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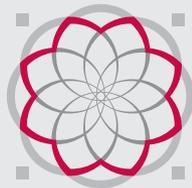
Arab NGO Network for Development
شبكة المنظمات العربية غير الحكومية للتنمية



Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs
معهد عصام فارس للسياسات العامة والشؤون الدولية

On the Way to HLPF 2018





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- The Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) is a regional network, working in 12 Arab countries with nine national networks and 23 NGO members. The Network's work focuses on Social and Economic Rights in the Arab Region. ANND was established in 1997 and its headquarters is located in Beirut, Lebanon since 2000.
- The AUB Policy Institute (Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs) is an independent, research-based, policy-oriented institute. Inaugurated in 2006, the Institute aims to harness, develop, and initiate policy-relevant research in the Arab region. The Institute is committed to expanding and deepening policy-relevant knowledge production in and about the Arab region; and to creating a space for the interdisciplinary exchange of ideas among researchers, civil society and policy-makers.



- This report is an addendum to the first report published in 2017 by ANND and the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs monitoring obstacles and challenges to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Lebanon. While the 2017 report defines all structural challenges in relation to sustainable development goals 1 (End Poverty), 2 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and 10 (Reducing inequalities), this report provides further information on the initiatives taken at national level in 2017 and early 2018 with regard to the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs.

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■ INTRODUCTION

Whereas in 2016, the first year following the adoption of the Agenda 2030 and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, there was no significant progress with regard to implementation of the Agenda in Lebanon, 2017 started off more promising with a number of initiatives towards achieving the SDGs.

First of all, Lebanon initiated a project entitled “SDGs in Lebanon: Analyzing Gaps and Reporting Progress” signed by the Council for Development and Reconstruction and United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The launching of the project by PM Hariri acknowledged the need for an institutional structure dealing with the implementation of the Agenda, by referring to the establishment of the National Committee for SDGs (June 2017) to lead and coordinate national efforts as well as to develop a national database for the SDGs indicators.

The National Committee for SDGs is set to:

- 1)** Integrate the programs, projects and initiatives undertaken by the current Government with the objectives of sustainable development.
- 2)** Raise awareness about the objectives of sustainable development and the importance of achieving the sustainable development goals
- 3)** Develop a national database of indicators of sustainable development goals, to see where Lebanon is, where it should be, and what gaps and obstacles it faces to achieving the goals.
- 4)** Provide periodic voluntary reports to the United Nations

In line with the above, it is important that the National Committee for SDGs remains as the central player for coordination and contributes to ensure that Lebanon adopts a comprehensive and holistic approach to the Agenda and the 17 SDGs.

In addition, particularly given that during the High Level Political Forum 2018, Lebanon will be among the countries presenting its Voluntary National Review report, the National Committee should play a significant role in bringing together key development actors to discuss localization, implementation, evaluation and follow-up. In this regard, following the National Workshop held on 7 December 2017 in Lebanon, the four working groups established within the National Committee (i.e. the planet, people, prosperity, strong institutions and peace) should be active, transparent and should adopt a participatory and inclusive approach to ensure multi-stakeholder engagement.

■ KEY CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR SDGS AND STEPS OF IMPLEMENTATION

National Committee for SDGs acknowledges that the adoption of the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs is an opportunity for putting Lebanon on the path of development and sustainable prosperity. Yet, challenges in its implementation are admitted as well and a set of priorities are put forward to achieve them. These include:

- 1) Preserving political security and social stability, especially in light of Lebanon's hosting of more than a million and a half displaced Syrians and the impact this has had on the development process in Lebanon.
- 2) Funding for the implementation of program initiatives that are part of the sustainable development process.
- 3) Creating a strong and supportive institutional framework.
- 4) Developing a database of reliable national indicators prepared according to international standards.

