



IN BRIEF

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY



Photo: UN Women/Emad Karim

The Issue

Women's engagement in peace and security is essential to building sustainable peace in Lebanon. On 31 October 2000, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1325 on WPS, recognizing this. The Government of Lebanon recognized this in 2019 with the passage of its first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, setting out a concrete set of commitments and roadmap for action. As the country works to recover from its multiple crises – including the most recent Beirut Blast, the NAP 1325 is a key framework for peace and stability. UN Women is leading UN efforts in Lebanon on ensuring women's engagement in national peace and security deliberations, in partnership with a range of UN, government and civil society partners.

Since the outbreak of the civil war in 1975, Lebanon has experienced armed conflicts, invasions and occupation, and continues to face external and internal insecurities, economic hardships, and political turmoil contributing to increasing volatility and instability. To date, women have largely been excluded from the country's peace and security architecture. For example, women were not engaged in the Ta'if Accords that brought the civil war to an end in 1991 or in subsequent national dialogues and remain underrepresented in national security institutions. Women also make up only 4.6% of the Parliament, the lead decision-making body on issues of peace and security in the country.

Almost 25 years after the formal end of the war, the people of Lebanon continue to find themselves victims of political violence, primarily in the form of localized armed clashes and broader violent conflicts. These disturbances are possible because of the presence of a fertile ground, marked by intercommunal grievances and fear, endemic corruption, and dysfunctional institutions. The presence of large numbers of Syrian refugees in Lebanon has also exacerbated this.

The passage of time has begun to open up new spaces to re-examine the past, to create new visions of governance and to broker new alliances and relations. The October 17, 2019 mass protests accelerated this – bringing people to the street across religious and geographic divides calling for change. The August 4 Beirut blast has further reinforced broad agreement on the need for change.

All of this is taking place against a backdrop of economic crisis, described by experts as the worst in Lebanon's recent history and deepened by the COVID-19 pandemic. The economic crisis, which began to manifest itself in currency depreciation and shortages and inflation prior to October 17, has been deepened by the political crisis, creating a reinforcing cycle of political and economic crisis.

During these unprecedented times in Lebanon, the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and the Lebanon NAP 1325 provide a critical framework to respond to the country's economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. The NAP 1325 prioritizes the

gendered needs of women and girls in times of crisis, pandemics, and conflicts.¹ Its implementation, which covers areas including mediation and dialogue, conflict prevention, the elimination of gender based violence and support to economic crisis response, is critical for peace and stability in Lebanon.

Our Strategy for Change

UN Women Lebanon's Women, Peace and Security work comprises of the following five strands:

- 1. Policy Support and Technical Assistance:** Support to the Government of Lebanon, primarily through the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW), in the implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) 1325, undertaken through a joint programme managed by UN Women, consisting of ESCWA, OHCHR, UNDP, UNFPA, and UNIFIL. Through this, UN Women continues to support the Government of Lebanon with NAP implementation, reporting, and the monitoring and evaluation of progress and results. UN Women also supports NCLW to convene national stakeholders around legal reforms related to the nationality law and civil personal status law. UN Women will also continue its coordination role in the UN Country Team on women, peace and security to ensure a coordinated response to the implementation of UNSCR 1325.
- 2. Analysis and Knowledge:** Regularly producing up to date analysis on the impact of instability on women's rights, and the role women are playing within the broader peace and security context in Lebanon. This has included the production of regular analysis on the role of women in Lebanon's October 2019 protests, and analysis on the impact of Lebanon's 2020 crisis on gender equality.
- 3. Mediation and Dialogue:** Support to increase women's participation in local mediation efforts to decrease community tensions and design and implementation of community early warning and conflict prevention mechanisms, undertaken in collaboration with United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Through this work UN Women has supported the establishment of local women's mediators' groups that lead community-based conflict resolution efforts through leveraging dialogue and understanding as tools for peace. At the same time UN Women is working with women from political parties and women from the October 2019 protest movement to support dialogue and trust building. To complement this work, UN Women will establish a national network of women mediators to exchange experiences and propose inclusive solutions for peacemaking at the national level.
- 4. Reconciliation:** Support to national reconciliation efforts, in collaboration with UNDP and OHCHR. Through a joint UN programme, UN Women is working to collect and document gender crimes from the civil war, and to support women led reconciliation groups to promote spaces for discussion on the past. This work aims to promote a holistic approach to dealing with the past by focusing on addressing conflicts at the individual and structural levels to transform attitudes, beliefs, individual and societal values, and rebuild relations for sustainable peace.
- 5. Protection and Livelihoods Support:** Support to increase the protection of women and girls through the provision of quality multi-sectoral services and awareness raising, linked to livelihoods and cash support. Linked to the implementation of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan, this work is implemented in partnership with national organizations and delivers services to women and girls – Lebanese, Palestinian refugees, domestic workers and host country nationals residing in marginalized pockets of Lebanon. In 2019, 1900 women have been reached through skills trainings and employment opportunities and 1500 women received protection services and trainings. For more on this, see UN Women Lebanon's brief on its work on Women's Economic Empowerment.

¹ For more information on how the NAP 1325 responds to Lebanon's economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, please see: UN Women, The Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Lebanon: A Key Tool for Supporting Recovery from Economic Crisis and the COVID-19 Pandemic in Lebanon, June 2020, available at: <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/07/policy-brief-women-peace-and-security-agenda-in-lebanon>.

Theory of Change

IF an enabling environment for implementation of WPS commitments is created;

IF women participate in decision-making processes related to the prevention, management and resolution of conflict;

and, IF the safety, physical manner and mental health and economic security of women and girls are assured;

their human rights respected, and their specific needs are met in peacebuilding and recovery processes; then Lebanon will be more peaceful and gender equal;

BECAUSE evidence shows that women are drivers of peace and security, inclusive societies are more likely to be stable and post-conflict settings are opportunities to address underlying gender inequality barriers.

Achievements in 2019

- Led support to the government in the development and passage of Lebanon's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (September 2019) and support to the National Commission for Lebanese Women to establish implementation and reporting mechanisms;
- Continued support to women's mediation groups in south Lebanon (in partnership with UNIFIL) and UNRWA-managed Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, who are working to broaden dialogue channels in their communities and identify common priorities for conflict prevention.
- Legal aid to the survivors of the disappeared.

Partnerships for Change

UN: UNDP, UNFPA, ESCWA, UNIFIL, OHCHR, UNSCOL and others.

Government of Lebanon: National Commission for Lebanese Women, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Affairs, Parliament, National Committee for the Missing and Disappeared and municipalities.

Civil society organizations: academia, media, regional and international mediation networks, community leaders, youth and university-based groups, women's rights groups and legal aid and support services organizations.



Photos: UN Women/Emad Karim