

# LEBANON

## SUPPORTING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY IN FRAGILE STATES

RESEARCH BRIEF



# CHANGING WITH THE TIMES

Most [Official Development Assistance] to gender equality in fragile situations goes to education and health; financing gaps remain in the peace and security sector and in economic and productive sectors. Integrating a gender perspective ... does produce better peacebuilding and statebuilding outcomes.

It makes state institutions more inclusive, enhances state legitimacy, fosters justice and security, and helps to unlock women's potential to contribute to economic recovery .... Donors could also further invest in dedicated gender equality programmes.

*OECD, States of Fragility: Meeting Post-2015 Ambitions (1)*

43%

of the world's people who live in severe poverty today are located in fragile States. Among them, women, youth and children account for over 70 percent.

2015 marked a turning point for the international community with the global adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The stand-alone goal on gender equality (SDG5) is a major step forward, as are gender indicators linked to the other 16 SDGs.

Yet overcoming today's challenges will require more than law and policy commitments. Real change requires sophisticated tools and innovative strategies that accelerate women's empowerment, and enable men and women to work together towards growth, recovery and collective well-being.

Closing gender gaps and eliminating inequality upholds women's rights, and leads to more cohesive societies

and robust economies. This is especially true in fragile States, home to 43 percent of people living in severe poverty (2). Among them, women, youth and children account for over 70 percent (3).

Given significant knowledge gaps on women's aspirations, needs, and contributions in fragile States, the following research aims to offer a more nuanced analysis of the opportunities available to women.

It also recommends steps to help development partners and local communities tackle some of the most urgent barriers to gender equality and inclusive development.

# LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

The FGE has awarded grants to 50 programmes in fragile States since 2009, including:

27 Political empowerment programmes

23 Economic empowerment programmes

In seven years, UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality (FGE) and its grantee-partners have developed strategies for making gender equality and women's empowerment programming smarter and more responsive to national and local needs.

With 63 grantee organizations operating in 30 of the 50 countries considered fragile by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (4), the FGE has conducted research based on case studies in Guinea, Lebanon and Sudan to help development practitioners understand:

- The gender dimensions of fragility specific to different places and contexts

- Empowerment as a suite of capabilities that together lead individuals and communities towards greater resilience, recovery and security
- The urgent need for more gender-responsive policies, services and gender disaggregated data, particularly at the sub-national level



*"Some nice things about [our Hima community in Bekaa, Lebanon] include the environment we live in. Women's role is very important, especially in our village. The women invest in their houses and use their own income to provide education to their children."*

Nahla Sukkari,  
Rural Lebanese beneficiary

# PORTFOLIO OF FGE GRANTS IN FRAGILE STATES\* 2009-2016

\$25

million in grants to fragile States

50

gender equality and women's empowerment programmes

63

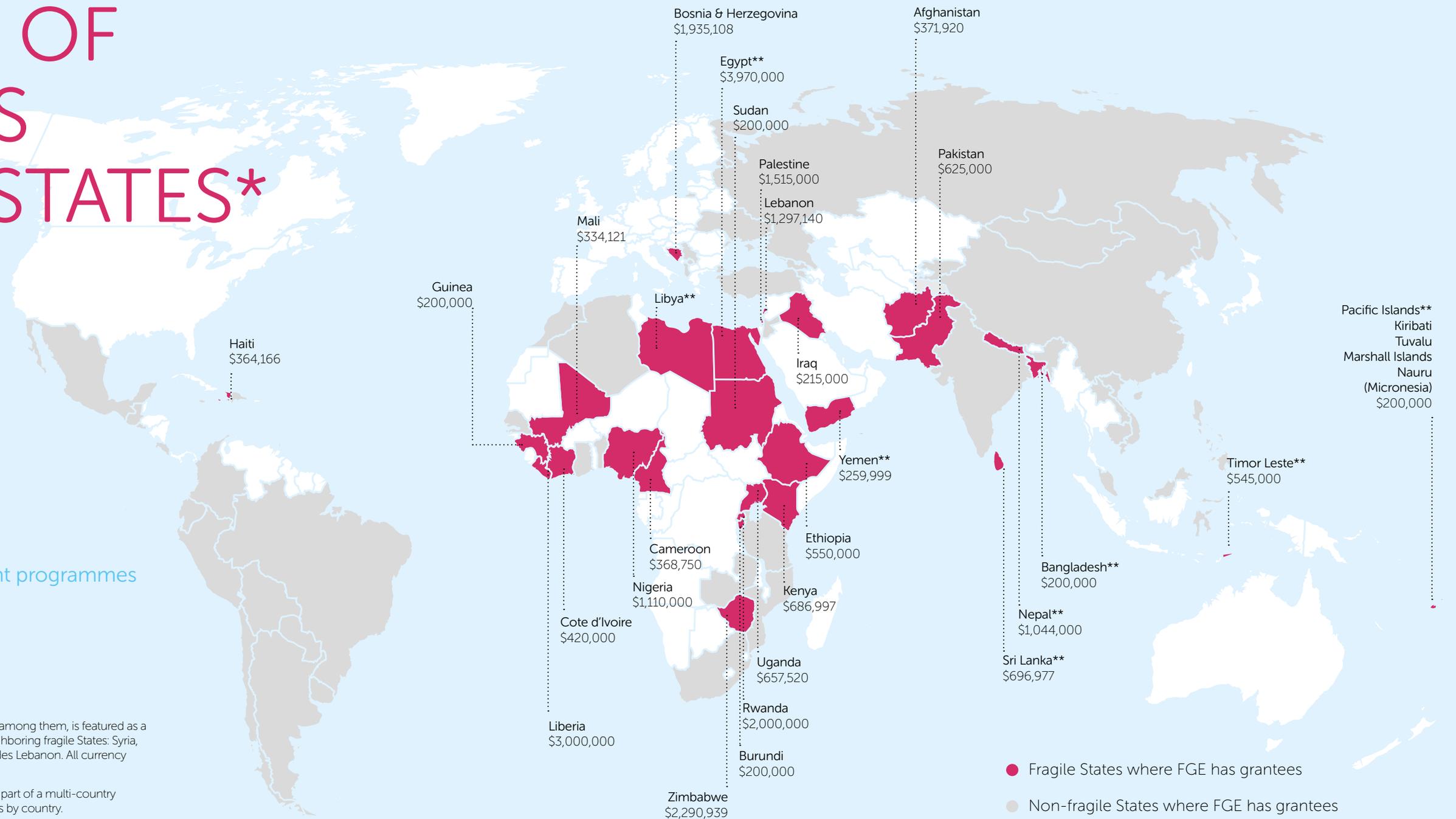
civil society organizations

31

fragile States

\* This map is based on OECD's 2015 list of fragile States. Lebanon, while not listed among them, is featured as a case study in this series for its role in managing ongoing emergencies in three neighboring fragile States: Syria, Iraq, and Palestine. For the purpose of this series only, the term fragile States includes Lebanon. All currency values are US\$.

\*\*States in which grantee civil society organizations have received an FGE grant as part of a multi-country programme. See Annex A for a full list of awarded organizations and grant amounts by country.



- Fragile States where FGE has grantees
- Non-fragile States where FGE has grantees

# KEY RESEARCH LESSONS LEARNED

## STRENGTHEN LINKAGES

between normative commitments and gender equality programme interventions; between humanitarian response and longer term recovery efforts



## CONTEXT MATTERS

for understanding the gender dimensions of fragility and the relevant opportunities worth seizing



## MAKE PROGRAMMING SMARTER

by building on successes and lessons learned to scale up projects and achieve greater impact



## LEVERAGE WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

to harness the full power of response and recovery interventions for gains that empower whole communities



## GENDER EQUALITY IS A STRATEGY

not a boutique issue for women and girls; it can be used to transform the position and capacities of all people seeking real change



## LOCALIZE GOOD PRACTICES

as pathways towards recovery and prosperity using area-based research, knowledge exchange and partnerships

# GENDER DIMENSIONS OF FRAGILITY

In 2015, the OECD introduced a new framework for understanding fragility which aligns with the SDGs. Its report, *States of Fragility: Meeting Post-2015 Ambitions*, outlines five broad, overlapping dimensions that weaken national and local capacities to thrive and recover from shocks (5).

