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► Gender mainstreaming into technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Lebanon

A study to map current initiatives and assess practices, achievements and gaps in gender equality and gender mainstreaming in skills/TVET systems



May 2024

▶ **Gender mainstreaming into technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Lebanon**

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► Acronyms and abbreviations

3RF	Reform, Recovery, and Reconstruction Framework
ALI	Association of Lebanese Industrialists
BP	Brevet Professionnel
BT	Baccalaureate Technique
CAS	Central Administration of Statistics
CRDP	Center for Educational Research and Development
DGVTE	Directorate General for Vocational and Technical Education
ETF	European Training Foundation
FDPs	Forcibly Displaced Persons
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GCLW	General Confederation of Lebanese Workers
GPSL3	Global Programme on Skills and Lifelong Learning
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
KII	Key Informant Interview
LET	Licence d'Enseignement Technique
LLWB	Lebanese League for Women in Business
LMIS	Labour Market Information System
LT	Licence Technique
MEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoL	Ministry of Labour
MSMEs	Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises
NCLW	National Commission for Lebanese Women
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NSSF	National Social Security Fund
PRL	Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDWG	Skills Development Working Group
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math
TS	Technicien Superior
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNWOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VASyR	Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees

► Preface

To support the establishment of effective and inclusive skills and lifelong learning skills system, the International Labour Organization (ILO) is implementing several programs in Lebanon. The study is the result of joint efforts and investments under two programmes, including:

- **PROSPECTS**, a partnership for improving the prospects for host communities and forcibly displaced persons (FDPs) launched by the Government of the Netherlands. In Lebanon, the program focuses on enhancing the resilience of the country's crisis-distressed labour market and creating better livelihoods for both Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees.
- **The Global Programme on Skills and Lifelong Learning (GPSL3)** funded by NORAD. GPSL3 – Lebanon component SkillUp aims to improve skills development system to facilitate access to and transitions of vulnerable groups in the labour market by providing market-responsive skills training and work-based learning, enhancing skills utilisation and productivity, and improving skills governance and quality assurance..

The two programmes use gender equality and women's empowerment as a central theme to drive improvements in policy, skills and business service provision to empower Lebanese and non-Lebanese women inclusion in the labour market. The disproportionate impact of the multifaceted crisis on women's employment, increased incidences of violence against women and their increased 'care work' and other factors reinforce the urgency of this focus. Through these programmes, the ILO seeks to mitigate the impact of the crisis while using skills development and entrepreneurship as an opportunity to advance access to quality skills training and decent employment and amplify the potential for women in unconventional jobs, digital and green economy and enterprise development as an important aspect in creating jobs.

The main purpose of this study is two-folds: (a) to map current initiatives and assess practices, achievements and gaps in gender equality and gender mainstreaming in skills/ Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems in Lebanon, and (b) to provide recommendations on relevant strategies and appropriate plan of actions that key stakeholders and ILO can undertake to address identified gaps and barriers in the existing TVET/skills development system. It is expected that these recommendations, if applied, will facilitate the task of strengthening gender responsiveness in TVET/ skills development and effectively enhance access and opportunity for increased female participation.

The study has been prepared based on extensive desk review and on the results of consultations held with diverse stakeholders, ranging to include the Directorate General for Vocational and Technical Education (DGVTE), ministries, syndicates representing private and public sector actors, employers' and workers' organizations, International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), United Nations (UN) agencies, local NGOs, TVET providers, and Lebanese and non-Lebanese youth from both genders. It entails conducting a thorough analysis of the gender disparities in access to skill building and development opportunities, financial resources, and benefits as well as employment opportunities in unconventional sectors, emerging sectors, and entrepreneurship. It then focuses on proposing interventions to address the imbalance. Nonetheless, in the process of collecting data, some limitations were faced:

1. The unfortunate events in the South of Lebanon impacted the provision of public and private TVET and skill building interventions in those areas. Accordingly, no updated numbers exist on students' overall enrolment in TVET.
2. Holding interviews during the month of December was challenging due to its nearness to the end of year. This affected the timeline of the study.
3. Public services were interrupted due to the overall economic crisis and hence access to interviewees from the public sphere was impacted.

Despite limitations, and despite the challenges faced in the region and in Lebanon, the study concludes that the employment landscape is experiencing significant and fundamental transformations arising from a kaleidoscope of factors such as the integration of international trade, rapid technological advancements, migration across borders, and the pressing issue of climate change. These elements have not only affected the global economy but have also redefined job sectors and the required skill sets. While this offers a positive outlook for the future of work, it places an obligation on countries who are eager to capitalize on this opportunity: the responsibility of setting up flexible and inclusive skill-building frameworks that promote adaptable and inclusive systems for skills development. The challenge then becomes in mainstreaming gender in both skill building and the world of work while providing inclusive opportunities for females who face further marginalization, including refugees and the disabled. To this end, a number of recommendations are provided at the end on three levels: macro, meso, and micro. The focus of these recommendations is to address challenges identified and further expand opportunities to mainstream gender in skills development.

► Introduction

Background to this study

The landscape of employment at the global and local levels is currently experiencing significant and increasingly profound transformations driven by various factors, including the integration of international trade, rapid technological advancements, the movement of people across borders, and the ever-pressing issue of climate change. These forces have not only impacted the global economy but have also left their mark on labour markets and the types of skills that are in demand, offering a remarkable opportunity for the future of work, provided that nations commit to creating adaptable and inclusive skill development systems.

In the face of evolving local and global dynamics, one promising avenue for skills development and employment is the adoption of demand-driven Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs designed to be agile and responsive to the changing requirements of the job market. By aligning the skills of the workforce with the evolving needs of industries, demand-driven TVET can play a pivotal role in equipping individuals with the competencies required for gainful employment in the rapidly changing job landscape.

► Box 1: Five reinforcing pillars of the ILO's Strategy on Skills and Lifelong Learning 2030

Pillar 1: Improved policies, governance and financing for effective skills development and lifelong learning;

Pillar 2: Strengthened skills needs intelligence;

Pillar 3: Innovative and flexible learning programmes and pathways;

Pillar 4: Inclusive skills programmes for diverse needs of the labour markets;

Pillar 5: Quality apprenticeships and work-based learning promoted for employability, productivity and sustainable enterprises.

Stemming from this belief, in 2019, and in its 108th (Centenary) Session of the International Labour Conference commemorating its 100th anniversary, the International Labour Organization (ILO) issued a landmark document entitled "ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work" in which it outlined a vision for the future of work in the 21st century, emphasizing the need to address the challenges and opportunities presented by rapidly changing labour markets, technology, and globalization. Among the declarations, the ILO avowed that it would direct efforts to "achieving gender equality at work through a transformative agenda" and "strengthening the capacities of all people to benefit from the opportunities of a changing world of work through [...] effective lifelong learning and quality education for all". Furthermore, in its strategy on skills and lifelong learning 2030, and recognizing that education is a right for all, the ILO focused on improving its capacity across five pillars that identify short to medium-term outcomes that can result from an effective skills and lifelong learning system. Aligned to its commitments locally and regionally, the ILO is implementing several programs in Lebanon, including:

1. **PROSPECTS.** This program constitutes a partnership for improving the prospects for host communities and forcibly displaced persons (FDPs). It was launched by the Government of the Netherlands in 2019 in response to forced displacement crises, bringing together the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the ILO, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank. Within the framework of PROSPECTS program in Lebanon, the ILO focuses on enhancing the resilience of the country's crisis-distressed labour market and creating better livelihoods for both Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees by (a) promoting market relevant skills, (b) enhancing employment placement services and labour market governance, (c) strengthening social protection schemes and (d) promoting micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs) as well as sectors, including the agriculture and agro-food with potential for decent job creation.

2. **SKILLUP.** The ILO is carrying out the Global Programme on Skills and Lifelong Learning (GPSL3) with funding from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), aimed at bolstering the creation of an efficient skills and lifelong learning system, which seeks to offer well-coordinated and enhanced assistance to ILO constituents in the development and implementation of modern skills and lifelong learning frameworks that contribute to a promising Future of Work. Within this larger framework, the Lebanon-based component SkillUp3 has the specific goal of enhancing the skills development system to facilitate the entry and transition of vulnerable groups into the labour market. It supports ILO constituents answer the questions presented in the box below.

1. What skills will be needed to ensure future economic success?
2. How can skills systems leverage the economic potential of global drivers of change?
3. How can skills development systems be improved to better deliver and anticipate the skills needs of the private and public sectors and workers?
4. How should governance mechanisms be organized and what institutions should participate?
5. How can a skills system remove all barriers to access and leave nobody behind?

Both programs concentrate on delivering skills training and work-based learning that aligns with market demands, increasing the application of acquired skills and productivity, and enhancing the governance and quality of skills system, including their digitalization. They also acknowledge that the disproportionate consequences of the complex crisis, such as the adverse effects on women's employment, rising instances of violence against women, and their increased responsibilities in terms of 'care work' and other related factors, underscore the critical need to prioritize gender equality and the empowerment of women. Thus, they use gender equality and women's empowerment as a central theme to drive improvements in policy, skills and business service provision to empower Lebanese and non-Lebanese women to be included in the labour market. Concurrently, they combine upstream and downstream interventions to achieve sustainable change focusing on economically underdeveloped areas and vulnerable communities with the aim to achieve an enrolment rate of 50% in skills training as well as significantly increase women's graduation and labour market transition and contribute to a training and working environment free from violence and harassment including gender-based violence and harassment.

► **Box 2: Aims of PROSPECTS and SkillUp3**

- (a) achieve an enrolment rate of 50% in skills training, and
- (b) significantly increase women's graduation and labour market insertion, and gender-based violence-free training and working environments.

Purpose and rationale

Aligned to the above, and to support its constituents systemically address the major problems and barriers that disproportionately hinder the female workforce in Lebanon from equitably and productively participating in the labour market in a sustainable and resilient manner, the ILO is conducting a study to map current initiatives, and assess practices, achievements and gaps in achieving gender equality targets and gender mainstreaming in TVET/ skills development system and TVET/ skills training practices of public and private technical institutes, NGOs, social partners, and other ministries/ departments engaged in skills development training. This constitutes the primary objective of this study. Furthermore, the study seeks to provide suggestions for effective strategies and practical plans for key stakeholders, including the ILO, to address identified gaps and barriers within the TVET/skills development system. The rationale is presented in Figure 1.

► **Figure 1: Rationale for this Study**



More elaborately, the objectives of the study are to:

- **Identify** gender disparities including within occupational segregation in the TVET system.
- **Analyse** the gender barriers that perpetuate these disparities and impede the achievement of gender equality in skills/TVET systems, aligning with the targets outlined in the SDGs goal.
- **Assess** any additional barriers faced by women with disabilities and refugee women in accessing TVET programmes and skills training opportunities.
- **Map** existing initiatives aimed at addressing these disparities, document best practices, and lessons learned and identify interventions with potential upscaling.
- **Identify** opportunities for ILO to address sector-specific gender gaps that would ensure effective and efficient inclusiveness in TVET for women of different categories/status.
- **Provide** recommendations on relevant policy actions, strategy, systems and mechanisms, capacity development measures needed, and plan of actions necessary for key stakeholders and ILO to undertake in order to address identified gaps and barriers. Analysis and recommendations will be at the macro, meso and micro levels including what role would ILO play to support their implementation.

Methodology

This study is based on the compiled results of an extensive desk review¹, 6 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) held with 51 youth and women aged between 16 and 57 years (40 females and 11 males), and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with 37 respondents from 33 stakeholders varying to include international and local development agencies, local authorities, educational institutions, and employers' and workers' organizations. The approach was predominantly qualitative, inductive, and thematic. FGDs and KIIs were steered by semi-structured guides developed to this end.

¹ Documents reviewed are provided in Annex A

► Understanding the context

According to Strategy 2022-2029 of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and with the support of data retrieved from the ILO, “31 per cent of young women and 14 per cent of young men worldwide were not in employment, education or training in 2019, and the number of young people in employment fell by 34 million in 2020. 12 per cent of young people in employment live in extreme poverty”. The strategy proposes three priority areas for TVET as shown in Figure 2. Specifically, the first and second priorities are of relevance to this study. As explained in the strategy document, the first priority encompasses a focus on developing targeted measures for inclusion and gender equality, while the second priority encompasses a focus on enhancing youth’s digital, green, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM), and entrepreneurship skills to combat unemployment. In fact, this study aims at providing recommendations to promote inclusion and gender mainstreaming in various TVET and skill-building interventions, including STEM.



