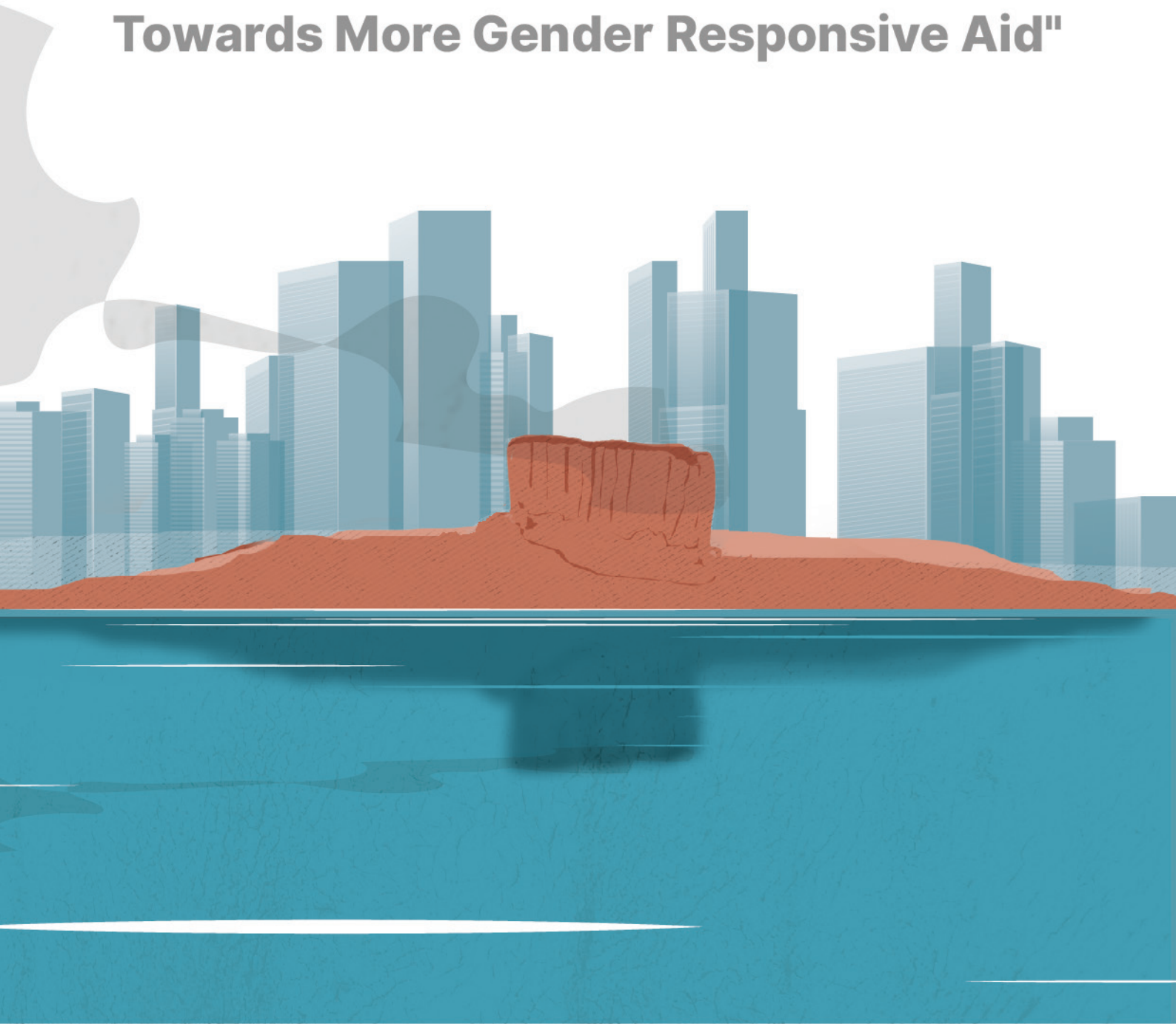


"In the Shadow of a State: Towards More Gender Responsive Aid"



**Women's Peace &
Humanitarian Fund** 

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A Word from Layal Sakr, Attorney at Law

Principle Investigator and SEEDS Executive Director



Gender-based violence (GBV) terrorizes women and excludes them from taking part in public life while controlling and governing their private life.

Structural violence in the laws on nationality, personal status and others, contributes to a culture in which women are marginalized. Moreover, economic and social crises have worsened the situation through increasing levels of economic violence to which women are especially vulnerable.

In general, structural violence prompts women to shy away from decision-making positions, thus reducing diversity and plurality. Diversity is the pillar of democracy as it improves the quality of discussions and decisions, leading to better outcomes that take into account the specific requirements and needs of women all women and assist them in having their voices heard while preventing their exclusion from a wide range of spheres.

Our report aims to enhance the relationship amongst donors and CSOs in the absence of a government that can improve the quality of people's lives in Lebanon - a land forever plagued by disasters - so that aid and recovery efforts are inclusive of all genders.

August 4th will remain a witness to the systemic violence inflicted by the authorities on the people. It will also bear witness to the role of local and international organizations who did their best to fill the gap, compensate for the failure of the Lebanese government and help the victims of the Beirut Port Explosion. Cooperation and solidarity among donors and local organizations remain the main guarantee for durability and sustainability and a chance to save what remains in a country where institutions are failing and corrupt and where accurate and reliable data are absent.

We will relentlessly pursue reforms and seek the building of a state of law based on gender equality; a state that ensures and carries the duties and responsibilities towards its people.

A Word from Dr. Carmen Geha

Inter-disciplinary Research Group on Migration, Pompeu Fabra University. Founding Member, Center for Inclusive Business and Leadership (CIBL) for Women at AUB



The Beirut Port Explosion on August 4th will forever stand as a reminder of the damage corruption and criminal negligence can cause to human life. The explosion itself was not, and will not be, the last tragedy that people in Lebanon have to endure. Women in particular are the historical, and ongoing, victims of a sectarian power-sharing regime sustained by warlords and corrupt financiers. From personal status laws to economic and political participation, women bear the brunt of a system of governance that operates through sectarian courts and that marginalizes their participation in political parties. The explosion exacerbated the suffering of women, who had already been facing rising rates of domestic violence and unemployment during the pandemic.

The intersectionality of race, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, and housing affect each woman differently. Although many women suffered as a result of the damage caused by the explosion, some women are more marginalized than others and suffer further discrimination as a result. There was not, and will not be, a state-led recovery. Lebanese state institutions are crippled by decades of corruption, a deficit of meaningful data, and administrative incompetence. The vast majority of recovery efforts in the wake of the explosion were community-led and aided by international donors that rushed to support in rescue operations, the provision of shelter, and mobilizing for reforms that would never see the light of day.

This report aims to improve donor-NGO relations and collaboration so that aid and disaster recovery efforts are gender-inclusive in a meaningful and sustainable manner. It seeks to build on successful and impactful interventions with the aim of addressing any weaknesses through collaborative partnerships and strategizing by NGOs and donors currently operating in the blast-affected neighborhoods of Beirut. In doing so, the report also serves two purposes: -1 to document this phase in the recovery process and -2 to try to learn from other contexts within weak or failed states.

Executive Summary

In the aftermath of the Beirut Port Explosion, and in an effort to respond to the corresponding urgent humanitarian needs that emerged in Beirut and in Lebanon in general, SEEDS for Legal Initiatives hastened to provide assistance and meet the needs of the affected community. As SEEDS' expertise lies in legal research, awareness and advocacy for the safeguarding of liberties and human rights, we looked to offer our support to the ongoing humanitarian response and to help ensure that the recovery efforts effectively and impartially engaged women, including minority women, and answered their specific needs.

With the support of the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund and the Government of Germany, and with technical assistance from UN Women, SEEDS launched the project "In the Shadow of a State: Towards Gender-Responsive Aid in Recovery" in July 2021. The first part of the project consisted of conducting a research study that aimed to assess the extent to which recovery programs that received funding following the Beirut Port Explosion succeeded in promoting the participation of women in decision making processes, considering the specific needs of women and girls including minority groups, adopting the recommendations of the Feminist Charter of Demands and taking into account the goals of the Lebanon Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF).

In the first phase of the study, we reviewed existing literature and data available online to better understand the situation of women and girls, including those within minority groups, and to gain an overview of the aid pledged to Lebanon (1) before August 2020, and (2) after the Beirut Port Explosion. It was quite evident that women and girls, who were already facing considerable hardships, were disproportionately impacted by the blast. With regard to aid, a review of incoming funds between 1992 and 2020 revealed that the specific needs of women were seldom prioritized and that minority women, such as LBQT women, were almost never considered [1]. In the aftermath of the Beirut Port Explosion, and despite the many calls and demands for gender responsive and women inclusive aid put forth by the Feminist Platform and the 3RF, incoming aid did not significantly address the specific needs of women and girls. The UN Flash Appeal 2020, a database that lists recovery initiatives funded by various donors, revealed that, of the total incoming funds of \$167 million, approximately \$3.8 million specifically targeted women [2].

Moreover, in the interest of developing best practice guidelines for gendered aid in post disaster contexts, we reviewed the key findings of gender analysis assessments, subsequent recommendations for gender inclusive aid and evaluations of the response, where data was available, in Syria and Haiti. It quickly became clear that recommendations for gender responsive and women inclusive funding fell short of triggering the desired change in these two contexts.

In the second phase of the study, we conducted a mixed-methods data collection where we interviewed key donors involved in the Beirut Port Explosion recovery response and those who have pledged gender inclusive aid, along with feminist experts, members of the Lebanon Reform, 3RF and experts on aid and accountability in order to shed light on existing problems, especially those that are context-specific, and to propose tangible and practical recommendations that can ensure women are included in decision making and that their specific needs are fulfilled throughout the recovery programs.

Key Findings

A. Absence of a Gendered Agenda

Most participants believed that the response was not gendered enough, highlighting how the needs of women and girls, including minority women, were seldom a priority. Many also shed light on how misconceptions on gender can hinder the adoption and implementation of a gendered agenda.

Finally, while most donors confirmed that women are part of the decision-making process within their teams, the majority of feminist experts had the impression that it was not the case especially since, on the ground, it was apparent that the specific needs of women were not taken into account.

B. Absence of Reliable Data

7/20 donors did not share any gender disaggregated data. Of those that did, the majority gave estimates, rather than clear figures, making it difficult to deduce the actual percentage or total funds that targeted women and girls.

C. Inability to Efficiently Measure the Impact

Experts highlighted the absence of the will, or the ability, of many key players to conduct proper monitoring and evaluation of the projects. Furthermore, experts shed light on the importance of assessing the impact of the initiatives, rather than merely monitoring for compliance and financial accountability.

D. Weak Coordination Mechanisms

Participants shed light on the lack of coordination among NGOs and how this negatively impacted the quality of the services provided and fostered chaos and duplication.

E. Dilemmas Regarding Engagement with the Government

Only 35% of donors (7/20) and 37.5% of (3/8) feminist experts shared that they trust the Lebanese government, or would work with it. On the other hand, members of the 3RF and experts on aid and accountability highlighted the need to collaborate with the government despite its ineffectiveness.

Discussion

In a context where women and girls, and especially minority women, suffer from existing and prolonged injustices, the repercussions that befall them, in the aftermaths of crises, or as a result of suboptimal or inefficient aid, are even more severe.

Additionally, in the absence of the rule of law and in the shadow of an inefficient and oppressive government, the burden upon civil society intensifies.

With the absence of strong, competent government institutions, the capacity of the government to oversee the proper disbursement of funds and to ensure accountability to the people is compromised. As a result, aid accountability is left to donors and implementing organizations.

At the same time, rampant corruption at the national level and the lack of oversight on aid efforts may foster the mismanagement of funds or, to the very least, a certain disregard for accountability.

Recommendations

In conclusion, tangible recommendations were put forth in an effort to ensure that recovery efforts in Lebanon are more gender responsive and women inclusive

These include:

I. Inclusionary Recommendations

1. Eradicate Structural Discrimination
2. Fight Corruption and Advocate for Accountability at the National Level
3. Advocate for Justice at the National Level
4. Mobilize to Prioritize Gender Among Stakeholders in any Recovery Response

II. Programmatic Recommendations

1. Adopt Gendered Internal Policies
2. Implement Gender Sensitive Monitoring and Evaluation
3. Ensure Transparency, Access to Data and Accountability
4. Devise an Effective Coordination Plan

The results and recommendations were validated with 12 study participants during a Dialogue and Validation Meeting that was held on June 07, 2022.