They include:

- Economic foundations
- Capacity to adapt to social, economic and environmental shocks and disasters
- Effective, accountable and inclusive institutions

- Violence and peaceful societies
- Access to justice for all

Focusing primarily on economic dimensions, the FGE's research explores:

- How programmes supported by the FGE use gender equality and women's empowerment strategies to strengthen resilience and counter various gender dimensions of fragility, and
- Key gaps and entry points for strengthening gender equality and women's empowerment interventions to contribute to these goals

This series of research briefs present the findings of the FGE case study research and describe the unique gender dimensions of fragility addressed by FGE grantees in underserved localities of Guinea, Lebanon and Sudan.

Each grantee is using different kinds of empowerment programming to help counter fragility by strengthening women's position, opportunities and participation in all areas of life.

# COUNTERING FRAGILITY THROUGH EMPOWERMENT

To make gender equality and women's empowerment programming in fragile States smarter and more targeted to women's real needs, the FGE research defines a framework for empowerment based on four components, as detailed on pages 12-13:

- productive resources
- institutional relations
- personal resources
- interpersonal relations

Together, the four components increase individuals' influence over

economic structures and decisions that shape their lives by:

- Expanding their agency to make and influence decisions at all levels
- Enabling them to enjoy greater command of and control over resources

While the FGE continues to support programmes that use mixed-gender empowerment strategies, this research series attempts to better understand the unique barriers and opportunities for women's empowerment in fragile States worldwide, using all four components as areas for investigation.

# WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT FRAMEWORK

FGE's empowerment framework helps programme practitioners approach women's needs as more than just political and economic gains (6). Needs also include improved capabilities, opportunities and relationships as part of an engaged and empowered life.

The four components of empowerment include:

## ● PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES

interventions that improve access and control over the inputs needed for sustainable income generation and safe, secure livelihoods.

## ● INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

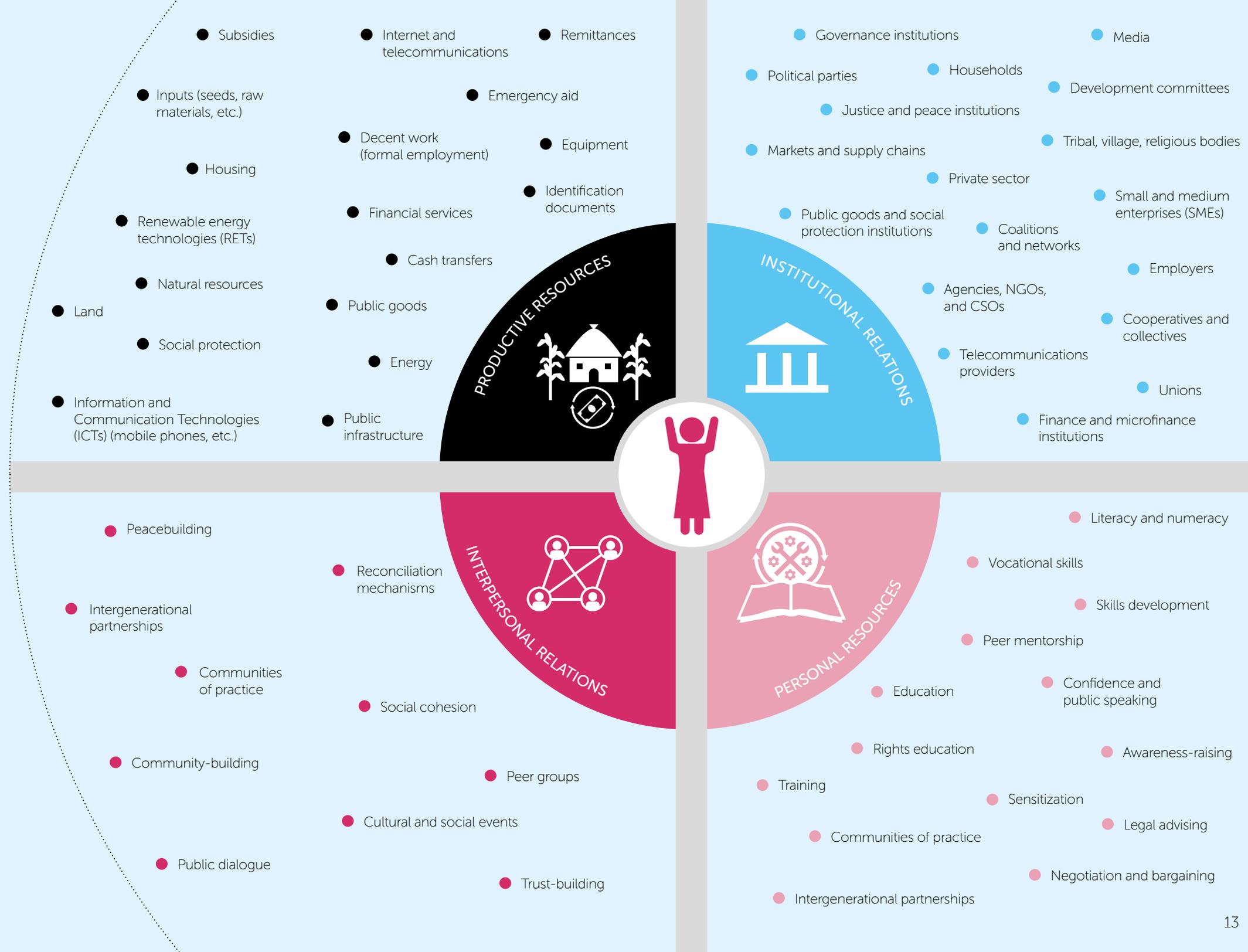
interventions that strengthen relations and commitments between individuals and the formal and informal institutions that shape their lives and opportunities.

## ● PERSONAL RESOURCES

interventions that increase and expand life skills, knowledge and information, social capital, and opportunities for confidence, agency and collective action.

## ● INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

interventions that improve and expand relationships between individuals and communities, and help shift norms and expectations about the roles people can play in society.



# THE LEBANESE REPUBLIC

52%

of registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon as of October 2015 are women (7).

Lebanon emerged from a 15-year civil war in 1990, beginning its slow but steady recovery. Today it is considered an upper-middle-income country, but economic gains are inequitably distributed among social groups and skewed towards urban areas.

Political and institutional stagnation and an atrophied public sector are additional barriers to growth and improved social outcomes for all. Since 2011 such vulnerabilities have been exacerbated by a steady inflow of refugees from neighbouring Syria and other parts of the region.

The spillover of social and economic shocks from Syria are increasingly difficult to absorb. Competition for jobs, household food insecurity, chronic indebtedness and social

anxieties about marriageability and personal safety affect both host community and refugee women (8).

Since 2011, Lebanon has become host to roughly 1.1 million registered refugees (9) — a 25 percent increase in population in less than five years. More than half of refugees are women and girls, and an estimated 27 percent of refugee households are women-headed (10).

## AT A GLANCE



5<sup>th</sup>

most gender unequal Arab State (11)

9<sup>th</sup>

largest economy among Arab League States US \$46 billion (12)

25%

women's labour force participation rate [Men's rate: 76%] (13)

US\$ 10,030

Gross National Income (GNI) per capita (14)

# RESEARCH METHODS

598

adult women in nine localities around Lebanon were surveyed.

For this brief on Lebanon, UN Women's FGE partnered with two grantee organizations: Amel Association and Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL).

