



H. Women and Sustainable Human Development

1. Introduction

The issue of women is central to the sustainable human development concept. Their full-fledged participation in this process is a basic measure for assessing the nature of development, and a prerequisite for its success and sustainability. This new approach implies dealing with women in development, not only as a factor of production, but also to consider the effectiveness of their participation in the formulation of policies and decisions affecting both their own lives and public life.

International experience has demonstrated that the forceful entry of women into the workplace is not sufficient to liberate them. Liberating women, and ensuring their equality with men and effective participation in decision-making, requires introducing major transformations in society: in political, social and cultural relations, and in existing values, in parallel with changes taking place in economic relations and at the level of women's participation in economic activity.

The reservation expressed regarding the partial economic approach in dealing with the status of women in society involves common usage of the gender concept. In some of the literature, the concept is viewed as a goal in itself, instead of being an analytical tool to understand the discrimination practiced against women, its social causes and manifestations.

It is from this perspective that the presence of women and their participation in all aspects of national life should be considered: in its static aspect as a beneficiary from opportunities of education, health services, etc.; and in its dynamic aspect as reflected in their participation in the economic, political, and social life of the country. This would entail measuring the share of women in professional and administrative occupations, as well as their participation in the institutions of political authority at the national and local levels, and in the decision-making process at different levels.

The UNDP Human Development Report for 1995 proposed two new indicators to measure these aspects: the gender-related development index (GDI), which adjusts the human development index to take note of inequality in achievement between women and men; and, the gender empowerment measure (GEM), which measures the participation of women in decision making at various levels. While the GDI focuses on expansion of capabilities, the GEM is concerned with the use of these capabilities to take advantage of the opportunities of life.

Gender-related development index (GDI)

The gender-related development index (GDI) measures achievement in the same basic capabilities as the human development index (HDI) does, but takes note of inequality in achievement between women and men. The methodology used imposes a penalty for inequality, such that the GDI falls when the achievement levels of both women and men in a country go down or when the disparity between their achievements increases. The GDI is simply the HDI discounted, or adjusted downwards for gender inequality.

According to the latest available data, the GDI for Lebanon stood at 0.615 (out of a possible 1.0) which ranked Lebanon 77th out of 137 countries - a position at par

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with its HDI ranking. Gender balance is achieved with respect to life expectancy where females outperform males (70.7 years versus 66.8 years) and combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrollment (female 74.8 percent and male 73 percent) . However, the female adult literacy (89.4 percent for females versus 94.3 percent for males) rate is less than that of males and the share of earned income is a low 21.4 percent compared to 78.6 percent for males.

Source: United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report 1996, Oxford University Press (New York/Oxford), 1996, annex tables pp. 130-216.

These two indices provide useful tools for assessing the status of women in Lebanon, where it is evident that there is discrepancy between the capabilities and skills possessed by women, on the one hand, and the actual position they occupy in national life and their participation in decision-making, on the other. Failure of society to take advantage of the potential of women is a source of considerable waste, with adverse effects on growth and sustainable development.

2. Women and health

Women have benefited from improvements in health care, which has been reflected in the average life expectancy at birth which stands at 70.7 years, as well as improvements in other health indicators affecting women.

The number of women not resorting to and/or not benefiting from pre-natal mother care increased considerably during the first half of the 1990s, the main factor being the more restricted access to care as a result of the rise in medical care costs by 32.2 percent (see Table III-29). As a result, the percentage of women attended by a doctor during pregnancy declined, to reach 73 percent only in 1996.

Table III-29: Prenatal mother care, 1990 and 1996
(Percent)

Area consulted	National Average	
	1990	1996
Doctor	83.3	73
Certified midwife	3.6	4.3
Uncertified midwife	0.2	1.7
No consultation	12.9	21

Source: UNICEF and Ministry of Public Health, 1994; League of Arab States - Republic of Lebanon, Lebanon Maternal and Child Health Survey - Pan Arab Project for Child Development, 1996.

Wide regional variations exist in the pattern of utilization of pre-natal services. The percentage of pregnant women attending pre-natal clinics is lowest in the region of North Lebanon (54.1 percent), compared to 96 percent for Beirut and a national average of 79.1 percent (see table III-30). The most important cause for women not to attend prenatal care is their inability to afford the cost involved.

Table III-30: Utilization of prenatal care by pregnant women at different stages of pregnancy,

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distributed by regions, 1996
(Percent)

	3 months	3-5 months	6-9 months	Overall
Beirut	83.3	100	100	96
Mount Lebanon	78.6	97.2	95	92
North Lebanon	33.3	50	62.1	54.1
Bekaa	100	87.5	75	79.3
South Lebanon	66.7	66.7	100	87.9
Nabatieh	0	50	85.7	61.5
Total	63.6	80.2	83.5	79.1

Source: League of Arab States - Republic of Lebanon, Lebanon Maternal and Child Health Survey, (Pan Arab Project for Child Development, PAPCHILD), 1996.