Consequently, and with the aim to advocate for the adoption of these recommendations across the recovery response in Lebanon, and as a continuation to the project “In the Shadow of a State: Towards Gender-Responsive Aid in Recovery”, SEEDS will launch the report along with a supporting media campaign in June 2022. It will also provide legal consultancy services to five organizations to assist in the development of their gender responsive and women inclusive responses based on these recommendations.

Finally, this report is only a first step towards achieving gender responsive and women inclusive aid. While it put forth a pioneering context-specific and tangible model to ensure that the recovery response in Lebanon is gendered, it also raised myriad novel questions and highlighted the need for complementary initiatives that can build upon this starting point.

Acknowledgments

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We would like to express our sincere gratitude to WPHF and the Government of Germany as well as Rachel-Dore Weeks, Olivia Schmitz, Hiba Abbani, Nancy Nahhas, Claire Wilson and all the UN Women’s Lebanon team. Had it not been for their belief in the necessity of this work and their steadfast support, we could not have succeeded in this endeavor.

We also recognize the invaluable contributions of all those who took part in our study, from donors to feminist experts, to Lebanon Reform, Recovery & Reconstruction Platform (3RF) members, to experts on aid and accountability. We are thankful for your participation and your support.

A special thanks to Emilie Vidal from the WPHF Global Community of Practice and to Joe Read from Care USA for sharing key material with us.

We are also particularly thankful to Dr. Carmen Geha, our Gender Consultant, for her invaluable input throughout the study.

Glossary

Donor	UN agencies, embassies and other international organizations that funded the recovery programs
Gender blind	A response that does not take account of issues related to gender, such as the specific needs of women, girls, vulnerable and minority groups
Gender gap	Inequalities between men and women across various sectors
Gender responsive	A term used to designate that the response in question responded to the specific needs of women, girls, and vulnerable and minority groups, such as women refugees, migrant domestic workers, transgender women, elderly women, female heads of households, stateless women, women married to non-Lebanese and others
Gender	A term used to denote one's identity, as well as the socially constructed roles, behaviors and attributes associated with a certain gender
Homophobia	A behavior or act of prejudice and rejection towards homosexual persons that aggravates the preexisting vulnerabilities of this group of people
Implementing partner	A party receiving funds or donations to be channeled to designated beneficiary groups
Intersectional	An approach that looks into every layer or aspect of an issue, situation or a problem and, in this context, is related to women and girls
Recovery response	Initiatives that aim at supporting people affected by crises by offering humanitarian aid or and development assistance
Respondent	A person providing information during the process of data collection
Responder	A person providing assistance in a response to a crisis
Similar crises	Crises similar to the Beirut Port Explosion in terms of impact on the general population and on women and girls and in terms of the response to the crisis in question
Transphobia	A behavior or act of prejudice and rejection towards trans women or transgender women and girls that aggravates the preexisting vulnerabilities of these groups of people
Vulnerable groups	Groups that are disadvantaged and may be at a higher risk of needing humanitarian assistance because of certain characteristics they have
Women inclusive	A term used to highlight that the response fosters the participation of women and girls at the planning, decision making and/or implementation levels

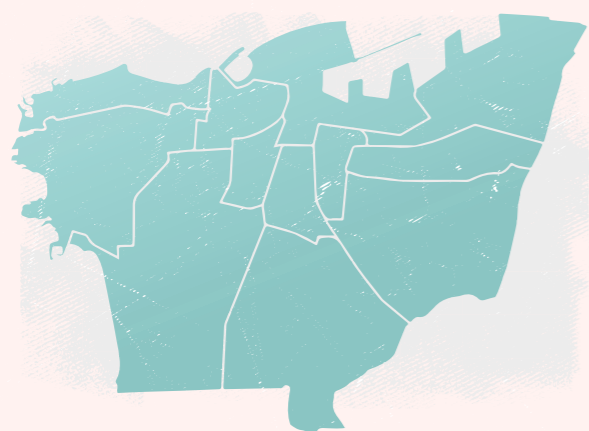
Acronyms

3RF	Lebanon Reform, Recovery & Reconstruction Platform
ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
AiW	Arab Institute for Women
AUB	American University of Beirut
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CRTDA	Collective for Research and Training on Development-Action
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EU	European Union
FHH	Female Headed Household
FTS	Financial Tracking Service – A United Nations database that lists recovery initiatives funded by various donors
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LAU	Lebanese American University
LBTQ	Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer
LLWB	Lebanese League for Women in Business
MHH	Male Headed Households
NCLW	National Commission for Lebanese Women
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PDNA	Post Disaster Needs Assessment
RDFL	Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering
RGA	Rapid Gender Analysis
SADD	Sex and Age Disaggregated Data
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SFW	Stand for Women
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
SRHS	Sexual and Reproductive Health Services
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNW	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, or UN Women
WFP	World Food Program

Overview

In the aftermath of the Beirut Port Explosion, and in an effort to respond to the resultant urgent humanitarian needs in Beirut and in Lebanon in general, SEEDS for Legal Initiatives hastened to provide assistance and meet the needs of the affected community.

As SEEDS' expertise lies in legal research, awareness and advocacy for the safeguarding of liberties and human rights, the organization sought to support the ongoing humanitarian response and to help ensure that the recovery efforts effectively and impartially engaged women, including minority women, and that they answered their specific needs.



In undertaking this project, SEEDS aimed to study the extent to which recovery programs that received funding following the Beirut Port Explosion succeeded in promoting the participation of women in decision making processes, that they considered the specific needs of women and girls including minority groups, that they adopted the recommendations of the Feminist Charter of Demands and that they took into account the goals of the Lebanon Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF).

In order to achieve these goals, the project started with a literature review followed by a data collection phase. The intent was to better understand if, and how, a gendered perspective was adopted throughout the response, and to develop tangible and achievable recommendations that could promote gender responsive programming and guarantee women-inclusive decision-making in the future.

The results of both phases of the study along with the recommendations are presented in this report.

The recommendations were consolidated with the study participants during a Dialogue and Validation Meeting that was held on June 07, 2022.

The final report and a supportive media campaign will be launched towards the end of June 2022. Donors, feminist associations, implementing organizations and other stakeholders involved in the recovery response will be invited to take these recommendations onboard in an effort to influence future funds and to ensure that future responses are inclusive of women and girls. Five organizations will also be offered support in developing and adopting internal policies based on the recommendations.

The project is funded by the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund and the Government of Germany, with technical support from UN Women.

Before August 4

A. Overview of Women's Rights in Lebanon – pre-Explosion

1. The Context

Women and girls in Lebanon have been struggling to obtain and exercise their civil, human and political rights since before the establishment of the state. For decades, women have been trying, in innumerable ways, to seize what they are entitled to as citizens and individuals. Despite these efforts, and although some legislation [1] has been passed by the parliament in order to improve gender equality in Lebanon, empower women and protect their rights, women still suffer from disparity and discrimination on many levels. The Lebanese political, economic, and legal systems systematically discriminate against women and girls. According to the Women Peace and Security Index, Lebanon is one of the least safe places worldwide for a woman or a girl to exist, especially for non-nationals [2].

According to the 2021 Global Gender Gap report, Lebanon ranked 132 out of 156 countries; it also ranked 139 on the Women's Economic Participation Index [3]. The country has been witnessing an unremitting decline in gender equality since 2010 [4].

Furthermore, globally, the women's labor market participation rate in Lebanon represents one of the lowest, with a score of 29% for women versus 76% for men [5].

These structural and legal injustices are exacerbated by a patriarchal culture that seldom promotes equity between men and women.

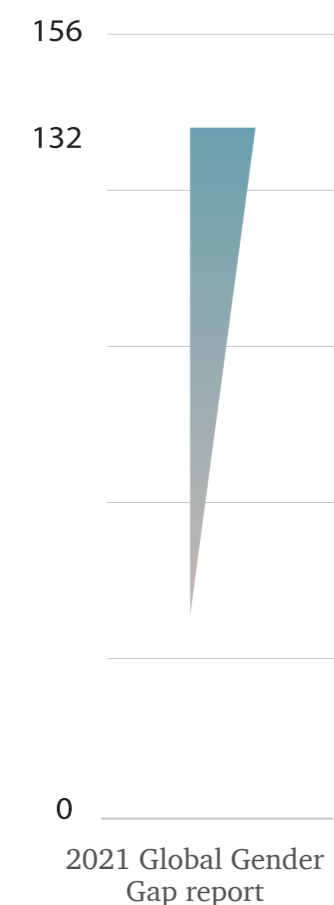
The Covid-19 pandemic had already impacted on women and girls as the multiple lockdowns increased domestic violence risks, in addition to placing huge burdens on female headed households and women in employment.

The vulnerabilities and injustices endured by women were only magnified by the Beirut Port Explosion of August 4, 2020.

This is especially true for women and girls living within the radius of the devastating blast according to the Rapid Gender Analysis [6] and the Socio-Economic Assessment [7] conducted in the aftermath of the blast.

Moreover, the blast represented the lowest point of a dire financial situation where the Lebanese Pound had, at the time of the assessments covered in this report, lost 80% of its value⁽¹⁾ [7] which made the relief efforts launched in response to the explosion incredibly challenging to manage.

It is evident that the substantial structural discrimination against women, along with the near total absence of functional state institutions, have had a disastrous impact on the lives of women in Lebanon, who continue to suffer from marginalization, violence and oppression.



1. At the time of publication (June 2022)

2. Structural Discrimination and Oppression of Women

The Collective for Research and Training on Development-Action (CRTDA) in collaboration with the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the Arab Institute for Women at the Lebanese American University (LAU) released an extensive report in 2020 that outlined the gender inequalities titled Lebanon's Parallel Report: 25 Years after Beijing: Women fighting Inequality in Lebanon. The report revealed how far Lebanon continues to be from reaching gender equality and the necessity for drastic reforms at the legal, social and cultural levels in order to achieve an improved empowerment, participation, representation and quality of life for women. The report presents crucial information collected by civil society organizations through field work that complements and, at times, challenges the official report that had been submitted by the government [8].

According to the CRTDA report, although the Lebanese Constitution clearly protects the equal rights of all Lebanese citizens, many internal laws and provisions are discriminatory against women as are a number of cultural beliefs and social norms. Women in Lebanon may enjoy a wide range of personal liberties, depending on their place of residence, the religious beliefs of their families, and their economic status; their health and education rights are largely met and the gender gap is narrow in this instance. However, women are still far behind men in terms of political participation, representation and leadership, in addition to marked discrimination against them as mothers and spouses when it comes to their rights regarding a range of issues.

Lebanese women suffer from a biased personal status law governed according to 18 religious sects that discriminate, in one way or another, against women and girls. [8] They cannot pass their nationality to their husband or children and they do not have equal status with men in regards to child custody, divorce, inheritance and property rights.

Lebanese women also continue to suffer from gender-based violence (GBV) and intimate partner violence (IPV) although the parliament passed a law to protect women and other family members from domestic violence in 2014. GBV has reportedly increased during the Covid-19 pandemic [9].



With regard to politics, Lebanese women are underrepresented, a reality largely influenced by political currents and agendas rather than by principles, laws or quotas that guarantee equal opportunities to engage or lead in public life [8].

In the 2022 parliamentary elections, eight women won seats, raising the percentage of women in parliament from 4.7% to 6.25% [8]. This increase in numbers does not necessarily imply an increase in women's ability to make their voices heard and actively participate in decision making. For example, on October 8, 2021, Member of Parliament Inaya Ezzedine withdrew from a Joint Parliamentary Committee session as male MPs dismissed her request to discuss the importance of integrating a women's quota into the next parliamentary elections under the pretext of not having the time to discuss the matter.

When it comes to the government, the previous government⁽²⁾ included six women ministers while the current caretaker government⁽³⁾ under Najib Mikati includes just one. This is a significant regression in the fight for the increased political participation of women and against the institutionalized patriarchy and the role it plays in sidelining women [8].

2. First formed in January 2020. Resigned on August 10, 2020
3. At the time of the publication of this report in June 2022

On the economic level, labor laws and regulations fail to safeguard women's rights in the workplace or to provide equitable opportunities, equal pay, childcare support, flexible schedules, paternity leave and protection from sexual harassment [8]. It is of note that the Lebanese Parliament has passed a law to criminalize sexual harassment (205/2020), which is a major step in the right direction. However, the law fell short of international standards, especially due to the lack of provisions targeting prevention, labor law reform and civil remedies [10].