With support from SPNL, Amel and Lebanon-based research consultants, the FGE:

- Undertook desk research and data gathering
- Reviewed grantee reporting documents
- Commissioned an area-based gender research report
- Conducted survey and focus group interviews with 598 adult women in nine rural and semi-urban localities.

Localities were selected given their proximity to SPNL and Amel programme sites.

Communities and individual respondents were chosen using random sampling techniques.

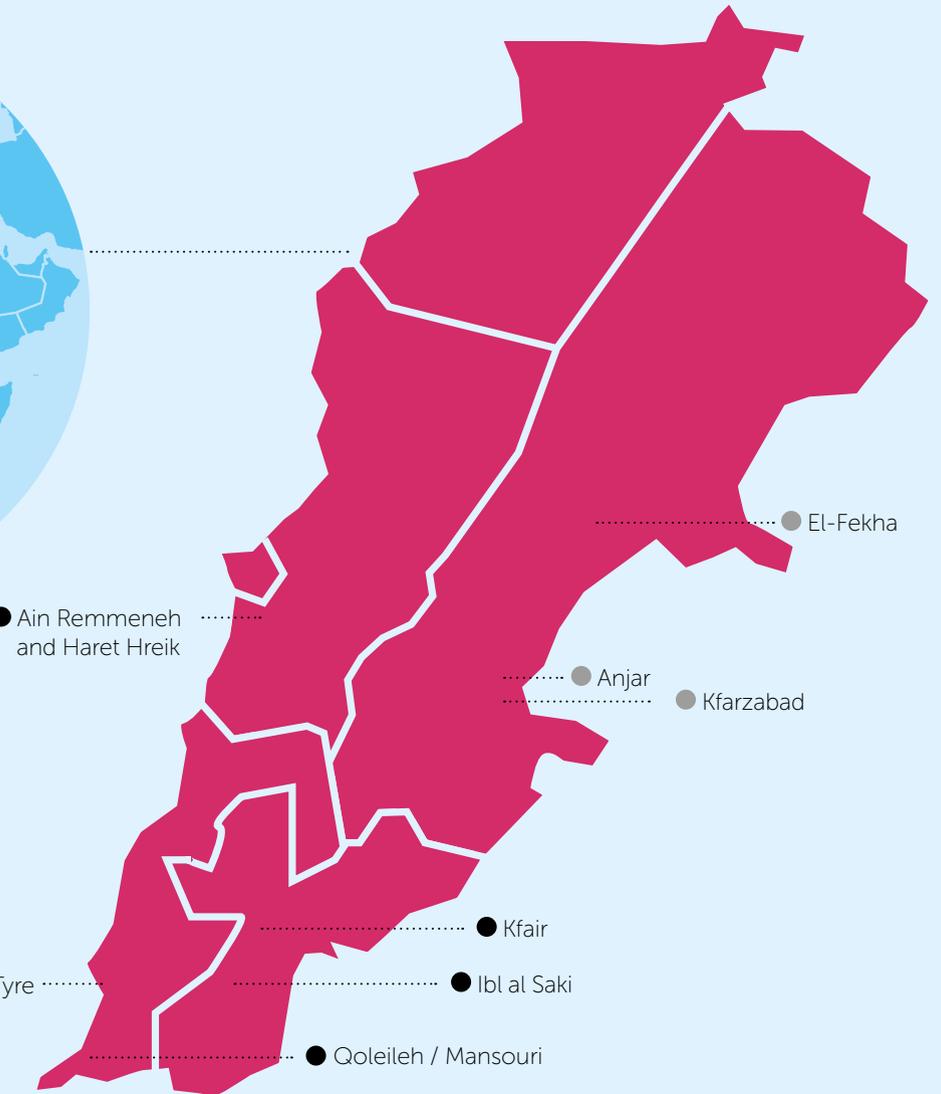
The surveyed sample included both programme beneficiaries [229] and non-beneficiaries [369] from three self-identified groups: 430 Lebanese, 128 Syrian and 40 "Other"—including Iraqi and Palestinian.

A 19-question perceptions survey was developed collaboratively from FGE HQ and administered in Arabic by two local research teams between August and November 2015.

The survey and area-based research findings are presented under the four components of empowerment: productive resources, personal resources, institutional relations and interpersonal relations.

All data are based on material uniquely produced for this series unless otherwise noted.

# LEBANON



- Amel sites:  
Southern Lebanon (Tyre, Ibl al Saki, Kfair)  
Southern Beirut suburbs (Ain el Remmaneh, Haret Hreik)

- SPNL sites:  
El-Fekha, Anjar, Kfarzabad, Qoleileh Mansouri

# GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT: SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATURE IN LEBANON (SPNL)



Watch the FGE's  
4-minute video about  
SPNL's *Hima* women  
programme site in  
Lebanon's Bekaa region:  
[www.unwomen.org/fge](http://www.unwomen.org/fge)

Society for the protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL) aims to inspire a national movement to improve, protect and conserve the environment, in part by reasserting women's leadership and participation in all aspects of rural life.

By 2004, SPNL had identified 15 biodiversity sites around Lebanon that could benefit from a revival of the community-based approach to resource management known locally as *Hima*.

*Hima* has historically been used in rural areas to manage natural

resources, build social cohesion and support local livelihoods. Women have traditionally played key leadership and decision-making roles in *Hima* community life.

In partnership with the national Ministry of Environment and four rural municipalities in southern Lebanon, SPNL aims to strengthen women's leadership and livelihoods activities by raising awareness of rural sustainability practices and ecotourism.



SPNL



SPNL received an FGE grant of US \$280,000 in 2012 to implement a rural women's leadership and sustainable livelihoods programme in four of Lebanon's 15 Hima sites.

SPNL has increased rural women's awareness about the importance of biodiversity and sustainable resource management in four rural municipalities. It has also strengthened their leadership and decision-making skills through peer group training and dialogue with municipal authorities.

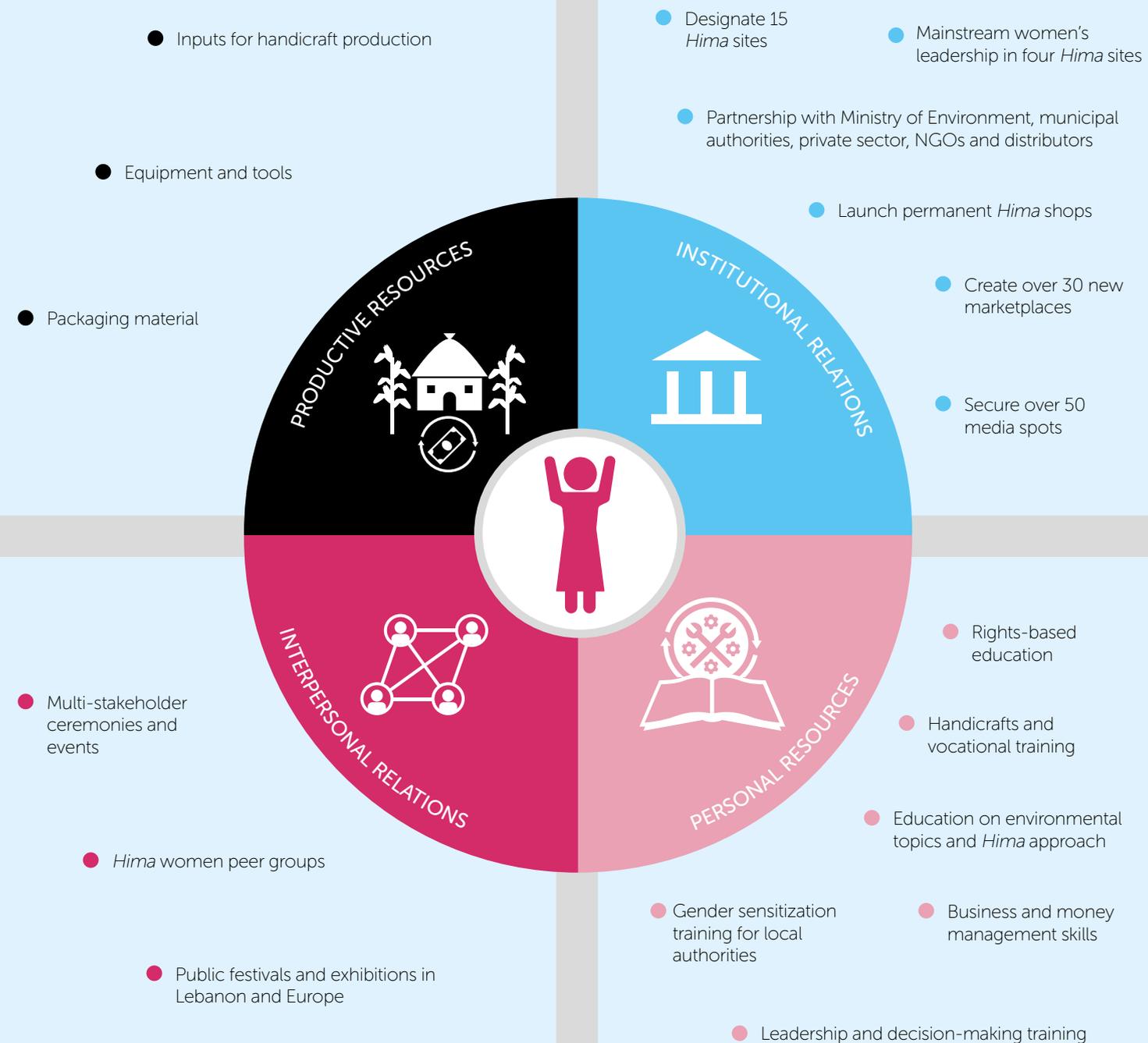
The programme has created new opportunities for rural women to sell their local handicrafts and food products inside Lebanon and abroad.