Table III-31 below shows a slight decrease in hospital/clinic in favor of the home as place of delivery during the first half of the 1990s. The figure for delivery in hospitals and clinics remains high, however.

Table III-31: Place of delivery, 1990 and 1996
(Percent)

Place of delivery	National Average	
	1990	1996
Hospital	81.2	87.9
Clinic	9.7	-
Home	9.1	11.9
Other	-	0.8

Source: UNICEF and Ministry of Public Health - 1994;
League of Arab States - Republic of Lebanon, Lebanon Maternal and Child Health Survey, Pan Arab Project for Child Development, 1996.

Data on the utilization of maternal care services provide additional evidence of the disparities among regions in the availability of basic hospital services (see table III-32).

The fertility rate in Lebanon is 2.5, and the average number of children per woman is 3.4; though 61 percent of women currently use contraceptives and 80.8 percent have used contraceptive measures once in their life time.

Table III-32: Deliveries in public and private facilities attended by physician, 1996 (Percent)

Area	Deliveries in public services	Deliveries in private services	Total deliveries	Total deliveries attended by physician
Beirut	6.56	87.70	94.26	91.0

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Mount Lebanon	11.90	83.05	94.95	89.3
North Lebanon	33.28	42.04	75.32	56.7
Bekaa	11.59	80.13	91.72	58.3
South Lebanon	17.60	71.20	88.80	70.0
Nabatieh	24.01	61.65	85.66	68.4
Total	18.58	69.28	87.86	72.5

Source: League of Arab States - Republic of Lebanon, Lebanon Maternal and Child Health Survey (Pan Arab Project for Child Development, PAPCHILD), 1996.

Women that die as a result of giving birth is 128 for every 100,000 deliveries. Women shoulder additional family responsibilities with respect to the health of their children, as a result of inherited cultural notions. In 1990, marriages between relatives constituted 26 percent of all marriages, with serious implications for transmitting hereditary diseases such as mental retardation, high cholesterol rates, thyroid gland and thalassemia. Marriages between relatives are among the highest in the world. This type of marriage tends to reproduce male-dominated relations which perpetuate the traditional view of women in the family and society.

Finally, women are highly vulnerable to the risk of AIDS. The ratio of women to men infected with the disease rose from 1 to 5 in 1992 to 1 to 3 in 1995; the disease being often transmitted by the infected husband returning from abroad.

3. Women and education opportunities

Since the 1960s, and as a result of the spread of elementary education to the villages, education - especially of girls - has made significant progress. Official figures show that in 1994 girls constituted 47.5 percent of all students enrolled in elementary schools, and 49.7 percent of those in the intermediate level. In secondary education, the percentage of girls exceeds that of boys, reaching 52.8 percent. Even more striking is the number of female students in higher education, where they account for 48.1 percent of the total number of students enrolled, and for 49.2 percent of university graduates. These percentages are significantly higher in the case of the Lebanese University being, respectively, 53.6 percent and 62.3 percent.

Table III-33: Female students in university education, 1994
(Number, percent)

	Lebanese University	All universities
Number of students enrolled	36,503	74,810
Number of female students	19,585	36,049
Percent of female students	53.6	48.1
Number of graduates	3,187	9,758
Number of female graduates	1,985	4,805
Percent of female graduates	62.3	49.2

Source: Center for Education Research and Development.

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The issue, however, is whether these improvements are reflected in enabling and empowering women to control their destiny, and in the availability of employment opportunities.

4. Women and employment opportunities

At 17 percent of the total labor force in 1992, the participation rate of women in economic activity is higher than in other Arab countries; but is not high compared to their potential and capabilities.

Although school enrollment ratios are about equal for men and women, and in some instances higher for women, as indicated above, women continue to make up less than one-third (27.8 percent) of the economically active population. This figure appears reasonable in view of the observed rising participation of women in the modern sectors such as information, communications, banking and services.

Women have achieved considerable progress in administrative jobs, where their participation was 30 percent in 1987, up from 10.3 percent in 1970, as shown in Table III-34 below.

According to the Lebanese Bankers Association, the percentage of women in the banking sector, which requires relatively advanced skill and education levels, reached 37 percent in the 1990s. Also, women constitute the majority (about 80 percent) of those employed in the information sector, according to available information. However, in both of these sectors, women in general occupy positions that do not go beyond middle-level posts.

