**Preface**

UNICEF Lebanon submits this combined thematic report to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in response to their request for submissions mandated by resolutions General Assembly resolution 75/167 and Human Rights Council resolution 41/8. This report documents the progress made by governmental and non-governmental organisations in Lebanon on the issue of child, early and forced marriage.

**Executive Summary**

Lebanon is facing a severe economic crisis with worrying implications for the prevalence of child, early and forced marriage (CEFM), particularly in impoverished remote areas. However, important progress has been made in tackling CEFM.

On the legislative level, parliament continues to debate a proposal to set a unified minimum age of marriage across all sects. There have been some important, though modest, legal gains with regards to the protection of women in general. Parliament passed Law No. 293 of 2014 on the protection of women and family members from domestic violence and Law No. 205 of 2020 for the criminalization of sexual harassment and rehabilitation of its victims. In 2017, Parliament also partially repealed Article 522 of the Penal Code which previously granted impunity to a rapist if he married his victim.

In addition, Law No.164 of 2011 on punishment for the crime of trafficking in persons may be used in certain cases where a minor is lured into a marriage for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Law No. 422 of 2000 on the protection of juveniles in conflict with the law or at risk can be used by juvenile judges to delay or prohibit early marriages if they rule that this would be in the best interest of the child.

At the services level, GBV service providers have improved access to their services through initiatives such as mobile safe spaces, one-stop-shop safe spaces, payment for transportation to and from safe spaces, as well as direct cash assistance to girls visiting safe spaces in some cases. The sector has sustained its services despite the pandemic and the economic crisis, by adapting its services to the context of limited mobility and increased poverty. Efforts are also underway to ensure a cross-sectoral approach towards the prevention and response to CEFM. Though true cross-sectoral integration is lacking, there are some notable improvements at the levels of education, health, and youth sectors.

Non-governmental organisations have successfully raised the issue of CEFM to the public agenda as well as the government and parliament agendas. UNICEF is taking these efforts a step further, moving from awareness raising to shifting norms and behaviours through the ongoing “Qudwa” programme which employs evidence-based interventions of Social and Behavioural Change Communications.

At the research level, governmental and non-governmental organisations seem to acknowledge the importance of data and evidence generation. Several studies on CEFM have been published or planned.

**Introduction**

Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) is a global issue affecting a large number of adolescent girls around the world, including Lebanon. According to a 2016 UNICEF report, 6% of women between 20 and 24 in Lebanon married before they were 18.[[1]](#footnote-1) The highest prevalence rate was among the Syrian cohort at 27%, followed by 13% for Palestinian Refugees women from Syria (PRS) and 4% for Palestinian Refugee women in Lebanon (PRL).[[2]](#footnote-2) Vast regional discrepancies exist among Lebanese women, with an overall marriage rate of 4% among Lebanese women between the ages of 15 and 19.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Lebanon is currently strained by a number of intertwined crises which have worsened some of the key risk factors associated with CEFM, ranging from lack of employment opportunities, to financial burdens of supporting a household, to lack of access to basic needs and services.[[4]](#footnote-4) In fact, 82% of Lebanon’s residents currently live-in multidimensional poverty,[[5]](#footnote-5) and 15% of children were pulled out of schools in 2021 alone[[6]](#footnote-6). Among Syrian refugees, 80% of young women aged 15-24 are not in education, employment, or training.[[7]](#footnote-7) At a national level, a slight decrease from 24% to 20% in child marriage among Syrian refugees have been noticed between 2020 and 2021.[[8]](#footnote-8)

The past few years have seen some notable progress towards preventing and responding to CEFM in Lebanon. This report expands on these efforts at different levels: policy and legislative framework; services; social norms and behaviour; evidence and data. It also explores areas of improvements that different parties have started to consider as well as the remaining gaps and challenges faced in the Lebanese context.