Through national and international media engagement, SPNL has helped generate ecotourism and respect for Lebanon's biodiversity sites while elevating the role and contributions of rural women to community-based development.

As Lebanon's rural areas continue to absorb refugees from Syria and

elsewhere, the need for decentralized strategies that promote sustainable resource management and localized decision-making is increasingly timely and relevant.

The Women's Empowerment Framework on page 21 outlines where SPNL's programme interventions have helped strengthen the local conditions and opportunities for women's empowerment in each of the four areas.



# GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT:

## AMEL ASSOCIATION



Watch the FGE's 4-minute video about the women who produce goods for the MENNA shop: [www.unwomen.org/fge](http://www.unwomen.org/fge)

Amel Association provides emergency and development services, rights-based education and vocational training to underserved refugee and rural women in Lebanon.

Responding to a growing need for livelihoods training, decent work and income generation opportunities—especially for refugee women—Amel's programme helps women improve vocational skills, access productive equipment and sell locally-made handicrafts, processed foods and services to national and international consumers.

Through a package of vocational, educational, health and psychosocial support services, Amel nurtures personal and professional empowerment, supports women to take control of personal income and helps them cultivate stronger interpersonal relationships.

Women have improved self-confidence, financial autonomy, personal networks and market opportunities as a result of the programme.



*"We started to cooperate together and we became one family within [the Mawasem Al Dayaa] cooperative. Cooperation happens on all levels, we share all the jobs, we share all the decisions. We succeed together and fail together."*

Daed Ismaiel,  
Head of the Mawasem Al Dayaa women's cooperative

# AMEL



Amel received an FGE grant of US \$325,000 in 2012 to implement a livelihoods and labour market access programme with over 1,100 refugee and rural women and women's cooperatives in Lebanon.

Through its nation-wide MENNA network, which links over 260 home-based women producers and 13 women's cooperatives from around the country to Beirut's commercial outlets, Amel has created market and paid work opportunities for nearly 1,100 refugee and rural women.

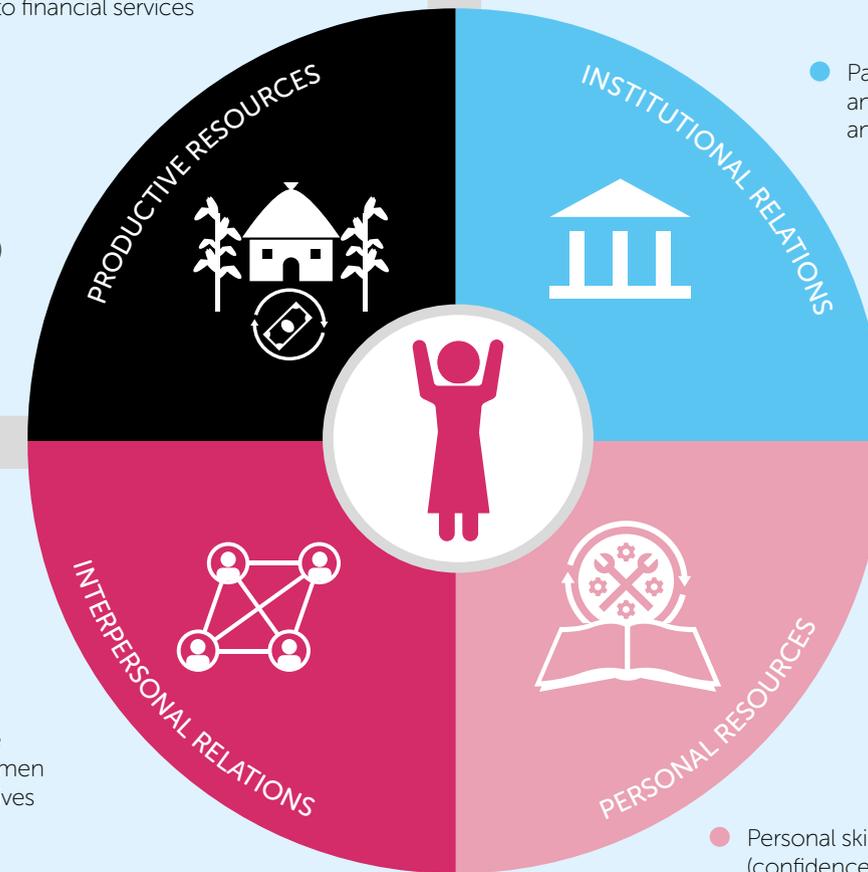
In 2015, Amel launched its first permanent MENNA shop in Beirut. It sells a wide variety of foods, soaps, accessories, jewelry, embroidered goods, handmade stationary and glass wares produced by over 130 women.

As a result of the programme's business trainings, 30 refugee women have launched small businesses, created social media sites and developed branding materials such as business cards and flyers.

The programme fosters social cohesion, and strengthens links between

emergency response and longer-term development, which host and refugee communities in Lebanon need now more than ever.

The Women's Empowerment Framework on page 25 outlines where Amel's programme interventions have helped strengthen the local conditions and opportunities for women's empowerment in each of the four areas.



- Access to productive equipment and supplies (handicraft materials, tools, food production equipment)

- Access to financial services

- Access to emergency transfers (food vouchers, winterization supplies)

- Supporting nation-wide MENNA network of women and women's cooperatives

- Organizing and facilitating peer groups and group exercises

- Supporting the nation-wide MENNA network

- Strengthening women's cooperatives

- Partnership with private sector, distributors and market venues

- Partnering with other national and international organizations and agencies

- Supporting women to launch their own small businesses

- Vocational and market skills training

- Product development

- Personal skills development (confidence, leadership, decision-making, personal care, health and hygiene, nutrition)

- Rights education

- Sensitizing public authorities and private sector

# RESEARCH FINDINGS



# KEY FINDINGS SUMMARY

## ● Productive resources

60

Women's unpaid time burdens are significant. Women estimated they spend an average of 60 hours per week on unpaid household-related activities such as child care, cooking, cleaning and so on. Unpaid time burdens among refugee women averaged 10 hours more per week than for Lebanese women.