Overview of the context in Lebanon

Lebanon is facing substantial socio-economic difficulties resulting from a sequence of events that have escalated in intensity over the past four years. The country hosts the highest per capita refugee population, encompassing Syrians and Palestinians. This situation has strained an already fragile economy, pushing most households, regardless of nationality, to seek assistance. A substantial portion of the population has been thrust into poverty, struggling to fulfil their basic needs. The COVID-19 crisis, the economic crisis, and the Beirut Port Blast of August 4, 2020 have further deteriorated the economic situation, driving unemployment rates to new heights. Reportedly, the Beirut Port Blast impacted the country's education, training, and social system by damaging around 163 schools (that enrolled about 85,000 young people). As a result of these combined events, the latest figure posted by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN ESCWA) reports that the multidimensional poverty rate in Lebanon surged from 42% in 2019 to a staggering 82% in 2021 ², with three-quarters of residents falling into poverty. The World Report 2023 issued by the Human Rights Watch set the poverty rate at 80% ³. Escalating inflation, which reached 210% between June 2021 and June 2023 ⁴ led to significant disparities between those earning foreign currencies and those relying on the Lebanese Lira. With these figures, it is no surprise that the economic crisis has taken a heavy toll on the healthcare and education sectors, causing a spike in medical and insurance costs and a decline in the quality of primary and secondary education. The nation started witnessing an increase in "brain drain" as qualified professionals sought opportunities abroad, resulting in a loss of skilled human resources ⁵. The chronic issue of electricity supply has added to the hardship, with almost a total collapse of the electricity system. The government can only provide a few hours of electricity per day, if any, forcing people to rely on costly diesel generators, while telecommunications suffer from sluggish internet, limited reception, and high

2 Retrieved from <https://www.unescwa.org/news/escwa-warns-three-quarters-lebanon%E2%80%99s-residents-plunge-poverty>

3 Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/lebanon>

4 European Training Foundation (2024). *Key Policy Developments in Education, Training, and Employment – Lebanon 2023*.

5 European Training Foundation (2021). *Skills and Migration Country Fiche Lebanon*.

prices. Both factors are negatively influencing all sectors, including the educational sector. Furthermore, the strain on resources has given rise to heightened tensions and incidents of violence and discrimination against displaced Syrians in Lebanon ⁶.

The political sphere has worsened the situation. While the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has expressed its commitment to assist Lebanon, this support is contingent to comprehensive reforms. Unfortunately, these reforms have yet to materialize, and ongoing political gridlock is impeding progress.

The labour market in Lebanon

Given the ongoing turmoil in the country, it is understandable that Lebanon's labour market confronts intricate challenges due to a blend of economic, social, and political elements.

Economically, Lebanon has been struggling with a severe economic crisis characterized by hyperinflation, a depreciating currency, and a struggling banking sector. This crisis has had a profound impact on the labour market, leading to job losses, reduced salaries, and increased poverty. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic added to the economic challenges, with lockdowns and restrictions affecting various industries, including tourism and services. Consequently, many Lebanese and non-Lebanese struggled to find stable employment opportunities, resorting to informal and short-term work arrangements to make ends meet, often lacking job security and social protections. Those who were employed often faced reduced hours and income. As a result, unemployment rates have become especially high among the youth and women, made worse by a disconnect between the skills offered by the workforce and the needs of the labour market. The mismatch limited opportunities for those seeking employment, notably in emerging industries. As a result, in a follow-up labour force survey conducted by the ILO and the Central Administration of Statistics (CAS) in 2022 on the residents of Lebanon, a dramatic increase

was recorded in labour underutilization ⁷ from 16.2% in 2018-2019 to 50.1% in January 2022, with the highest percentage noted among youth aged between 15 and 24 years reaching 64.7%. The same survey reported an increase in the unemployment rate from 11.4% in 2018-2019 to 29.6% in January 2022, with a female unemployment rate standing at 32.7% compared to a 28.4% male unemployment rate.

Socially, the deterioration of the Lebanese Lira has led to a social disaster, driving more than half of the population in Lebanon to live below the poverty line, and thus transforming the lives of individuals and families rendering them incapable of meeting their basic needs, including food security, health, and education, among others. A significant collapse in essential services occurred caused by the country's drastic decrease in foreign exchange reserves and the elevated cost of import subsidies on food, fuel, and medication. While the Lebanese diaspora has traditionally been a source of remittances, the ongoing crisis led to increased emigration as many Lebanese citizens sought employment opportunities abroad, given the dire situation at home. For those remaining at home, the presence

► Box 3: A Quick Overview of Some Labour Market Trends in Lebanon

Amidst this panorama, unfortunately, Lebanon does not have a Labour Market Information System (LMIS) that can provide analysis into labour market trends. Nevertheless, existing data show that the unemployment rate has substantially increased from 11.4 percent in 2018-2019 to 29.6 percent in January 2022 and the youth unemployment rate (15-24 years old) increased from 23.3% in 2018-2019 to 47.8% in January 2022. The female unemployment rate (32.7%) was somewhat higher than the male rate (28.4%) while the youth rate (47.8%) was almost twice the adult rate (25.6%). The highest degree of labour underutilization was among the youth population (15-24 years old) for whom it was 64.2% in January 2022, compared to 29.4% in 2018-2019, and among women, for whom it was 57.1% compared to 21.3% in 2018-2019 (ILO, 2022).

⁶ World Bank (2019). Behavioral Strategies to Support Social Stability in Lebanon.

⁷ As defined by ILO, underutilization refers to (a) unemployment, (b) underemployment where persons are available to work more hours than they do, (c) potential labour force of those who are available for employment but are not seeking it, and (d) potential labour force of those who are not immediately available to undertake employment.

of a significant number of Palestinian refugee and Syrian displaced populations created additional challenges and competition for jobs in some sectors. Disparities got exacerbated between different segments of the population, with the crisis disproportionately affecting vulnerable groups, further widening the gap between the rich and the poor.

Politically, the persistent instability, with no new president elected, left the Lebanese economy in a state of unprecedented uncertainty. The caretaker government struggled to implement the necessary reforms set in Lebanon's Reform, Recovery, and Reconstruction Framework (3RF). However, despite efforts, the civil and political unrest have only added to the disruption of economic activities and overall stability within the country. The overall context not only hampered the efficient functioning of the labour market but also diminished the incentives for individuals to acquire the necessary skills and education for meaningful employment. Concurrently, unemployment rates remained difficult to monitor due to the growing informal economy. As a result, a widespread frustration and disillusionment was noted among the Lebanese population, especially the youth. Foreign investment and economic growth have been deterred, causing businesses to scale back or relocate. With a weakened economy, a lack of job opportunities, and political unrest, many Lebanese citizens have sought employment abroad, further draining the nation of its skilled workforce.

Education, skills development, and tvet in Lebanon

In Lebanon, 44% of the population (Lebanese and non-Lebanese residents) is below 24 years of age. Recent developments in the country have made it increasingly difficult for these young individuals to stay motivated due to limited future prospects (UNICEF and ILO, 2022). Consequently, many young people, Lebanese and non-Lebanese, are compelled to seek employment prematurely and abandon their education to provide for their families, adversely impacting their mental health and overall well-being. The National Youth Policy Action Plan for 2022 underscores that the challenges arising from Lebanon's recent adversities have significantly hindered students and their families' access to education. This has disrupted the educational paths for numerous children and adolescents, resulting in a surge in school dropout rates. According to the action plan, «about 50% of schools ⁸ experienced an increase in the number of dropouts in the 2019-20 and 2020-21 academic years,» and «about 15% of the Lebanese respondents stopped their education, as the percentage of school enrolment decreased from 79% in 2020-21 to 57% in 2021-2022». The statistical bulletin issued by the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CRDP) on public and private general education for the scholastic year 2022-2023 indicated a mere improvement/ increase of 0.6% in enrolment rates. This bulletin mapped that the academic year 2022-2023 witnessed an enrolment of 1,079,048 students distributed over 2,780 public and non-public schools as illustrated in Figure 3, of whom 50.06% were females. Nationalities were diverse, noting that in 2012, and responding to the Syrian crisis, the Lebanese government issued a memorandum instructing all public schools in Lebanon to enrol Syrian students regardless of their legal status ⁹. As a result, many schools implemented a second shift specifically to accommodate the numbers of Syrian displaced children. Hence, for the academic year 2022-2023, 83.27% of enrolled students were Lebanese, 10.87% Syrians, 4.73% Palestinians, and 1.13% of other nationalities. Overall, 19.71% of enrolled students experienced delays; i.e. they were enrolled in classes intended for younger age groups. Unfortunately, it is expected that less refugees will be registered in TVET in the year to come whereby

► Box 4: NEET Rates in Lebanon

In January 2022, almost one-third of the female youth population (32.1%) was not in employment, education, or in training, a net increase from 2018-2019, when the Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) rate for young women was 26.8%. A similar change may be observed in the case of the male youth population for whom the NEET rate increased from 16.7% in 2018-2019 to 26.1% in January 2022 .

⁸ This figure is originally derived from a study of 30 public schools implemented by AVSI in 2021 published under the title "Education Rapid Needs Assessment". These schools fell under the general education provided by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

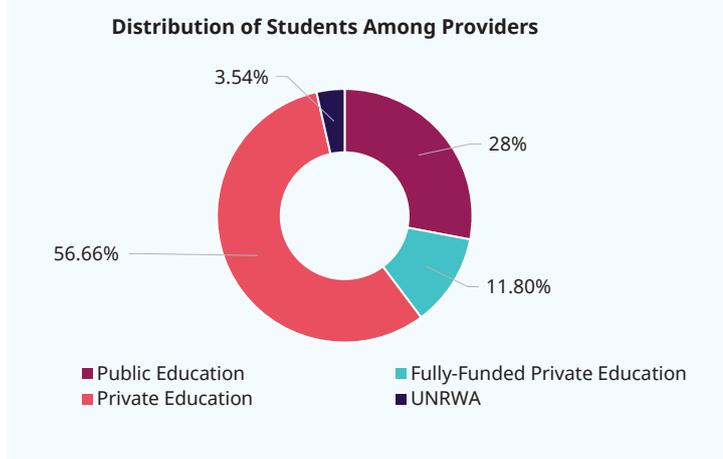
⁹ Ministry of Education and Higher Education (2014). Reaching All Children with Education in Lebanon.

according to interviewed stakeholders, the Government of Lebanon issued in 2023 a new decision requiring residency documents for Syrian refugees to be eligible to be enrolled in education, including TVET. As per the General Security regulations, Syrians residing in Lebanon become responsible for regularizing their legal stay at the age of 15 years and residency is now required to register in formal programs and/ or to receive certificates of success in official exams¹⁰.

A report issued by ILO in 2019 indicated that around 1.2 million less fortunate children and youth needed educational assistance, including Lebanese, Palestinian refugees, and displaced Syrians living in poverty, with about 40% of Syrian children and youth between 3 and 18 years not enrolled in either formal or non-formal education, whether general or technical. The report further indicated that only 2.3% of youth aged between 15 and 24 years out of school attended education, literacy, or training programs, primarily non-formal education programs offered by NGOs. Recent figures published by the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR) indicated that the school attendance rate of Syrian children in 2023 varied by age to reach 19% for ages 3 to 5 years, 63% for ages 6 to 14 years, and 29% for ages 15 to 17 years. Although the circulated VASyR 2023 summary presentation does not provide gender segregated data, VASyR 2022 indicates that the “the gender parity for primary school attendance was at equilibrium for children (1.01) and favoured girls at lower secondary (1.56) and upper secondary (2.02) levels”.

Despite these discouraging rates, Lebanon continues to emphasize the pivotal role of education in achieving comprehensive and sustainable development, with a concurrent focus on TVET due to its significant importance in the economic and social advancement and recovery of the nation. Nevertheless, TVET in Lebanon remains an unfavoured choice among youth, whether refugees or nationals, including females. Additionally, it remains highly centralized, with DGVTE operating as the main decision-making body under the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) with limited involvement from other actors, such as the private sector. In principle, private TVET schools providing formal TVET must apply the same curricula centrally developed and accredited by DGVTE to enable their students to be prepared and eligible for the official national exams.