With respect to the aforementioned priorities www.sdglebanon.com refers to several steps which have already been taken. In this section, while referring to these steps, this addendum will also put forward some critical analysis on the remaining and related challenges:

- **In relation to Goal 8 and Goal 9:** In June 2017, the Cabinet approved the plan of the Ministry of Telecommunications and reduced the prices of the internet and increased its speed, which is presumed to stimulate the facilitation of the business environment especially for small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurs and young people. While access to internet, especially in relation to accessing information, is vital to achieving sustainable development, and while its affordability is an important element in this regard, such initiatives must go hand in hand with others, including by enhancing the role of internet for multi-stakeholder platforms among development actors, and by ensuring data privacy. Accessibility is also an issue of infrastructure, and improvements in and investment in the right telecommunications infrastructure are necessary to increase connectivity and accessibility for all across Lebanon, especially in rural areas. Furthermore, regarding the business environment, Lebanon still lacks a regulatory framework, which includes laws and regulations to organize e-commerce, and the latter must be adopted and effectively implemented to achieve sustainable development. Reliability, whether related to connectivity or electric power supply, is also crucial to the success of e-commerce.
- **In relation to Goal 8 and Goal 9:** Lebanon adopted a large Capital Investment Program (CIP) aiming at addressing the challenges of the Syrian crisis, to develop Lebanon's infrastructure and public services, to stimulate economic growth and restore confidence, and to create jobs. The plan was presented to the donor community at the CEDRE—Conference for Development and Reform with Businesses—conference in Paris in April 2018. The conference pledged billions to support the program that includes projects in eight different sectors: transport, water and irrigation, wastewater, electricity, telecom, solid waste, tourism and cultural heritage, and support to industry. Although investment and infrastructure support is needed in Lebanon, and became critical in light of the Syrian crisis impacts, the CIP cannot be considered an effective and efficient response to the challenges facing Lebanon. Not only does it rely highly on public-private partnerships (PPPs), which is likely to be disguised public debt (public debt-to-GDP stands at 150%), but it is a part of a wider austerity plan pushed by several donors and international institutions. There are concerns that the CIP will be implemented along with other measures, including cuts in pension, as well as public sector servants that will have a detrimental impact on workers and the population in general. Also, there remain several issues of concern including the lack of sustainability impact assessments, lack of national dialogue on the development needs, the role of the private sector when the regulatory role of the state is in question, and the promotion of PPPs and rentier economy sectors at the expense of value added economic sectors. Additional challenges in relation to the CIP are :

1) Infrastructure support and related projects should not be planned only as vehicles for job creation, but also as a comprehensive macro-economic reform process in Lebanon. Furthermore, most of the employment that will be created as a result of the CIP is likely to be precarious, low-skilled and temporary, whereas Lebanon needs to enhance productive sectors that can generate sustainable and decent jobs, ones that are much needed to tackle the high level brain drain, and which consolidate labor supply and demand.

2) Lebanon has previous experiences of infrastructure and reconstruction projects, yet has not witnessed genuine development achievements. Within these projects' implementation, the private sector will play a key role, but Lebanon's experience with private sector involvement in infrastructure projects has been poor in light of the state's weak governance set up and lack of strong state regulations. Safeguards on economic and social rights are vital, together with an accountability framework for the private sector.

3) A World-Bank Strategic Assessment on the projects is present, yet what Lebanon needs is a comprehensive economic feasibility study and an analysis of social returns on investment. Decent job creation and addressing inequalities should be the key indicators of a priori and a posteriori sustainable impact assessments. These assessments should be inclusive and participatory, allowing open and public consultations.

- **In relation to Goal 5:** Lebanon has made important strides towards achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls in Lebanon, be it through the introduction of the Law 293 on domestic violence in 2014, or more recently by the abolishment of Article 522 by the Lebanese government on August 2017³. The abolishment of Article 522, which allowed rapists to marry their victims in order to avoid punishment and prison, marks a significant step forward for women and girls in Lebanon, but there are other discriminatory laws that still exist; i.e. Article 505 and 518. Article 505 involves sex with a minor who is 15 years old and Article 518 involves the seduction of a minor with the promise of marriage. In this regard, while the abolishment of the Article 522 was a clear achievement and outcome of the civil society campaigns in the country, a genuine step forward towards Goal 5 necessitates aiming at eliminating all discriminatory laws, rather than using a case-by-case approach, and at ensuring full adherence to the CEDAW, which Lebanon is party to. This also includes addressing several practices related to economic and social rights to ensure gender equality i.e. in relation to informal labor, taxation, social security, etc.