1. **Policy and Legislative Framework**

Lebanon ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1991 without reservations, as well as Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1997.[[9]](#footnote-9) While CRC broadly guarantees children’s rights and their protection from all harm, CEDAW explicitly states that “the betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory.” In addition, the CRC committee’s concluding observations in 2017 reiterated the need for Lebanon to “adopt “expeditiously legislation setting at 18 years the minimum age for girls and boys, and to engage with the religious authorities to prohibit child marriages. Although Lebanon recognizes the primacy of international law in its Constitution and is bound by the principles of both conventions, the Lebanese national law still deals with CEFM according to the religious court rules, where each sect refers to its own religious law for legal age of marriage.

**I.1. Efforts for a unified minimum age of marriage**

Since 2014, three law proposals have been presented to Parliament in an effort to mitigate CEFM by specifying a unified minimum age of marriage across sects. An initial proposal, prepared by the National Coalition for Lebanese Women (NCLW)[[10]](#footnote-10) d attempted to increase the requirements for marrying minors, by adding the need to get permission from a Juvenile Judge, in addition to permission from the child’s legal guardian. By 2017, A second proposal was presented to set the minimum age of marriage at 18, without exceptions. This proposal was endorsed by civil society organisations as well as NCLW. The two proposals resulted in a stalemate in the parliamentary debates, which prompted the Office of the Minister of Human Rights to present a third proposal setting the minimum age of marriage at 18, with the possibility of a Juvenile Judge granting exceptions where a girl can marry when “she completes her 16th year”. The Administration and Justice parliamentary committee studied the three proposals and combined them into one. The details of this last combined proposal remain unclear.

The proposals were met with strong political opposition. Raising the minimum age of marriage is a controversial issue in Lebanon due to the relegation of family and personal status laws to the realm of religious courts[[11]](#footnote-11).

Nonetheless, the proposal is still on the table and was last discussed by the Woman and Child parliament committee in June 2021. In parallel, the Supreme Islamic Sharia Council has raised the minimum age of marriage for the Sunni community to 18, while keeping certain exceptions for girls and boys between 15 and 18 whereby a religious court may grant permission for their marriage.[[12]](#footnote-12) Other sects have also unofficially expressed their readiness to discuss the matter, though no other decision has materialised to date.

Ultimately, legal reform, though important, cannot on its own, end the practice of CEFM. Many marriages are not registered. An easy way around any legally mandated minimum age for marriage would be for the couple to register their marriage only once both parties turn 18. For the law to be effective, it needs to create a mechanism to monitor marriage registration and ensure law enforcement and the protection of minors simultaneously, while also guaranteeing an access to quality services for adolescent girls, and aiming towards changing social norms that influence CEFM

**I.2. Opportunities within the existing legal framework**

Given the unique controversy of setting a unified age for marriage in Lebanon and the urgency of ensuring adequate protection and response to CEFM, especially in the current context of Lebanon where the overall situation is not conducive for major legal reforms at the moment, UNICEF and other UN organisations, with the support of civil society organisations (CSOs) and judges started identifying and promoting opportunities within existing legal frameworks to enhance protection of girls.

For instance, the Law No.164 of 2011 on punishment for the crime of trafficking in persons [[13]](#footnote-13) lists sexual exploitation as one of the forms of exploitation which can render a person a victim of trafficking. Importantly, in 2014, the Ministry of Justice issued a document titled “practical indicators of trafficking” which explicitly recognizes “early marriage” and “the use of the marriage institution as a means to committing illegal acts” as two possible forms of sexual exploitation.[[14]](#footnote-14) [[15]](#footnote-15)

Additionally, Law No.422 of 2002 on “Protection of Juveniles in Conflict with the Law or at Risk” establishes the authority of the juvenile justice system over cases of minors at risk of any form of violence or exploitation. In other words, the juvenile court currently supersedes religious courts in matters of child protection, which can include protection from CEFM. In practice, using this law to prohibit or delay CEFM requires a juvenile judge to take a principled stance which may face political and religious opposition. UNHCR and UNICEF have partnered up to build the capacity of juvenile judges with the aim to ensure the protection of the rights and needs of children and ensure gender-sensitivity in the juvenile justice system. UNICEF is currently working on amending Law No.422 with the the Woman and Child parliamentary committee. The amendment incorporates a gender lens to the law through aiming to broaden the definition given to children at risk and in need of protection to allow for an improved protection from child marriage.

