



Women's Political Participation: Exclusion and Reproduction of Social Roles Case Studies from Lebanon



Women's Political Participation: Exclusion and Reproduction of Social Roles Case Studies from Lebanon



Abstract

This study seeks to expand understanding of women's participation in the Lebanese political system – a system founded on confessionalism, political familism, clientelism, and other factors which reinforce kinship-based patriarchy. The study looks at both leadership and rank and file positions in four different examples: a political party, a syndicate, a civil society organisation, and a social movement. The study examines the structures of these entities, their positions on women's issues, and their practices in audience and public engagement, through analysis of official documents, public discourse, practices, and the experiences of and challenges faced by, women affiliated with these entities.

Team

Researchers and Consultants for Lebanon Support

Manar Zaiter and Sarah ElMasry

Research Assistants

Ehsan Ismaeel and Mustafa Assi

Research and Programme Coordinator

Amreesha Jagarnathsingh

Director of Publications

Léa Yammine

Director

Dr. Marie-Noëlle AbiYaghi

Translation

Viviane Kosremelli Salloum

Design and layout

Mirna Hamady

Copy-editing

Lina Mounzer, Alex Ray

Keywords

Political participation

Woman/women

Lebanese Forces

Teachers' Syndicate

"You Stink/*Tole't Rehetkom*"

Lebanese Physically

Handicapped Union

Lebanon Support would like to thank Dr. Islah Jad and Doreen Khoury for their input in developing this study.

The views expressed in this publication are solely those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect those of Lebanon Support or its partners.

Lebanon Support © Beirut, November 2018

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying or recording by mechanical or electronic methods, without the written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotation or referencing in articles, journals and critical reviews, and other non-commercial uses permitted by copyright law.

Introduction

4

Methodology

6

I. The Lebanese Forces Party: Consolidating the General Framework of Lebanese Politics?

7

1) From Militarism to Politics: The Role of Female Party Members

8

2) "The Incarceration Phase": Greater Roles for Women?

10

3) Structures Impeding the Political Advancement of Women

12

4) Public Discourse vs. Internal Exclusion Practices

15

II. "You Stink/*Tole't Rehetkom*": Limits of Horizontal Mobilisation?

17

1) Social Protest Gatherings in Lebanon

17

2) "You Stink/*Tole't Rehetkom*": A Spontaneous Protest Movement?

19

2.1) The Limits of Unstructured Organisation

20

3) Women in the Campaign: True Participation or Tokenism?

21

III. Teachers' Syndicate in Lebanon: Women at the Bottom and Men on Top

24

1) Relationship with the Syndicate: Inactive Membership and Symbolic Commitment

25

2) Obstacles to the Advancement of Women in the Syndicate

27

2.1) Structures and Practices Unwelcoming to Women

28

2.2) Confessional Quotas and Marginalisation of Syndicate Work: Private Schools and Parties

30

2.3) How Social Duties Impact Women's Participation in the Syndicate

32

IV. The Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union: Limits for women

32

1) The Union as Social Safety Net

32

2) Female Union Members and their Social Environments

34

3) Union Structures and Practices: The Hidden Ways Women Are Short-Changed

36

Conclusion

39

Bibliography

42

Introduction

A significant amount of literature has examined the gap between men's and women's political participation, as well as obstacles and challenges faced by women. Most literature has focused on experiences in Europe, America, and emerging democracies of Latin America. The most important explanations for the gaps and shortcomings in political participation posited by previous literature fall into two categories. The first deals with individual-level factors, such as the differences between the economic, social, educational, and professional resources afforded to men and women (for example, it is easier for men to work full-time jobs, which in turn gives them the economic capital necessary for political promotion, whereas this is generally harder for women).¹ The second category deals with structural and institutional factors that shape the surrounding political, economic, social, and legal frameworks, such as regime type, levels of industrialisation, and economic development, as well as cultural barriers affecting perceptions of women's social status and roles.²

However, experiences in the Middle East – especially Lebanon – have been less-well documented, largely due to the unavailability of adequate survey data. Although women in Lebanon have high rates of educational attainment and economic participation,³ as well as many political,⁴ economic, and social rights,⁵ the indicators of women's political participation in Lebanon⁶ demonstrate that they are still unable to break the political “glass ceiling.”⁷ Most studies have focused on women running in parliamentary or municipal elections⁸ as members of political parties that are firmly entrenched in the confessional political system. Rarely do they expand their scope to examine women's political participation in nonpartisan entities or non-traditional (informal) arrangements.