- **In relation to Goal 16:** The Office of the Minister of State for Women Affairs (OMSWA) was established in February 2017, aiming at empowering women, and combatting violence and extremism. Prior to parliamentary elections (that took place in May 2018), a Diaspora-ID project was launched to allow Lebanese expats to vote and a new law was passed for proportional representation. Nevertheless, the elections witnessed many flaws, with hundreds of violations reported by the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE), including for Diaspora whose personal data was shared with the candidates, without any prior consent. Also as a step towards achieving Goal 16, in May 2018, the Lebanese government designated the members of the Lebanese National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) and the National Prevention Mechanism against torture. Both institutions can play a key role in monitoring Lebanon's compliance to international human rights treaties and the overall promotion and protection of human rights in the country. With regard to the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, these institutions should also play a proactive role, in an independent and unbiased position as watchdog and advisor.

2. These points are retrieved from the speech made by Kulluna Irida at CEDRE conference, full text of the speech is available at <http://www.kulluna-irada.org/2018/04/08/speech-kulluna-irada-at-cedre/>

3. Draft laws on sexual harassment have also been presented, though these are not currently on the government's agenda.

■ THE SYRIAN CRISIS

During 2017, the Syrian crisis continued to remain among the biggest challenges facing Lebanon, having implications on its economy by deepening the ongoing political crisis, closing trade corridors and borders, and negatively influencing the tourism sector. All the latter factors contribute to the slowdown of GDP growth that reached a mere 1.8 percent in 2016. Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri referred⁴ to the situation saying that the country was close to a “breaking point” due to the strains of hosting 1.5 million Syrian refugees, and he feared unrest could spiral from tensions between refugees and Lebanese host communities.

As of April 2018⁵, there are 986,942 registered Syrian refugees, 42.1 percent of them are 18-59 years old, 2.7 percent are 60+ and the remaining 56.2 percent is composed of children under the age of 18. Now going into their 7th year as refugees in Lebanon and surrounding countries, over 5 million Syrians are displaced and their humanitarian needs are huge, as are the funding gaps, in 2017, the funding gap for Lebanon was nearly equal to what had been received (around 1 billion USD).

In this context, SDGs and the Agenda 2030 are considered as an opportunity, and the aforementioned Capital Investment Plan and pledges made by international community aim to address the impact of the Syrian crisis as well. Nevertheless, as previously discussed, immediate humanitarian needs and short-term responses will only provide limited support to the country and to the nearly 1 million registered refugees that it hosts. Addressing long-term structural development needs is crucial and Lebanon, complementing the humanitarian assistance, should focus on the provision of protection, particularly legal protection, for those people in need, whether refugee or host. Accordingly, long-term and sustainable protection measures should be designed; acknowledging the fact that stability and security, sustainable development and refugee protection are interlinked⁶. Residency, mobility, employment and livelihood rights for these vulnerable groups must be addressed as the main concern.

■ TOWARDS ACHIEVING SDGS 1, 8 AND 10

The liberal economic model in Lebanon, which promotes rentier economies of banking, financial services and tourism does not generate sustainable growth, but rather leads to further inequalities. Given the lack of redistribution mechanisms and generation of decent work opportunities, private sector-ruling elite relations with embedded corruption, growth accumulation from these sectors remains in the hands of few and at the expense of productive sectors that can generate jobs. In addition to these, political deadlock/instability and the Syrian crisis hampers growth.

While remaining one of the most indebted countries, Lebanon passed its long awaited budget (pending since 2005) in 2017 and tried to move forward by meeting with the international community and donors, first in the Brussels Conference and later at CEDRE in April 2018, to promote investments and infrastructure support for the country. Yet, as previously discussed, promotion of the CIP has its own flaws and Lebanon needs counter-cyclical monetary and fiscal policies to restore its economy towards inclusive and sustainable growth. This, on the monetary and fiscal levels requires reforms, i.e. lowering the interest rates to the level of GDP growth and tax reforms⁷.

4. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-lebanon/lebanon-near-breaking-point-over-syrian-refugee-crisis-pm-hariri-idUSKBN1722JM>

5. <http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/71>

Tax policies

Taxes in Lebanon can be broadly divided into direct taxes, such as personal income and company taxes, and indirect taxes such as value added tax (VAT) and customs. As the ANND case study on Lebanon⁸ demonstrates, “the continuous need of the state to fund its expenditure and maintain currency stabilization has stripped fiscal policy from its economic function and rendered taxation as a mere extractive measure rather than an instrument for redistribution and encouragement of productive economic activities.” Furthermore taxation policy in Lebanon is discriminatory (i.e. through legislations on the basis of gender and marital status) and with its regressive structure exacerbates inequalities.