61%

Women want more and better opportunities for paid work and income generation. Three out of five women (61 percent) said they had not been paid for work outside the home within the previous month. Refugee women fair worse, as fewer than one in five (16 percent) said they had been paid for work outside the home within the previous month.

82%

Women want better access to productive equipment and skills far more than access to credit. Four out of five women (82 percent) said better access to productive equipment would greatly improve their income generation opportunities, whereas only two in five women (36 percent) said better access to credit would greatly improve those opportunities.

71%

Women's ability to ensure household food security is strained. More than two out of three women (71 percent) said they borrowed money at least once in the previous six months to afford food for the household. Less than 10 percent of women reported being able to access emergency food vouchers or supplies within the same period.

96%

Women perceive lack of energy supply as an economic barrier. An overwhelming majority of women (96 percent) said unreliable and/or cost-prohibitive electricity greatly affects their ability to perform paid work and unpaid household activities, adding also to social tension and household anxiety.

## ● Institutional relations

35%

Women are more satisfied with their influence over economic decisions in the household than in the community. Women said they are more satisfied with their ability to influence economic decision-making in the household (69 percent) than in the community (45 percent), indicating 35 percent greater satisfaction with household influence.

82%

Women indicate a high degree of influence over personal income. More than four out of five women (82 percent) said they decide how their personal income is managed and spent – one possible reason women's satisfaction with household level decision-making was high.

## ● Personal resources

1,400

Women want improved market skills and knowledge to help them identify market opportunities. Over 1,400 refugee and rural women received rights-based education and vocational skills training, but many still feel their market-oriented skills are insufficient. Additionally, women expressed a need for better knowledge on how to identify market opportunities and create new ways to connect with consumers.

77%

Women are relatively satisfied with their current level of literacy. Nearly four out of five women (77 percent) said they are currently satisfied with their ability to read and write, but acquiring numeracy and new language skills emerged as priorities for many women, especially refugees.

## ● Interpersonal relations

81%

Women perceive conflict as the most significant issue affecting their lives today. Four out of five women (81 percent) said their lives are greatly affected by conflict today, whereas 69 percent of women said their lives have been affected by changes to the environment over the previous 10 years.



# PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES

60

hours of unpaid work per week was the average among local women.

## Time burden

- As household managers, local women invest significant time in unpaid household activities: child care, cooking, laundry and cleaning, securing water and energy and caring for family members.
- Time spent on unpaid household activities reduces time for other activities, such as to earn income, improve education, engage in the community, participate in political activities and so on. This dynamic is sometimes referred to as "time poverty".
- Women said they spend an average of 60 hours per week on unpaid household activities – the equivalent of one and a half full-time jobs according to international standards (15).

79%

Percentage of women who said they borrowed money at least once in the previous six months to afford food for the household, of which less than 10 percent were able to access emergency food aid.

## Emergency transfers

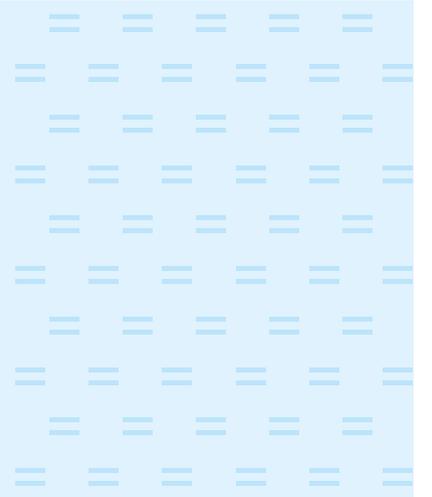
- Without access to emergency transfers such as cash transfers, food and housing vouchers, winter supplies and protection services, refugees will depend on paid work to afford their most basic needs. As a result, food insecurity and job competition are on the rise.
- As of mid-2015, new refugees cannot be registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as per the Government of Lebanon's decision (16). Without a registered status, refugees are ineligible to access emergency transfers from aid agencies.
- Many aid agencies have had to suspend or reduce their provision of emergency services since 2013 due to overwhelming demand, leaving national civil society organizations (CSOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and charities to fill in the gaps.
- These pressures increase competition for paid work and exacerbate social tensions between refugee and host communities, especially in rural areas where public resources and jobs are already scarce.

## GOOD PROGRAMME PRACTICE

In addition to its FGE-supported livelihoods programme, Amel Association has delivered more than 800,000 emergency services and cash transfers to persons affected by the Syrian crisis.

It has also helped refugee and rural women connect with gender-responsive health and protection services and rights-based education which would be unavailable to them in communities outside of Beirut.

Pursuing a dynamic approach that pairs emergency services with longer term livelihoods programming, Amel Association supports refugee and rural women to create and take advantage of opportunities for paid work. Its work also strengthens social cohesion through safe spaces, training and educational opportunities and market strategies that reinforce cooperation between refugee and Lebanese women.



82%

Percentage of women who said having better access to equipment and land would increase their income opportunities.

## Access to capital

- Aid agencies have tended to view emergency cash transfers as the best way to support refugees, emphasizing their cost-effectiveness and immediate returns (17).
- This research found that demand for training and access to productive capital are both high among refugee and rural Lebanese women. Such needs are not sufficiently addressed
- Cash in hand, while helpful in the short term, does not necessarily enable women to improve their marketable skills, advance their personal growth or to access the equipment and networks they need to generate sustainable income and safe livelihoods.
- by one-off emergency cash transfers.

36%

Percentage of women who said access to credit would greatly increase their opportunities for income generation.

## Access to credit

- Women indicated low confidence that loans or other forms of credit would greatly improve their opportunities for income generation. Many women said they are afraid of borrowing and debt.
- According to 2015 research, nearly 90 percent of Syrian refugees in Lebanon are trapped in a cycle of debt from their efforts to afford basic necessities (18).
- Widespread cuts to emergency transfers have increased refugees' dependency on both informal loans and paid work opportunities.
- Many informal, unregulated lenders have cropped up since 2011, sometimes holding refugee passports or family assets as collateral.

61%

Percentage of women who said they had not been paid for work outside the home within the previous month.

## Paid and unpaid work

- Women said competition for jobs and lack of appropriate work skills and opportunities are among their most urgent concerns today.
- Social cohesion and livelihood activities accounted for the smallest portion of humanitarian and resilience response investments in 2015 (19).
- The FGE research suggests livelihoods and social cohesion are two of the most urgent issues affecting refugee and rural women in Lebanon. Fierce competition for paid work is one area where the two concerns overlap.
- Tight restrictions on hiring of refugees are being enforced in municipalities with high refugee populations, creating additional barriers to paid work and self-employment, especially in rural areas.
- Highly informal and precarious types of self-employment and petty trading are common, especially among refugee and rural women who – for a variety of reasons – are less likely to work in primary sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing.
- Three out of five women (61 percent) said they had not been paid for work outside the home within the previous month. Refugee women fair worse, as fewer than one in five (16 percent) said they had been paid for work outside the home within the previous month.

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# 96%

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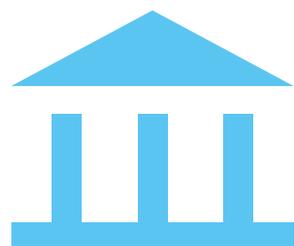
Percentage of women who said electricity or lack of it significantly affects their ability to perform daily paid and unpaid work activities, inside and outside the home.