Opportunities of protection for married girls could also also be available under Law No. 293 on the protection of women and family members from domestic violence. The 2020 amendments to the law ensured that the Juvenile Court had the mandate to protect married girls under 18, as opposed to the Criminal Court or the Court for Urgent Matters. This is significant because minors cannot file a lawsuit in these courts without their legal guardian, whereas they can represent themselves in the Juvenile Court. This reduces a likely barrier to access to justice for married girls under 18 since legal guardians often approve of their minor daughter’s marriage and may oppose their daughter reporting domestic violence or seeking to end the marriage.

The last few years have witnessed a progress in efforts towards legislation related to women’s rights and protection from GBV. Indeed, in 2020, the Parliament passed Law No. 205 for the criminalization of sexual harassment and rehabilitation of its victims. Article 2 of the law specifies the harshest penalty of imprisonment (from two to four years) and the highest fine (from thirty to fifty times the official minimum wage) for any offence committed against a minor. However, minors cannot report sexual harassment without a legal guardian. Although not necessarily focused on CEFM, these modest efforts show strong advocacy efforts by CSOs and UN agencies to raise the attention of lawmakers to the importance of ensuring an enabling and safe environment for women and girls in Lebanon.

Despite the spaces of opportunities in existing legal frameworks, other loopholes might increase the risks of CEFM on adolescent girls, including married girls. In 2017, the Parliament partially repealed Article 522 of the Penal Code which previously granted immunity to a rapist in the event that he married his victim. Though a step forward, an alarming exception remains in the case of girls between 15 and 18 years of age who engage in sexual relations, whether with an adult or another minor. This effectively encourages the person who engaged in sexual relations with a girl between 15 and 18 to seek marriage after sexual relations as a means to exonerate himself. Keeping this exception constitutes a major threat to girls between 15 and 18 who may be forced into marriage following any sexual relations.

**I.3. Government-led Strategies**

Efforts towards preventing and responding to CEFM are not restricted to legal frameworks. The Government of Lebanon (GoL), and in partnership with UN organisations and CSOs, have developed various strategies to ensure protection of girls from CEFM particularly, but also from other types of gender-based violence.

* The National Action Plan to Prevent and Mitigate Child Marriage in Lebanon (NAPPCM 2020-2025) prepared by the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), with technical support from UNICEF is a multisectoral strategy that includes prevention and mitigation interventions with the aim to achieve a 60% reduction in child marriage in Lebanon by 2025. It envisages large-scale actions in six key domains of intervention, namely Child Protection, Education, Health, Community Based Initiatives, Poverty Alleviation and Resilience Enhancement, and Advocacy and Behaviour Change. In line with the CRC committee concluding observations of 2017, this strategy provides “comprehensive awareness-raising programmes on the negative consequences of child marriage on children, in particular refugee girls, targeting parents, teachers and religious leaders.”
* The Strategic Plan on the Protection of Women and Children (2019-2026) prepared by MoSA aims to consolidate MoSA's capacity for general protection of women and children at national and local levels, including but not limited to CEFM.
* The National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women and Girls in Lebanon (2019-2029) prepared by the office of the minister of the state for women affairs and now under the mandate of tNCLW: aims to end all types of violence against women and girls and explicitly recognizes CEFM as one kind of violence.
* The National Action Plan for the implementation of the Violence against Women Strategy (2019-2022) prepared by NCLW, and to be implemented in partnership with MEHE and UNICEF, aims at addressing drivers that might lead to girls’ drop out from schools including online sexual harassment risks, GBV and child marriage through through to 1) achieving compulsory and free primary education, 2) making educational curricula programs free from any discrimination against women and girls, 3) combating violence, 4) raising awareness on the dangers of GBV and the need to report it, 4) ensuring that children, especially girls, are enrolled in formal education and avoiding dropout from schools, 5) delivering a proper training on the concepts of gender equality, GBV and anti-violence to schools on an annual basis.
* “Lebanon National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325: The Path to a Fair and Inclusive Society Through the Women, Peace and Security Agenda” prepared by NCLW – NCLW, and with the support of UN agencies, formed an inter-ministerial Steering Committee[[16]](#footnote-16) in 2017 which includes representatives from civil society, to implement the 1325 National Action Plan. The plan aims to improve women’s participation in decision-making, conflict prevention and relief efforts, and also includes a strategic objective to improve prevention and response to GBV. Through the Work Plan, the GoL reaffirmed its attention to “set the age of marriage at 18 with well-defined exceptions.”[[17]](#footnote-17)