During 2017, a new tax law, specifically law 45/2017 was introduced. The law brought changes including the increase of the corporate income tax rate to 17 percent (from 15 percent), the VAT increase by 1 percent to a total of 11 and the transfers of real estate to be subject to a duty of 2 percent of the sales value of the property. Nevertheless, in order for taxation to ensure redistribution in Lebanon, a key tenet to reducing inequalities, as in Goal 10, further steps are needed. The below suggested steps take a comprehensive look at structural problems in Lebanon, addressing informal labor and the lack of universal social protection⁹ :

- Taxing rents: Imposing a progressive rate on rentier income, including on profits from sale of capital assets (such as real estate) as well as a progressive tax on interest income and bank deposits. The rates of these taxes would be high where top marginal rates exceed the existing ones on profit. However, this measure can be constrained by the bank secrecy law ,which does not disclose the size of bank deposits, and thus the interest income earned by each depositor cannot be known. Therefore it would require either lifting bank secrecy laws or leaving a choice to depositors to disclose their accounts and those who do would benefit from a lower tax rate which would favor small depositors. Taxing rents would then finance the social wage and at the same time impose a heavy cost on those activities where investors would have more incentive to channel their investments to productive activities.
- Encouraging productive sectors and formal employment: As social service provisions, including universal health care, would be financed by taxes on rents, the contributions for health and maternity indemnities to the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) would be removed which will reduce labor costs for firms and encourage them to formalize the workers they employ. At the same time firms would be given certain conditional tax incentives to encourage their activities, such as tax cuts and exemptions for certain sectors. This would be in the frame of general economic policies aimed at identifying productive sectors with growth and comparative advantage potential that would be encouraged to grow through low-cost credit and tax cuts (such as technology, green industries, agriculture, etc.).
- Introducing the global income tax: On all income (except rents as specified above since a special tax would be levied) including income from profit of holding companies that would be taxed like other profits from income. Moreover, a restructuring of the different income brackets ought to be done while increasing top marginal rates in line with standards of middle and high income countries. This would also entail removing of a wide range of exemptions especially relating to the sectarian system
- Reforming tax on consumption: This would require two kinds of measures. First, replacing the uniform VAT tax rate with different scales according to products where basic food products would be taxed less than other products. At the same time removing the exemption on luxury items and taxing them with higher rates. Second, there should be efforts to relieve consumers from additional expenses that they incur on their consumption especially those related to electricity, water and transportation. This would imply significant public investment to reform these three sectors without privatizing them to ensure their full and sustainable coverage. Its benefits would not only benefit individual consumers but would also reduce costs on productive sectors (such as industry and agriculture) as they will have the necessary infrastructure to conduct their operations without incurring additional costs.

6. George Ghali, 2018, MEIRSS policy paper, The Head Out of the Sand – Addressing the Legal and Practical Options, available at <http://meirss.org/head-sand-addressing-legal-practical-options/>

7. <http://www.annd.org/data/file/files/IMF-ReactiontoArticleIV-Lebanon-March2017%282%29.pdf>

- **Transparency:** Measures to enhance tax transparency that would include periodical issuing of detailed tax returns according to their category, and information about tax payers in terms of their income range and the share of taxes they pay. Moreover, in order to deter evasion, the names of high earning individuals and entities avoiding tax or not paying it should be made public. Also, amongst other measures, tax payers ought to be insulated from corruption through increasing their salaries, implementing more severe disciplinary measures on those who collude with tax payers, and assuring constant rotation and mobility of tax inspectors to minimize the risk of building compromising relations with taxpayers.

While these steps are minimal, Lebanon needs to adopt tax reforms within the framework of a comprehensive economic vision of which social justice is at its core.

Social protection¹⁰

The social protection landscape in Lebanon is a mixture of scattered schemes ranging from social security, to syndicate created security, and safety nets as well as informal securities. Yet, most of the population does not enjoy formal social protection and is pushed into clientelist relations and allegiances to secure their basic livelihoods. Furthermore, overall, social protection does not come as a right or basic entitlement in Lebanon and individuals falling outside the latter schemes remain exposed and unprotected.