## Energy and water

- Most respondents said they purchase water and electricity through the private market due to unavailable or substandard public resources.
- When electricity outages occur for long periods, as they often do in rural and semi-urban areas, households and workplaces use non-rechargeable generators, candles or wood-burning as alternatives.
- Women said they spend between 100,000 and 450,000 Lebanese pounds per month for electricity (about US \$65 to \$295) and up to 100,000 pounds for drinkable water. Together these costs were estimated at 40 percent of monthly household income.
- According to anecdotal findings from rural women in Bekaa, modest public energy subsidies for rural municipalities exist, but very few rural residents are aware of the entitlement or know the steps involved in claims-making at the municipal level.
- Respondents said a lack of regular electricity affects their daily routine in the following ways:
  - › Results in unfinished household tasks
  - › Creates tension and stress
  - › Leads to family arguments
  - › Leads to a negative outlook
  - › Causes nervousness
  - › Makes people feel immobilized
  - › Negatively affects productivity inside and outside the home



*Integrating empowerment activities into programme interventions in fragile States can strengthen resilience and facilitate recovery, especially among the most underserved communities (20).*



# INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

69%

Household

Percentage of women who said they are very satisfied with their ability to influence decision-making in the household and in the community, respectively.

45%

Community

## The household

- A strong majority of women said they are satisfied with their current ability to influence economic decision-making in the household and 82 percent said they have a high degree of control over their own personal income.
- With regard to community level economic decision-making, women were about 35 percent less satisfied with their current level

of influence, and a majority of refugee and rural women said local authorities do not understand their economic needs.

- Roughly 30 percent of registered refugee households in Lebanon are headed by women—or, about 67,500 households (20). More in-depth needs assessment and programme engagement with women-headed refugee

households on issues of livelihoods recovery and economic empowerment may be worthwhile.

- Focus group findings suggest competition among host and refugee young women to find a suitable spouse has intensified in recent years, resulting in new economic anxieties for Lebanese women and girls.

1,400

refugee and rural women gained access to new market opportunities through the SPNL and Amel programmes.

## The market

To help refugee and rural women address their most urgent economic needs by accessing more and better opportunities for paid work and income generation, the combined activities of Amel and SPNL have:

- Launched four permanent shops in Beirut and other locations which attract tourists
- Supported over 130 women producers to develop brand story, logo and packaging that convey

respect for women's rights and gender equality

- Partnered with commercial distributors and other private sector actors to gain access to national and international product markets
- Joined virtual marketplaces for online sale of goods
- Experimented with Ramadan gift baskets, catering services and other innovative strategies

## Governance

- Municipal level authorities have a high degree of influence to take and shape policy decisions in Lebanon, and more so since the Syrian refugee crisis gave rise to new, highly localized challenges.
- Job creation, hiring and wage norms, public services provision, subsidies and resource allocation are all overseen and enforced by municipal authorities.
- As a result, municipal level authorities are key power-brokers to sensitize and engage in the process of advancing gender equality and gender-responsive, inclusive development. This is especially relevant in rural areas where public infrastructure is already strained.

## GOOD PROGRAMME PRACTICE

SPNL's series of market kiosks called *Souk EL Hima* have provided rural women producers a reliable outlet for income generation. Through planning and cost-sharing arrangements between SPNL and municipal authorities, rural *Hima* women have also taken on new leadership, planning and decision-making roles that help coordinate market engagements at public events around Lebanon. In 2015, SPNL established a partnership with Bioland, a Lebanon-based producer and distributor of organic foods to develop and market signature food products made by rural women.

SPNL has also engaged and sensitized national and municipal institutions on gender issues. It has coordinated over 40 events, consultation meetings and public dialogue with representatives from the national Ministry of Environment and municipal authorities to promote Hima women's leadership and decision-making roles.



*"The municipalities in the programme Hima sites offered the space and facilities for the establishment of the kiosks [such as the one in Anjar pictured]. This shows that they believe in the important social and economic roles that women play in society and in the protection of natural resources."*

SPNL



# PERSONAL RESOURCES

1,800

rural and refugee women, municipal authorities and community members have accessed vocational and gender equality training and rights-based education on a variety of topics.

## Training and education

- The ample training components provided by SPNL and Amel add important value to their efforts to support and nurture women's empowerment and community resilience for refugee and rural Lebanese women.
- Through training and education interventions, women gain access to productive equipment and collective safe spaces where sensitive issues can be discussed and coping strategies improved.
- Recognizing training and education as value-added interventions that help refugee and rural women realize economic empowerment, SPNL and Amel Association have gathered feedback from beneficiaries to help establish good training practices and lessons learned for the Lebanon context.
- The following section offers reflections and insights from this process.



*"My name is Nahla Sukkari. I am a housewife and I work in the making of carpets. A year ago I trained 30 Syrian and Lebanese women in carpet-making. SPNL provided all the tools for the training. Thanks to their work, the women are investing in their homes and providing education to their children."*

Nahla Sukkari,  
SPNL beneficiary in El Fekha



Watch Amel's short documentary about the MENNA programme vocational trainings for refugee and rural women: [www.mennalb.com](http://www.mennalb.com)

## Good Training Practices

- Having an experienced and professional trainer is key to learning skills properly the first time. Trainers should pay attention to detail and quality control at all stages, especially in product packaging.
- Trainers should help students develop a long-term learning plan. One or two trainings on a topic is not enough to apply the new skill effectively in real world activities. Many women said after they practiced a skill in real life, they felt a need to learn additional, related skills.
- Trainers should aim to become a personal resource for students by educating themselves about online resources or other low-cost opportunities for continued learning. Organizations may consider training of trainers (TOTs) approach for better training and educational outcomes.
- Women said they prefer to gain practical skills and knowledge that will help them generate income and perfect marketable job skills. Overall women want to see the immediate return on their time investment as well. Even if small, there should be some concrete take away by the end of each training session.
- Women prefer to learn different skills with a consistent group of peers, suggesting interpersonal relationships are an important feature of the learning environment.



*"As a result of the extensive trainings on skills within the UN Women project, women in the different Hima sites have produced a large number of marketable items that are of cultural value. These items are directly linked to the Hima sites and hold traditional value for the local communities."*

SPNL

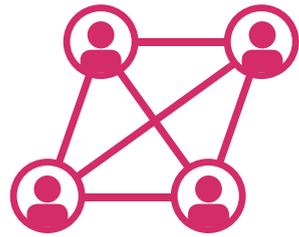
## Skills in demand

- Language and Internet courses continue to be the most highly demanded trainings.
- Many Syrian refugee beneficiaries have some formal education and command of French (in addition to Arabic fluency) but felt more French and/or basic English language skills would help them stay competitive in Lebanon's more cosmopolitan economy.
- Women showed a high demand for household management and service-oriented market skills, such as:
  - › Sewing and tailoring
  - › Makeup and hairstyling
  - › First aid
  - › Childcare techniques
  - › Household cleaning and management
  - › Clothes washing and ironing
- › Money management and cashiering
- › Food processing and preparation
- › Entertainment-oriented skills (singing, party hosting)
- › Waitressing
- › Bookkeeping
- Product development, branding and marketing were also in high demand, particularly among women and women's cooperatives with signature product lines or services.
- Supporting women to scale their sale of goods and services continues to be an area for innovation and networking, for instance by connecting women with wholesale distributors and international consumers.



*"[Through this programme] we won a worthy opportunity to bond our skills from different cultures and work in a coherent and joyful mood together to renovate life and revive the old traditions and cultural legacy by planting it in fresh young blood of the junior generation who will carry it for the future."*

Ahed Shahine,  
Rural Lebanese beneficiary



# INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

## Social cohesion

- Relations between Lebanese and refugee communities in Lebanon have become increasingly strained since 2013.
- In focus group discussions, women conveyed the following:
  - › Perception of refugees as carrying small arms, and being perpetrators of theft and violent assaults
  - › Perceptions of Syrian girls and women as creating unfair competition in marriage markets
  - › Feelings of insecurity and reduced physical mobility, including hesitation to participate in social events and public spaces, or inviting people into one's home
  - › Psychological and emotional fatigue, and drained personal energy
  - › A sense that male family members are becoming more protective and controlling over women's and girls' freedom of movement, social interactions and personal decisions
  - › Perceived "clash of cultures" and fear that one's culture is being forcibly changed, for example, regarding the behaviour of women in public
  - › The belief that international aid and development agencies are only concerned with Syrian refugees and not with the well-being of Lebanese nationals
  - › Feelings of alienation within one's own society, lack of control over the future, pessimism and cynicism
  - › The belief that weak and unreliable public services are the result of refugees "stealing" or "monopolizing" available resources
  - › The belief that refugees are bringing diseases into the community and overtaking health facilities

69%

Percentage of women who said changes to the environment over the previous 10 years have greatly affected their lives.