1 Hilde Coffe and Selin Dilli, “The gender gap in political participation in Muslim majority countries,” *International Political Science Review*, 2015, Vol. 36(5), p. 528-529.

2 Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, “Cultural Obstacles to Equal Representation,” *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 12(3), 2001, p. 129,131.

3 The director general of the Central Administration of Statistics said in 2014 that the economic participation of women in Lebanon “exceeds 27% compared to 73% for men.” The speech available on: <https://bit.ly/2w64POu> [Last accessed 31 July 2018]. The percentage of women and girls at all levels of school and university education in Lebanon ranges from 48% to 53%, according to the data available in the annual statistical bulletin of 2013. Available at the Directorate General of Statistics: <https://bit.ly/2nDNjgo> [Last accessed 31 July 2018].

4 Women in Lebanon won the right to vote and run for parliamentary elections in 1953.

5 Women in Lebanon have gained some economic and social benefits, most notably the extension of maternity leave, and the securing of social security and social welfare, but much discrimination against women still persists in the laws regulating personal status.

6 In 2017, Lebanon ranked 11th among 14 Arab countries on the Global Gender Gap Index, which includes economic participation rates and employment opportunities, educational attainment, access to health care, and political achievement. “Lebanon has filled about 60% of the existing gender gap but has regressed since 2016,” Annahar, 13 November 2017, available on: <https://bit.ly/2MfPBkV-2016> [Last accessed 4 August 2018].

7 A term originally used to express the invisible barriers and obstacles to women's corporate advancement – later used more broadly and in different contexts by other marginalised groups.

8 Fatima Sbaity, “Can Women Break Through the Political Glass Ceiling?” in *Party Politics, Religion, and Women's Leadership*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2013, p.203-230.

The following study therefore helps answer: “What are the challenges and obstacles that impede women's participation in the political sphere in Lebanon?” This study defines political participation as “an activity that works either directly, by trying to influence government efforts to implement public policies, or indirectly, by influencing the actors who make these policies.”⁹ This definition does not confine political participation to formal electoral moments, it rather recognises that it can take on various forms including demonstrations and protest movements.¹⁰ Thus, it challenges androcentric definitions of what is “political.”¹¹ The study also takes into account the diversity of forms of participation according to women's heterogeneous religious and class experiences.¹²

Within the framework of the Lebanese political system – i.e. founded on confessionalism,¹³ political familism,¹⁴ clientelism, the *zu'ama* system¹⁵ and kinship-based patriarchy,¹⁶ – this study explores women's levels of participation in leadership roles, and rank and file positions. Four different examples were selected, including a political party, a syndicate, a civil society organisation, and a social movement. The study examines the structures of these entities, their positions on women's issues, and their practices in audience and public engagement. Information was gathered through analysis of official documents, public discourse, practices, and the experiences of and challenges faced by,

9 Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady, *Voice and Equality*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1995, p. 38.

10 *Ibid.*

11 Waylen concluded that there is a dominant androcentric perception of the participation of women in politics; for example, in order for a woman's participation to be eligible for consideration, she must have won a seat in the elections. For more on this issue, please read: Georgina Waylen, “Analysing Women in the Politics of the Third World,” *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* Vol. 9, Gender, Colonialism, Technology and 'Development' (December 1997), p. 4-5.

12 Intersectionality refers to “a tool that can be used to show the interaction between [intersecting axes of oppression, such as] gender, race, class and other categories” such as age, sexuality or disability in individual and social lives.

For more, consult: Lebanon Support, “Gender Dictionary: Traveling concepts and local usages in Lebanon,” *The Civil Society Knowledge Centre*, 2017, available at: <http://civilsociety-centre.org/gen-dictionary/i/34579> [Last accessed 13 August 2018].