► **Figure 3: Distribution of Students enrolled in education from Kindergarten through Grade 12 for the Scholastic Year 2022-2023 by School Provider (Source: CRDP, na)**



► **Box 5: Mandate of DGVTE in Lebanon**

As per its mandate, DGVTE (a) supervises 158 public and 259 private TVET providers, (b) organizes the TVET examination as well as the development and implementation of curricula and qualifications, (c) oversees the state examinations, (d) licenses all public and private TVET schools, institutes, and centers providing formal TVET specializations except for agriculture, and (e) accredits curricula for short training courses (non-formal training) implemented by the different stakeholders.

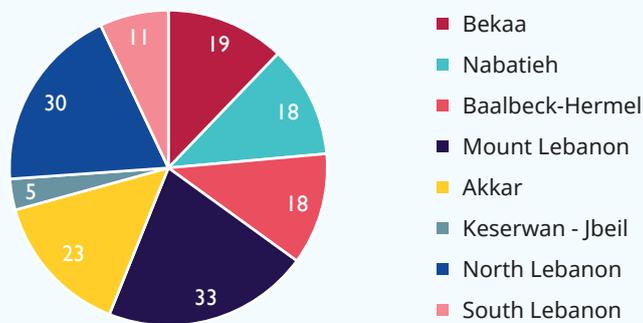
10 See recent post: <https://www.mehe.gov.lb/ar/Activities/News/Details?ItemId=2474>

According to the latest figures provided by DGVTE, for the academic year 2023-2024, public vocational and technical schools in Lebanon are offering education to 58,861 students (46.3% females and 53.7% males) while private vocational and technical schools are offering education to 48,665 students (40.2% females and 59.8% males). Figure 4 maps the distribution of public TVET providers by region. Furthermore, non-formal TVET courses have been offered by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international NGOs (INGOs) to a total of 715 youth (60.6% males and 39.4% females) at DGVTE’s centres during 2023.

Separate and apart from DGVTE, the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) is responsible for the management of 8 active technical agriculture schools and for training on agriculture and animal husbandry. Together, the schools currently enrol 216 students, of whom 31% are females and 69% males. The Extension and Agricultural Education division within MoA runs 28 agricultural centres, delivering agricultural education and training.

► **Figure 4: Distribution of Public TVET Providers by Region (Source: DGVTE, 2024)**

Mapping of Public TVET Providers by Region



Notwithstanding the existing efforts, and to address the shortfalls, in 2021, ILO, UNICEF, and the World Bank initiated the Skills Development Working Group (SDWG), bringing together key development partners in Lebanon. The SDWG comprises key actors ¹¹ and plays a critical role in addressing some of the key challenges in the skills development agenda in Lebanon as well as in ensuring better coordination and collaboration among development agencies. It is hoped that the findings of this study will provide valuable input that can further direct the work of the SDWG, especially that worldwide, TVET and youth skill building interventions have become the driving force for sustainable development. Thus, to impact economic, environmental, and social sustainable development, these systems need to be reformed, transformed, and revitalized to play a dual role: (a) providing training and career advancement opportunities for school dropouts and (b) providing skilled manpower as needed by the various levels of the economy whether in employment or self-employment.

11 ILO, UNICEF, WB, EU, KFW, USAID, AFD, IECD, GIZ, AICS, UNRWA, UNHCR, IOM and ETF

Women and gender disparities in Lebanon

The economic and financial crisis in Lebanon continues to weigh heavily on the population, creating social problems and tensions, including gender inequality and gender-based violence (GBV). Escalating living expenses coupled with widespread financial hardship have forced households to adopt detrimental coping mechanisms, with child labour and early marriage emerging as distressingly frequent practices. Other negative coping mechanisms include domestic violence and sexual exploitation.

Disturbingly, there has been a notable shift in the average age of girls entering marriage, with reports of marriages as young as 12-13 years old (Child Protection Working Group 2023). Statistics reveal a higher prevalence of boys (6.8%) engaged in child labour compared to girls (1.9%). Notably, child marriage remains particularly rampant among Syrian refugee girls, with rates rising from 20.4% in 2021 to 21.9% in 2022¹². Figures for 2023 are even higher, with the percentage of refugee girls impacted by early marriages reaching 25% of Syrian refugee girls aged between 15 and 19 years of age (VASyR, 2023).

Although one of the guiding principles of Lebanon's 3RF is gender equality and women's empowerment, to-date, women in Lebanon remain largely discriminated against and their access to education and employment is influenced by various factors and challenges, including:

- **Social Norms and Gender Inequality:** Lebanon's social norms reinforce traditional gender roles, with men expected to be breadwinners and women more often restricted to caregiving roles. This perspective is resulting in pronounced gender disparities and an imbalance that translates into tangible barriers for women, encompassing limited job opportunities, lower wages, and a hindered career advancement compared to men, notably in the absence of comprehensive family-friendly workplace policies that support women's employability and advancement. According to the Lebanon Gender Analysis Report (2021) issued by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the wage gap between Lebanese women and men with university-level or higher degrees is 20.2%, with a total gap across all education levels reaching 6,5%¹³. Furthermore, Lebanese women's participation in entrepreneurship is significantly lower, at only 16%, because women typically dominate a significant share of lower-wage positions, with a greater concentration of their employment in the public sector as opposed to the private sector where more opportunities for advancement usually exist (ESCWA, 2022). A report issued by UNDP in 2021 noted that women held 42.3% of senior and middle management positions across the public sector in 2018 and 2019, but only 26.5 % of managerial positions in the private sector in the same years¹⁴.
- **Legal framework:** Lebanese laws have historically favoured men over women, with implications for women's rights. While Lebanon's Constitution emphasizes equality, Article 9 permits religious groups to enforce their own regulations, perpetuating gender-based discrimination. This is evident in areas such as inheritance, child custody, passing citizenship to children, and commercial practices. As relevant to employment, some examples are listed below.
 - Article 26 of the **Lebanese Labour Law** states that "an employer may not discriminate against working men and women with the type of work, amount of wage or salary, employment, promotion, professional qualifications, and apparel". This at times is viewed to prohibit gender-based discrimination against women. Nevertheless, Articles 28 and 29 of the same law prohibit women from certain hazardous professions like mining, welding, and alcohol production. Additionally, the Law lacks clear mechanisms for enforcing anti-discrimination provisions and setting deterrent penalties for violations. Consequently, for instance,

“A girl does not select her major: the whole family does...”

A Female Participant in a FGD

12 European Training Foundation (2024). *Key Policy Developments in Education, Training, and Employment – Lebanon 2023*.

13 UNDP (2021). *Lebanon Gender Analysis*.

14 UNDP (2021). *The Life of Women and Men in Lebanon: A Statistical Portrait*.

15 UNFPA, UN Women, and UNDP (2018). *Gender-Related Laws, Policies and Practices in Lebanon*.

while women are legally entitled to a ten-week paid maternity leave, numerous employers disregard this provision to avoid paying for additional non-working days. Instead, they exert pressure on women, coercing them into either resigning upon pregnancy or arranging for a substitute to fulfil their duties during their absence¹⁵.

- It is true that Articles 11 and 12 of the 1942 **Code of Commerce** were amended in 2019 under Law No. 126/2019 allowing married women the full capacity to do business and to conduct the necessary business for a commercial project without interference from their husbands. Nevertheless, Article 14 of the same Code continues to discriminate against women limiting the rights of those married to the rule of their matrimonial regime (ESCWA, 2022).
- Article 31 of the **Tax Code** discriminates against married women regarding tax deductions and allowances. According to the Article, married men are entitled to tax deductions on dependent wives and up to five children. However, these benefits only apply to married women who can prove they are the head of the household due to the husband's death or inability to work¹⁶.
- Article 3 of the Legislative Decree 3950 of the **Law of Employees** and Article 46 of the **Social Security Law** give male employees and workers the right to benefit from family allowances. However, these rights are not allowed to women workers, who are denied family compensation, despite their equal contribution to the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) unless their husbands are dead or have a debilitating illness¹⁷. Article 14 of the same law discriminates against women in access to health care, hospitalization and other social benefits for their husbands. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) has proposed several amendments to the Social Security Law and specifically to Articles 14 and 46, which are pending follow-up at the Parliament.

When it comes to the legal framework and education and training, and as explained in a report issued by USAID in 2017, existing policies related to TVET education are non-discriminatory. However, they fail to provide anti-discrimination and/or anti-harassment provisions. In fact, different decrees, laws, and resolutions (e.g. Decree No. 11019 of 1968, Resolution 134/1996, and Resolution No. 115/2000) regulate training contracts, set acceptance criteria, and dictate the formation of an advisory board in TVET schools and institutions, among others. Nonetheless, all of these legal frameworks omit provisions specific to promoting gender equality and/or stipulating penalties in cases of discrimination. As a result, interviews with key informants still pointed out to the existence of gender discrimination practices at some TVET institutions, such as discouraging enrolment in non-traditional specializations for both genders in addition to scheduling certain courses exclusively in the afternoon at a time where movement restrictions on girls may be imposed by their families.

- **Access to Education:** the recent unfortunate events that hit Lebanon have created multiple challenges for students and their families in terms of access to education, affecting the enrolment and continuity of learning pathways for thousands of children and youth, among them girls.

According to the ETF Country Fiche¹⁸, data obtained from the Lebanon Education Sector on Children in Lebanon (Save the Children, 2022) revealed that for the 2020-2021 academic year, the total school-age population was around 2,018,927, of which only 1,281,881 students were enrolled in education revealing an access gap experienced by both genders. Additional statistics indicate a more pronounced disparity for female students. For instance, during the academic year 2022-2023, there were 1,079,048 students enrolled in general education across 2,780 public and non-public schools. Female participation averaged at 50.6%, but varied significantly, ranging from a low of 38.8% in Grade 12 Science sections to a high of 73.42% in Grade 12 Literature and Humanities sections¹⁹.

16 UNFPA, UN Women, and UNDP (2018). *Gender-Related Laws, Policies and Practices in Lebanon*.

17 *ibid*

18 European Training Foundation (2024). *Key Policy Developments in Education, Training, and Employment – Lebanon 2023*.

19 Center for Educational Research and Development (CRDP). *Statistical Bulletin 2022-2023*.

Similarly, the latest figures from DGVTE for the academic year 2023-2024 indicate the enrolment of 107,526 students in both public and private TVET, with a higher enrolment of males (40.2% female enrolment rate at private providers as opposed to 59.8% male enrolment and 46.3% female enrolment at public providers as opposed to 53.7% male enrolment). This is a slight increase from the total number of enrolments recorded in 2021/2022 of 99,106 students, with still a higher enrolment for males (40.3% female enrolment rate at private providers as opposed to 59.7% male enrolment, and 44.5% female enrolment at public providers as opposed to 55.5% male enrolment).

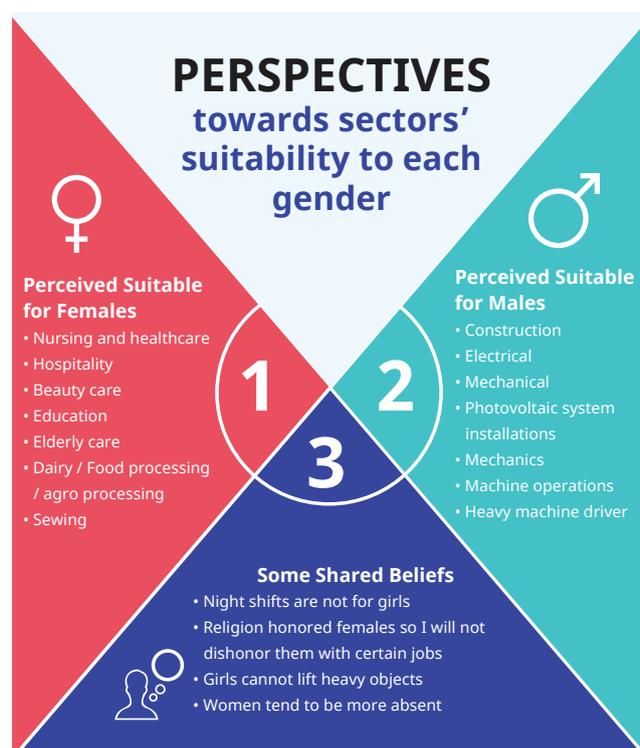
As per the ETF (2024) report, there are no available statistics to monitor the progress of graduates in education and training, and no structured surveys are being carried out to track the transition from school to work. Nevertheless, it is clear that many young women within the education system do not fully utilize TVET opportunities and tend to restrict themselves to more conventional skill sets and career paths. For example, for the scholastic year 2023/ 2024, figures provided by DGVTE reveal that 99% of students enrolled in public TVET Primary Education and 73% of those enrolled in Nursing were females. On the other hand, 99% of students enrolled in public TVET studying Industrial Manufacturing or Electromechanics were males. Similar percentages are reflected when considering numbers provided by private TVET providers registered with the DGVTE.