81%

Percentage of women who said conflict is greatly affecting their lives today.

## Environmental shocks

- Women's anxieties about changes to the environment over the last 10 years were deeply intertwined with social cohesion issues, and a general perception that refugees are bringing negative change to Lebanon.
  - › Public sanitation gaps related to trash collection
  - › "Absence of dignity" and lack of "feelings of citizenship," or the sense that one belongs to and is valued by the home country or country of residence
  - › Proliferation of diseases and health concerns
  - › Safety concerns and lack of trust
  - › The rapid and inequitable depletion of natural resources by refugees
- Women perceived changes to their environment broadly and linked it to the following:
  - › The natural environment (unseasonal rains, longer and colder winters, etc.)
  - › Food, water and electricity

## Conflict

- Lebanon continues to be affected by armed conflicts both within and outside of its borders.
- Sexual and gender-based violence is reportedly on the rise, particularly in refugee communities (22).
- The Syrian, Iraqi and longer term Palestinian refugee crises—in addition to other crises in the region and beyond—are contributing to a number of insecurities, social tensions and unarmed conflicts over jobs and strained food, water and energy supplies in Lebanon.
- Stress and anxiety related to competition for jobs and livelihoods concerns are perpetuating distrust, lack of hope and feelings of despair, which weaken resilience.

## GOOD PROGRAMME PRACTICE

Amel has facilitated vocational training, rights-based education and market skills development opportunities for over 1,100 refugee and rural Lebanese women since 2013.

Through a variety of training modules in marketing, money management, product and brand development, jewelry and accessories production, food processing, household management, catering services, product packaging and social media outreach, Amel has used training sessions as safe spaces where rural and refugee women can work side-by-side, cooperate on learning tasks and begin to break down social barriers by getting to know one another better.

This approach reflects the organization's central mission: to ensure that aid and development benefit not only refugees but also Lebanese communities in need.

In its commitment to supporting women from both communities, Amel's training modules help illustrate how training interventions can be tailored to strengthen not only skills development but also improved social cohesion.



*"The trainings that Amel delivered to my women (...) affected their personalities and self-trust positively (...), I never saw them this energetic and aware of their talents in calculations, conversations and dealing. And this came as an added value to make the environment of work much happier and productive."*

Daed Ismaiel,  
Head of Mawasem Al Dayaa Cooperative

# CONCLUSIONS: COUNTERING FRAGILITY BY EMPOWERING WOMEN



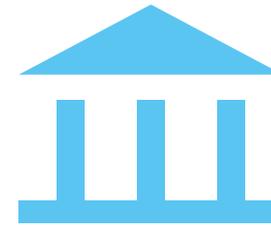
## Productive resources

Women want more and better opportunities for paid work and income generation but face an increasingly competitive and restrictive labour market, especially refugee women. To support their efforts, women said they want more and better access to productive capital and inputs: raw materials, equipment, machinery and functional spaces where productive activities can take place. These were seen as being more important and useful than access to credit or land.

Women distrust loans and see paid work as the only reliable strategy to meet their most basic needs. Most refugees in Lebanon today have some experience with informal credit and research suggests many are stuck in a cycle of debt, unable to

afford their most basic survival needs. Most women said they are afraid of loans and saw credit as worsening – not improving – opportunities for income generation and well-being.

**Women are struggling to ensure household food security and other basic needs that uphold their human rights.** Many aid providers have had to reduce or suspend their provision of emergency transfers due to overwhelming demand, leaving refugees without assistance beyond what they can afford through their own income and assets. Weak public infrastructure and delivery of services in rural areas leaves rural women in a similar situation of being dependent on piecemeal employment for their livelihoods.



## Institutional relations

Women are more satisfied with their ability to influence economic decisions in the household than in the community, and a majority of women said they have a great deal of control over their personal income. Overall women had low confidence that local authorities understand their economic needs.

Municipal authorities are gatekeepers to more gender-inclusive economic policies and practices. Municipal authorities have a growing degree of influence over economic policies and practices as a result of the refugee crisis. Yet there is considerable scope to educate and sensitize them to the economic needs of rural and refugee women, and to the benefits of gender-inclusive development strategies at the community level.

Local models of community-based governance that recognize women's economic contributions, leadership and decision-making do exist. The *Hima* approach to community-based resource management is one such model that resonates culturally, yet there is scope to further sensitize and engage municipal authorities to the importance of reinforcing such gender inclusive models at the community level.

Many women depend on CSOs, NGOs and charities to expand their economic opportunities, and this is increasingly true as aid providers cut their emergency transfers and public resources in rural areas are further depleted. In this challenging and competitive economic setting, programme interventions can help refugee and rural women connect with the skills, assets and services they are unable to access elsewhere.

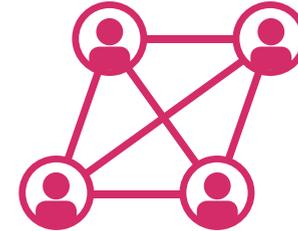


## Personal resources

Women want more and better vocational trainings and educational opportunities to help them navigate and succeed in a competitive labour market. Internet courses, French and English language training and a spectrum of market-oriented skills are all in high demand as women seek ways to improve their earning potential and secure livelihoods.

Women want better and more relevant knowledge about existing markets and how to connect with consumers. To help them apply vocational and business-oriented skills in an effective way, many women want knowledge and information that will help them identify and take advantage of new opportunities to sell their goods and services to consumers. Understanding good practices for self-employment, brand development and launching product lines can help women tap into new spaces and scale their earning potential.

Skills and educational training are value-added components of gender equality programmes, and can help women realize not only improved livelihoods and well-being but also personal growth and empowerment. Recognizing the role cash transfers and rapid response interventions play in crisis management, livelihoods programmes that pursue a sustainability approach also need to be supported and reinforced for their contributions to long-term resilience and recovery.



## Interpersonal relations

Women have been deeply affected by the changes to their social and economic environment, and many expressed anxiety and fear about the future –for themselves, their families, communities and culture. Fierce competition for jobs and scarce public resources only serve to exacerbate distrust and negative stereotyping between host and refugee communities.

Refugee women in particular have a highly individualized experience in the labour force, meaning they are less likely to enjoy the benefits and protections of membership in a collective or cooperative. Supporting women's cooperatives and community groups to include refugee women members may be a worthwhile strategy to strengthen social cohesion and cooperation.

Social cohesion and livelihoods crisis interventions are among the most under-funded priority areas, yet both rank high among women's most urgent concerns. Gender equality and women's empowerment programmes offer women important opportunities to confront these concerns in a safe and structured environment

and to work side-by-side towards self improvement and economic autonomy.

Conflict is an issue of great importance that affects most women, either directly or indirectly. Yet women's capacity to help counter these forces at the community level continues to be strained by a lack of gender-inclusive institutions and practices, as well as limited public infrastructure.

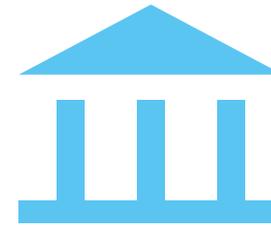
With limited opportunities to shape decision-making at the institutional and community levels, interpersonal spaces and events also offer women important entry points to shape social norms and participate in society.