13 The Ta'if Agreement (1989) established the general principles to ensure national reconciliation among conflicting entities during the Lebanese Civil War, the most important of which is ensuring “representative” confessional power-sharing and political representation through a more equitable distribution of parliamentary seats among Christians and Muslims. Accordingly, the Agreement—followed by the amendments made to the Lebanese Constitution that same year—served to further entrench confessionalism in the Lebanese political system. Consult: Elizabeth Picard, “Is the Consociational system reformable?,” *IREMAM - Institut de Recherches et d'Études sur le Monde Arabe et Musulman*, 2015, available at <https://bit.ly/2P8ZiPW> [last accessed 4 August 2018].

14 Suad Joseph proposes the concept of “political familism” to explain how family mediates the relation of citizens to the state; affiliation and loyalty to family outweigh that paid to the state, as the family offers services and privileges – as well as a guaranteed existence – that individuals can count on, as opposed to state assistance. Suad Joseph, “Political Familism in Lebanon,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 636 (1), 2011, p.150-163, DOI: 010.1177/0002716211398434

15 Clientelism in Lebanon is based on leadership by a person with influence and authority acquired through his family and confessional affiliation; he offers his services in exchange for loyalty. For more on clientelism, consult: Nizar Hamzeh, “Clientelism, Lebanon: Roots and Trends,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 37 (3), 2001, p.170-171, available at: <https://bit.ly/2B81La9> [Last accessed 4 August 2018].

16 Joseph points out how confessionalism maps over political familism. Political familism works through kinship-based patriarchy, where women, young people, and children are subject to the authority of the elder male members of the family. This dynamic regulates their relationship and obligations to these elders, as well as the state. Thus, kinship-based patriarchy is not restricted to the family, but extends to all state institutions and politics at large in Lebanon. Consult previous citation of Suad Joseph p. 155-159.

women affiliated with these entities. This analysis assumes that women's presence in highly visible leadership positions is more likely to increase public faith that women are able to govern and make political decisions,¹⁷ and that this contributes to long-term gender equality.¹⁸

Methodology

This study adopts an exploratory approach, employing a case study methodology and qualitative research techniques to collect data on the four selected entities. Data collection techniques consisted of conducting 35 in-depth interviews and organising seven focus groups. The interviews were conducted with several stakeholders and actors within the four entities, as well as specialists of political and syndicate activity in Lebanon.

In parallel, focus groups were designed to include both leaders and grassroots members among these entities. Participants were selected according to criteria recognising the diversity of their roles within these entities, their age groups, social and economic backgrounds, and the geographical areas within which they work. The aim was to examine a diverse-enough group in order to better identify the challenges and obstacles women face during political participation. The field research was conducted in two phases; collected responses were then fully transcribed and analysed through a process of qualitative coding to generate trends.

The four entities examined were selected on the basis of having high rates of female involvement – even if only at the grassroots level – or based on their slogans and demands regarding women's political participation in Lebanon. The Lebanese Forces party (LF) was selected because it endorses many women's issues in its legislative positions within parliamentary committees, and proposes laws to improve the economic and social conditions of women in Lebanon. Additionally, it appointed a woman, Dr. Chantal Sarkis, as general secretary of the party in 2016, which is rare among Lebanese parties.

“You Stink/*Tole't Rehetkom*” was a social movement that participated in the 2015 protest movement sparked by the garbage crisis in Lebanon. This particular movement was chosen due to the prominent presence and participation of women both on the ground and in their media representation,

.....
17 Quantitative study literature available revealed no conclusive results regarding the effect of women's presence in parliamentary offices and ministries on the public's perception of women's potential leadership and governing capabilities, nor any impact on women's political empowerment. Some studies found a positive impact on the perceptions of both genders, while others revealed negative results on women's perceptions. For a review of this literature, consult:

Tiffany D. Barnes and Michelle M. Taylor-Robinson, “Women Cabinet Ministers in Highly Visible Posts and Empowerment of Women: Are the Two Related?” in: Amy C. Alexander, Catherine Bolzendahl and Farida Jalalzai (eds) *Measuring Women's Political Empowerment across the Globe*. Gender and Politics. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2018, p. 237, 245.