In relation to ensuring access to health services, there are certain initiatives taken by the government, including the e-health system¹¹, and the accreditation¹² process to set standards for primary healthcare centers. Despite these efforts, an analysis on the quality of healthcare in Lebanon concludes that there is a lack of an explicit national quality policy for the healthcare system, and rather, that “there is a spread of several (disjointed) pieces of legal measures and national plans leading to fragmentation and lack of clear articulation of responsibilities across the entire continuum of care”¹³. The same study notes that despite efforts towards quality improvement by the MoPH, there is no quality unit nor a quality directorate assigned to see diverse quality improvement projects. Furthermore, like other public services, the healthcare system is overstrained as a result of the Syrian refugee crisis.

On the other hand, the private sector continues to play a significant role in provision of health services, but remains too expensive for many groups, including Palestinian and Syrian refugees and persons with disabilities (PwDs). Taking into consideration that these groups face financial restrictions due to lack of employment and education opportunities, costs of health services, especially for secondary and tertiary care, remain unaffordable for them in private centers. PwDs face additional barriers to healthcare, such as accessibility and availability of specialized services.

In this context, with the aim of achieving sustainable development and ensuring full adherence to international human rights treaties that Lebanon is state party to, Lebanon has to revise its social protection policy with a rights based approach. Focus should be on adopting a comprehensive policy aiming at universal, publically provided health care, extending social protection coverage to include the unprotected as well as other social protection mechanisms, in line with International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 102 and Recommendation 202.

8. ANND policy brief entitled Taxes and social justice: Lebanon's prospects: Economic impasse or opportunity for reform? Reaction to the IMF 2016 Article IV Consultation in Lebanon, by Nabil Abdo, to be published in 2018

9. ANND policy brief entitled Taxes and social justice: Lebanon's prospects: Economic impasse or opportunity for reform? Reaction to the IMF 2016 Article IV Consultation in Lebanon, by Nabil Abdo, to be published in 2018

10. This section is retrieved ANND policy brief entitled Social protection in Lebanon: From a System of Privileges to a System of Rights, by Nabil Abdo, to be published in 2018

Poverty

Poverty in Lebanon is not new, since the mid-90s until the latest studies published in 2017, poverty is estimated at around one third of the population with half of this rate in urban areas and double this rate in the peripheries (North and Bekaa). Yet there is no national effort to produce poverty measurements by the State. Promoted as a measure to address poverty, the implementation of the Emergency National Poverty Targeting Program (ENPTP), a follow-up to the National Poverty Targeting Program, has failed to achieve its declared goals and is being revised.

Vulnerable groups, including Syrian refugees and Palestinian refugees remain in poverty at an increasing rate. The 2017 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR), reveals that 58 percent of the households are living in extreme poverty (increased from 53 percent in 2016)¹⁴. It is estimated that 65% of PRL and 89% of PRS live in poverty as well¹⁵.

Employment

Unemployment is identified as one of the root of Lebanon's problems.¹⁶ The unemployment rate is in excess of 20%¹⁷ and is higher in certain areas of the country; for instance nearly double the national rate in Wadi Khaled, standing around 58%¹⁸. Furthermore "figures show a large gender gap in terms of employment between men (%67) and women (%25)." ¹⁹

In relation to the targets of the SDG 8, migrant workers, child labor and Palestinian and Syrian refugees' continue to remain among those most vulnerable in the Lebanese labor market. In order to address the violations they face adoption of a comprehensive employment policy is needed including ensuring the right to organize and associate, ratifying ILO Convention 87, and upholding ILO Convention 98. In Lebanon, public sector workers are still denied the right to organize and freedom of association, and private sector workers are required to obtain a prior authorization from the Ministry of Labor to establish their own unions. Migrant workers as well are deprived from many union rights.

Lebanon has taken several steps in order to eliminate child labor. First of all a "National Action Plan for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor in Lebanon by 2016"²⁰ was adopted, marking Lebanon's commitment to withdraw children from the streets. Coordination with UNICEF, and development of a code of conduct and coordination mechanism between Internal Security Forces, NGOs and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs²¹ to address child labor were also positive initiatives. Yet, including due to the Syrian crisis, child labor remains persistent, with the first access to labor market standing between the ages of 7-14 years of age²²