Irrevocably, efforts to encourage the entry of males into female-dominated fields and females into male-dominated fields are constrained and depend heavily on the willingness of principals and teachers to facilitate participation in various TVET specializations for both genders, without a clearly defined official policy. As a result, the choice of specialization results from parental advice, personal preference, and the advice of the institute (USAID, 2017).

- **Labour Force Participation:** Women's participation in the formal labour force is lower compared to men, with many women in Lebanon engaged in informal or unpaid work, such as caregiving and household tasks. A 2021 report jointly released by the World Bank and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) highlighted the considerable challenges faced by Lebanese women in the labour market.

The Labour Force and Household Conditions Survey conducted in 2018 and 2019 by the Central Administration of Statistics in collaboration with the ILO showed that a mere 29.3% of Lebanese women were found to be formally employed, starkly contrasting with the formal labour force participation rate for men, which stood at 70.4%. The report underscored the likelihood of unemployment, lower earnings, and unfavourable working conditions that women in Lebanon confront compared to their male counterparts, shedding light on the pressing need for targeted efforts to enhance women's economic participation (ESCWA, 2022). As such, it is no surprise that Lebanon ranked 132 out of 156 countries in 2021 on the Global Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum. The published study cited an "assessment conducted by the World Bank and the former Office of the Minister of State for Women's Affairs in 2017 revealing that Lebanese women were twice as likely as men to be unemployed, work in unfavourable conditions and receive lower pay and profit".

► **Figure 5: Perspectives and Quotes Collected from KIIs and FGDs**



- **Occupational Segregation:** Occupational segregation remains a prominent issue for women in Lebanon where they continue to face underrepresentation in higher-paying and leadership roles in traditionally male-dominated fields. This phenomenon contributes to the low engagement of Lebanese women in entrepreneurship, standing at 16%, as they tend to be more involved in traditional jobs rather than pursuing self-employment. Even before the economic crisis, women in Lebanon confronted limited access to financial assistance for small business development, with only 3% of bank loans directed toward female entrepreneurs despite their ownership of over 30% of micro and small businesses in Lebanon (USAID, 2019). The concentration of women in lower-paying positions within the service sector, particularly in industries like banking, education, healthcare, and tourism, is exacerbated by limited family-friendly workplace policies and the persistence of a system that favours men. Despite women attaining higher educational qualifications, the ongoing wage disparity, where women earn only 71% of what men earn for similar occupations, highlights deep-rooted systemic inequities (ESCWA, 2022). This is impacting both women's employability and career progress. As a result, according to ILO (2022), the largest change in the share of employment in the case of women occurred in "Elementary Occupations", which fell drastically from 27.4% in 2018-2019 to 13.6% in 2022. Furthermore, for "Managers", the share of female employment decreased from 4.8% in 2018-2019 to 1.7% in 2022.

Disparities become wider in rural areas where societal expectations more often confine women to caregiving roles. Exploitation and discrimination persist in the informal sector, where 31% of workers are women, lacking formal recognition and social protections. The absence of coverage under the Labour Law leaves these informal workers without benefits such as social security.

When it comes to trade unions, and although women exhibit more active participation in traditional sectors, achieving leadership positions continues to pose challenges for them. For instance, despite constituting 79% of the teachers' syndicate, only one out of 12 council members is a woman (ESCWA, 2022).

- **Violence and Harassment:** Women continue to be disproportionately affected by gender-based violence and harassment including sexual harassment in Lebanon. Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a concern as well, and efforts are being exerted to address domestic violence and improve legal protection for women. In April 2014, the country took a significant step by enacting the Domestic Violence Law (Law No. 293) to protect women and family members from abuse within their homes. However, a notable challenge continued to arise from a provision within the law stipulating that, in cases of conflicting content between this legislation and personal status laws, the latter takes precedence. This provision introduces a problematic cycle where the interpretation and application of the law depend on the discretion of judges in religious courts who continue to wield substantial influence in defining and adjudicating domestic violence cases, leading to potential inconsistencies and limitations in legal protections. Thus, as Lebanon battles with addressing gender-based violence, a critical focus on ensuring the efficacy of legal frameworks and overcoming challenges tied to religious courts becomes imperative for fostering a safer environment for women.

When it comes to TVET, research conducted by USAID (2017) concluded that there is no evidence of sexual harassment in institutions; however, harassment incidents usually happened to female students as they commuted back and forth. Yet, formal reporting policies are non-existent. As to the workplace, the Lebanese Labour Law does not address sexual harassment. Law No. 205 of the Penal Code, issued in December 2020, criminalizes sexual harassment, doubling punishment if the victim is an employee. Nevertheless, the legislation falls short because it addresses sexual harassment as a crime without setting preventive measures.

- **Refugee and Displaced Women:** Lebanon hosts a significant number of refugees and displaced persons, including Syrians and Palestinians. According to figures posted by UNHCR in December 2023, 784,884 displaced Syrians reside in Lebanon, with 51.8% of them being females ²⁰. UNRWA figures of 2022 show the registration of 487,660 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, with around 50.2% being females ²¹. Both Syrian and Palestinian women confront discrimination in accessing employment and basic services based on their refugee/ displacement status, gender, and socioeconomic background, leaving them vulnerable to various forms of exploitation, and driving them to work in the informal labour market especially that the 1946 Labour Law restricts certain professions to Lebanese only. Furthermore, the law safeguards worker rights but leaves informal workers unprotected, lacking penalties for violations and potentially discouraging women from reporting unfair conditions (ESCWA, 2022).

The classification of Syrian refugees as displaced individuals by Lebanese authorities denies them essential rights, such as the right to work, perpetuating their vulnerability, and impacting both men and women. As the Syrian crisis worsened and the number of Syrian refugees increased in Lebanon, the pre-existing bilateral agreement between Lebanon and Syria was suspended and the economic activity of Syrians in Lebanon became regulated by the framework governing Syrian residence in Lebanon and the Ministry of Labour decrees restricting Syrians to work in agriculture, construction, and sanitation only ²². To date, barriers to the formal labour market, compounded by residency permit requirements, further impede their employment prospects and career advancement, particularly in rural areas where inadequate security measures expose them to exploitation.

As for Palestinians, and while there have been some positive developments, such as a 2005 memorandum granting Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (PRL) work permits for previously excluded occupations, numerous restrictions persist, impacting over 30 professions. A Ministry of Labour (MoL) decision in December 2021 allowed certain categories of PRL to work in occupations overseen by Lebanese trade unions. Nevertheless, limitations persist, and PRL continue to be denied the right to practice liberal professions requiring syndicate membership. Furthermore, the amendments made to the Labour Law and Social Security Law in 2010, with the intention of abolishing reciprocity principles and work permit fees, lack precise decrees for their implementation. This leaves the application of these amendments at the discretion of current and future ministers. Consequently, many PRL workers contribute to the NSSF without receiving corresponding benefits, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive reforms to address the multifaceted challenges faced by refugees, including women in Lebanon.

While the above pose challenges to both men and women, women face additional challenges compounded by the absence of laws promoting gender equality and providing them with support in both the formal and informal employment sectors.

When it comes to their education, a study published by AUB in 2019 highlighted that overall funding for refugee education in general has been falling short year after year with funding still focused on primary education. Simultaneously, vocational education, which is often more affordable, lacks data and quality interventions and as such is not viewed as a desirable pathway for youth in general, including female youth.

- **Women with Disabilities:** In 2000, Lebanon introduced Law No. 220 to address the Rights of Individuals with Disabilities, predating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted in 2006. Despite mandating that both public and private employers with over 60 employees allocate a minimum of 3% of their workforce to individuals with disabilities, minimal progress has been made in implementing required

Integrating women into the workforce is equally challenged by the obstacles they face in acquiring job market skills.

20 Retrieved from: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/71>

21 Retrieved from <https://www.unrwa.org/what-we-do/unrwa-statistics-bulletin>

22 LEADERS Consortium (n.d.). Dignity at Stake: *Challenges to Accessing Decent Work in Lebanon*.

regulatory decrees, policies, and budget allocations (ESCWA, 2022). Additionally, Law 220/2000 adopts a "charity" perspective towards disability, defining it as a "diminished or impaired capacity" that emphasizes limitations rather than focusing on capabilities (ILO, 2013). As a result, the law's enforcement has been constrained due to the non-appearance of penalties, the absence of a comprehensive action plan, and the overall lack of coordination among ministries, impacting the employability of persons with disability. As a result, the responsibility of caring for them is placed upon their families and communities, reflecting a welfare-oriented approach to disability (ILO, 2013).

Concurrently, the prevailing societal norms in Lebanon continue to present additional challenges, particularly affecting the economic participation of women with disabilities. The Director of the Centre for Lebanese Studies underscores that the difficulty of integrating women with disabilities into the workforce is not primarily due to the lack of legal frameworks but stems from the social isolation they experience, hindering their acquisition of crucial job market skills and resulting in a significant gap between job applicants with disabilities and those without (ESCWA, 2022). In fact, barriers preventing persons with disabilities from obtaining satisfactory employment are multifaceted, encompassing social, economic, cultural, and political dimensions. These hindrances include negative attitudes, disparities in accessing education, physically inaccessible buildings, insufficient access to information, challenges related to inaccessible transportation, a shortage of assistive devices and support services, issues tied to low self-esteem and overly protective family dynamics, the absence of a supportive legal framework, and a lack of policy support (ILO, 2013).

When employed, persons with disabilities in Lebanon often find themselves in low-skilled positions with limited income and few prospects for career advancement, as the dominant occupations typically do not provide sufficient income for a decent standard of living (ILO, 2013). When it comes to women with disabilities, dual discrimination is faced, starting with gender bias within families. A study by Wehbi and Lakkis (2010) revealed that societal expectations often confine the roles of girls to marriage and childbearing, which are at times perceived as unattainable for women with disabilities, pushing them to lifelong dependence and hindering personal growth. Legal instruments such as Article 6 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ILO Convention No. 159, and ILO Recommendation No. 168 acknowledge the occurrence of multiple discrimination against women and girls with disabilities, emphasizing the need for measures to guarantee their complete and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms (ILO, 2013).

The multifaceted challenges faced by women with disabilities in Lebanon highlight the pressing need for comprehensive reforms addressing legal frameworks, societal norms, and economic inclusion. With their absence, the fact remains that in Lebanon, there are several gender related obstacles to learning for girls and women with disabilities. These barriers include, but are not limited to fear of stigma, bullying, patriarchal concerns and fear of people's judgements, and restricted access to public schools (limited educational materials, lack of staff training, inaccessible school buildings...). In a study published by Abaad in January 2022, 150 women with disabilities all around Lebanon were surveyed of which 36% had no education and merely 5% had technical training. From the rest, 2% had non-formal education or training and only 17% attended elementary school, 17% completed Brevet (middle school), 7% underwent Baccalaureate II (high school), 11% attended university graduate, and merely 5% studied at post-graduate level. Yet, 85 % of the sample demographics was unemployed irrespective of their educational status ²³.

23 Feghali, Jay (2022). "The Status of Women with Disabilities in Lebanon: A Snapshot of Socio-Political and Economic Impacts from an Intersectional Lens."

- ▶ **Sexual Harassment:** The recognition of sexual harassment as a legally and administratively punishable offense in the Lebanese legal system only occurred in December 2020. Before this date, incidents falling under this category were addressed using a combination of administrative and penal articles, often leaving the victim without compensation or protection, while the perpetrator remained free. The newly enacted Law 205 addresses sexual harassment, emphasizing a comprehensive approach across legislative, organizational, social, and educational dimensions. Legislative measures involve integration into existing laws like the Labour Code, emphasizing the victims' right and ability to legally document evidence. While this can be seen as a step forward in enhancing safety and protection in public institutions, workplaces, and personal spaces, the enactment of this law did not come with the establishment of a concrete complaint mechanism within public institutions and local authority representatives. Thus, to move forward, despite advancements, there are still gaps in the law that require attention for meaningful change.