18 Hakan Seckinelgin and Jennifer F. Klot, “From Global Policy to Local Knowledge: What is the Link between Women's Formal Political Participation and Gender Equality in Conflict-affected Contexts?,” *Global Policy*, Vol. 5(1), February 2014, p. 38-39.

as well as from demands related to women's issues raised by smaller groups within the movement – discussed further below.

Among non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union was selected for having female leaders. This provided an opportunity for analysing the impact of such leadership on the organisation at large, while the Teachers' Syndicate was chosen because of the large presence of women in its rank and file membership, rather than leadership roles.

The use of “case studies” imposes some limitations, which must be taken into consideration when reading the conclusions of this study. Firstly, like other qualitative research methods, case studies depend on the researcher's subjectivity and ability to identify the variables of the context being studied. This subjectivity often leads one researcher to analyse the causes of a phenomenon differently from another, making it difficult to replicate the research methodology in order to study other phenomena. Secondly, the selection criteria in case studies is not based on random sampling — the prevailing approach in quantitative studies — making case studies more likely to confirm the researcher biases. This is because the cases selected often already exhibit clear elements of the phenomenon under study. Finally, the methodology of case studies is inherently limited as their conclusions cannot be generalised to a larger number of similar cases. However, the purpose of the case study methodology is not to be able to generalise, rather it is to uncover what challenges women face in their political participation within the selected entities, or within entities with similar structures or practices. The objective here is then analytical generalisation rather than statistical generalisation.

I. The Lebanese Forces Party: Consolidating the General Framework of Lebanese Politics?

1) From Militarism to Politics: The Role of Female Party Members

While political parties are one of the most important channels through which women can enter the political sphere,¹⁹ Lebanese parties have historically not been welcoming to women.²⁰ Before Lebanon's independence, membership within political parties was restricted to men. After independence, thanks to the activism of women's associations and the efforts of early generations of feminists, female participation in the public sphere – and consequently the country's political parties – increased.²¹ Though there was considerable interaction between several Lebanese parties and their

.....
19 Fatima Sbaity Kassem, *Party Variation in Religiosity & Women's Leadership Lebanon in Comparative Perspective*, Columbia University, 2011, p.22.

20 Paul Kingston, “Women and Political Parties in Lebanon: Reflections on the Historical Experience” 2011, p.10 available at: <https://bit.ly/2B823xL> [Last accessed 6 August 2018].

21 Rita Stephan, “Four Waves of Lebanese Feminism,” *E-International Relations*, 7 November 2014, available at: <https://bit.ly/2B-kZPeP> [Last accessed 6 August 2018].

international counterparts²² in the run-up to the Lebanese civil war, local parties remained committed to particular features of the Lebanese political system, most notably in their adherence to confessionalism and the authority of the *zu'ama*, eventually leading to their participation in armed conflict.²³ Among these parties is the Lebanese Forces.

The Lebanese Forces party (LF) was established in 1976, following the decision to unify the Christian parties under the leadership of Bashir Gemayel and the Lebanese Front coalition, with the LF coordinating the military arm of the coalition.²⁴ By the end of 1980s, and with the departure of some Christian militias from its ranks, who rejected its authority and expansion, the LF became more cohesive as a military entity. It then underwent several transformations, including a phase emphasising military action. This persisted until 1993, when the LF was formalised as a political party and focused on political action. The LF relied on its strong ties to school and university students — bolstered by on-campus meetings²⁵— to recruit male and female students for general and specialised military training. Recruits then graduated from this system as fighters.²⁶ Alongside its military recruitment programme, the LF provided civil and social services such as health, education, and transportation, which over time turned it into a political movement with a social base,²⁷ especially within the areas under its control.²⁸ The institutional structure and discourse of the LF during its militant period strongly influenced the interviewed female members of the party, some of whom lived through the civil war.