As of 2015, a UNICEF²³ study revealed that around 73 percent of the children living/working are from Syria, 10 percent from Lebanon, and 8 percent are Palestinian children. The same study by UNICEF revealed that children engage in different economic activities, begging (43%) being the most common, followed by street vending (37%). While these are hazardous activities, another sector with rising child labor in Lebanon is agriculture. Agriculture has been identified by the ILO as one of "the three most dangerous sectors in terms of occupational safety and health, irrespective of the age of the worker, because – in addition to occupational diseases – it results in a high rate of work-related fatalities and non-fatal accidents, largely through use of motorized agricultural machinery"²⁴. Child labor increases in line with the high drop-out rates from schools, increasing poverty levels, and decreasing voucher aid (from 27\$ to 13\$ by World Food Program)²⁵. Thus, Lebanon should consider child labor as a social phenomenon and address it with a comprehensive strategy which addresses employment, health and poverty aspects. Likewise, an effective monitoring system for child labor should be put in place, ensuring implementation of a legislative and regulatory framework.

Several structural problems remain in relation to migrant workers labor rights in Lebanon. These are: a unified employment contract that does guarantee or grant minimum rights for migrant domestic workers²⁶, a lack of legal redress and protection for migrant domestic workers, illegal recruitment practices, and a lack of monitoring of private agencies which have replaced the National Institute for employment. Over 250,000 migrant domestic workers in Lebanon continue to be excluded from labor law protections. Among these, the majority are female domestic workers, whose exploitation and lack of rights further stand in the way of achieving Goal 5 in Lebanon.

An important and positive step taken in 2017 is the first-ever census carried out by the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee towards providing some statistical information on the situation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Covering 12 Palestinian camps and 156 informal “gatherings”, the census indicated a lower number of refugees than the UNRWA registered refugee number in country (174,422 vs 500,000)²⁷. With regard to labor rights, several violations and discriminatory practices in employment persist for the Palestinian refugees, whose unemployment rate stands around 23.2% (in 2015). An UNRWA protection brief from October 2017 notes these, including²⁸:

Palestine refugees consistently report discrimination in hiring and opportunities for employment due to bureaucracy and stigma. They are faced with informal restrictions on the types of jobs and industries they can be hired for; with 36% employed in elementary occupations such as agricultural laborers, sales and service workers, cleaners, etc. Lack of written contracts (only 14% of the PRL labor force have an employment contract); lack of employment benefits (87% of employed PRL do not benefit from either sick or annual leave); as well as insecure job tenure (48% of employed PRL are paid on a daily basis, 37% on a by-piece/service basis and 8% work in seasonal employment) contribute to unstable working conditions. Differential treatment in the workplace is also an issue as Palestine refugees are often unable to access better paid positions and are paid less than their Lebanese counter-parts for the same work.

11. <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/innovative-tools-fight-chronic-diseases-lebanon>
12. <https://www.moph.gov.lb/en/Pages/6/779/universal-health-coverage-project-lebanon#/en/Pages/6/755/accreditation-primary-health-care-centers>
13. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5559834/>
14. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/VASyR%202017.compressed.pdf>
15. https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/lebanon_protection_brief_october_2017.pdf
16. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2018/Apr-07/444472-unemployment-is-the-root-of-lebanons-problems-machnouk.ashx>
17. <https://www.google.com.tr/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKEwj07Kt4bbaAhXLCcWkHRvJC-0QFgggMAA&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.fransabank.com%2FEnglish%2FMediaCenter%2FPressReleases%2FDocuments%2Ffransabank%2520finalizes%2520its%2520Economic%2520Bulletin%2520for%2520Q4%25202017.pdf&usq=AOvVaw3kH58fNcRGw-YQdw97Lx6>
18. <http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Lebanon-Crisis-Response-Plan-2017-2020.pdf>
19. Arab Watch Report 2016, <http://www.annd.org/cd/arabwatch2016/pdf/english/13.pdf>

■ AWARENESS OF THE AGENDA 2030

2017 witnessed more media coverage on the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, particularly with the launch of the project “SDGs in Lebanon: Analyzing Gaps and Reporting Progress” by the PM Hariri. The Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (AFSD) organized by ECSWA was held in Beirut, raising further awareness on the implementation of the Agenda and preparation towards the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2018. Over 250 participants attended the Forum, which took place in Beirut, Lebanon, from 24-26 April 2018. ESCWA played an important role in organizing a regional seminar for parliamentarians²⁹, aiming at raising the awareness among parliamentarians about the importance of their role in implementing the Agenda. Further awareness-raising activities are implemented by the UN Information Center, collaborating also with the private sector and media figures³⁰. In addition, there were private initiatives like the websites launched (i.e. <http://lebanon2030.com/about-us/> and www.sdglebanon.com) and the SDG magazine initiated by World Merit Lebanon. Among academic institutions, a number of research projects have been launched aiming at advancing the sustainable development goals through action-oriented research.