On the education level, the educational enrollment rates of boys and girls are quite close, with a very small gap in favor of men in tertiary levels. Although this represents significant progress, many girls are still deprived of education due to cultural and social norms, especially as education is not compulsory and many families cannot afford to educate their children [8]. Moreover, access to health services is often threatened by the high cost of care and, sometimes, by the husband or other family members who often take it upon themselves to make healthcare choices on behalf of the woman especially regarding sexual and reproductive health services (abortion and contraception) [8].

LBTQ women and women of other nationalities, for example, women refugees and migrant domestic workers, experience even greater hardship and discrimination due to their minority or refugee status [8].

Lebanon hosts the highest refugee population per capita in the world and this has been exacerbated with Syrian refugees escaping the Syrian crisis in 2011. Governmental estimates confirm the presence of 1.5 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon, 865,500 were registered with UNHCR up until the end of December 2020 [11] [12], of which 25.2% are women and 27.1% are girls, in addition, there are also 28,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria in Lebanon [8]. Finally, around 180,000 Palestinian refugees live in camps distributed throughout the Lebanese territory [8].

Furthermore, an estimated 250,000 migrant domestic workers reside in Lebanon and the majority are women. Domestic workers have no legal protections under the "Kafala" law that denies them the right to leave their job or the country without the approval of their employers which exposes them to an increased risk of abuse and exploitation [8]. Lebanon has ratified various international

treaties pledging that the government will respect and protected human rights, including women's rights. The CRTDA report highlighted the inefficient implementation of these treaties, and the lack of laws, policies, plans and strategies that are in line with gender responsiveness and the inclusivity of women.

Despite the ongoing work of CSOs, and given the government's rather limited efforts, Lebanon still ranks very low in terms of gender equality [8].

B. Overview of aid to Lebanon – 1992 to 2020

Lebanon has been receiving financial aid from the international community since the end of the Lebanese Civil War (1975 – 1990). Originally, the donations largely aimed to support the reconstruction and financial stability of the country. However, aid kept flowing due to catastrophic events such as the various ongoing, or sporadic conflicts within Lebanon.

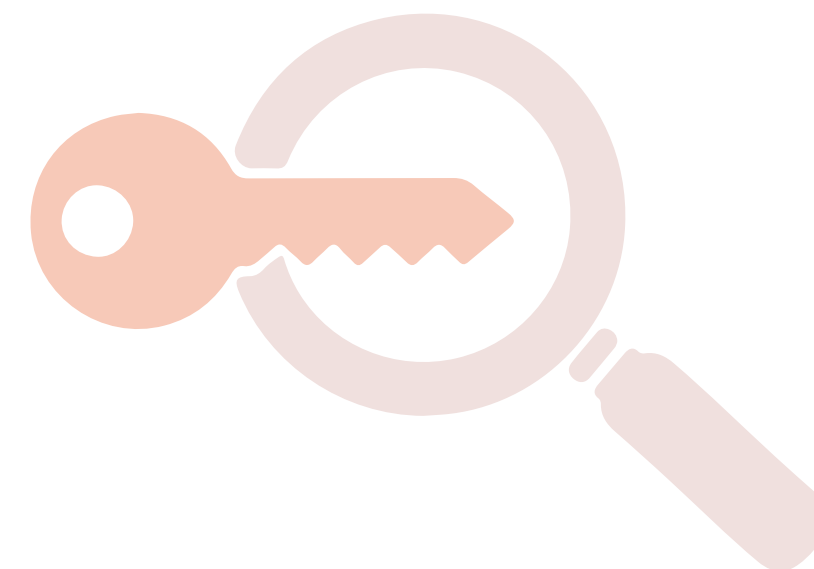
Financial Aid to Lebanon [13]

Year	Total Incoming Funds	Women	Girls	Elderly Women	GBV	LBTQ	Refugees/ Migrant	Sexual & Reproductive Health	Female Headed Households	Hygiene Kits	Mental Health	Women Volunteers & Responders	Other Expenses	Total Percentage For Women
1992	\$34,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0%
1993	\$432,613.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0%
1994	\$3,027.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0%
1995	\$2,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0%
1996	\$260,517.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0%
1999	\$250,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0%
2001	\$879,314.00	\$406,452.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	46.22%
2002	\$3,621,092.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0%
2003	\$889,753.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$70,510.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	7.92%
2004	\$7,638,481.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$100,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	1.31%
2005	\$7,532,909.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0%
2006	\$572,135,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$200,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$1,276,192.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.26%
2007	\$134,363,886.00	\$163,934.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$43,103.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.15%
2008	\$80,941,435.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$36,184.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$376,551.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.51%
2009	\$64,073,633.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$109,012.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.17%
2010	\$36,312,669.00	\$513,645.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$299,145.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	2.24%
2011	\$43,813,247.00	\$887,277.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$34,452.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	2.10%
2012	\$163,449,059.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$209,636.00	\$ -	\$484,593.00	\$81,282.00	\$ -	\$704,846.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.91%
2013	\$1,044,926,778.00	\$538,611.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$1,826,902.00	\$ -	\$1,619,753.00	\$609,517.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$399,865.00	0.48%
2014	\$1,102,664,842.00	\$1,639,260.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$523,315.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.20%
2015	\$1,319,056,775.00	\$407,247.00	\$5,291,005.00	\$ -	\$1,003,740.00	\$ -	\$6,485,018.00	\$5,296,442.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$123,509.00	1.41%
2016	\$1,306,658,361.00	\$2,331,284.00	\$510,670.00	\$ -	\$5,059,590.00	\$ -	\$4,806,845.00	\$3,038,775.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$5,200,000.00	1.60%
2017	\$1,076,407,582.00	\$3,766,669.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$2,808,556.00	\$ -	\$200,095.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.63%
2018	\$1,103,001,626.00	\$6,802,069.00	\$ -	\$184,981.00	\$2,992,961.00	\$ -	\$101,603.00	\$1,228,673.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	1.03%
2019	\$1,110,965,788.00	\$200,236.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$2,479,450.00	\$177,377.00	\$256,358.00	\$285,388.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.31%
2020	\$1,588,440,252.00	\$5,514,937.00	\$1,620,000.00	\$ -	\$116,468,768.00	\$ -	\$5,951,327.00	\$1,712,901.00	\$1,976,441.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$35,035.00	8.39%

The above overview of the financial aid to Lebanon covers the period from 1992 until 2020 and is based on the data available on Lebanon's Country Data Section on the UN's Financial Tracking Service (FTS) website.

The following key findings were identified:

- The first time incoming aid specifically targeted women was in 2001
- The average level of aid specifically allocated to women and girls ranged from 0.1% to 8.39%, with the exception of 2001 where the allocation to women reached 46.22% (\$406,452)
- Gender Based Violence (GBV) was first specifically funded in 2003 and the funds allocated to this issue have been largely increasing ever since
- After GBV, the most targeted groups of women or women's needs were maternal health (pregnant women, mothers ...) and women migrants and refugees
- Sexual and Reproductive Health Services (SRHS) were first targeted in 2006. However, the level of funding allocated to these services has not been particularly consistent over the years
- Women Headed Households (FHH) were first specifically targeted in 2020. However, we could not identify whether these funds were disbursed before or after the Beirut Port Explosion as specific dates were not available
- The least targeted needs relating to women or minority groups were FHH- and LBTQ-related.
- Women's mental health needs and the needs of women volunteers and responders were never specifically targeted according to the UN's website.



The Scene on August 05

A. The Impact of the Beirut Port Explosion on Women

Following the Beirut Port Explosion, a plethora of humanitarian organizations conducted assessment reports mainly in the 5 km radius of the blast i.e., the area consisting of the Beirut port area and its vicinity, Beirut downtown, Ashrafieh, Karantina, Mar Mikhael, Gemmayze, Geitawi, Bourj Hammoud, Saifi, Mdawwar, Bechoura and other adjacent neighborhoods.

According to the Rapid Gender Assessment conducted by UN Women et al (October 2020), many of the assessment reports were gender blind [6] but a few studies and assessments targeted vulnerable groups such as female headed household (FHH), elderly women, women with disabilities, women living with people with chronic sickness, pregnant and lactating women, LBTQ, women refugees, women migrant workers and adolescent girls [6].

The explosion exacerbated the existing vulnerabilities of women and girls living in the affected areas and touched the various aspects of their lives.

Women, loss of shelters & GBV risks:

Many women who were living in the radius of the explosion lost their shelters, either completely or partially, and consequently lost their safe spaces and were subject to higher GBV risks, abuse and exploitation threats. This emerging situation imposed inappropriate living conditions as women and girls found themselves unwillingly sharing humble accommodation with relatives and strangers thus suffering from lack of privacy, clean facilities and a secure environment [6].

Female headed household – FHH:

According to UNOCHA's review «Gender Equality in the Humanitarian Response to the Beirut Port Explosion», female headed households represented 52% of the affected population [14]. The study highlighted the fact that the explosion imposed greater responsibilities on many women who are the sole caretakers of the family. Furthermore, they were more likely to have

family members over 60 years old or with chronic illnesses who required care [6].

Women Livelihoods: In a press release issued by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) on August 14, 2020, it was revealed that around 150,000 women and girls were displaced following the explosion. The release also stated that 30,000 women in Lebanon were already unemployed [15] and unemployment was on the rise. Moreover, a large number of women-led businesses were destroyed particularly in the radius of the explosion as pointed out in the UN Women Rapid Gender Analysis which implies the loss of employment opportunities for women [6].

Elderly women: As per the Rapid Gender Analysis, 8% of the affected population were elderly women living alone and/or with household members in need of humanitarian assistance and with no bread earner in the family [6].

Health services for women and girls: The availability of women's health services, especially those required by pregnant and lactating women, massively decreased as a direct impact of the explosion and the significant damage that affected a large number of healthcare centers [6].

Mental health services for women and girls: Around 81,000 women (aged 15-49), including 24,000 adolescent girls, were affected by the explosion and were in dire need of assistance for the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder or required gender-based violence services. Several NGOs and CSOs, such as KAFA and ABAAD, launched response plans to help vulnerable women, especially those exposed to violence and abuse [16] [9].

Women of other nationalities and social statuses: Women Syrian refugees and migrant workers suffered from discrimination and favoritism in aid distribution following the explosion. These day-laborers or low-income workers who had been residing in affordable areas, such as Karantina, in the Beirut port area and Bourj Hammoud, also lost their shelters

and were unable to find somewhere to stay without financial assistance. This led to food insecurity and homelessness. Moreover, many women domestic workers lost their official papers in the explosion, which made it very difficult for them to return to their home countries. Some were abandoned by their employers under the pretext of the economic crisis and their inability to pay their monthly wages and fees in US dollars [6].

LBTQ women: Mar Mikhael, Gemmayze and their surrounding areas were long considered a safe haven for LBTQ women. However, many members of this community lost their homes in the explosion and had to endure housing discrimination due to the fact that homophobia and transphobia are prevalent and often impact upon queer persons seeking housing across Lebanon. This led to LBTQ women suffering from very limiting options when it came to finding safe shelters [6].

Women volunteers and responders:

The assessment also covered volunteers and responders who were exposed to discrimination, disregard and sexual harassment as they took to the streets to contribute to aid, relief and needs assessment efforts in the immediate aftermath of the blast [6].



Taking Stock of the Response to the Beirut Port Explosion

A. Calls for a more gender responsive recovery response

Since the day of the explosion, and especially in light of the findings of the assessments conducted on the ground, many voices were raised to demand a more gender responsive recovery response that can ensure a better representation of women in the shaping and implementation of these efforts, and can meet the specific needs of women, including of minority women.

The **Feminist Charter of Demands** was released on August 27, 2020 by Lebanon's Feminist Civil Society Platform. It called for an impartial investigation into the Beirut's Port Explosion and for a more gender responsive approach across all recovery efforts.

Its main goals included:

- Conducting a gender assessment of needs and priorities. This has now been conducted by UN Women (October 2020) and has identified the main needs of women and girls in the affected area.
- Ensuring women's representation, leadership, and inclusion. This is of utmost importance because it is only through this representation and inclusion in the planning of recovery efforts and decision making that women's voices can be heard and their specific needs put on the table.
- Providing food security, shelter and sustainable livelihoods by ensuring equal access to funds and services.
- Preventing and responding to violence against women and girls especially following the numerous reports of an increase in GBV in the last couple of years.
- Ensuring access to health services and sexual and reproductive health rights which may not have been considered a priority as hospitals and healthcare institutions were grappling with the toll of the economic crisis and that of the explosion [17].