▶ **Box 6: Summary of Factors Influencing Women's Access to Education and Employment in Lebanon**

Women in Lebanon remain largely discriminated against and their access to education and employment is influenced by:

- ▶ Social limitations in terms of job opportunities, wages, and career advancement.
- ▶ Unsupportive legal provisions.
- ▶ A participation in TVET oriented to more traditional skills.
- ▶ A labour force participation oriented towards informal and/ or unpaid work and marked by underrepresentation in higher-paying and leadership roles.
- ▶ The lack of preventive measures in cases of harassment or GBV experienced in the workplace or in TVET institutions.
- ▶ Weak support towards enrolling refugee women in education beyond primary levels.

► Gender gaps and gender-based occupational Segregation in TVET system

Having adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, Lebanon is actively engaged in launching contributions towards the advancement of these SDGs and Agenda 2030. Among the SDGs, the fourth SDG on education urges member States to “ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning”. It further specifies that “equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education” is to be provided by 2030, alongside “substantially increasing the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship”²⁴. Despite contributions and efforts, and although women make up a majority of trainees in some TVET concentrations, their overall participation in STEM-oriented TVET specializations is minimal, reinforced by occupational segregation in many technical occupations. In fact, women-oriented skills development programs often perpetuate traditional gender roles, offering training in industries typically associated with women, such as sewing and handicrafts, which often come with lower wages and poorer working conditions. Moreover, business development programs frequently neglect the specific issues faced by women in business (ILO, 2008). Furthermore, Lebanon’s legal and policy structures related to gender equality continue to depict considerable gaps due to the influence of personal-status laws. These gaps impact the unequal distribution of household assets and hinder women’s capacity to exploit political and economic opportunities. Furthermore, inconsistencies in comprehension and enforcement of gender equality laws persist (USAID, 2019).

Zooming further into education and work, studies reveal that many public and private institutions continue to neglect gender-sensitive approaches in curricula, impacting the attainment of equal opportunities for females in the workforce (USAID, 2019). Cultural norms reinforcing traditional gender distinctions further limit individuals’ capacity to participate in nontraditional jobs, placing a dual burden on women challenging these norms (USAID, 2019). The Social Impact’s Performance Management and Support Program’s gender analysis of Lebanon’s education system, with a focus on TVET, uncovered gender insensitivity in the Public Schools Rules of Procedures governing TVET schools, revealing instances of discrimination and sexual harassment during commutes, exacerbated by inadequate staff training programs (USAID, 2017). Gender stereotypes influencing career choices limit options for both male and female students, with societal perceptions contributing to stigmatization, particularly for females in TVET. Efforts to challenge stereotypes lack support, and extracurricular activities are biased towards males, reflecting deeply ingrained gender roles in Lebanese society (USAID, 2017).

MEHE and DGVTE lack official guidance on how TVET programs can promote gender equality within specializations. Refugee youth encounter additional difficulties, and the broader challenges facing TVET and education for refugees highlight the need for comprehensive reforms to address gender disparities and create inclusive environments. As a result, when it comes to female participation in TVET, it remains lower than males notably in some specializations traditionally perceived to be more suitable for males, partly because females face more significant challenges in entering the labour force. A comparison of male-to-female enrolment rates for the academic year 2023/ 2024 for some specializations is shown in the below chart (Figure 6). Overall enrolment figures showed that 56.4% of those enrolled in TVET for the year 2023/ 2024 were males and 43.6% were females. Male enrolment was higher than that of females at both public and private TVET providers (59.8% male enrolment and 53.7% male enrolment respectively). Male enrolment was also higher in non-formal TVET provided by NGOs and INGOs at DGVTE centers where during 2023 433 males and 282 females were enrolled in short courses varying to include electricity installation, mechanics,

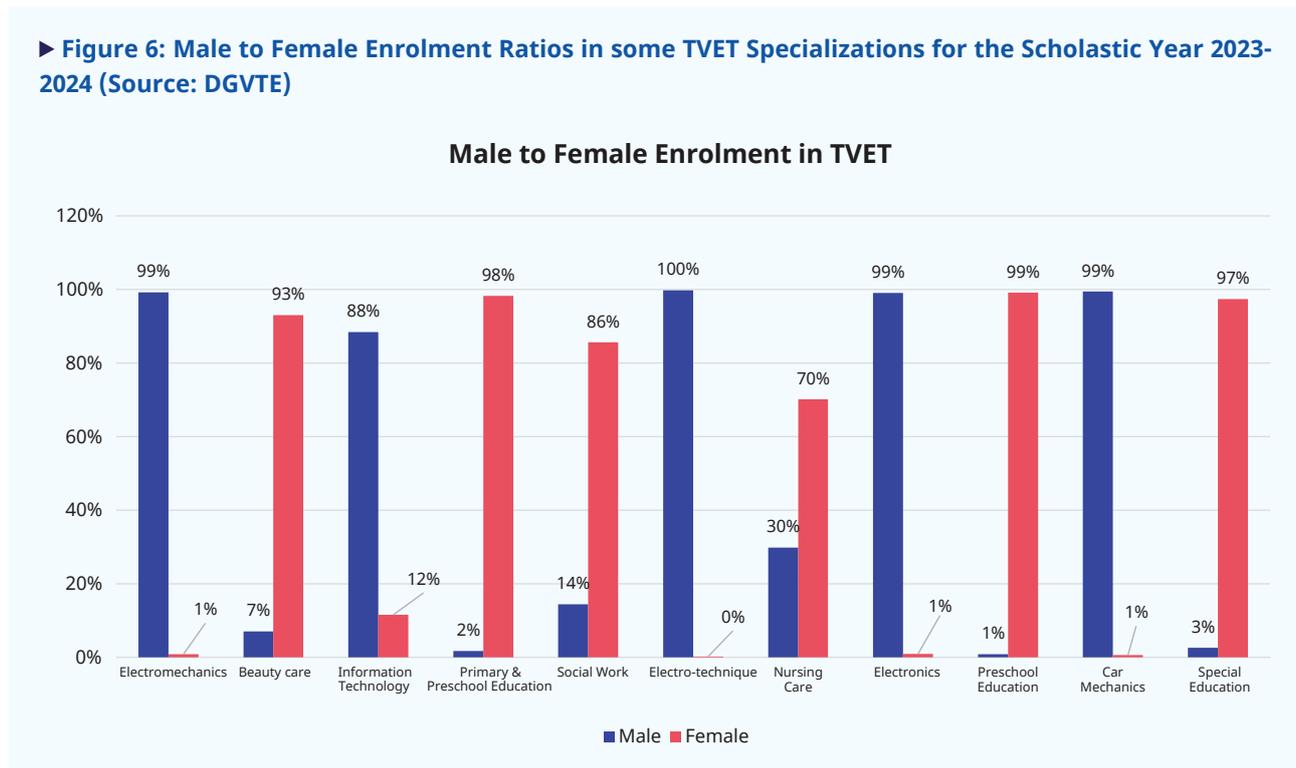
► I studied plumbing, but after graduating, I found no one willing to employ a female plumber. I feel I wasted my time...

A TVET Female Graduate

24 UN Sustainable Development as cited in UNICEF and ILO (2018).

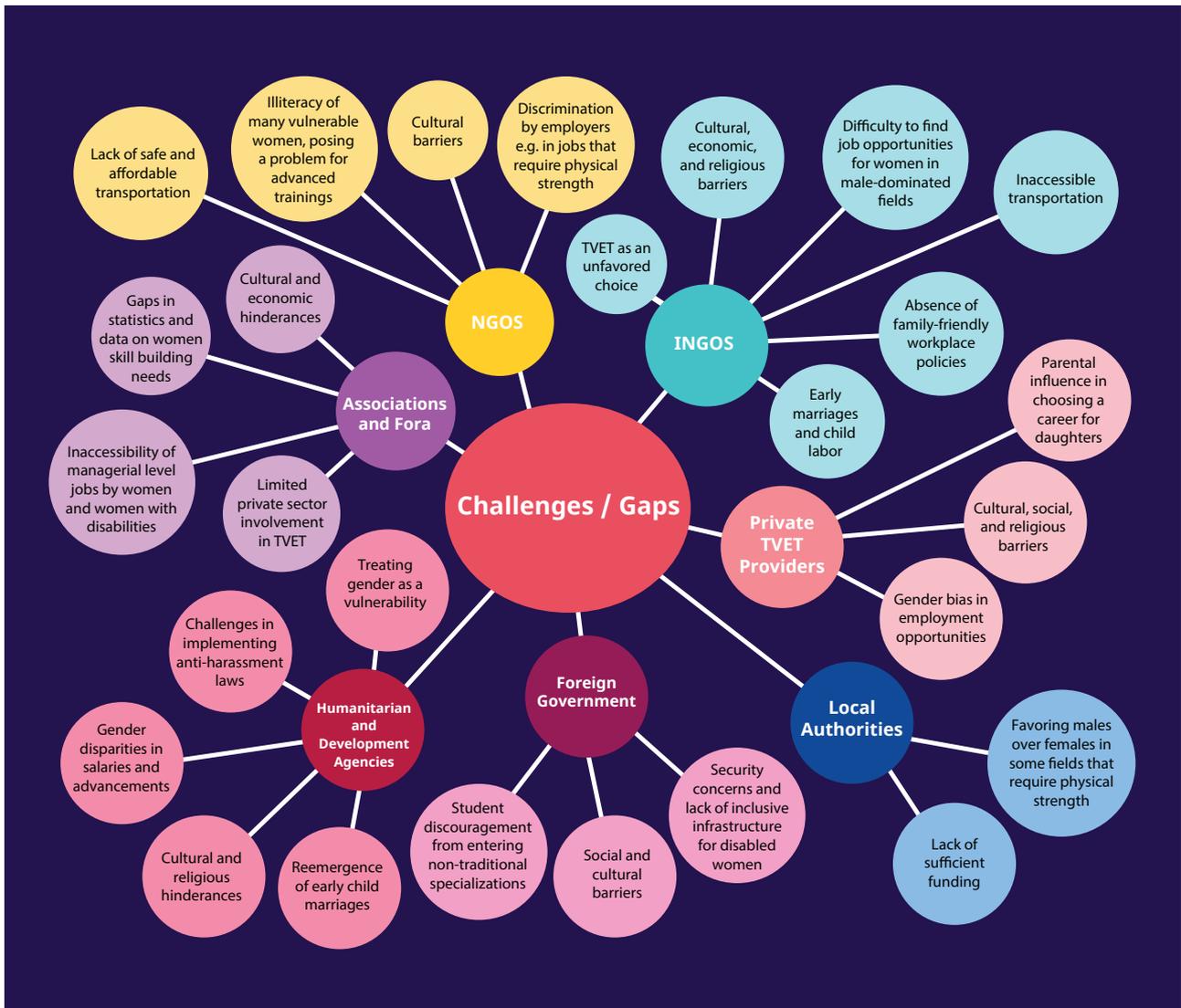
computer maintenance, mobile phone maintenance, sewing, carpentry/ cabinet making, and cheese production, among others. Despite these figures, success stories have been recorded demonstrating that females (including refugee females) can participate in traditionally male-dominated occupations (ILO, 2011, as cited in ILO, 2019) if the program is able to offer them a guaranteed access to the labour market. This finding was affirmed by several key informant interviews (KIIs) held as well as by figures shared by DGVTE where for example 10 females and 2 males were enrolled in a painting course and 10 females and 5 males were enrolled in a CCTV installation course offered by NGOs at DGVTE's schools during 2023. Other nontraditional courses that witnessed female enrolment, even if at lower percentages, included photovoltaic installation, electrical installation, computer maintenance, and mobile phone maintenance.

► **Figure 6: Male to Female Enrolment Ratios in some TVET Specializations for the Scholastic Year 2023-2024 (Source: DGVTE)**



The literature concludes that many gaps persist in Lebanon impeding gender mainstreaming. A summary of these gaps is presented in Figure 7 as articulated by consulted stakeholders.