The breakthrough in these strategies is the opportunity of decentralisation of support offered through local multi-sectoral Protection mechanisms for children, including adolescent girls, at a Qadaa level, ensuring wider reach, and on the longer term, a stronger impact on issues related to CEFM. Furthermore, these strategies tackle different aspects of CEFM, and are led by different actors. The humanitarian response to the Syrian refugee influx to Lebanon has established several inter-agency and inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms which facilitated the identification of gaps and administration of interventions in different sectors. Building on this work, MoSA, with the support of UNICEF, developed a ToR in 2022 to build coherence between the fragmented efforts, and focus on the first and main pillar of the NAPPCM that requires putting in place coordination mechanisms. This will ensure a holistic approach in addressing CEFM between key responsible ministries: MoSA, MoPH, MEHE and the Ministry of Justice, through the safe identification, and timely referral and management of child protection cases including the cases of adolescent girls at risk of GBV.

However, the multiple crises that Lebanon is currently going through remain the main barriers for a consistent and timely roll-out of the strategies, given the prioritisation of initiatives that address basic needs on protection interventions. Humanitarian funding for protection, and more specifically GBV, tends to be deprioritized in emergency situations. At the same time, the GoL is reducing its budget and imposing widespread austerity, with limited and insufficient programs supporting families in poverty.

1. **Service provision**

Beside the work on policies and legislation, governmental institutions, UN agencies and CSOs in Lebanon have ensured access of adolescent girls at risk, including married girls, to protective mechanisms and services. whether through direct GBV interventions tailored to their specific needs, or through the integration of a gender perspective and a focus on girls in other key sectors.

**II.1. Tailored GBV protection services for Adolescent Girls**

Adolescent Girls (AGs) have been targeted in different sectors since the beginning of the humanitarian response in Lebanon. A lot of progress has been made in improving access of AGs to life-saving and vital services and information throughout the years. Most importantly, the GBV sector started considering the specific needs and concerns of AGs, that are different to those of adult women, and tailored interventions accordingly, while taking into account the barriers they face in accessing services. Focused life skills curricula for AGs such as “My Safety, My Wellbeing”[[18]](#footnote-18) and “Girl Shine”[[19]](#footnote-19) have been developed and rolled out across different regions in Lebanon to equip them with the needed skills and knowledge to prevent, mitigate and respond to GBV, including CEFM.

Additionally, when limited participation of married girls was noticed in these programs, services were further adapted to the particular needs of married AGs under the Multi-Sectoral Child Marriage Prevention and Response Toolkit. For example, information on sexual relations and pleasure as well as pre/post-natal care for mother were added, scenarios in different sessions were tailored to the realities of married girls. Outreach efforts have been adapted to reach married girls, different from outreach strategies used to reach single girls like for example meeting with the mother-in-law first and visiting them outside of household chores timing.

Life skills sessions were facilitated in static and mobile safe spaces, in order to reach those who have limited mobility. Case management, Psychosocial Support (PSS), and legal aid to survivors of GBV are also among the main services provided in these spaces. For those who need to escape abusive houses, safe shelters are available across Lebanon and their bed capacity reportedly responds to the existing needs.

The GBV sector actors have achieved important gains despite the challenging context. One remaining gap is the longer-term follow-up with survivors of GBV, and particularly married girls who may need assistance in education, employment, or other, in the longer term. In addition, though case management and legal counselling is available for married girls, legal representation for married girls in court cases such as divorce remains lacking in most cases.

**II.2. Mainstreaming to Other Sectors**

Addressing CEFM as a protection issue solely does not take into account the other needs of single, engaged, married, divorced girls, and fails to address the root causes of CEFM.