According to these women, the LF took over “the mission of defending the land and strengthening the connection to the homeland” during the war years. This mission placed fighting and martyrdom among the founding values of the party’s identity and that of its members.²⁹ Many therefore joined the LF out of a sense of loyalty to those martyred and wounded, a principle that the party also placed great value on in its official discourse.³⁰ One female member expanded on this: “I have relatives who

22 Paul Kingston, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 10-11.

23 Farid el Khazen, “Political Parties in Postwar Lebanon: Parties in Search of Partisans,” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 57 (4), 2003, p. 606.

24 The Lebanese Front Coalition was an alliance of parties with a Christian majority, established at the beginning of the Lebanese civil war as a force to counter and confront the Lebanese National Movement, allied at that time with the Palestinian Liberation Organisation. For more on the constitution and development of the Lebanese Forces, consult: Lewis Sinder, “The Lebanese Forces: Their Origins and Role in Lebanon’s Politics,” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 38(1), 1984, p. 1-33.

25 Encyclopaedia of Lebanese Parties – Part 2, Edition International, 2006, Beirut, page 91.

26 Lewis Sinder, “The Lebanese Forces: Their Origins and Role in Lebanon’s Politics,” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 38(1), 1984, p 8-9.

27 A political official in the Lebanese Forces party, interviewed in Beirut on 21 July 2017, defines the organisation as “a military resistance organisation that was established during the civil war, and in order to guarantee its continued existence, it had to have a popular embrace, one that included and still includes women and men.”

28 Lewis Sinder, *ibid.*, page 16.

29 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female members of the Lebanese Forces party, Beirut, 16 March 2018.

30 Dr. Geagea’s speech of 16 September 1991, Lebanese Forces History blog, available on: <https://bit.ly/2vH70IU> [Last accessed 6 August 2018].

died fighting with the LF and I am certainly no better than them. Our young people confronted death, and the least we can do is to continue the journey.”³¹ Being raised in families whose members joined the LF, first as a militia and then as a political party, and seeing their fathers and relatives in military roles – becoming personally acquainted with martyrs – were experiences that strengthened the loyalty of female members towards the party’s martyrs.

One female party leader explained: “I have known the LF since I was nine years old, since the attack on Zahleh when people started arming themselves and our house became like a barracks.”³² In 1993 the LF became a formal political party with Samir Geagea as leader. Some women cited their high regard for him as a reason not only for having joined the party, but also for why they maintain membership. But no sooner did the LF become a party than it was dissolved in 1994. Its activities ceased and Geagea was arrested and charged with war crimes, becoming the only Lebanese militia leader to receive a prison sentence. He remained in prison for 11 years.³³ “*Al-hakim’s*”³⁴ experience in prison only increased admiration for him among those who saw him as someone determined and steadfast in his political positions. His detention came to constitute one of the most important incentives for joining and staying within the ranks of the LF. All female members interviewed cited details about *Al-Hakim* – his personality, his handling of certain situations, his steadfastness during incarceration, and his speeches conveying hope to his constituents, despite both personal and political pressure.

The war, combined with the above-mentioned influences prepared LF women to play new roles in the military context.³⁵ The female members interviewed saw militarisation as natural, “a necessity to defend [our] existence.” Existence had different meanings for them; for some it meant their sect, for others their religion, yet this was the context within which they defined the significance of their roles and participation.³⁶ According to the women, their roles at first consisted of providing various forms of service and care — consistent with the traditional roles of women — such as cooking, securing food for village populations, first aid, communication, media and administrative functions,

31 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female members of the Lebanese Forces party, Beirut, 16 March 2018.

32 The Battle of Zahleh (1980-81) took place between Syrian forces and Lebanese Forces’ militia, and was followed by confrontations between Israeli and Syrian air forces. The crisis ended with the withdrawal of both the Syrian forces and the Lebanese Forces’ militia from the city. Consult: Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, London, Pluto Press, 2012, p. 216.

33 “Amnesty for Lebanon ex-warlord,” *BBC*, 18 July 2005, available at: <https://bbc.in/2MrglOo> [Last accessed 6 August 2018].