► **Figure 7: Main Challenges and Gaps as Identified by the Different Consulted Stakeholders**



► Practices, lessons learnt, and Recommendations

Developing a gender-responsive and inclusive TVET sector necessitates the implementation of institutional-level gender mainstreaming and inclusion policies that work to promote equity, affirmative action, and diversity within the TVET sector, recognizing the significance of diverse perspectives in decision-making processes. Integrating gender equality into the learning processes is considered essential for creating a more equitable educational landscape. Simultaneously, to further enhance the TVET sector, focus should be placed on initiatives such as strengthening capacity building, promoting career development, and improving access, enrolment, retention, and transition opportunities for both women and men. This includes establishing a secure and safe learning environment and advocating for gender-responsive budgeting within TVET institutions to promote financial fairness. The emphasis on cooperation and linkages between TVET institutions and industry partners, as well as data utilization for evidence-based decision-making, would further underscore the comprehensive nature of such initiatives.

In efforts to promote gender mainstreaming into TVET in Bangladesh, the ILO and the EU issued a Resource Guide that provides practical tools and information comprised of ten main steps presented to the right. The guide is provided with the understanding that TVET institutes will adapt the guidelines according to their specific needs and utilize them to attain the objectives outlined in their national strategy. These steps are in fact general enough to be applied to any context and specifically provide support to any TVET institution implementing any TVET program to ensure that gender is mainstreamed all throughout. Unfortunately, in Lebanon, similar steps are currently not being applied by either public or private TVET institutions whereby no gender-based situational mapping is taking place other than the very first step whereby the ratio of male to female students' enrolment across specializations is being calculated with no specific measures taken to address the gaps. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that some NGOs and INGOs are implementing specific TVET programs, such as those in the field of construction, with focus on ensuring equitable male-to-female participation. On the

level of DGVTE, and although the new National Strategic Framework 2024-2028 has not yet been officially launched, the Directorate intends to commit to the introduction of reasonable adaptation to make all TVET centres, schools, and institutions inclusive to all, including out-of-school children, irrespective of age, gender, nationality, religion, or disability. Furthermore, actions outlined under its strategic objectives will encompass training teachers, directors, and administrative staff on the provision of gender-sensitive and inclusive education as well as implementing a nationwide awareness campaign to increase awareness towards TVET potential, integrating gender-sensitive messages.

► Box 7: Ten Steps to Initiate Gender Mainstreaming in TVET Institutions – Bangladesh

- Step 1:** Begin with a gender-based situational mapping of the institution.
- Step 2:** Analyze data, undertake causal analysis and identify gender gaps.
- Step 3:** Chart out an Initial Tentative Gender Action Plan.
- Step 4:** Conduct a gender analysis of the Training Programme Cycle.
- Step 5:** Set up social campaigning guidelines and promotional measures for attracting female students.
- Step 6:** Establish and strengthen gender responsive strategic partnerships.
- Step 7:** Strengthen staff capacity on gender issues and establish a Gender Mainstreaming Unit or Network.
- Step 8:** Carry out a gender budgeting exercise.
- Step 9:** Set up research and documentation units.
- Step 10:** Plan for a Participatory Gender Audit (PGA) OR Finalize the Gender Action Plan.

Practices and lessons learnt

The connection between education, skills development, and the labour market is profoundly intertwined and cannot be overlooked or isolated. The three factors are intricately linked, with each playing a pivotal role in shaping and influencing the others, underscoring the need for a holistic approach to address them collectively. Advancements in technology have also amplified the necessity for advanced skills in areas such as science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and information and communication technology among both highly-skilled and skilled professionals. These needs aren't limited to high-tech sectors but also resonate across various industries, including service-oriented and customer-centric domains and are gender neutral and often nationality neutral. Furthermore, the challenges posed by climate change and the shift towards a sustainable economy bring forth new job roles and skillset requirements, emphasizing the significance of preserving and upgrading current competencies. Consultations with key stakeholders have revealed that organizations that have invested in programs targeted towards such skills

► **Figure 8: A Proposed Successful Model**



have reported success in increasing the possibility of achieving gender equity in both skills development and the respective access to the labour market. Figure 8 presents a model that has been reported to be a best practice, while Table 1 presents best practices and lessons learnt as clustered by the different consulted stakeholders.

▶ **Table 1: Overview of Best Practices and Lessons Learnt Provided by Key Stakeholders Consulted**

Best Practices
INGOs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Public-private partnerships: Collaborative ventures uniting private and public sector entities have demonstrated effectiveness by enhancing educational results, bridging resource gaps, and aligning education with market demands. ▶ TVET collaboration with the private sector: Partnerships with the private sector (a) enhance training effectiveness by helping understand employers' needs, (b) paves the way for future opportunities by identifying skill sets required by the labour market, and (c) helps communicate to overcome employers' concerns in employing females in specific industries. Success has been documented in promoting women's employability when the cycle begins with the employers, studying their needs, and tweaking and revising TVET offerings depending on their requirements. ▶ Skills development: Integrating digital and marketing skills and fostering entrepreneurship can overcome cultural restrictions impeding women's access to the labour market. ▶ Support services and conducive environments: Providing holistic support services, such as protection facilities, cash assistance, and child-friendly spaces is crucial to enable mothers to participate in skills development and/ or employment. ▶ Deliberate gender mainstreaming: Ensuring gender mainstreaming and sensitivity across all project components that address both males and females enhances success. This should be done with the aid of specialists who are trained to address the specific concerns of diverse communities. ▶ Encouraging shared decision making: Involving both males and females from the same household side by side in trainings empowers families and accentuates the female role. ▶ Continuous monitoring: Regularly assessing progress on gender mainstreaming and adapting interventions based on feedback helps uphold standards and maximize impact.
NGOs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Tailored courses: Offering courses that are tailored to the needs of employers and women simultaneously ensures relevance and effectiveness. ▶ Vulnerability approach: Adopting a vulnerability approach recognizes the diverse needs of different beneficiaries and guarantees due focus on women and their needs. ▶ Collaboration with the private sector: Building partnerships with the private sector enables the provision of work-based learning that can accommodate the needs of females for increased participation. ▶ Collaboration with the public sector: Collaborating with ministries complements training initiatives, gives credibility, and expands reach, encouraging both male and female youth to enrol. ▶ Accessibility: Implementing training programs in various regions across the country ensures accessibility to female trainees who might face restrictions to commute. ▶ Holistic approach: Projects that include cash-for-work and scholarships for women promote skills acquisition and holistic empowerment. This is easier to achieve in partnerships with international NGOs and donors who share the same belief. ▶ Rights-based approach: Dedicated programs that raises awareness through community engagement and capacity building promote gender equality as part of human rights.

Best Practices

Humanitarian and Development Agencies ²⁵

- **Inclusive recruitment practices:** Imposing recruitment criteria that prioritizes the inclusion of persons with disabilities in women-focused projects helps set an example to be followed by NGOs and local communities. Moreover, providing flexible work arrangements and gender-responsive policies demonstrates a holistic approach to promoting gender equity in employment and in programming.
- **Gender diversity in digital training:** Focusing on increasing female participation in coding and digital training programs highlights efforts to address gender disparities in tech-related fields. By closing the gap in expertise, a more balanced and inclusive tech industry can be promoted.
- **Commitment to gender mainstreaming and sensitivity:** Requiring partners to disaggregate beneficiaries in program design, ensuring an equitable distribution of beneficiaries and thereafter necessitating that they report on actual numbers reached demonstrates a commitment to promoting inclusivity and diversity. Furthermore, providing gender mainstreaming support and capacity building to both public and private institutions drives positive change and advocates for gender-responsive practices and policies.
- **Supporting feminist initiatives:** Collaborating with and supporting feminist initiatives demonstrates a commitment to advancing women's rights and gender equality in Lebanon, bringing these topics to the forefront of ongoing discussions and interventions.
- **Engaging in advocacy actions:** Addressing discrimination in various sectors can be gradually achieved through advocating for policy and legislative reforms.
- **Gender as cross-cutting:** Addressing gender as a cross-cutting issue provides a valuable opportunity and recognizes its importance across all sectors, including skills development.
- **Starting early on:** Collaborating with academia and local ministries to provide career guidance and orientation at schools helps overcome preconceptions and biases and supports the provision of equitable opportunities for all.

Foreign Governments ²⁶

- **Post-training support:** Facilitating internship opportunities for females graduates of non-traditional specializations through partnerships with the private sector promotes employability and helps overcome stereotypes. This requires prior collaboration with a diverse range of businesses who offer internships in sectors identified as in need of workers.
- **Skills development for graduates:** Upskilling graduate females is equally important to ensure that they have an up-to-date skill set as required by the market.
- **Addressing gender barriers:** Recognizing and addressing barriers facing women, such as security concerns, promote women's participation in skills building and employment. This can be realized by engaging husbands and other male family members to create a supportive environment at program initiation and gradually transitioning to working with females independently after trust is built.

Local Authorities

- **On-the-job training:** Implementing on-the-job training opportunities throughout and in parallel to the academic education fosters practical skills development among students. This has enabled many women to open their own businesses. It works best when done in partnership with employers and when incentives are offered to encourage participation of both employers and students.
- **Connectivity and networking:** Public agencies play an important role in connecting job seekers with the labour market. This works when public agencies maintain contact with the private sector and a roster of job seekers.
- **Focal Points:** Having gender focal points within public institutions promotes networking and collective actions.
- **Local collaborations:** Collaborating with NGOs to provide training and certification programs addressing local skills gaps and labour market needs enhances employability of both genders, including females.

²⁵ Such agencies include UN and EU agencies.

²⁶ Such as USAID.

Best Practices

Private TVET Providers

- ▶ **Flexible course offerings:** Course offerings that are based on demand while retaining the flexibility to provide accommodation as needed encourage female participation. These courses should remain agile and adaptable to enhance relevance to evolving market needs.
- ▶ **Student guidance:** Students need assistance in making informed decisions about their educational path, particularly those opting for TVET. Here an opportunity lies for providers to guide females towards specializations aligned with their skills and strengths and which are at the same time needed by the market.
- ▶ **Focus on livelihood:** Trainings provided to all students and notable females should maintain focus on livelihood. Economic empowerment via technical trainings have proven success in promoting the livelihoods and independence of females.

Associations and Fora

- ▶ **Women participation and representation:** Establishing women taskforces enhances the participation and representation of women. Involving influential women leaders from various industries enables the taskforce to effectively work towards achieving gender equality targets. Concurrently, it underscores a commitment to promote diversity and inclusivity.
- ▶ **Equipping women with additional skills:** Providing women with mediation skills empowers them to navigate and resolve workplace conflicts.

Lessons Learnt

INGOs

- ▶ **Engage with the private sector:** Merely networking with the private sector isn't sufficient; active engagement is crucial. Thus, it is crucial to consult with employers to understand evolving job needs and skill requirements across sectors. This dynamic engagement ensures that training programs stay relevant and up-to-date and increases the employability of graduates whether males or females.
- ▶ **Recognize diverse educational goals:** Approaches must be tailored to address diverse educational aspirations, acknowledging that not all participants seek traditional employment outcomes, especially that the primary purpose of some girls at times is not employment.
- ▶ **Adapt to changing contexts:** It is important to stay adaptable to changing circumstances and modify program plans and activities based on evolving situations. This renders the programs more appealing for both males and females.
- ▶ **Address area-specific challenges:** Acknowledge that female participation and barriers vary based on geographical location, cultural norms, and religious influences. As such, interventions must be tailored to address area-specific challenges and foster environments of acceptance and inclusivity.
- ▶ **Start with gender analysis:** Initiating interventions with a thorough gender analysis helps understand the specific context and dynamics at play. This analysis would then better inform targeted outreach strategies and program design, ensuring that skills building and employability interventions are sensitive to gender dynamics and needs.

Lessons Learnt

NGOs

- **Consider literacy levels and training suitability:** It is important to recognize that the most vulnerable individuals, who are often illiterate, may face barriers in accessing advanced training programs such as coding or programming. To this end, training offerings should be tailored to the literacy levels and capabilities of the target population. This will help women from different backgrounds improve their skills to their capacity and become more employable.
- **Consider local specificities in assessing markets:** Market assessments should consider local specificities rather than solely reflecting national-level trends. Community-level insights are crucial in designing relevant TVET programs that meet the needs of the local labour market and is a prerequisite to achieve gender equality.
- **Link TVET to the labour market:** Addressing the disparity between TVET programs and the labour market is essential, particularly given its disproportionate impact on females.
- **Allow sufficient time for project maturity and outreach:** Providing adequate time for projects to mature and establish effective outreach strategies increases success. Attainment requires time and effort to achieve meaningful impact, and proper outreach is crucial for engagement and acceptance.
- **Address social perceptions and awareness:** While training providers may be supportive, social attitudes impact participation. Thus, efforts to raise awareness and change perceptions are essential.
- **Recognize gender differences in preferences and engagement:** Females may show greater interest in education, making them more receptive to training initiatives, while males may require additional financial incentives to participate in skills building interventions.