The Feminist Platform also contributed to the development of an eighteen months response plan called **Lebanon Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF)** [18]. The 3RF was launched in December 2020 by the United Nations, the European Union and the World Bank for a longer term people-centered recovery, reform and reconstruction goals. It estimated that \$426 million are needed for the implementation of a number of recovery initiatives in the first year.

The 3RF is based on four focal points:

- Improving governance and accountability
- Jobs and economic opportunities
- Social protection, social inclusion, and culture
- Improving services and infrastructure

The 3RF framework touches upon gender equality and the empowerment of women. It also addresses the existing gender inequities and prioritizes meeting the specific needs of women and girls.

B. Overview of aid in the aftermath of the Beirut Port Explosion

The total number of funds that were received or pledged following the Beirut Port Explosion was around \$1 billion [19], [20], [21], [22], [23], [24].

This number was confirmed by a recent article by *L'Orient Le Jour* that revealed that \$426 million were pledged to the 3RF, an additional \$317.7 million were pledged by international donors (outside the scope of the 3RF), and around \$300 million were pledged during a fundraising conference convened by the French government alongside the United Nations [25]. The main donors included the World Bank, the European Union, various UN agencies and INGOs.

But how gender inclusive were these donations? Did they adopt a gender inclusive approach? Did they follow the guidance of the Feminist Charter, the 3RF and the national and international legal

frameworks on women's rights and the inclusion of women and girls? Were women represented and involved in decision making when these efforts were planned? Did the funds target women specifically? Did they require an equitable distribution of the funds? Were these efforts inclusive of minority women?

Very few donors published gendered data. For example, the UN Flash Appeal 2020 is a database that lists recovery initiatives funded by various donors [21]. The database included the main area of interest of each fund such as provision of GBV, assistance, protection or healthcare services targeting women and girls. It also listed the recipients of the funds from which we identified one women's rights organization: ABAAD. Based on this data, we have deduced that, of the total incoming funding of \$167 million, about \$3.8 million specifically targeted women; this is equivalent to

2,28% of the totals funds [21].

This does not necessarily mean that women did not benefit from these programs. But, the scarcity of gendered disaggregated data suggests that the meaningful inclusion of women in decision-making and as project beneficiaries is still lacking.

Furthermore, according to UNOCHA and UN Women's Review of "Gender Equality in the Humanitarian Response to the Beirut Port Explosion", 62% of Lebanon's Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) is comprised of women; one of the highest representations of women in HCTs in the world [14].

It is unclear, however, if that representation rate is consistent across all major funding platforms and whether it is translated into better inclusion of women and girls and better targeting of their specific needs.

C. Success Stories

There are, of course, a few success stories where recovery actors were, to some extent, gender responsive and women inclusive.

A number of local CSOs and NGOs took on major roles in responding to the Beirut Port Explosion, time and again going beyond their own mandates and scope of work and stretching their resources to their limits. Below are some examples.

- FE-MALE is a feminist collective engaged in advocacy and campaigning to combat gender inequalities, stereotyping and discriminatory norms and policies. Following the Beirut Port Explosion, FE-MALE members took to the streets to help with aid distribution and to assess the emerging needs of women and girls. They reported some duplication in aid and helped redirect some funds to respond to the affected women's specific needs. FE-MALE also launched the "Women of Beirut" campaign, a series of photos that documented the stories of 10 women and girls who lived horrifying experiences due to the Beirut Port Explosion. The goal was to give these women the chance to make their voices heard in a context where women are largely excluded. These stories reached 2 million people in 2 weeks on social media and triggered societal engagement that started with people reaching out and asking about how they could help these women; following this response, the media showed an increased willingness to cover their stories; and other women who were also affected by the blast, started sharing similar stories [26].

- LLWB is one of the prominent local nonprofit associations that had been working on empowering women in business since 2006 and that contributed to the response to the Beirut Port Explosion especially through crisis management initiatives. Following the explosion, and through the taskforce that had been launched upon the 2019 protests, LLWB tackled the most pressing needs of women in business; it provided support to women led businesses, offered mental health coaching, channeled medical supplies to the organizations working in the field and more. Furthermore, the organization found itself working outside its mandate or scope of work to help people recover following the blast.

LLWB helped launch donation efforts from inside and outside of Lebanon in order to assist the affected families and provide them with basic necessities like food, clothes, medical and construction supplies and even electronic devices that were delivered to a public school in Beirut.

- Stand for Women (SFW) is an NGO advocating for women's economic empowerment and gender equality in the Middle East. SFW launched the Marion Fund initiative in memory of Marion Hochar Ibrahimchah who lost her life in the Beirut Port Explosion. The initiative aimed at helping more than 200 women-owned small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that were affected by the blast. 270 women-owned businesses were assessed, 140 were supported through reconstruction or rehabilitation support, cash grants, or training workshops to build the women's capacities in business development and e-commerce. The initiative is ongoing and SFW is making sure that the women-owned businesses they supported are able to continue to function amid the ongoing financial crisis. They are also seeking to target women-led businesses in rural areas, as well as supporting women working in the agriculture and hospitality sectors [27].

- Yalla Care Coalition gathers eight LGBTQ organizations in Lebanon and aims to "create a robust network of support and service provision amongst queer and other marginalized communities". Following the Beirut Port Explosion, it successfully assessed and attended to the specific needs of the community, providing them with safe and high-quality support, services and information, and continued to advocate for their rights. The Yalla Care Coalition represents a rare example of a successful model where the concerned community, in this case LGBTQ individuals, are fully engaged in identifying their own funding priorities, designing, planning and evaluating programs and initiatives [28].

Additionally, we cannot but note that 53 women rights' organizations and activists came together to form the Feminist Platform to voice their demands for a gender responsive and women inclusive recovery response. They also pushed for the adoption of a gendered perspective in the 3RF agenda.

However, it remains true that the vast majority of funds disbursed to Lebanon in general, and those allocated to the recovery response in particular, have fallen short of international standards and of context-specific gender responsive and women inclusive recommendations.

We are not alone

In order to benefit from best practice guidelines and to mitigate any common missteps that hinder the attainment of gender responsive and women inclusive programming, we will now look at crises that have taken place in comparable contexts. There have been various man-made and natural crises all over the world that required significant recovery efforts and major funding, as was the case with the Beirut Port Explosion on August 4, 2020. Many such responses also put forth recommendations to ensure gender inclusive efforts. But, to our knowledge, there have been very few assessments of the impact of these calls to action or any measured improvement in the way gender specific needs were tackled in these contexts when compared to previous responses.



A. Syria

1. The Disaster

In 2022, Syria entered its 11th year of conflict, with more than half a million killed, the world's largest refugee crisis and the destruction of the country's infrastructure [29]. By 2022, 13 million people had been displaced including around 6.7 internally displaced within Syria (more than half of which are women and children) and about 5.6 million who escaped to neighboring countries [30].

According to a gender analysis assessment report developed by UNW, UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF [31] and released in 2021, girls were more likely than boys to be forced into child marriages; women and female headed households were more likely to suffer from food insecurity and more likely to rely on humanitarian assistance; women suffered from lower participation rates in the labor market and were paid less in comparison to men; and they were underrepresented in leadership and decision-making positions. Additionally, women Syrian refugees in Lebanon endured gender inequalities that affected the various aspects of their lives [31].

Below is a brief summary of the reality of Syrian refugee women in Lebanon according to a study published by UN Women in 2019 [32]:

Legal Residency: Women are 9% less likely to have legal residency compared to men

SGBV: 38% of Syrian refugee women said that SGBV is not usually reported

Sex Trafficking: 94% of known sex trafficking survivors in 2016 within Lebanon were Syrian refugee women

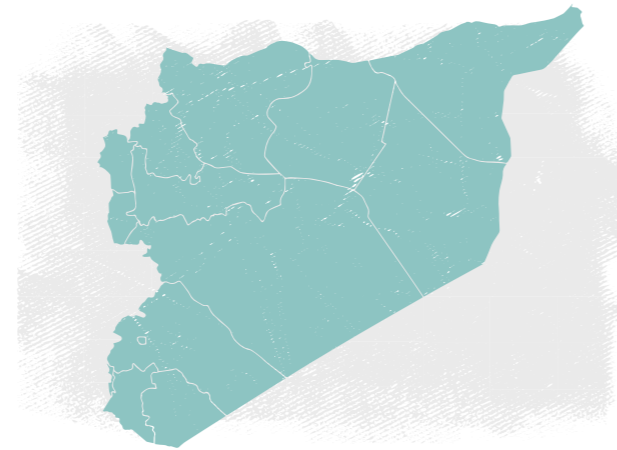
Child Protection: 1 in 3 Syrian refugee girls were married

Safe and Secure Shelter: FHH are more likely to live in informal settlements/non-permanent shelters than MHH (32% vs. 17%)

SRHS: 70% of recorded births among Syrian refugees in 2017 were by adolescent girls (this data was deduced from general health assessments that did not specifically focus on SRHS)

Livelihoods: The labor participation of Syrian refugee women in 2019 was 10% compared to 65% for men

Education: 79% of Syrian refugee young women and girls did not enroll in vocational or other training programs compared to 41% of young men.



2. The Response

Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, Syria's total financial assistance has been estimated to stand at more than \$21 billion (2011-2021) as per FTS, and this was meant to cover various needs and emergency aid for Syrians. However, the funds allocated to women did not exceed \$13.8 million (0.06%) [33].

It is noteworthy that SGBV remains significantly underfunded for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Only 30% of funding targets have been reached for 2019 and funding for the sector is decreasing. This mirrors global trends, where an estimated 0.12% of humanitarian funding is allocated to violence against women and girls [32].

Based on the assessment findings listed above, UN Women formulated recommendations to main stakeholders

such as governments, the UN and international actors and CSOs in order to push for a more gender responsive and women inclusive recovery covering all phases of the humanitarian action. The main recommendations included:

- Adopting a feminist approach that seeks to empower women and girls and addresses gender inequalities while taking into account unequal power relations in aid
- Promoting women and girls as main actors, decision makers and implementers in the response efforts, and allowing them to identify their needs and means of addressing them
- Engaging women and LGBTQ rights organizations in aid action
- Integrating a gender perspective in legal reforms to boost women's rights and to ensure the protection and well-being of Syrian women and girl refugees in Lebanon
- Guaranteeing access to health, hygiene and sexual and reproductive health services for women and girls in need
- Supporting women and girls in the education sector and providing them with training opportunities to increase their chances in the labor market along with the provision of adequate and free child support [32]

However, to our knowledge, no subsequent needs assessment was conducted and no project reports were published with gender disaggregated data that revealed an increase in the targeting of women's needs or their inclusion in decision making.

B. Haiti

1. The Disaster

On August 14, 2021, an earthquake hit the Grand Sud region of Haiti. The earthquake was twice as strong as that which hit in 2010. The 2021 earthquake killed hundreds of people, injured more than 12,000, and leveled thousands of homes and shelters adding to the deteriorating situation in Haiti due to COVID-19, the turbulent political situation and the impact of cyclones on an already weakened infrastructure. In a rapid gender assessment led by CARE and UN Women, key findings revealed the vulnerabilities of women and girls and highlighted critical problems similar to those arising in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake [34].



2. Key Findings and Recommendations in the Aftermath of the 2010 Earthquake

According to Haiti's post disaster needs assessment (PDNA), the earthquake significantly impacted an already struggling population, especially women and vulnerable groups [35].

The PDNA called for a gender-based assessment that took into account the needs of women and girls. Recommendations to ensure the provision of safe spaces, hygiene and sanitation facilities, reproductive health services, access to food and water, equal opportunities in education and employment, equal representation in disaster response processes, in decision making and leadership and access to justice were put forth. In addition, calls were made to help women and women's organizations recover their capacities in order to function once more and to be able to create revenue in the short and medium term [35].

3. Key Findings and Recommendations Following the 2021 Earthquake

The "Rapid Gender Analysis in Haiti: Impacts of the 2021 Earthquake" prepared by CARE and UN Women revealed that the effects of the disaster were more significant among women and the most vulnerable populations [34].

As for the recommendations, the gender analysis report suggested working on a more gender-based and sex and age disaggregated data (SADD) set in order to cover the impact of the disaster on most vulnerable groups, especially women and girls. It also suggested providing security measures to avoid any increase in violence and sexual abuse against women. It highlighted the importance of increasing women and girls' participation in recovery activities and their participation in decision making and leadership roles alongside increasing the involvement of women-led organizations. The report also stressed the need to create mechanisms of communication and collaboration with civil society organizations in order to prioritize the needs of affected women [34].