Several activities related to CEFM prevention and response have been planned under the Education sector, in partnership with the Child Protection sector. A Child Protection policy has been rolled out in public schools to ensure early identification and referrals of children at risk. Teachers and school personnel have been trained to identify girls at risk and referral pathways have been developed between public schools and CP service providers. Although this is a step forward in coordinating efforts from different sectors together, the CP sector lacks systematic mainstreaming of gender and GBV in its interventions, which means that issues such as CEFM which requires gender-sensitive programming, may not be tackled directly through CP strategies.

At the level of education, a joint project between UNICEF and NCLW, and in partnership with MEHE and CRDP, tackles girls’ education with the deliberate aim to prevent girls drop-outs and early marriage.[[20]](#footnote-20) The project activities include, among others, guidance development and training for school staff and teachers on how to approach cases of adolescent girls at risk of child marriage and how to conduct safe referrals to GBV service providers where needed. The project will also advocate for MEHE to apply the 74/M/2000 circular stating that engaged, married, pregnant girls, girls with children, would not be asked to leave schools.[[21]](#footnote-21)

In Primary Health Care Centres (PHCCs), healthcare professionals have been trained to identify and counsel girls at risk as well as married adolescent girls. Standard Operating Procedures were developed specifically for healthcare professionals in PHCCs and public hospitals to safely handle and refer cases of AGs survivors who visit these healthcare facilities. The health sector is also expanding adolescent health services and tailoring sexual and reproductive health and mental health services to adolescent girls. The NAPPCM also aims to strengthen coordination between PHCCs, SDCs, and other sectoral services targeting the protection of girls at risk.

Though other sectors, like Health and Education, have integrated certain crucial prevention and response measures, more needs to be done to ensure that all the root causes of CEFM are tackled, including poverty and unemployment. There is a particular need for more livelihood for divorced and widowed in order to increase agency and limit dependence on parents. Another important measure towards protecting girls at risk of CEFM, engaged girls, and married girls is to systematically integrate eligibility criteria for livelihood and cash assistance programs that are specific to these cohorts, such as: women/girl-headed households, families with adolescent girls, families with married girls, divorced and widowed women, etc. These criteria are missing from MoSA’s “Emergency National Poverty Targeting Program,” for example, which is the only poverty-targeted social assistance program funded directly by the GoL in Lebanon.

**II.3. Adapting Services to New Realities**

Since March 2020, Lebanon has implemented various forms of lockdowns, curfews, and restrictions on mobility, which negatively impacted the ability of GBV survivors to report incidents of GBV and seek assistance. As a response to the pandemic, UNFPA Lebanon in partnership with ABAAD developed a “Remote Gender-Based Violence Case Management” guide[[22]](#footnote-22) which helped service providers sustain their services and adapt them to the context of the pandemic[[23]](#footnote-23).

NGOs running safe spaces reduced their face-to-face activities but ensured that key interventions were sustained online. Hotline operations were scaled up. GBV counselling and case management shifted mostly to several sessions held over the phone. However, exceptions were made for emergency cases and several safe spaces ensured that one social worker was physically present at all times. Safe shelters implemented new COVID regulations which necessitated a 14-day quarantine and a negative PCR test before admitting a new case. This constituted a significant barrier to access which was handled by Kafa through the creation of a pre-shelter quarantine space to accommodate survivors of GBV during the mandatory quarantine before admittance to a safe shelter. In addition, life skills programs targeting AGs, such as “My Safety My Wellbeing” and “Girl Shine”, were modified and adapted for remote delivery.

In addition to the pandemic, Lebanon is contending with a severe economic crisis which has resulted in skyrocketing prices of basic necessities such as food and fuel. GBV service providers ensured that girls and women who visited safe spaces were given transportation allowance to and from the centres. UNICEF has also expanded the eligibility criteria to its Haddi Child Grant program to systematically include all girls who visited their safe centres in 2021. The Haddi Child Grant consists of a direct cash transfer to vulnerable households with children where families with one child receive US$40 per month, US$60 for two children and US$80 for three children or more.[[24]](#footnote-24)