Humanitarian and Development Agencies

- **Recognize female perspectives towards TVET:** Females often associate TVET with vocational work and may not be attracted to the specializations offered. It is crucial to study and understand their perspectives to tailor programs that appeal to them as well as to know how to present programs to them.
- **Link projects for impact and sustainability:** Coordination and integration among projects is crucial to achieve greater impact. By linking various initiatives, such as small business training and internships, a more comprehensive approach can be adopted to address the needs and concerns of women.
- **Avoid treating gender as a disability:** Cultural mindsets that perceive gender as a limitation must be challenged to be able to recognize women's capabilities and potentials.
- **Cater for social dynamics:** Crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic downturn exacerbate social challenges, particularly among vulnerable populations. Gender equality cannot be achieved without catering for such dynamics in programming.
- **Employ a bottom-up approach:** Bottom-up approaches are more successful when it comes to tackling gender issues as they provide more accurate and realistic insight into the concerns of females as well as the constraints they face on the ground.
- **Gender sensitive curriculum and training:** Prioritizing gender sensitivity in curriculum development, training, and program implementation helps address stereotypes and thus promote female participation in non-traditional sectors.

Lessons Learnt

Foreign Governments

- ▶ **Flexibility:** Flexibility is needed when it comes to scheduling courses and activities to accommodate women's other obligations and hence increase their participation.
- ▶ **Address security concerns:** Acknowledging and addressing security concerns felt by women or immediate family members and that may hinder women's participation in certain activities increases participation.
- ▶ **Media campaigning:** Launching wide-scale media campaigns aimed at changing societal perceptions towards vocational training is important and relevant but requires patience and time. Gender sensitive messages must be embedded into such campaigns.

Local Authorities

- ▶ **Mentorship for advancement:** Encouraging the formation of support networks among female employees, where experienced mentors can guide and support newly recruited female managers, foster success and women empowerment in the workplace.
- ▶ **Parental engagement:** Engaging directly with parents to communicate the benefits of having their daughters enroll in non-conventional programs can increase female participation in non-traditional vocations.
- ▶ **Community awareness:** Fields such as mechanics and construction present challenges for female employment due to physical demands and societal perceptions. Raising the awareness of the surrounding community is needed to overcome resistance.
- ▶ **Quotas in gender:** Enforcing quotas may not effectively address gender disparities, as evident in both employment and political representation of women. While quotas may create opportunities, they do not always result in substantive change or long-term equality.

Private TVET Providers

- ▶ **Awareness raising:** Females still face challenges in the labour market due to prevailing cultural norms. Therefore, there is a need to raise awareness of parents as well as the surrounding community. Equally important is addressing perceptions and promoting greater acceptance of female participation in non-traditional fields to overcome cultural barriers.
- ▶ **Gender-sensitive delivery:** Delivering courses in a gender-sensitive manner requires curriculum revision and update. This should be done with specialists' support.
- ▶ **Sharing successes:** Sharing success stories of women who are succeeding in non-traditional jobs encourages other females to follow suit, and those promotes gender equality targets.
- ▶ **Educational guidance:** Educational guidance is very important before choosing a specialization, and more so for girls. A special unit must be set up to provide such guidance, extending its services to schools.

Lessons Learnt

Associations and Fora

- **Sharing success stories:** When shared, success stories and experiences of Lebanese women leaders inspire other women and promote gender equality and empowerment of women in leadership positions.
- **Developing benchmarks:** Identifying Lebanese companies adopting best gender mainstreaming practices and diversity policies helps detect the positive outcomes they achieved and use them as benchmarks.
- **Diversify job opportunities for people with disabilities:** Expanding beyond traditional jobs and skills to include diverse career paths for both genders such as journalism, teaching, and activism encourages the participation of women with disabilities.
- **Link to feminist movements:** Facilitating connections between women with disabilities and feminist movements can promote access to economic rights and strengthen mainstreaming advocacy for inclusion.
- **Overcoming barriers:** Mapping and recognizing the various challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in general and women in particular helps find ways to gradually overcome them to achieve better inclusivity in the workplace.
- **Technology and Accessibility:** Technology can be capitalized on to overcome some of the barriers women with disabilities face in employment, enabling them at times to work from their homes.
- **Cross-sector engagement:** Encouraging greater government and private sector engagement and support for persons with disabilities to access their right to decent work promotes employment opportunities for both genders.

Recommendations

As per the literature and according to stakeholders consulted, gender inequalities remain evident in Lebanon when it comes to women's access to skills training and participation in the labour force. Key challenges women face include gender biases influencing career paths, barriers to education and training particularly in rural and informal sectors, and sociocultural and economic limitations. These challenges are hindering effective female participation in skills development and employment, limiting the presence of women in STEM fields. To address these issues, this section offers several recommendations at the macro, meso, and micro levels respectively. Additionally, Table 2 disaggregates recommendations by the stakeholders consulted, offering some recommendations specifically addressed by them to the ILO. At the core of these recommendations is a crucial understanding that the labour market is increasingly dynamic, with the private sector's requirements constantly evolving. This underscores the importance of adopting an agile and gender-responsive skills development system to effectively cater for these shifting demands.

a. At the Macro Level (Systematic):

- **Revision of Laws:** Review discriminatory laws that impact women's economic and social activity. Complement these laws with frameworks at the national level that would prioritize equal access, participation, and opportunities for females in TVET and skills development programs, irrespective of nationality. Such frameworks must (a) ensure compliance with international standards and conventions related to gender equality and women's rights, (b) include provisions for the inclusion of refugee females and females with disability, (c) include clear anti-harassment and anti-discrimination provisions along with penalties for noncompliance, (d) include targets supported by a dedicated budget, and (e) be accompanied by implementation action plans.
- **System Agility:** To adapt the TVET System in Lebanon to become more in touch and responsive to the needs of the labour market. This can be achieved by conducting a national-level labour market survey that will identify concrete needs and potentials for gender mainstreaming in both skills building/ education and employment to be updated on at least an annual basis. Such a system must ensure bringing on board collaboration and partnerships noting that they play a pivotal role in advancing gender mainstreaming, ensuring a collective and sustained effort toward achieving these goals. Preferably, it should foster strategic partnerships and collaborations between public bodies, educational institutions, private sector organizations, civil society organizations, syndicates, employers' and workers' organizations, chambers of commerce, and international donors to leverage resources, share expertise, design programs, and implement gender mainstreaming initiatives effectively at the national level. The system would then address skills mismatch while promoting an accurate and continuous assessment of the labour market's current state.
- **Data Pooling:** To ensure long-standing mechanisms are in place through which data on all TVET and skills building interventions are pooled and shared to ensure complementarity, non-duplication, and informed decision making. Data pooling must be segregated by gender, nationality, and disability status to feed into the continuous identification of areas where females are under-represented and where specific challenges face those with disability and non-Lebanese residents. For this to happen, coordination mechanisms must be set in place bringing together MEHE, MoL, MoA, and the Ministry of Social Affairs. Pooling should also dynamically capture success stories and best practices that can be scaled up and replicated. Such pooling can take place within a national monitoring and evaluation framework designed to assess the impact of gender mainstreaming initiatives in TVET and skills development programs that would concurrently and regularly evaluate the effectiveness of policies, programs, and interventions.

- **LMIS:** Promote the development of a sophisticated labour market information system that would provide essential insights into both the availability (supply) and requirements (demand) of skills within the job market. This LMIS would serve as a vital resource for forecasting employment patterns, benefiting individuals seeking jobs, educational entities, businesses, and decision-makers. It could be based on the developed National Occupational Classification System and could embed an interlinkage between MoL, the National Employment Office (NEO), MEHE, and DGVE. The information would encompass details such as salaries, working conditions, and the overall health of the labour market, all crucial for a range of stakeholders. Companies would then use this information to evaluate the presence of qualified workforce irrespective of gender and can use this data to achieve their gender targets where present.
- **A Dual Pathway National System:** To revise the Lebanese TVET curriculum with the primary goal of restructuring it into a competency-based, learner-centred framework that aligns with the workforce's needs in the future of work. Concurrently, to develop standardized non-formal education programs, creating pathways to formal education, especially tailored for children who have been out of school for an extended period. Both pathways need to devise a strategy to incorporate gender considerations throughout the curriculum, removing unnecessary requirements that discourage and/ or discriminate against female participation.
- **National Campaigning:** Launch national awareness campaigns targeting various stakeholders, including policymakers, employers, educators, and the general public, to challenge gender stereotypes, raise awareness about gender equality, and promote female participation in non-traditional fields. The campaign must include messages customized to address the different prevailing narratives in the different geographic regions across Lebanon, including camps and gatherings.
- **Inspection and Auditing:** Train a team of inspectors who can audit and assess public and private institutions systematically for gender sensitive approaches and programming. This can be done in cooperation with NCLW who is providing gender focal points for different public ministries and directorates.

b. At the Meso Level (Institutional):

- **Strengthened Collaboration Mechanisms:** Collaborate with existing actors, women's rights organizations, women-led organizations, and working groups, such as the Education Working Group and Gender Working Group to advocate for gender equality in education, TVET, and skills development. Advocacy should concurrently push for policies and legislation that improves the business operational environment for women and women-led enterprises.
- **Training and Capacity Building:** Provide gender-sensitive training programs for TVET instructors, staff, principals, and directors to enhance their capacity in promoting gender equality, implementing inclusive teaching methodologies, and creating a supportive learning environment. The training should be provided as part of a comprehensive program that links skills acquisition to the development and implementation of concrete action steps. Change should start at schools and educational institutions in a bottom-up approach and should focus on creating a culture conducive of gender-responsiveness.
- **Access and Equity:** Develop institutional strategies and initiatives to eliminate barriers hindering women's access to quality TVET and skills development programs on one hand and the labour market on the other hand, such as financial constraints, cultural norms, and lack of information. Establish institutional support services, including safe transportation, scholarship programs, mentorship initiatives, and facilities, to facilitate women's participation and retention. Concurrently, support employers to identify reasonable accommodation needed to establish and sustain a harassment-free workplace that promotes the employment of female workers and workers with disability as one cited reason for not employing females was allotted to the "trouble that the employer would go through to ensure that she is not harassed in a predominantly male working environment".

- ▶ ***Inclusive Curriculum Development:*** Review and revise TVET curricula to ensure they are gender-responsive, inclusive, and free from gender biases. Additionally, incorporate gender-sensitive modules and training materials and promote women's participation in traditionally male-dominated fields. To proceed with this, it is recommended to select few specializations from the male-dominated STEM sectors where females have the potential of being employed in collaboration with private sector institutions and pilot test a complete value chain that connects the training institution with female students and with the labour market/ employers.
- ▶ ***Benchmarks and Indicators:*** Develop benchmarks and indicators to track the effectiveness of gender equality interventions in TVET/skills development. Such indicators need to go beyond quantitative measures of male-to-female TVET enrolment percentages to consider other indicators proposed by KIIs such as percentage of females who transition from TVET to work, the percentage of women who receive equal pay for equal work as men, time spent by women in a job/ job tenure, decent work opportunities available for women following skills acquisition, actions taken by employers to employ female graduates across specializations when female qualifications prove to be equitable to that of male graduates, and employability trends of females in professions relevant to their course of study.
- ▶ ***Support for People with Disabilities and Refugee Females:*** When working towards creating fair training opportunities for women with disabilities or refugee women, it is essential to offer academic support, accelerated learning programs, and literacy and numeracy trainings that recognize that girls and women with disabilities and refugee girls and women may have missed basic educational opportunities and may require additional support to transition them into vocational education and the labour market, and notably in STEM fields. Make certain that training programs encompass a broad spectrum of skills, spanning vocational, entrepreneurial, and essential workplace competencies, with an emphasis on enhancing self-confidence. Given the possibility of isolation and exclusion, extra initiatives may be necessary to assist them in overcoming apprehensions and building confidence. Accommodate additional support for graduates to find employment or start an enterprise, including providing them with required tools and equipment.
- ▶ ***Student Engagement:*** Support the establishment of student governance bodies at TVET institutions that would encourage the active participation of females, including refugee females and females with disability to ensure that their perspectives are accounted for at all times and that any action plan set is responsive to their needs.

c. At the Micro Level (Individual/ Community):

- ▶ ***Community Awareness and Sensitization:*** Implement programs and campaigns that would sensitize community members, caregivers, and youth on the benefits of gender equality, challenging gender stereotypes, and encouraging women's participation. Such programs and campaigns must acknowledge that geographic discrepancies continue to exist across the various governorates in Lebanon. As such, action plans and messages must be customized to suit the area's specificity and account for local cultures and traditions which often pose additional restrictions on female participation if not accounted for. Furthermore, the campaigns should encourage men to understand how important and beneficial it would be for their daughters/sisters/wives to become a productive member of the family.
- ▶ ***Career Guidance and Counselling:*** Provide individualized, gender-sensitive career guidance and counselling services as part of the services offered by educational institutions to help students, especially female students, identify their interests, strengths, and opportunities in diverse fields and make informed educational and career choices. These services need to recognize the additional challenges that refugee women and women with disabilities encounter and assist them in overcoming them. Complementarily, scholarships can be provided to encourage female enrolment in male-dominated specializations as well as male enrolment in female-dominated specializations.