Table III-34: Distribution of the labor force by gender and employment sector, 1970 and 1987 (percent)

Occupation	Male		Female		Total	
	1970	1987	1970	1987	1970	1987
Agricultural workers	18.0	13.2	22.8	6.1	18.9	12.0
Technical and scientific professions	7.4	32.2	21.2	12.7	9.8	29.4
Managers and high level employment	2.3	4.4	0.2	3.3	2.0	4.2
Administrative employees	7.9	6.9	10.3	30.5	8.3	10.8
Commercial sector and sales employees	14.2	9.1	3.2	21.0	12.3	11.0
Non-agricultural workers and drivers	37.2	18.8	19.6	11.9	34.1	17.7
Services workers	9.4	6.1	22.5	11.8	11.7	7.0
Military and other professions	3.5	8.9	0.3	2.7	2.9	7.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Central Directorate of Statistics, Labor Force Survey, 1970. Kasparian, R., et Beaudoin. A., La population déplacée au Liban, 1975-1987, Université Saint-Joseph (Beyrouth, Liban) - Université Laval (Québec, Canada), February 1992.

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Moreover, estimates indicate that the share of income accruing to women does not exceed 21.8 percent of total national income. This is significantly less than their share in the labor force which, in turn, does not include some important activities carried out by women - notably in the agricultural and informal sectors, and family assistance and household activities - that are not valued economically. The contribution of women in these sectors in the country - as in other parts of the world - is either not valued in monetary terms, or is partially valued. This means that the contribution of women in the gross domestic product is considerably under-estimated.

Thus, the participation of women in productive activity has not been commensurate with the improvement in their situation and their feeling of equality. Despite the rise in the contribution of women to the household budget (40 percent of working women contribute more than 40 percent of the household budget), their participation in the decision-making process has remained inadequate. This is especially the case in rural areas, where decision-making remains a male prerogative, though women carry out the work, and even when they own the land.

5. Women and poverty

In the absence of studies and surveys on poverty and its distribution according to gender, it is not possible to make an accurate assessment of the relation between poverty and the status of women. However, the responsibilities shouldered by women towards meeting the needs of their families have increased over the past two decades. Women were obliged during the war to assume additional responsibilities and enter the labor market to provide for their families, as a result of the death or forced displacement of men, and economic and social conditions. This was particularly true in rural areas where women, in addition to household work, often play a role equal to that of men in agriculture.

The continuing discrimination between men and women in wages paid for equal work, and the allocation of administrative and less productive jobs, with modest earnings, leads to the conclusion that women, from an economic point of view, are worse off than men and, consequently, suffer more from poverty.

Furthermore, some partial field inquiries point to some discriminatory practices against women inside the family itself. When resources are limited, priority in education and health care is given to males.

6. Opportunities for women to participate in public life

Despite the progress achieved in educating women, and their increasing participation in economic activity, the degree and effectiveness of their participation is very much below their potential and capabilities.

The gender empowerment measure (GEM) examines whether women and men are able to actively participate in economic and political life and take part in decision-making. The gender empowerment measure is a useful tool for measuring progress of societies; since it serves to indicate the progressive transition towards gender equality. According to latest available data, the gender empowerment measure for Lebanon stood at a very low 0.212 (out of a scale of 1), ranking Lebanon towards the bottom of the list. This position is explained in particular by the very weak political and economic empowerment of women in the country.

At the *political level*, women are not represented in the executive authority (the

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government) and are scantily represented in parliament (3 out of 128 deputies). In the lower political decision-making structures, i.e. local authorities, there are no women regional governors (Mohafez); and, caem-macam at the district level, except by assignment. At the level of municipalities, only 3 out of 390 councils are headed by women, who also account for a negligible 0.4 percent of municipal council members; likewise, women representation at the lower level of local authority (Moukhtar) is virtually nil (0.1 percent).

In the *public administration*, the situation is not much different. Out of 90 posts at the General-Director level, only one is occupied by a woman. In the equivalent post of ambassador, there are only two women ambassadors, or 3.3 percent of the total. The situation in the second-grade and third-grade is similar, women occupying about 7 percent of posts in 1994.

Despite the rapid increase in recent years in the number of women entering professional occupations (doctors, engineers, etc.), their participation in decision-making in the professional associations has remained low. There is only one woman (out of twelve members) on the board of each of the orders of engineers and doctors, and two out of nine in the order of pharmacists, as shown in Table III-35 below.

Table III-35: Women participation in professional associations, 1980, 1994-95

Associations	Female members		Board membership (1995)	
	1980 (percent)	1994 (percent)	Number of members	Female members
Lawyers -Beirut	5.9	24	12	1
Lawyers - North Lebanon	4	26.2	6	-
Doctors - Beirut	7.7	15	12	-
Doctors - North Lebanon	3	9.7	9	-
Pharmacists	36	51	9	2
Engineers - Beirut	-	6.8	12	1
Engineers - North Lebanon	1	6.5	12	-
Dentists - Beirut	-	14.2	12	-
Dentists - North Lebanon	5	27	9	-

Source: Councils of above-mentioned professional associations.