# RECOMMENDATIONS



## Productive resources

- Support rural and refugee women to create, launch and scale goods and services by helping them identify new and innovative brands, products and strategies for connecting with consumers.
- Help women identify and take advantage of known opportunities for paid work, formal employment, cooperative membership and/or self-employment in the sectors where they have skills and interest.
- Enable women to gain access to productive equipment and inputs, such as machinery, raw materials and productive spaces.
- Identify any emergency resources (food, clothing, shelter, etc.) which may be available to refugee women through CSOs, NGOs and/or charities, and help them establish the necessary lines of communication. Similarly, identify any social protection services and/or energy subsidies available to rural women and support their claims-making efforts.
- Plan vocational training with a long-term production strategy in mind, whether it be to help women launch a small business, dominate a service sector or connect with a supply chain or distributor.
- Consider conducting more in-depth needs assessment with women-headed households from both refugee and host communities to identify under-addressed needs and opportunities.



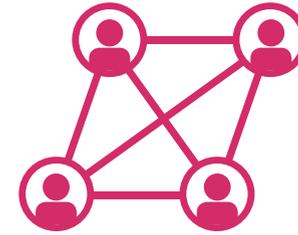
## Institutional relations

- Optimize knowledge of the local context and culture(s) to identify key powerbrokers and dedicate some effort to sensitizing them to women's economic needs and the value of gender-inclusive and – responsive practices. In the case of Lebanon, focus on municipal authorities and community leaders.
- Consider organizing and/or sponsoring women's cooperatives that welcome both host and refugee community women as members to gain collective access to productive equipment and inputs.
- Support women's cooperatives and community groups to host recurrent public events that can become social institutions in the long-term. For instance, consider organizing special "women's days" or "gender equality days" at national festivals and events, where women producers sell their goods and local women artists perform.
- Help women producers and women's cooperatives establish lines of communication and cooperation with national and international distributors and supply chains.
- Mentor women's cooperatives and community groups on interpersonal advocacy and dialogue with local authorities. Help women develop the skills needed to manage these relationships as community representatives in the long-term.
- Help sensitize other local and national CSOs, NGOs and charities to ensure they distribute aid, goods and services in a gender-responsive manner.



## Personal resources

- Organize smaller peer groups to deepen the impact of training and skill-building, and ensure peer groups include both Lebanese and refugee women members.
- Recognize that programme trainings can play transformational roles in the lives of rural and refugee women and commit to making programme trainings the very best they can be, in part by making sure trainers are properly trained and rewarded for their efforts.
- Consider piloting a series of training of trainers (TOTs) modules to improve organizational accountability for training outputs and to strengthen local ownership of skills and knowledge in the long-term.
- Identify applied learning strategies that combine vocational and non-vocational skill-building as often as possible. This may mean, for instance, supporting women producers and cooperatives to practice social media marketing in Arabic, French or English using smart phones as a learning tool.
- Tailor trainings to complement new economic opportunities and institutional relationships. For instance, train women food producers to prepare and serve the dishes they know best as caterers, event staff and even food vendors.
- Find ways to make women's rights and gender equality topics less "theoretical" by relating them to everyday realities and experiences in the local environment. Remember that women and girls may also need to see the practical value before considering the training worth their time.



## Interpersonal relations

- Support rural and refugee women to cultivate a unique voice for themselves on economic and gender-sensitive issues that are most important to them.
- Sensitizing local authorities depends on strong interpersonal relationships built on some degree of trust and familiarity. Support women's cooperatives and community groups to establish and build relationships over time through information exchange and dialogue.
- Bring women into the process of engaging with local authorities rather than acting as their spokesperson in the long-term. Recognize that women want to develop and articulate their own voice within the communities where they live.
- Optimize training, education and other interventions as instruments for strengthening social cohesion. Ensure members of different social groups participate equally and have opportunities to interact one-on-one through creative activities and trust-building exercises, including yoga or meditation.

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# ANNEX A

## FGE GRANTS IN FRAGILE STATES

### Political empowerment – awarded CSOs

#### Africa

**Burundi:** UNIPROBA | \$200,000  
**Kenya:** GROOTS Kenya Association | \$302,000  
**Kenya:** Uraia Trust | \$384,997  
**Nigeria:** Alliances for Africa (AfA) | \$230,000  
**Nigeria:** BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights & KIND | \$480,000

#### Arab States

**Egypt:** Egyptian Center for Women's Rights | \$545,000  
**Egypt, Libya and Yemen:** Karama | \$565,000  
**Egypt:** Women and Memory Forum | \$200,000  
**Egypt:** Association of the Egyptian Female Lawyers | \$260,000  
**Iraq:** Women's Empowerment Organization | \$215,000  
**Palestine:** Anabta Women Welfare Society | \$200,000

#### Asia and the Pacific

**Afghanistan:** Afghanistan Watch | \$210,000  
**Nepal:** Association of Community Radio Broadcasters Nepal | \$394,000  
**Nepal, Philippines:** Tebtebba | \$250,000  
**Pacific Islands (including Kiribati, Marshall Islands and Tuvalu):** Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat | \$200,000

#### Europe and Central Asia

**Bosnia and Herzegovina:** KULT and BH Experts Association | \$462,768

**Nigeria:** Community Life Project | \$400,000  
**Uganda, South Africa:** Women's Net | \$257,520  
**Zimbabwe:** Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network (ZWRCN) | \$1,680,939

**Palestine:** Association of Women Committees for Social Work | \$450,000  
**Palestine:** Dalia Association | \$200,000  
**Palestine:** Palestinian Centre for Peace and Democracy and Jerusalem Centre for Women (JCW) | \$200,000  
**Regional (including Egypt and Palestine):** Stars of Hope Society | \$265,000

**Pakistan:** Pak Women & Women Association Struggle for Development | \$220,000  
**Sri Lanka:** Women and Media Collective | \$496,977  
**Southeast Asia (including Timor-Leste):** International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAP) | \$545,000

**Bosnia and Herzegovina:** Gender Center of Bosnia and Herzegovina and SNV, BiH Office | \$1,472,340

### Economic empowerment – awarded CSOs

#### Africa

**Cameroon:** Horizons Femmes | \$368,750  
**Ethiopia:** Union of Ethiopian Women Charitable Associations (UEWCA) | \$550,000  
**Cote d'Ivoire:** Organisation Nationale pour l'Enfant, la Femme et la Famille (ONEF) | \$420,000  
**Guinea:** Partenariat Recherches Environnement Médias (PREM) | \$200,000  
**Liberia:** Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Market Women's Fund | \$3,000,000  
**Mali:** Association d'Entraide et de Développement | \$334,121

#### Arab States

**Egypt:** Ministry of Manpower and Emigration and American University of Cairo, Social Research Centre | \$2,400,000  
**Lebanon:** Lebanon Family Planning Association for Development & Family Empowerment (LFPADÉ) | \$255,000

#### Asia and the Pacific

**Afghanistan:** Women and Children Legal Research Foundation | \$161,920  
**Bangladesh:** Bolipara Nari Kalyan Somity (BNKS) | \$200,000

#### Americas and the Caribbean

**Haiti:** Association d'Entraide et de Développement | \$364,166

**Rwanda:** RCN Justice & Democratie and Haguruka | \$2,000,000  
**Sudan:** Badya Centre for Integrated Development Services | \$200,000  
**Uganda:** Shelters and Settlements Alternatives: Uganda Human Settlements Network | \$200,000  
**Uganda:** Uganda Women Concern Ministry | \$200,000  
**Zimbabwe:** Basilwizi Trust | \$200,000  
**Zimbabwe:** Ntengwe for Community Development | \$410,000

**Lebanon:** Amel Association | \$325,000  
**Lebanon:** Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon | \$280,000  
**Palestine:** Mother's School Society in Nablus | \$200,000

**Pakistan:** Thardeep | \$405,000  
**Sri Lanka:** Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR) | \$200,000  
**South Asia (including Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka):** Feminist Dalit Organization | \$400,000

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