2010 Needs Assessment	2021 Needs Assessment
No Safe Shelter	No Safe Shelter
Food Insecurity	Food Insecurity
Disproportional Loss of Jobs	Disproportional Loss of Jobs
GBV Risks	Increased GBV Risks
Very Little Funding Directed to Women and Girls	Women and Vulnerable Groups Not Adequately Targeted
	Difficulty in Accessing Health Services
	Difficulty in Accessing Information
	Underrepresentation
	Setback for Women's Activism

4. Evaluating the Response

A brief was published in 2020 by the Development Research Institute in Norway [36] on the situation faced by women in Haiti ten years after the earthquake: the report found that the status of women's rights in Haiti did not significantly change. Women had managed to create a movement advocating for, and raising awareness on, gender equality, and this had resulted in the creation of a law for the criminalization of rape in 2005, they also succeeded in pushing for an electoral decree to implement a 30% quota in 2015.

However, these efforts have not generated tangible advancements. According to the report, women were still exposed to gender-based violence; still struggling to achieve real participation in the labor market and in public life, to access equal opportunities and pay, food and water security, and shelters. This brief suggests that the international community and the Haitian Government have failed to implement a gender inclusive response and a reconstruction framework that takes into account the needs of women and girls in Haiti and that women's organizations were excluded from the process [36].

Furthermore, a report "Trust must be earned: Perceptions of aid in Haiti" published in 2022 by Ground Truth Solutions, a provider of on the ground feedback to humanitarian agencies, is a reality check on post-quake accountability. The report reveals that, upon interviewing 1,251 disaster affected people, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The aid was only useful for short term needs
- The aid did not address priorities
- The aid did not respond to long term recovery or affected people's goals or needs
- There was a lack of transparency, affected individuals did not know how aid worked and they felt excluded from any decision making as beneficiaries
- There was no trust in aid providers
- The affected people felt like passive recipients

- The affected people wanted to be part of the needs assessment, aid planning and implementation

- The affected people wanted to collaborate with aid providers/actors they trust in order to make aid accountable [37].

C. Lesson learned

It is quite evident from the examples of Haiti and Syria that recommendations for gender responsive and women inclusive funding fell short of triggering the desired change. It is important to consider why the recommendations were unsuccessful in these contexts in order to build on lessons learned and develop best practice guidelines that can inform the Beirut Port Explosion recovery response, as well as similar programs in the aftermath of large-scale disasters.

Learning from Foreign Policies

In addition to crises in similar contexts, foreign policies that can also be relied upon to develop tangible recommendations for gender responsive and women inclusive aid were also studied.

Below are two examples of such policies.

A. Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy

Canada's policy discusses the importance of having a gender-responsive approach in any humanitarian action plan. It outlines specific strategies that can ensure that assistance initiatives are gender inclusive and that they promote the empowerment of women and other groups [38].

The policy's core action area is "gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls".

It focuses on combatting GBV, reducing sexual abuse and supporting women's rights organizations, civil society organizations, movements and governments strategizing to advance gender equality [38].

Through this policy, Canada works to better direct its international assistance to help the poorest and the most vulnerable individuals, especially in fragile and middle-income countries. In that context, Canada aims to provide more integrated and responsive support and to capitalize on research and gender analysis. [38]

B. Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy (2019 – 2022)

In 2014, Sweden was the first country to announce a feminist foreign policy [39] based on what it defined as the 'Three Rs'; Rights, Representation and Resources. Swedish Foreign Policy integrates gender with an intersectional perspective.

In 2014, Sweden's government formulated an action plan (which spanned from 2014 – 2022) to implement its feminist foreign policy. The policy focuses on:

- Calling for gender equity, fighting discrimination and combatting all forms of physical, psychological and sexual violence

- Promoting the importance of women's participation in conflict resolution and prevention and in peace building negotiations
- Securing women's sexual and reproductive health and rights
- Giving men a major share of the responsibility in achieving gender equality
- Protecting women human rights defenders
- Promoting gender equality in the political parties of developing countries [39]

Methodology

So far, we have closely examined the situation of women and girls, including minority groups in Lebanon, along with the aid pledged to the country [1] before August 2020, and [2] after the Beirut Port Explosion. We have also discussed the specific recommendations put forth by the Feminist Platform and the 3RF and drawn upon [1] similar crises where the recommendations that were put forth fell short of achieving gender responsive and women inclusive recovery efforts, and [2] foreign policies that can inform our next steps.

It is quite apparent that developing a concrete and realistic plan to attain women-focused goals is vital. In addition to the numerous lessons learned in our literature review, SEEDS endeavored to hear from funding agencies involved in Lebanon's programmatic scene along with feminist experts and other stakeholders who could shed light on existing problems, especially those that are context-specific, and who could propose tangible and practical recommendations that can ensure women are included in decision making processes and that their specific needs are fulfilled throughout the recovery programs.

In order to gather the data, we conducted a mixed-method research study throughout March, April and May 2022.

Our approach was feminist and participatory where the investigator, SEEDS, is a women-led civil society organization based in Beirut that was directly affected by the Beirut Port Explosion; and where the donor agency, WPHF – UN Women, primarily targets women and girls and is a key player in the recovery response.

A. Participants

The study targeted four groups, for a total of 35 participants:

- 20 Donors
 - Donors involved in to the recovery response in Beirut
 - Donors who have a public commitment to feminist and inclusive aid
 - Donors who sit on the Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF)
- 8 Feminist Experts
- 4 3RF members
- 3 Experts on aid and accountability

B. Study Variables

A customized data collection tool was developed for each of the chosen groups. The tools, available in Annex A of this report, covered the following main topics:

- The share of funds that targeted women following the Beirut Port Explosion
- The share of funds that targeted minority women
- The share of funds that were directed to feminist or women-led organizations
- The participation of women in decision-making and project planning
- The extent to which the recommendations of the Feminist Charter of Demands and the 3RF have been taken into account in the recovery efforts
- Challenges to achieving gender responsiveness and women inclusivity in aid
- Insights with regards to collaboration among donors, among CSOs, between donors and CSOs, and with the Lebanese government
- Best practice guidelines for accountable aid

C. Data Collection, Management and Analysis

Prospective participants were invited to take part in the study via e-mail. Most participants agreed to a semi-structured interview that was conducted over Zoom and generally lasted around 45-60 minutes. However, many sent all or some of their answers via email. Each participant was asked to sign an informed consent form that explained the purpose of the study, ensured the confidentiality of the shared information unless and until they agreed to its publication, and guaranteed their right to withdraw from the research at any time.

The interviews were then transcribed. The transcripts, together with the written responses sent by email, were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

D. Limitations

It is noteworthy that, despite the initial difficulty in reaching the participants, especially donor agencies, we eventually managed to achieve a response rate of 85%. This points to the stakeholders' interest in discussing gender issues and how to ensure that the recovery response is more gender aware.

We also recognize that our sample size may be rather small; however, the study reached saturation towards the 15 interview mark and generated very little new data after this point, especially in regard to the answers provided by donors. This is a strong indication that our sample is quite representative of the recovery scene in Beirut.

Finally, this study may have resulted in the creation of limited data that reflects the views of implementing organizations or that directly sheds light on the opinions of the women and girls who have benefited (or not) from recovery efforts. However, we have opted to primarily target donor agencies, along with experts, as they are playing a major role in shaping the financing of recovery programs. We have also filmed a vox pop video in parallel with this study, in which we visited the Karantina, Bourj Hammoud, Mar Mikhael and Gemmayze neighborhoods. While there, we talked to a sample of women who were directly affected by the blast.

To further the impact of this report, it might be plausible to conduct a follow up study with the stakeholders that were not covered here.



Results

A. Absence of a Gendered Agenda

Did the recovery response adopt a gendered agenda that ensures gender responsiveness and women-inclusivity?

1. Gender in the Recovery Response

Most participants believed that the response was not gendered enough, highlighting how the needs of women and girls were seldom a priority.

“To be honest, I felt that the response was rather timid [...]. It wasn’t enough”. HAYAT MIRSHAD. Executive Director. FE-MALE.

“Aid was always scarce. [...] There was no clear focus on the needs of women and girls. The big funds were directed elsewhere”. JOELLE ABOU FARHAT. Co-founder and President. Fiftyfifty.

DAYNA ASH, Executive Director. Haven for Artists, highlighted the work of small organizations in contrast with the government’s lack of awareness with regard to gender inequalities: *“I think many organizations and small grassroots initiatives focused on marginalized communities and access to hygiene and menstruation products for women who are hard to come by and whose prices were rising. I believe the response of the government when it came to the financial crisis highlighted the lack of awareness of gender inequalities and access to products within the market. For instance, men’s razor blades for shaving were regulated yet menstrual products were left at exorbitant prices”.*

“Yes. Of course. it was gender inclusive. There was no differentiation. No one had the time to discriminate or exclude women in the first place”. ASMA ZEIN. Advisory Board. Lebanese League for Women in Business.

“It always comes down to implementation. So, for example, when they launched the B5 fund, of course, they integrated a gender perspective within the document and committed to trying to reach women. But were they actually able to reach a large number of women? The applications

submitted as reported by Kafalat showed that only 33% of the applications received were submitted by female owners.” ROULA MIKHAEL. Founder and Executive Director. Maharat Foundation.

In particular, feminist experts stressed fact that, in their opinion, without a clear transformative and gender inclusive agenda, aid is seldom accountable when it comes to gender responsiveness and women inclusivity.

“There is a serious issue [...]. When the donor is not sincere about having a transformative agenda, it becomes all about ticking boxes and completing a log frame; it is not clear how we are causing change and how we are being accountable to women”. LINA ABOU HABIB. Director of The Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship. AUB.

“While gender is one of the main pillars in humanitarian response, it is not prioritized in emergency response plans equally as livelihood, wash and other sectors... We strived to make it a core priority mainstreamed across”. MOHAMAD MANSOUR. Deputy Director. ABAAD.

2. Gender in the 3RF

60% of the donors who participated in the study stated that they are members of the 3RF.

According to some donors, the 3RF failed to clearly tackle gender and women’s rights. However, others insisted that the framework is on the right path when it comes to gender despite it being a challenge to address.

“The World Bank, EU, and the UN are leading on the implementation of the 3RF process which was drafted with a gender lens. The 3RF third pillar covers needs and interests of women to ensure an inclusive recovery” ROULA W. ABBAS. Programme Manager. Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon

“UN Women was the chair of the social cohesion and inclusion and gender sector and the whole point was to work on making the 3RF response inclusive response. So, basically, when we drafted the 3RF on October 2020, we circulated it to sectoral gender experts across UN agencies, NGOs, and INGOs – all of whom are members of the Gender Working Group in Lebanon- to ensure that each of the 16 sectors were covered and gender was integrated. Each gender expert reviewed their sector, sent feedback to the sector lead, with added gender data and more gender related interventions. UN Women also produced 4 internal briefs that showed the main gender issues that could be highlighted and put in the 3RF. So, that part – I would say, was overall positive. The challenge was in the editorial process of all of the sectoral plans. In November, it was decided that the original 200 pages plan, needed to be seriously sliced down to around 50 pages. And unfortunately, at that stage, a lot of the good gender work that had been done on the plan was removed. It may seem like a small thing- but if we don’t be gender on paper, in the plan – then it’s harder to keep gender on the donor agenda, and address gender equality in the field.”
CLAIRE WILSON. Gender and Humanitarian Specialist. UN Women Lebanon

While 3RF members recognized that gender was mentioned in the 3RF’s design, most thought that this does not mean that the framework can be seen as entirely gender sensitive.

“I wouldn’t qualify it as a gender-sensitive or gender-aware. The jargon is there, true, but it feels that it is there to tick the right boxes rather than it engages with intersectional and gender dimensions of policymaking”
Dr. MONA HARB. Professor and Research Lead. Beirut Urban Lab. American University of Beirut

“The 3RF was not gender balanced and nothing is surprising in it, as usual. Same goes for the Lebanon Response Plan (LCRP). It’s disappointing, and not okay. Womens rights cannot wait. It is Enough!”
PETRONILLE GEARA. National Program Officer. Gender Specialist. SIDA

3. Misconception and Perceptions About Gender that May Hinder Gender Equality

Donors mentioned that many equate gender equality with GBV and that it is quite hard to include minority women, especially LBQT women, when allocating funds.
(CLAIRE WILSON. Gender and Humanitarian Specialist. UN Women Lebanon; NAJAT ROCHDI. Resident and Humanitarian coordinator for Lebanon. UN).