1. **Raising Awareness, Shifting Norms and Changing Behaviours**

**III.1. Awareness Campaigns**

Non-governmental organisations have been vocal on the issue of CEFM and have joined efforts through global partnerships and local coalitions. The global “Girls Not Brides” network counts 7 NGO partners from Lebanon, out of a total of 1500 civil society organisations from 100 countries, who are committed to collaborating to end child marriage across the world and ensure girls can reach their full potential.[[25]](#footnote-25) In 2017, RDFL formed a National Coalition for Protecting Children from Early Marriage with 58 partner organisations. Since then, concerted efforts have been made on the part of civil society to to raise awareness on the risks and dangers of CEFM. Several organisations have launched videos, flashmobs, billboards, and online media campaigns under the title “Not before 18.” This resulted in the issue being put on the public agenda and the parliamentary agenda in a sustained manner for the past 5 years.

**III.2. Social and Behavioural Change Communications**

While legal reforms, service provision and awareness raising are important to prevent CEFM, they do not directly address gender norms. In 2017, UNICEF’s KAP study revealed that 73% of residents of Lebanon are aware of the harms caused by child marriage.[[26]](#footnote-26) Yet the practice is still significant with 6% of women residents getting married before the age of 18. This signalled a need to go beyond awareness raising campaigns and training and towards evidence-based interventions aimed at changing social norms and practises. In 2019, UNICEF launched a Social and Behavioral Change Communication (SBCC) Plan to Prevent Violence against Children & Women, Child Marriage and Child Labour, which falls under MoSA’s NAPPCM strategic goal of preventing child marriage. The SBCC plan gave birth to a new platform called “Qudwa” (leadership in Arabic) through which several interventions have been rolled out under the five key pillars of Advocacy, “Edutainment”, Social Mobilization, Community Engagement, and Capacity Building. These pillars will engage a wide base of stakeholders, most importantly community influencers (people who are trusted and turned to for advice), caregivers, and religious leaders who exercise great influence on social norms.

One of the innovative activities under the Edutainment pillar is a television soap opera “Bakkeer” which started airing on national television in the beginning of February of this year. “Bakkeer” promotes UNICEF’s key communications messages around violence against women, child labor, and CEFM, through carefully prepared scripts enacted by relatable characters. Another activity under “Qudwa” is the training of barbershop and salon workers in local communities to engage in conversations with their clients around the three topics and to promote the key messages. By engaging trusted members of the communities, themselves, UNICEF hopes to multiply the promoters of good practises and increase the likelihood of changed behaviour within the community.

1. **Evidence Generation**

Governmental and non-governmental stakeholders recognise the importance of conducting research in order to guide their advocacy strategies, service provision priorities, as well as the impact of their interventions. Evidence generation is an integral part of the national strategies and work plans listed above. Most notably, MoSA’s NACPPM includes a plan to document and mainstream jurisprudence responsive to child marriage issues, and to use the media to disseminate desirable outcomes of CEFM-related court cases. The strategy also includes planned research in religious courts on the prevalence of child marriage among the cases of divorce registered in religious courts. The NCLW-UNICEF work plan also envisions a study on the impact of Covid-19 and the economic crisis on adolescent girls, recognizing the increased risk that adolescent girls currently face.

Several studies containing critical information around CEFM have already been published:

* “Underneath the surface: Understanding the root causes of violence against children and women in Lebanon,” UNICEF Lebanon, 2016
* “Adolescent Girls Access to Primary Health Care Services in Lebanon: Barriers and Facilitating Factors.” AUB, MoPH, UNICEF.
* Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice Survey, UNICEF Lebanon, 2017
* The Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VaSyr) Gender Analysis, 2021.
* “The Attitude of Lebanese Society Towards Child Marriage: An Opinion Poll,” RDFL, 2018.

In addition, RDFL is planning a study on maternal mortality and school drop-out rates associated with CEFM.

Despite these conducted and planned studies, data also remains scarce in relation to married/engaged/widowed/divorced adolescents and adolescent mothers. There is also a gap in sex disaggregated data and marital status of school dropouts.