The role of women in *economic decision-making* may be assessed in terms of two basic elements: their share in the ownership of productive assets, and their status within the decision-making bodies representing major economic groupings.

Despite the fact that there is no accepted classification of data on ownership that could be used to make an assessment by gender, information obtained in the field from various sources indicates that ownership by women in companies and establishments does not exceed 22.5 percent in any of them.

The only figures available, in the National Report to the Beijing Conference, indicate that land ownership by women is still low; their share in real estate transactions being 22.5 percent of the total. In addition, an analysis of bank

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accounts of 24 branches of a major bank in Lebanon showed that the share of women amounted to 30 percent, with a monetary value of 20 percent of the totality of the accounts.

It should be pointed out, however, that these figures do not necessarily reflect the share of women in ownership or in economic decision-making. The actual share could be lower, given that some men resort to registering assets in the name of their wives or female relatives, or to opening accounts in their names, to protect their profits or firms from risks (mortgage and others), or to avoid payment of taxes.

At the same time, the participation of women in economic decision-making bodies is virtually nil. Membership in the major economic bodies, such as chambers of commerce and industry, and industrialists and bankers associations, are limited to men.

7. Status of women in relation to sustainable human development

Although women in Lebanon have progressed considerably over the past two decades, they do not yet participate effectively in all aspects of life. In fact, women are still excluded from many posts, and especially those involving making decisions. This exclusion raises genuine queries about the course of development, and the dynamism of the Lebanese society.

These queries are not confined to the legal aspects where the law continues to differentiate between women and men in some of its provisions; they also extend to education and information, and to social relations, which the process of modernization has yet to penetrate really.

The information cited above confirms that acts of discrimination still exist under different forms, which inhibits effective participation by women and obstructs the working of sustainable human development mechanisms.

The fact that prevailing practices in the political, administrative and social fields are based on narrow sectarian and factional criteria inhibits the prospects for improving the status of women and, hence, constrains the process of sustainable human development and the reassessment of the status of women in society. Moreover, the attitude of women towards themselves and towards other women harbors considerable discrimination and fanaticism that adversely affect the manner of bringing up their children.

Therefore, practical measures that involve the amendment of laws that restrict participation of women, or that detract from their eligibility and competence, should proceed in parallel with, and be supplemented by, educational and social measures, as well as cultural transformations, with a view to modifying the prevailing and unfavorable image associated with women; reinstating the notion of competence, education, and equality of opportunities; and liberating the personal lives of individuals especially women, from the shackles and traditions that constrain them. This should be facilitated by acceding to, and enforcing the implementation of, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and by transforming the issue of women participation in the process of development into a national cause based on consensus; and by arguing that it is not only appropriate and fair that women should enjoy equal rights, but also because failure to do so will perpetuate the waste arising from the under-utilization of their energies and potential, developed at considerable cost to society.

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From a practical point of view, the following measures should help to achieve these objectives:

First: Provision of a conducive environment to promote the participation of women in the development process, by re-examining existing political and administrative structures and relations that obstruct the development of society as a whole, and also discriminate against women.

Second: Modernization of national legislation to remove all forms of discrimination against women, and acceding to relevant international agreements.

Third: At the level of the education - culture - information nexus, endeavor to change prevailing perceptions and attitudes regarding women through:

- Altering the image of women in education curricula,
- Altering the image of women as portrayed by the information media, and involving them in the formulation of information policies, and ensuring that this is observed by the media.

Fourth: Removing obstacles that prevent the modification of intra-family relations, and those between males and females, including the amendment of the civil status laws.

Fifth: Removing cultural, political and social obstacles that inhibit women from participating in political life at all levels with a view to enhancing and accelerating political empowerment of women. To ensure that there is a minimal level of participation of women in political decision making at central and local levels, it is proposed to establish quota for women, at least for a medium-term period.

Sixth: Introducing mechanisms and organizational forms needed to implement these proposals, including:

- Strengthening of the high-level National Commission on Women and the NGO Committee for Follow-up on Women's Issues.
- Formation of a parliamentary committee on women.
- Setting up a unit in the Central Administration for Statistics to introduce the gender component into all national and sectoral statistics.
- Formation of special units to follow up on the status of women in the ministries concerned with basic services (education, social affairs, health, etc.).
- Ensure representation of women in the Economic and Social Council, and their participation in all national committees (academic curricula, information, etc.), and in municipal and cada councils.

**DON'T STOP HERE .. THERE IS MORE TO READ IN CHAPTER THREE
GOT TO SECTION I:
SITUATION OF CHILDREN**