“Donors mentioned that many equate gender equality with GBV. In the context of the Syrian displacement crisis many stakeholders equate gender equality with activities to prevent and respond to GBV. Yet, this is not the same as having an integrated gender approach. Gender analysis, mainstreaming and equity need to be thought in along all activities in a project, including in HR and internal capacity.”
KATRINE PLESNER. Senior Advisor. Danish Embassy

Experts also highlighted the rather superficial understanding of gender as “targeting men and women” that they say was prevalent among a number of stakeholders. This understanding excludes other gender identities and ignores the fact that gender power inequities have a drastic impact and create specific needs.
(LINA ABOU HABIB. Director of The Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship. AUB)

Notably, some participants were skeptical about the need to engender all agendas and pushed back on the need to look at, for example, the livelihoods of 2 million people who are food insecure, or at anti-corruption efforts through a gender lens.

4. Women in Decision Making Processes

70% of donors confirmed the engagement of women in decision-making at both the donor and implementing organization levels (14/20). 55% (11/20) of donors stated that at least 50% of their staff are women.

“We do not say that women are oppressed or that men are oppressed. We say that we need to have gender equality and gender balance according to merit and qualification. Not with positive discrimination”.
ASMA ZEIN. Advisory Board. Lebanese League for Women in Business.

“We are 50 50. In my team, I have 25 people of whom 13 out of 25 are women colleagues. So, we walk the talk”.
REIN NIELAND. Head of Cooperation. EU Delegation to Lebanon.

“In Lebanon, our country director and deputy country director (my supervisor) were male. I was the highest female manager. I am heading the program. So in a way, yes, I am involved in the decision making. But I don’t know if my participation itself is a good indicator” - Title:
KAORI URA Head of Program. World Food Program

On the other hand, the majority of feminist experts had the impression that this was not the case especially since, from their working on the ground, it was apparent that the specific needs of women were not taken into account.

“In my opinion, women are totally absent from decision-making positions. The fact that razor blades were chosen among the items to be sponsored and sanitary pads were not is very telling. It indicates how men are taken as the norm ... It also shows the disconnect between the prevalent discourse on gender justice and the action or in-action... There is a huge disconnect. We don’t feature. We are sidelined from any decision-making body. Where and when our opinions are taken into consideration?”
MYRIAM SFEIR. Director. Arab Institute for Women (AiW).

Others thought that we’re on the right path:

“Women and women’s organizations are part of the consultative body that is monitoring the 3RF and its implementation. They ensure a gender perspective is integrated into the efforts carried out under the 3RF framework. There will also be accountability over the work done in this regard through the 3RF”.
LARA SAADE. Feminist Coalition Building & Civil Society Specialist. UN Women.

5. The Feminist Platform

All 8 feminist experts that were interviewed deemed the Feminist Platform a worthwhile initiative for one or more of the following reasons:

- It succeeded in gathering 53 women’s rights organizations, defenders and activists to form a powerful feminist civil society
- It managed to reach a consensus around gender issues and priorities despite the different points of view on gender and feminism held by its members
- It formed a lobbying group that could network with donors, advocate for a more efficient support for women’s rights in Lebanon and influence donors’ gender strategies in Lebanon
- It participated in the 3RF and its various task forces and influenced its gender agenda

However, some areas for improvement were identified by the participants. These included pushing for a less bureaucratic process that could speed up decision-making within the platform and increase the impact of its advocacy efforts.

B. The Absence of Reliable Data

Was access to reliable centralized data, including gender disaggregated data, that was useful to strategize post-disaster efforts ensured throughout the recovery response?

Donor	Reported Total	Directed to Women	% Directed to Women	% Directed to Minority Women	% Directed to Women-led	Notes
ACTED						No estimated budget
Danish Embassy	\$22,000,000.00					
Embassy of Japan	\$26,000,000.00	\$969,872.00				Embassy reported spending more than \$26 million; To UN Women \$786,909 (supporting women, protection & economic recovery) & UNFPA: \$182,963 (GBV, sexual & reproductive health, gender awareness and other services)
Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany	€ 14,000,000.00		50%			Equivalent to 14,841,036 USD (Percentage is an estimate)
European Union		€ 150,000.00				30 women received 5000 Euros each = 150 000 Euros reallocated from an ongoing 2.5M Euros (Targeting women in business affected by the blast)
Save the children	\$8,000,000.00		50%			Percentage is of participants not of budget
French Embassy	€ 130,000,000.00					
UNOCHA - LHF + CERF	\$57,000,000.00					Gender specific issues is a main criteria in selection
MEPI - US Embassy			30.00%			An unidentified amount was reallocated to respond to the blast
Swedish Embassy	\$2,300,000.00		50%			\$870,000 for GBV and \$430,000 for protection, gender inclusion and community engagement. No estimates for % directed to women or girls (This is only the Swedish support to the blast and not the Swedish support in general to Lebanon)
UNICEF	\$3,500,000.00					To target around 22,000 women and girls yearly
UN Women	\$2,000,000.00	\$2,000,000.00	100.00%	90.00%	83.00%	
Welthungerhilfe	€ 1,200,000.00		50.00%			Percentage is an estimate
World Food Program	\$40,000,000.00		53.00%			

This table showcases the reported total funds spent by each donor and the reported percentages or total funds that were directed to women. The values shown here are solely based on the data collected during interviews with the donors who participated in our study and have consented to publishing this information.

1. Providing Quantitative Data about Funding for the Recovery Response

The Resident UN Coordinator revealed that 1.8 billion dollars were received in 2021 to cover all aid efforts in Lebanon; these included, but were not limited to, 3RF initiatives. (NAJAT ROCHDI. Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon. UN)

As for funds specifically disbursed to the recovery response, and based only on the data collected through interviews with the donors who participated in our study, that number does not exceed \$400 million.

2. Providing Gender Disaggregated Data and Data on Funds Targeting Minority Women

7/20 donors did not share any gender disaggregated data. Of those that did, the majority gave estimates of the usual percentages of women and girl beneficiaries benefitting from their projects and not of the share of funds, or estimates with regards to one specific project only.

Only 4 donors (20%) shared the budget that was directed specifically to women and girls. However, one of them shared data with regards to one project only.

“I don’t have this information. I mean, I can check with my colleagues. But you know, the problem is that we don’t have a central database, that means that we will have to collect this information from each agency and aggregate it”. NAJAT ROCHDI. Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon. UN

As such, it was difficult to deduce the actual percentage, or total funds, that targeted women and girls.

Only one donor shared that 83% of their programs are designed to support women-led organizations. Another mentioned that one of their partners sub-granted funds to one women-led organization. Participants emphasized the difficulty in accessing information with regards to the 3RF progress in general and with regards to gendered data in particular. Many also stated that the communication of results was rather inefficient.

“We still have not witnessed anything tangible [...]. We stressed on the fact that our work cannot be efficient and meaningful without access to information. We should not be investing personal effort and time to research basic information. We are only asking for the minimum”. ROULA MIKHAEL. Founder and Executive Director. Maharat Foundation

“I would not say the information dissemination and exchange was efficient. It wasn’t. There is a number of information that we can’t reach and up until now there’s a lot of confusion regarding the exchange of information”. Dr. Mona Harb. Professor and Research Lead. Beirut Urban Lab. American University of Beirut

“Outreach cannot be achieved through a document that requires a PhD to be able to analyze it. Outreach can only be achieved through a simple communication. This also applies to funding opportunities”. ROULA MIKHAEL. Founder and Executive Director. Maharat Foundation

“You will not find the disaggregated data, as this is still work in progress”. REIN NIELAND. Head of Cooperation. EU Delegation to Lebanon.

One donor highlighted the fact that donors can only report what they are provided with by implementing partners. Major challenges to donors being able to report gender disaggregated data include: the lack of access to sex-disaggregated data in partners’ reports, the general poor access to data at the governmental level due to lack of awareness, commitment or capacities in monitoring and evaluation.

3. Transparency and Access to Gender Disaggregated Data

Experts highlighted the importance of disclosing data. They also emphasized that transparency and timely access to information is a key requirement to ensure any degree of accountability.

“We know what we need to do. And we being everybody, whether it’s international organizations, local organizations, the government, whoever, and it just, we have the tools to be able to do it. It’s disclosing the amounts that are coming in and publishing financial reports on a regular basis, providing in-depth progress reports. [...]. what was spent on materials, what was spent on staff needs to be a little bit more developed than what we currently have”. BACHIR AYOUB. Deputy Country Director – Programmes. OXFAM.

“Only when there is transparency can a citizen hold those in charge accountable and question them about the programs and the results, and evaluate their performance: did they meet the real needs and reflect the actual demands of the people? Were they effective? Did they employ tools and resources in the best way possible to achieve the best result? Thus, accountability can lead to positive results and can reveal whether the performance was good, average or bad”. ANDRE SLEIMAN. Governance and Public Policy Expert. Democracy Reporting International Country Representative in Lebanon.

“It would be ideal for progress reports to start being published on a regular basis. We don’t want to receive a report on the success stories of the Beirut blast 10 years from now, because

it'd be really difficult for us to properly assess the impact of the engagement. It definitely needs to be very accessible to all communities to all individuals for people to read in English, Arabic, French, Armenian and if there's any other languages, that for other communities that are impacted, you have to be as inclusive as possible because they need to be fully informed of what's going on. And the second thing for me where I've seen where it's worked well is if it's happening on a fairly regular basis, it creates greater trust. And, if there is a lack of trust, then it's really difficult for accountability systems to thrive". **BACHIR AYOUB. Deputy Country Director – Programmes. OXFAM**

However, as some of the donors stated, and perhaps more through small scale initiatives by local organizations, women and girls may have eventually partially benefited from the recovery efforts. In addition, the scarcity of the data or, at the very least, the difficulty in accessing said data, may reveal that the needs of women and girls, especially minority women, were not prioritized during the recovery response, even when women were involved in decision-making, at least at the donor level. Given the problems in accessing data, it is difficult to draw conclusions.

C. Inability to Efficiently Measure the Impact

Was the recovery response accountable to women and girls? Did it manage to measure impact in a way that is focused on responding to gender-based needs and on the inclusion of women in key decision-making areas?

1. Monitoring and Evaluation

Donors referred to the fact that many key players were unwilling to conduct monitoring and evaluation, perhaps due to the fact the importance of the practice is not fully understood.

"I think that for a lot of people, this is still being seen as extra work that you have to do because it's a requirement. And the idea behind it is not fully understood in the sense that you will have to generate trust in both sides towards the population, but also towards donors that they continue to fund programs like this. So personally, I think this

still is a bit of neglected topic, it should be stressed further, and not just like, here, you have now this because it's mandatory". **COLIN WEISSHAR. Junior Expert Project Administration. Welthungerhilfe.**

On the other hand, experts underscored the necessity of monitoring and evaluation for every project. While it is understood that monitoring and evaluation may be challenging and that there may be a shortage of resources with regard to collecting all the essential data, it remains an undeniable and vital process, without which there is no accountability.

"If you don't measure it, you haven't done it [...]. If they cannot measure the gender aspect of what they're doing, they're not doing gender [...]. They may tell you it is too expensive. You have to give and take on the specific thing. Maybe they're right. Maybe it's too difficult. But, maybe not. Maybe they're just lousy and mismanaged so you have to approach it from a constructive perspective. This is really important you know, this part of the project; if we don't measure it, we don't know if we've done it. This is very challenging. We know it's difficult and so maybe you need to put more resources to achieve that part of the goal". **ISHAC DIWAN. Director of Research. Finance for Development Lab. Paris School of Economics**

2. Evaluating the Ability to Induce Change

While it is important to monitor compliance and financial accountability, experts argued that it is more important to monitor the impact of the project.

"Monitoring financial accountability is not a big issue as long as you have the compliant systems in place. And they are. The big issue is how do you monitor accountability to the people. Accountability with regards to impact. If I have a transformative agenda, it is not clear how I can evaluate for it [...]. You don't yet have the tools to look at this level of accountability in terms of impact, what change happened in the lives of people, in terms of qualitative tools, in terms of having the resources to capture that change, the moments of change and the know how [...]. I think it is something that still needs to be developed in order to measure our accountability as to whether we have contributed to gender equality". **LINA ABOU HABIB. Director of The Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship. AUB.**

3. Participatory Approach

The experts emphasized the importance of assessing the specific needs of beneficiaries, engaging them and asking for their feedback throughout the project and shaping all future activities based on that feedback.