**Conclusion**

The Government of Lebanon, along with UN agencies and NGOs operating in the country, have shown sustained commitment to the prevention of and response to CEFM in the country, in an effort to reduce CEFM prevalence and improve the protection of adolescent girls. The multiplicity of strategies and programs which tackle CEFM or integrate it demonstrates clear progress, which is already translating on the ground into improved coordination and services.

However, humanitarian funding for protection, and more specifically GBV, tends to be deprioritized in emergency situations. At the same time, the GoL is reducing its budget and imposing widespread austerity, with limited and insufficient programs supporting families in poverty.

In this environment, it is crucial for the GoL, UN agencies, and NGOs to identify opportunities for the protection of girls from CEFM within the existing legal framework, and to mainstream CEFM into already existing services and programs and especially into the “National Poverty Program”.

In parallel, it’s crucial to continue working to endorse and enforce a national law that prevent and prohibit child marriage in line with international and regional human rights standards, by establishing a consistent legal minimum age of marriage of 18 for girls and boys, with no exceptions (including parental consent or court’s authorization) and to ensure that the GoL allocates adequate yearly budget for the implementation of related policies and programs to prevent and respond to child marriage.

1. *Gender-Based Violence Information Management System: National Overview-January-September 2017*. National GBV IMS Steering Committee in Lebanon; 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Unicef 2016 Baseline survey [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Unicef 2016 Baseline survey [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Underneath the surface: Understanding the root causes of violence against children and women in Lebanon, UNICEF Lebanon, 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. “Multidimensional poverty in Lebanon (2019-2021) Painful reality and uncertain prospects,” UNESCWA, E/ESCWA/CL3.SEP/2021/POLICY BRIEF.2, 2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Lebanon Emergency Response Plan (2020-2021) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VaSyr), 2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VaSyr), 2020 and 2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Lebanon filed a reservation to CEDAW article 9, para. 1: “States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality.” [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. NCLW is an official institution affiliated to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. NCLW was established in 1998 to promote women’s rights in Lebanese society and enhance gender mainstreaming in public institutions. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Lebanon has 15 different family and personal status laws, each with its own minimum age permitted for marriage. Article 9 of the Lebanese constitution guarantees “that the personal status and religious interests of the population, to whatever religious sect they belong, shall be respected.” Religious courts perceive any reform which supersedes the sectarian personal status laws as a step towards a civil unified personal status law and, therefore, as a threat to their authority. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Family Law No. 46/2011 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Article 586.1 of Law No.164/2011 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. The Crime of Trafficking in Persons in Lebanon: Practical Indicators, Lawyers Syndicate of Beirut, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. In January 2022, Judge Nazek El Khatib ordered the arrest of a religious figure who approved the marriage of a 15-year-old girl without the consent of her legal guardian. The charge brought against him was the contribution to the sexual exploitation of a minor through deceptive means. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. The NAP 1325 Steering Committee includes the former Office of the Minister of State for Women’s Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants, Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and three civil society organisations involved in this field including the organisation ABAAD, Women In Front and the Institute for Arab Women at the Lebanese American University. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Implementation of the National Action Plan 1325 of the United Nations Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security: Work Plan (2020-2021) [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. My Safety, My Wellbeing, IRC, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Girl Shine, IRC, 2019. https://gbvresponders.org/adolescent-girls/girl-shine/ [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Empowered and Capable Girls: Equitable Education for all. UNICEF and NCLW, 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. MEHE Circular No. 74/M/2000 dated 10 October 2000, on accepting enrolment of married girls in public schools and secondary schools. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Remote Gender Based Violence (GBV) Case Management during Emergencies. Guidelines for GBV Case Workers. UNFPA & ABAAD, 2021. https://www.abaadmena.org/documents/ebook.1624018123.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. The global guidelines “COVID-19 Guidance on Remote GBV Services Focusing on Phone-based Case Management and Hotlines” have also been disseminated within the GBV sector in Lebanon: https://gbvaor.net/sites/default/files/2021-01/covid-guidance-on-remote-gbv-services-04012021.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. This support is crucial as 3% of Haddi recipients had reported considering marrying off a girl child. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Girls Not Brides Member Directory <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/our-partnership/member-directory/?order=-date_joined&country=lebanon#listing> [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice Survey, UNICEF Lebanon, 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)