- **Peer Support and Mentorship:** Establish peer support groups and mentorship programs to foster a supportive learning environment, promote positive role models, and encourage female students to pursue their aspirations. Such groups must be assisted to circulate success stories where females in non-traditional educational and career paths succeeded.
- **Incentive Programs:** Design and implement incentive programs, such as tax incentives and lower loan interest facilities, that encourage SMEs to achieve gender equity in employment partly through supporting them establish family-friendly work practices such as parental leave, flexible work arrangements, and childcare provisions. Incentives can also be provided for the employment of females with disability and refugee females.
- **Testing and Certification:** Develop specialized tests and certifications addressing key core competencies for different vocations that can be used to prove the equal eligibility of women to do the same job as their male counterparts. This would enhance their employability and encourage employers to offer opportunities to those with documented competencies irrespective of their gender.
- **Partnerships and Staffing:** Include clear requirements to promote gender equality in partnership agreements and in the competencies, specifications, and responsibilities of staff and consultants to be recruited. Additionally, allocate a budget in such agreements for promoting gender equality, such as a budget for training staff, adapting facilities, and conducting evaluations.

▶ **Table 2: Overview of Recommendations Provided by Key Stakeholders Consulted**

General Recommendations*	
INGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Promote digital literacy: Digital literacy is important in enhancing gender mainstreaming efforts. Thus, it is recommended that public and private TVET providers provide training on digital skills and technology use, ensuring inclusivity by catering to diverse age groups and levels, noting that some females, and especially refugee females have low literacy levels. ▶ Incorporate mandatory components: English proficiency and basic digital skills should be mandatory across all skilling, upskilling, and training programs provided by both public and private TVET providers. Additionally, training in employability skills, such as job search strategies should be provided to all trainees across sectors. ▶ Start with gender analysis: Interventions provided by all actors should be preceded by a thorough gender analysis to understand the specific context and dynamics at play. This analysis would then inform targeted outreach strategies and program design, ensuring sensitivity to gender dynamics and needs. ▶ Role modeling: Compile and share success and inspirational stories of female role models who have successfully pursued STEM specializations and other traditionally male-dominated fields. ▶ Revising assessment criteria: Employers should revise their assessment and selection criteria to focus on more than physical capacity. This will ensure that females are not discriminated against in STEM fields. ▶ Overcoming barriers: Formal and nonformal TVET providers should address barriers to female participation, including transportation and timing of sessions.
NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ensure collaborative approaches: NGOs implementing projects should emphasize collaboration with local municipalities to ensure initiatives addressing females are tailored to community needs and effectively implemented at the grass-roots level. Collaboration becomes even stronger when it reaches out and involves ministries, the private sector, and feminist organizations. ▶ Advocate: NGOs and INGOs should advocate with MoL and MoSA to create work environments that are conducive for females. Additionally, a national campaign should be launched to promote gender equality and empower women in the workforce. ▶ Address decision makers: TVET providers and NGOs should target business managers in advocacy and negotiations to promote gender equality and sensitivity in the workplace, thus complementing community-level efforts. ▶ Mentor: NGOs and INGOs providing financial assistance to females to develop their business should complement such programs with mentoring to secure ongoing support and guidance for sustainable growth. ▶ Quotas: Quotas in the workplace should be advocated to promote women's participation in the workforce.

General Recommendations*

Humanitarian and Development Agencies

- **Advocacy:** Increased government monitoring should be pushed for, particularly in areas related to the prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Gender-Based Violence.
- **Holistic approach:** Holistic and comprehensive plans to promote gender mainstreaming should be advocated and developed with multiple pillars, embedding community engagement, youth involvement, policy-level interventions, and support from caregivers.
- **Change the way women are being categorized:** Refrain from considering women a disadvantaged group placed in the same category as refugees or individuals with disabilities. It is essential to challenge cultural mindsets that perceive gender as a limitation, recognizing women's capabilities and potential without imposing special quotas.
- **Target change geographically and by sector:** Addressing societal mindsets should be approached geographically and by sector rather than with a main focus on nationality. Prioritize sectors with potential, interest, and demand from girls. Address disparities geographically and implement initiatives tailored to specific regions to create systematic change.

Foreign Governments

- **Advocacy and awareness:** Increase efforts, including those by donors, directed towards raising public awareness regarding the importance of TVET and encouraging women to participate in fields that are male dominated, and vice versa.
- **Link to internships:** Make trainees feel secured that the skill building program will link them to internships with the private sector. The program should concurrently network to increase opportunities for females.

Local Authorities

- **Reform and retrain:** Reform the public sector by building the capacity of its workforce, including capacity on gender sensitivity. Transition trainees to the private sector since the public sector has oversupply in employment.
- **Partner for credibility:** Maintain partnerships with the public sector to enhance its credibility and restore trust in its capacity to implement transformative action plans, including action plans oriented towards gender mainstreaming.

Private TVET Providers

- **Promote inclusive workspaces:** Collaborate with employers to create inclusive work environments that prioritize diversity and equity, fostering a culture of acceptance and respect for female employees.
- **Address curriculum disparities:** Advocate with MEHE and DGVTE to update educational curricula to ensure they are more inclusive, equitable and gender sensitive. Advocacy efforts should highlight the importance of providing equal opportunities to all students irrespective of their backgrounds.
- **Parental sessions:** Organize awareness sessions targeting parents to educate them about the importance of guiding and supporting their children's educational and career paths. Emphasize the need for parental involvement from an early age to facilitate informed decision making, including decisions related to the educational path of their daughters.

General Recommendations*

Associations and Fora

- ▶ **Basic skill building:** Target programs to build the capacity of females in different areas, including languages, to promote their employability. In fact, language training should accompany all TVET programs. Additionally, any TVET program should be accompanied with training on rights and duties.
- ▶ **Digital skills building:** Provide females with training on how to use technology and social media to enhance their skills and capacities.
- ▶ **Coordination among actors:** Promote coordination among public institutions for more gender sensitive programming. Include inspectors to audit and assess institutions for non-discrimination and gender sensitive approaches.
- ▶ **Awareness for women industrialists:** Increase awareness among women industrialists on the vitality of them becoming board members or members in associations to promote and achieve gender equality.

Recommendations to ILO

INGOs

- ▶ **Set up collaboration platforms with employers:** By working closely with employers to combat gender stereotypes, equal opportunities will be guaranteed for all trainees, including females.
- ▶ **Conduct targeted awareness campaigns:** Parallel to training programs, it is recommended to implement targeted campaigns that challenge stereotypes and promote gender equality in the workplace.
- ▶ **Implement dynamic skill mapping:** Constantly update skills development programs to align with evolving labour market needs, catering for both national and local specificities when designing programs targeting females.
- ▶ **Prioritize rural areas:** Prioritize rural areas in development initiatives that acknowledge the untapped potential of women there. Define sectors and involve women in cooperative ventures to provide the necessary structures for rural women to thrive.
- ▶ **Co-design:** Co-design projects with the involvement of diverse stakeholders, including government bodies, to advocate for and overcome policy and regulatory barriers and foster effective solutions that hinder female participation.
- ▶ **Holistic interventions:** Ensure that interventions that include skills development are provided following a holistic approach that embeds capacity building for teachers, motivation for female students, and curricula revision to eliminate gender biases.

NGOs

- ▶ **Conduct localized market assessments:** Ensure that market assessments take into account local specificities rather than reflecting solely national-level trends. Community-level insights are important in designing relevant TVET programs that appeal to women while meeting the needs of the labour market.
- ▶ **Tailor programming:** Programs should be tailored to address the specific needs of females in each local area, acknowledging the unique challenges and opportunities present in different communities. When relevant, accommodation should be made, such as offering segregated classes to ensure female participation and overcome parental resistance. Similarly, address distance barriers by providing localized training programs and ensuring safety and accessibility to female participants.
- ▶ **Support to women entrepreneurs:** Develop programs catered to the needs of women entrepreneurs, facilitating the growth of their businesses.

Recommendations to ILO

Humanitarian and Development Agencies

- **Develop a Labour Market Information System (LMIS):** Develop a consistent and reliable LMIS to support TVET in revamping courses and content. Such a system will support an agile matching the skills of female learners with market needs.
- **Advocate and raise awareness:** Implement awareness raising campaigns to highlight the importance of gender mainstreaming. Advocate for Labour Law reform in collaboration with employers and government entities.
- **Collaborate with women-led businesses:** Support women-led businesses to develop and grow as they are more likely to employ women. This would increase female workforce participation.
- **Focus on digital economy and legislative framework:** Collaborate with organizations and UN agencies focused on refugees and displaced learners to help establish legislative frameworks for digital economy jobs, ensuring accessibility and legal protection for refugees and specifically refugee women engaged in digital jobs.

Foreign Governments

- **Adapt to local context:** Adapt programs to the specificity of each local context. Acknowledge that security considerations and/ or fears may at time impede female participation and hence require reasonable accommodation.

Local Authorities

- **Collaborate with MoA:** Collaborate closely with the MoA to utilize their pool of experienced trainers. This would ensure access to high-quality training resources and enhance the effectiveness of vocational education initiatives, including those provided to encourage female employability and skill building in the agricultural sector.
- **Pool funding for FOORAS:** Fund, support, and upscale the FOORAS platform which offers geographic information system capabilities on graduates. This would provide a valuable tool for connecting employers with candidates, including females, who possess specific educational background and experience.
- **Conduct training of trainers:** Train the gender focal points on curriculum revision so that they can train committees within educational institutions and gradually implement changes.
- **Increase coordination:** Coordinate more closely with NCLW for the implementation of the action plan supporting the National Strategy for Women in Lebanon 2022-2030. Actions can then be coordinated through the Gender Focal Points' network overseen by NCLW and which has a reach to all ministries. The network has the capacity to provide structured data that can feed into joint programming.

Recommendations to ILO

Private TVET Providers

- ▶ **Provide guidance:** Guide TVET providers on how to mainstream gender into their course offerings and curricula. Guidance is also needed in best approaches to adopt with parents and girls to encourage female enrolment in non-traditional specializations.
- ▶ **Start with the labour market:** Advocate with employers and the labour market to be more accepting of females in non-traditional jobs and to have more accommodating and non-discriminatory policies. Employers should also be encouraged to change their recruitment practices that play a role in categorizing jobs by gender and transform their criteria to measure applicants' potential.
- ▶ **Support inclusive workspaces and training centers:** TVET centers need additional resources to adapt their centers to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities, including females.
- ▶ **Implement tripartite agreements:** Build partnerships that bring together employers, disability institutions, and academic institutions. Embed curriculum revision into such an agreement.

Associations and Fora

- ▶ **Upscale training:** Increase the provision of training programs tailored specifically for women in the industrial sector across all career levels in the ladder.
- ▶ **Facilitate data compilation:** Ensure the collection of comprehensive data of women in industries. This data should include information on women's educational levels, employment status, and position held within industries to build on and support gender sensitive programming.
- ▶ **Network with Disabled Women Fora:** Open communication channels with NGOs working with disabled women to ensure their inclusion into programming. Additionally, set up programs focused on community skill building for women with disabilities, enhancing their employability and empowering them economically.
- ▶ **Join forces:** Bring together disability organizations and the private sector to build a workplace that accommodates women with disabilities. Additionally, bring on board syndicates to advocate for the rights of women with disabilities.

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