"This is very important. At ABAAD, we definitely follow a participatory approach whenever we are designing any project. We ask for the feedback of stakeholders and all those who are receiving the service. This support should come from the assessment. In other words, the service should be something they need; otherwise, it is a waste of resources". **MOHAMAD MANSOUR. Deputy Director. ABAAD.**

"It could also be within the project to support the voice of the beneficiaries in a particular way so that they actually benefit from the services offered by the project [...]. Maybe, if we don't let them participate, we may pick the wrong beneficiaries, we may fail to provide them with the right service or with a high-quality service". **ISHAC DIWAN. Director of Research. Finance for Development Lab. Paris School of Economics**

"If there's no local engagement, and if there's no local consultations, and there's no up-to-date studies on the potential impact on the communities that need to be most supported when you're in a recovery phase, you're most likely going to result in wasted resources, because the amounts that are allocated won't serve the purpose that you're expecting them to". **BACHIR AYOUB. Deputy Country Director – Programmes. OXFAM**

4. Gender Accountability

The experts also mentioned the need to develop accountability mechanisms with women and girls and to include them in all phases to ensure that their needs are truly met.

"Everything in Lebanon is set up in such a structural and systematic way that is at a disadvantage for women and girls, that you can only imagine that when you're entering into an immediate post recovery phase, communities that have already been marginalized and, it'll increase. We've already seen this happen after the Beirut blast. So, accountability mechanisms need to be in place, and they need to be accessible specifically to women, girls, and basically all individuals in the recovery phase, because

a lot of the planning that will be conducted won't necessarily include their voices. They're not engaged in the planning and the design and monitoring of the implementation, there's a pretty good chance that the end result will also be not in their favor". **BACHIR AYOUB. Deputy Country Director – Programmes. OXFAM**

"First, any aid strategy should have an emphasis on gender and marginalized groups. Then, funding should match this already existing emphasis. Later on, this should also be stressed on in the conditions for awarding grants. In other words, an NGO receiving a fund should answer to a specific gender indicator in procurement, recruitment and other sectors". **ANDRE SLEIMAN. Governance and Public Policy Expert. Democracy Reporting International Country Representative in Lebanon**

5. Best Practice Guidelines

Finally, the experts mentioned the importance of developing and adopting best practice guidelines.

"I think we should build on lessons learned and develop a kind of a protocol that can be implemented anywhere whenever a crisis occurs. The standard approach of this protocol should specifically target gender, youths, marginalized or vulnerable groups with specific indicators. I also think there should be one data sharing database system to better monitor what is being spent in Lebanon and in other countries as well". **ANDRE SLEIMAN. Governance and Public Policy Expert. Democracy Reporting International Country Representative in Lebanon**

D. Weak Coordination Mechanisms

Were the ongoing coordination efforts successful in reaching all affected women and avoiding duplication?

1. On Coordination Among NGOs

Participants shed light on the lack of coordination among NGOs and how this negatively impacted the quality of the services provided, fostering chaos and duplication.

“We should improve our coordination among the donors and this is not always the case but we are also guilty I mean because every donor is doing what he wants and is not always coordinating with the other countries”.

NOÉMIE ATTIA. Political Advisor. French Embassy

“At the moment, we don't have the kind of integrated assessment of needs and clear response architecture to ensure that we're reaching all of those people in need”

MARTHA WILKES. Program Development & Quality Director. Save the Children

“I believe that there was a lot of chaos in that there were many organizations that used or directly benefited from the blast itself due to the large number of donations and support that came flooding and I believe that although some tried, many closed off and didn't collaborate as openly. It could've been much better had every sector grouped or more coalitions been formed”.

DAYNA ASH, Executive Director. Haven for Artists

E. Dilemmas of Engaging with the Government

How are participants navigating the relationship with the government? In what way is the government's inefficiency impacting their work?

1. Collaborating with the Government

Only 35% of donors (7/20) shared that they trust the Lebanese government or that they would work with it.

“I know it's not very diplomatic to say it but we are not working anymore with any institution, we are not giving money to ministries we are just working with NGOs”.

NOÉMIE ATTIA. Political Advisor. French Embassy

When it comes to Feminist experts, 62.5% of (5/8) considered the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) to be politically biased and expressed their unwillingness to cooperate with it.

Only 3 out of 8 stated that they currently collaborate with NCLW.

“The National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) an official institution that tackles women's rights, has a strategy and networks with civil society organizations to develop action plans or at the level of the law. So, yes. As KAFA, we collaborate with NCLW”.

FATEN ABOU CHACRA. Advocacy Manager. KAFA (Enough) Violence and Exploitation

“I don't know if there was any coordination or collaboration. But I do know that, during meetings, platform members clearly rejected the possibility of having NCLW join. They wanted to platform to continue to represent the independent civil society organizations.”

HAYAT MIRSHAD. Executive Director. FE-MALE.

While some 3RF members believe that coordinating with the government is a necessary evil, others saw it as one of the priority goals of the framework.

“Anything that is executed by the 3RF is approved by the government. But they don't receive the funds. No funds are given to the government [...]. We have sent the required TORs for their approval since the end of January. Now, in April, we still haven't heard back”.

ASMA ZEIN. President. Lebanese League for Women in Business.

“The civil society is one of the backbones of Lebanon in many respects. We have seen it in response to the blast. Reinforcing the dialogue between the government and civil society and building trust, promotes the coordination of reform and recovery efforts. This is one of the reasons why we have put in place the 3RF partnership, proposing a new organizational model on how to collectively make some progress in this country”.

REIN NIELAND. Head of Cooperation. EU Delegation to Lebanon.

Finally, experts on aid and accountability highlighted the need to collaborate with the government despite its ineffectiveness.

“The main takeaway that I had was one of the aid effectiveness principles is to ensure alignment with government planning in all of the interventions that are made, so any amount that's coming to Lebanon for any form of support, whether it's humanitarian or development needs to be linked to some form of government planning. And obviously, that wasn't always the case. Because either there was no planning or it was to respond to an immediate emergency, like the July war”.

BACHIR AYOUB. Deputy Country Director – Programmes. OXFAM

“It's impossible to ensure proper accountability and effectiveness if you exclude the government, regardless of what your opinion is of them. They're still there. They're the legal entity that you have to engage with”.

BACHIR AYOUB. Deputy Country Director – Programmes. OXFAM.

2. Challenges Due to Governmental Inefficiency

Some participants expressed their frustration with the current situation in Lebanon where government ministries and agencies cannot be relied upon for better accountability, and stated that UN coordination agencies should increase their efforts in that regard.

Additionally, the scarcity of official data in Lebanon was identified as a main factor that impeded proper accountability.

“The main issue in Lebanon, for me, in targeting the right people is that there are no relevant figures assessing the vulnerability of the Lebanese population or the Syrians or, the Palestinians because everything is very politicized. And we have some big issue, for example, with getting this kind of correct figures through MOSA or other ministries. So, what is difficult is to be sure that yes, the good help is, is going to the relevant population. So, now, we are working more with NGOs but since there's no reliable data in Lebanon, I think this is not perfect and I'm sure that unfortunately we are forgetting some people or some vulnerable lives and that's why we also come very much and the UN for example we are trying to assess the vulnerability of the population throughout the country”.

NOÉMIE ATTIA. Political Advisor. French Embassy

“There are 2 things here. (1) difficulty in accessing information and (2) difficulty in understanding information. There is no proactive disclosure. And when someone wants to request certain data, they need to be experts, they need to know how to submit an official letter instead of simply accessing the information on a website and downloading it [...]. This is all to lead people to lose hope [...]. And then, let us say we actually accessed the information. It will most probably be written in a technical language in a way that we don't understand what's going on”.

ANDRE SLEIMAN. Governance and Public Policy Expert. Democracy Reporting International Country Representative in Lebanon.

Finally, experts on aid and accountability also shed light on the government's micromanagement and interference regarding all incoming aid, which results in delays. (ISHAC DIWAN. Director of Research. Finance for Development Lab. Paris School of Economics)

3. Challenges that NGOs are Facing, Especially in the Absence of an Effective Government

a. Higher Expectations
Experts underlined the high expectations found among NGOs and the increased pressure to perform tasks and take on some of the government's responsibilities.

“There is a total absence of the state, in all its agencies and capacities. Sometimes we forget that we cannot do everything. We need to know the government is there and that we can rely on a certain system for support. Unfortunately, this doesn't exist. Thus, the pressure is increasing, the expectations from NGOs are increasing. We are carrying a big burden”.

HAYAT MIRSHAD. Executive Director. FE-MALE.

b. Inflexible funding requirements
In addition to the shortage of funds directed to answer women's needs and assigned to women-led organizations, experts spoke about the lack of core funding and the lack of flexible funds as major obstacles to impactful and sustainable gender responsive and women inclusive aid. (HAYAT MIRSHAD. Executive Director. FE-MALE.)

c. Burnout
The pressure and the fact that many NGOs took on responsibilities that they would not have done so had the government been effective led many NGO staff to feel exhausted and burnt out.

“I have to admit, we are very tired and drained. We are working on so many projects that have deliverables that ought to be met. I just worry about finalizing those funded project and finishing the day to day responsibilities that make up part of my work at AiW. This is my priority, I cannot step outside of it. I do not have the luxury or the resources”.

MYRIAM SFEIR. Director. Arab Institute for Women (AiW).

Discussion: A Dyadic Relationship

There is no doubt that the Beirut Port Explosion, as well as the country's various preceding and parallel crises, have impacted all those living in Lebanon, and in particular, those in Beirut.

Furthermore, the lack of transparency and access to data, proper accountability mechanisms, effective impact evaluation and adequate coordination processes certainly affects all those concerned in the recovery response.

However, in a context where women and girls, and especially minority women, suffer from existing and longstanding injustices, the repercussions that befall them, in the aftermaths of crises or as a result of suboptimal or inefficient aid, are even more severe.

Additionally, in the absence of the rule of law and in the shadow of an inefficient and oppressive government, the burden intensifies.

With inefficient governance, the risk of man-made disasters increases while the ability to meet the needs of citizens and residents, especially in the aftermath of a tragedy, decreases.

In turn, the weight of the recovery response falls on civil society groups, donor agencies and even private sector institutions.

With the absence of strong, competent government institutions, the capacity of the government to oversee the proper disbursement of funds and to ensure accountability to the people is compromised. In turn, accountability in terms of aid is left to donors and implementing organizations.

At the same time, rampant corruption at the national level and a lack of oversight on aid efforts may foster mismanagement of funds or, to the very least, a certain disregard for accountability.

Moreover, structural discrimination against, and the exclusion of, women may also hinder the adoption of a gendered agenda

in the recovery response and of genuinely gender responsive and women inclusive funding.

These are some examples that reveal how the absence of an efficient government has both fostered and exacerbated the injustices that women face every day, and has resulted in a gender blind and inefficient recovery response in the aftermath of the Beirut Port Explosion.

Recommendations for Gender Responsive and Women Inclusive Aid

In conclusion, based on our study, the following tangible recommendations for a more gender responsive and women inclusive recovery efforts in Lebanon are offered.

We also note that these recommendations are valid at every stage of the aid process; they can be applicable to donor agencies, to implementing organizations and to government institutions.

Ideally, all stakeholders would join their efforts to ensure that the ongoing recovery response⁽⁴⁾ is accountable both in a broader sense and from a gender perspective in particular. However, we realize that the likelihood of a strong, collaborative effort occurring is rather improbable, especially in the absence of an effective government in Lebanon. Our recommendations are thus developed to specifically respond to the needs that arose from this reality.

I. Inclusionary Recommendations

In the shadow of an inefficient state and prolonged structural discrimination, it is essential for women from civil society, academia, business, legal advocacy, etc., to mobilize together in order to push for more gender responsive and women inclusive aid.