It is important that these diverse initiatives work in a complementary manner and within a broader and comprehensive communication strategy on the Agenda 2030. Such a strategy should be systematic, aiming at engaging different stakeholders on the Agenda 2030 discussions, enhancing national dialogue, and contributing to having open and public consultations—inclusive of different regions/groups in Lebanon and tackling the Agenda in a holistic manner rather than focusing on only certain Goals.

■ CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION EFFORTS ON THE AGENDA 2030

Civil society continued its monitoring work on the Agenda 2030. Coordinated by Caritas and the Hariri Foundation (civil society representatives within the National Committee for SDGs), five consultations took place in different locations across Lebanon.

Region	Date	Place
South	28 March 2018	Ola-Outreach and Leadership Academy
Bekaa	29 March 2018	Ray of Hope-Zahleh
North	14 April 2018	Maronite School-Tripoli
North	24 April 2018	Mar Doumit Monetsry, Qoubaiyat
Beirut/ Mount Lebanon	5 April 2018	Padova Hotel – Sin el Fi

In addition, ANND has launched the microsite <http://www.2030monitor.annd.org/> in order to provide indigenous resource material, research, and analysis on the implementation of the Agenda 2030 in the Arab region, including in Lebanon. The e-platform will provide an opportunity to share and disseminate information, and lessons learnt for civil society groups across the region.

On 4-5 April 2017, ANND, in coordination with the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut, the Lebanese Observatory for the Rights of Workers and Employees, the Lebanese Trade Union Training Center, Mouvement Social, and the Lebanese Transparency Association organized a National dialogue session. The session provided a platform for civil society actors to discuss national reports and to undertake a comprehensive national assessment reflecting on the implementation of Agenda 2030 and socio-economic reform initiatives. On 26-27 September 2017, a training workshop was held, during which development challenges were discussed at the social and economic rights and the civil and political rights levels. The same meeting also served as an occasion where civil society groups committed to engaging in the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process.

Prior to the aforementioned Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, ANND organized a regional preparatory civil society organizations' (CSO) meeting. It brought together around 60 CSO representatives from the Arab region including several regional networks as co-organizers of the event, including the Arab Trade Union Confederation (ATUC), the Transparency International Chapters in the region, Disabled People International regional office, Habitat International Coalition, and Regional Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED). The workshop ended up with 3 outcome documents and 10 key messages presented by civil society representatives during the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development. Furthermore a draft follow-up plan, including the priorities for the region and indicators, was adopted.

Last but not least, a coalition led by ANND continued monitoring the implementation of the recommendations received by Lebanon during the 2nd cycle review of the Universal Periodic Review. With a rights-based approach, and taking into consideration that the SDGs and the UPR recommendations both aim at advancing human rights and addressing inequalities faced, groups continued their monitoring, data collection and advocacy on various issues, including the adequate standard of living (SDG 1), labor rights (SDG8), women's rights (SDG5), people with disabilities rights (SDG 10), etc. that this report benefitted from.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Move from project-led initiatives on the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs implementation towards adopting a comprehensive national strategy on rights-based development in Lebanon which integrates targets and goals. Short-term project initiatives will have limited results while long-term nationally-owned policies can contribute to moving towards sustainable development for all.**
- 2) Ensure that the National Committee for SDGs and the new NHRI remain independent in its monitoring, coordination and advisory roles towards the implementation of the SDGs and promotion and protection of human rights in the country. In relation, ensure the availability and accessibility of data and information on the initiatives taken, and encourage open and public consultations with all development actors and enhance national dialogue. In this regard, AFSD and HLPF 2018 present opportunities, but an effective follow up mechanism should be set in order to move from ad hoc consultations or awareness raising initiatives towards a national level plan for dialogue. Continuous engagement at HLPF will be a positive step, supported with structured and inclusive national dialogues on the Agenda 2030.**
- 3) Revisit social and economic policies to ensure their alignment with the rights-based development approach. Regarding implementation of the Capital Investment Plan, which remains as the key tool promoted by the government for job creation and development, ensure that an enabling environment for the private sector does not come at the expense of human rights and sustainable development.**

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