1. Eradicate Structural Discrimination

- a. Identify laws and practices that perpetuate discrimination against women, or that fail to protect them and ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the laws in question
- b. Prioritize and highlight the laws that require amendment
- c. Propose and lobby for amendments to these laws and practices, including the lifting of reservations on CEDAW

d. Identify cultural norms that foster injustices and discrimination against women

e. Advocate for social change via awareness raising, capacity building and other activities

2. Fight Corruption and Advocate for Accountability at the National Level

- a. Push for the implementation of laws that criminalize corruption and hold corrupt officials accountable
- b. Advocate for improved documentation and access to information, especially in areas affected by the blast
- c. Mobilize against corruption through capacity building, raising awareness, protesting and more

3. Advocate for Justice at the National Level

- a. Push for the adoption of a gendered agenda throughout governmental institutions
- b. Push for gender responsive and women inclusive aid

4. Mobilize with Stakeholders to Prioritize Gender in any Recovery Effort

- a. Partner with stakeholders from the private, public and civil society sectors to push for prioritizing a gendered approach across recovery efforts
- b. Create and expand safe spaces for all women to ensure their inclusion

4. As of June 2022

II. Programmatic Recommendations

In parallel, civil society groups, implementing organizations and donors alike may adopt these programmatic recommendations in order to ensure that their own response is gender responsive and women inclusive.

1. Adopt Gendered Internal Policies

- a. Clearly define gender and gender-specific needs
- b. Adopt an intersectional gendered perspective throughout all programs
- c. Adopt a 50% women's quota within their teams
- d. Ensure that at least 50% of all project beneficiaries are women or girls
- e. Ensure that minority women such as LBQT women, refugees, migrants, stateless women, women with disabilities, etc. are fairly represented and gain a just share of the funds or services provided
- f. Develop and implement internal policies and procedures that protect against the mismanagement of funds and guarantee the inclusion and fair treatment of women. These policies shall include, in addition to a policy that ensures gender responsive programming:
 1. Financial Policies and Procedures
 2. Code of Conduct
 3. Anti-Corruption, Bribery and Money-Laundering Policy
 4. Policy Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

2. Implement Gender Sensitive Monitoring and Evaluation

- a. Develop and implement monitoring and evaluation tools that track your gender strategy
- b. Conduct a gender analysis, as well as a needs assessment with the targeted beneficiaries before the implementation of any project
- c. Involve beneficiaries and/or community members at the planning, implementation and evaluation stages of the project and conduct gender sensitive outreach

- d. Conduct at least one evaluation with beneficiaries at the end of the project to assess for progress, impact or the need for improvement
- e. Seek/provide funding to conduct the pre and post assessments and for the ongoing involvement of beneficiaries
- f. Offer regular training programs to project managers and officers on feminist programming, gender analysis and gender sensitive outreach
- g. Raise awareness on the importance and need for a clear monitoring and evaluation system
- h. Seek/provide funding to design and implement a monitoring and evaluation plan
- i. Set realistic indicators to assess for programmatic and financial progress in addition to measuring impact across all activities. These shall include gender disaggregated data as well as disaggregation by age and minority status
- j. Create realistic means by which to gather the necessary data to measure for progress, as well as measuring impact
- k. Conduct/require a gender analysis in the design and evaluation phase of each new initiative

3. Ensure Transparency, Access to Data and Accountability

- a. Publish financial and programmatic reports on at least a quarterly basis
There is no need to divulge specific data on individual salaries. Instead, the total quarterly amount spent on salaries should be published
- b. Publish gender disaggregated data on at least a quarterly basis
There is no need to divulge any data about beneficiaries that might lead to their identification, such as their names
- c. Ensure that the published data is disaggregated by minority status whenever possible
Take into account the potential security risks of publishing data about the beneficiaries' minority status, especially

if they include criminalized groups. Make sure anonymity and confidentiality are respected and safeguarded as a rule.

- d. Provide easily-accessible and straightforward data without any jargon
- e. Clearly define whether the reported percentages reflect the funds disbursed to women, the number of women who have benefitted from the programs, or the number of activities that targeted women
- f. Seek/provide funding to communicate results on your organization's website and/or your social media accounts
- g. Launch a centralized platform that showcases gender disaggregated data on all aid programs in Lebanon, as well as other relevant data
- h. Ensure that new funding opportunities are easily-accessible to the public. Opportunities should be shared through all available means to reach all concerned stakeholders. The language of the call and the application process should be simple, without any jargon or complex requirements.
- i. Ensure that newly offered services are easily accessible to the public. The availability of the services should be shared through all available means to reach all those who might need them. The language of any advertisement or details about the offered services should be simple, without any jargon or complex requirements.
- j. Conduct more in-depth research on aid accountability and gender in the recovery response in various contexts and develop best practice guidelines.

4. Devise an Effective Coordination Plan

- a. Foster networking efforts among donors, among NGOs, and between donors and NGOs
- b. Develop clear TORs for networking and coordination platforms with explicit objectives and a clear division of roles
- c. Adopt a clear and intersectional gendered perspective along with gender responsive and women-inclusive policies across all platforms

A clear definition of gender and gender-specific needs as well as a clear understanding of the impact of gendered power inequities is also recommended.

- d. Develop concrete evaluation mechanisms to allow for a quarterly assessment of these platforms, of any progress made, and any areas for improvement
- e. Ensure that the objectives set forth by these platforms are intertwined with those of the member institutions and that the time and efforts of representatives are acknowledged and compensated, either through direct funding for networks and task forces, or through institutional funding
- f. Join efforts to lobby for a better integration of gender in aid initiatives and for a more customized, and therefore more effective, system of funding



Next Steps

This study is only a first step towards achieving gender responsive and women inclusive aid.

As part of this project, and in addition to this report, SEEDS is launching a media campaign that will include and highlight all the data gathered throughout this study, including information that could not be included in this report.

Furthermore, SEEDS will commit to support 5 organizations and assist in the development of their own gender responsive and women inclusive internal policies by the end of July 2022.

In addition, and with the aim to implement the recommendations formulated above and to build on what has been achieved, a number of goals and initiatives can be considered in the near future:

- a. Continue to track the recovery response and the disbursement of funds and build on these efforts
- b. Push for keeping the blast and its victims as a priority, especially given the shifts in funding priorities and donor interests (moving to other contexts and disasters)
- c. Continue to engage with women and girls who were directly affected by the blast and hear their voices in order to complement this study report
- d. Build multi-stakeholder partnerships with women from the public, private and non-profit sectors
- e. Conduct similar studies to assess whether the recovery response, or aid to Lebanon in general, is inclusive and responsive to the needs of other marginalized groups
- f. Push for effective networking efforts among NGOs and donors

g. Launch a centralized platform for gender disaggregated data on all aid programs in Lebanon

h. Document gender-inclusive pilot projects so they can be replicated elsewhere

i. Conduct more in-depth research on the impact of an ineffective government on accountability in aid, especially with regards to gender

j. Launch a crisis management unit to devise a gendered contingency plan and implement it in response to catastrophes, should they occur



Annex A – Tools

Tool 1 – Experts on Aid Accountability

1. What are examples of successful experiences where aid was accountable to people?
2. In the absence of an effective government, how can aid transparency, in a post disaster context, be ensured?

In what ways can local indigenous voices enhance aid accountability?

3. What are best practice guidelines to ensure the accountability of aid received by state institutions? (Especially after the explosion)
4. What are best practice guidelines for the accountability of aid received by CSOs? (Especially after the explosion)
5. How important is local engagement for aid accountability?
6. How important is transparency for aid accountability?
7. What is the link between aid accountability and the effectiveness of gender responsive recovery efforts?
8. How can aid be more accountable? Do you have any suggestions for us? Did we ask the right questions? Did we miss anything in your opinion?

Tool 2 – Gender Experts

1. Tell us more about yourself. What does your organization specialize in?
2. In what ways did the explosion affect women's rights in Lebanon?
3. Can you please tell us about your experience on the platform?
Why was it important?
What have you done since then?
4. How did you carve out a relationship with donors, if any?
5. And with government institutions including NCLW?
6. What, in your opinion, are the main challenges to women's representation in spaces where aid decisions are being made?
7. What, in your opinion, are the main challenges that your organization faces in meeting the specific needs of women?
8. How can the results of this study be used from the perspective of your organization/ the platform?
9. How can aid be more accountable? Do you have any suggestions for us? Did we ask the right questions? Did we miss anything in your opinion?

Tool 3 – 3RF Members

1. How do you think the explosion impacted women and girls in Lebanon?
2. In what ways is the reform agenda gendered?
3. How are women represented in your group? Not necessarily on 3RF. Their own organizations, the percentage of women on the board, for example
4. What kind of women-inclusion programs are being decided on now for funding? What is influencing these decisions?
5. How does the 3RF see its relationship to government and donors? Does the 3RF give guidelines to the government or not? If so, is the government implementing them? Are they willing to?
6. How are you following up on the implementation and financing of the 3RF? What are the latest updates resulting from this work? How well do you think it's going?
7. How are these goals and strategies being communicated?

8. What, in your opinion, is still missing? What would you like to know more about?
9. How can aid be more accountable? Do you have any suggestions for us? Did we ask the right questions? Did we miss anything in your opinion?

Tool 4 – Donors

1. Tell us more about yourself and your institution. How were you involved in the recovery response in Beirut?
2. In what ways are you involving women in decision-making?
3. What is the estimated budget you allocated to the recovery response?
4. What kind of programs and interventions are you funding (health, education, direct assistance...)?
5. How do you choose your partners (implementing organizations)? Are there specific criteria?
6. How much of the budget goes to women and girls?
Amount, or % of funds that target women and girls
Who are your target beneficiaries?
Amount, or % of funds that target minority groups (elderly, migrant, LBQT, stateless women, women married to non-Lebanese spouses or other marginalized women)
Amount, or % of funds that go to feminist or women-led organizations?
7. How can you align your organization /national policies on gender inclusive aid within the local context?
8. How do you navigate state institutions and legislation that discriminate against women and girls? For example, the Kafala system?
9. Do you sit on the 3 RF? Do you strive to implement the 3RF recommendations?
10. Do you purposefully try to implement the Feminist Platform's recommendations?
11. How can aid be more accountable? Do you have any suggestions for us? Did we ask the right questions? Did we miss anything in your opinion?

Annex B – Study Participants

1. Experts on aid and accountability

- BACHIR AYOUB. Deputy Country Director. Programmes. OXFAM
- ISHAC DIWAN. Director of Research. Finance for Development Lab. Paris School of Economics
- ANDRE SLEIMAN. Governance and Public Policy Expert. Democracy Reporting International Country Representative in Lebanon

2. Feminist Experts

- FATEN ABOU CHACRA. Advocacy Manager. KAFA (Enough) Violence and Exploitation
- JOELLE ABOU FARHAT. Co-founder and President. Fiftyfifty.
- LINA ABOU HABIB. Director of The Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship. AUB
- DAYNA ASH. Executive Director. Haven for Artists.
- MOHAMAD MANSOUR. Deputy Director. ABAAD
- HAYAT MIRSHAD. Executive Director. Fe-Male.
- LARA SAADE. Feminist Coalition Building & Civil Society Specialist. UN Women
- MYRIAM SFEIR. Director. Arab Institute for Women (AiW).

3. 3RF Members

- MONA HARB. Professor and Research Lead. Beirut Urban Lab. American University of Beirut.
- ROULA MIKHAEL. Founder and Executive Director. Maharat Foundation.
- REIN NIELAND. Head of Cooperation. EU Delegation to Lebanon.
- ASMA ZEIN. Advisory Board. Lebanese League for Women in Business.

4. Donors

- ROULA W. ABBAS. Programme Manager. Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon
- NOÉMIE ATTIA. Political Advisor. French Embassy
- MAYA BARHOUCHE. Grants Program Manager. MEPI Office. Embassy of the United States of America
- MOUNA COUZI. Country Operations Officer. World Bank
- PETRONILLE GEARA. National Program Officer. Gender Specialist. SIDA
- FARAH HAMMOUD. Child Protection Officer. UNICEF
- ALEXANDRA IRANI. Social Development Advisor. Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. UK.
- YIANNIS NEOPHYTOU. Development Counselor. Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, Beirut
- MAKI YAMAGUCHI. First Secretary. Embassy of Japan.
- JUDYTA NEDZA. Project Development Manager. ACTED
- KATRINE PLESNER. Senior Advisor. Danish Embassy
- NAJAT ROCHDI. Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon. UN
- ALICE THOMANN. First Secretary - Deputy Head of International Cooperation. Embassy of Switzerland to Lebanon and Syria. Swiss Cooperation Office in Lebanon.
- KAORI URA. Head of Program. World Food Program.
- COLIN WEISSHAR. Junior Expert Project Administration. Welthungerhilfe
- MARTHA WILKES. Program Development & Quality Director. Save the Children
- CLAIRE WILSON. Gender and Humanitarian Specialist. UN Women Lebanon

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