34 “*Al-Hakim*” (‘the doctor’ in Arabic) was the nickname given to Dr. Samir Geagea in Lebanon, because he was studying medicine at the American University of Beirut.

35 Some literature deconstructing the concepts of “militarism” and “resistance” suggest that war may force societies to consider the social roles of women and men from new perspectives. In wartime contexts, men and women are compelled to perform tasks that are new to them. Some duties are considered consistent with traditional gender roles while others are more unorthodox, challenging the traditional roles, even if only temporarily. Hence, we find female fighters in militias or women taking on tasks that have long been associated with men. For more, consult: Jocelyn Viterna, *Women in war the micro-processes of mobilisation in El Salvador*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013, p.6.

36 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female members of the Lebanese Forces party, Beirut, 16 March 2018.

and child care management. Gradually, these roles evolved to participation in guard duties,³⁷ with women being trained in the cleaning, loading, and use of small arms and light weapons, primarily for the purpose of defending themselves, and later, to enable them to participate in combat operations.³⁸ Female party members described having had “female fighters” trained to play direct military and combat roles on the field, as the most remarkable and important feature of that period.³⁹ However, most of these “female fighters” returned to performing traditional women’s tasks immediately after the end of the war. According to them, their military roles were only “temporary.”⁴⁰

The emergence of the party, of its identity and its military mobilisation, all served to “weaken the presence of women in leadership positions.”⁴¹ Military action essentially links the ideas of masculinity and war – with war seen as an arena for violence and murder, in which males become “men” tasked with the responsibility of defending the nation, sect, or party.⁴² The LF’s perceptions of military mobilisation are also reflected in a video report, documenting the party’s military history, its various battles, and the graduation of its fighters. Female fighters are absent from this narrative; rather, women are portrayed as war victims, requiring support and protection.⁴³ The only exception is the role played by Mrs. Sethrida Geagea, wife of Samir Geagea, who kept the party together during her husband’s incarceration.

This representation is consistent with the general stereotype of women during times of war and conflict, whereby they are characterised as passive and ineffectual “victims.” The LF, like other right-wing parties, made no effort to see women outside the traditional framework of caregiver roles, and made no demands regarding any women’s issues during that period. The military roles played by women served specific military objectives rather than representing improved views towards women. This is consistent with the generally conservative frameworks of right-wing parties.⁴⁴

2) The ‘Incarceration Phase’: Greater Roles for Women?

By the end of Lebanon’s civil war, women played various roles within the LF, whether as student activists or within the party’s media and research institutions. During this transitional period – from

.....
³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Lamia Rustom Shehadeh, “Women in the Lebanese militias” in *Women and War in Lebanon*, University of Florida Press, 1999, p. 155.

³⁹ According to the testimony, there were three units of female fighters one each in Beirut, Bikfaya the Metn district. All the women who enlisted describe first having visited the women’s unit accompanied by male relatives, either their fathers, brother, or cousins. See page 156, previous reference.

⁴⁰ Lamia Rustom Shehadeh, *op. cit.*, 1999, p. 159.

⁴¹ Interview carried out by the research team with a political official in the Lebanese Forces party, Beirut, 21 August 2017.

⁴² Sune Haugbolle, “The (little) militia man: Memory and militarised masculinity in Lebanon,” *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies*, Vol. 8 (1), 2012, p. 128.

⁴³ Lebanese Forces, *The Continuing Resistance*, Beirut 2014, available at: <https://bit.ly/2MrgEc0> [Last accessed 28 June 2018].

⁴⁴ Silvia Erzeel & Ekaterina R. Rashkova, “Still men’s parties? Gender and the radical right in comparative perspective,” *West European Politics*, Vol. 40(4), 2017, p. 815.

the end of the Civil War in 1990 to the arrest and incarceration of Samir Geagea in 1994 – the party worked to bolster women’s political awareness through educational sessions, known as “staff sessions” and “pioneer sessions.”⁴⁵ This phase was short-lived, ending with the upheaval of Geagea’s arrest on 12 April 1994.

Geagea’s arrest came following a host of restrictions imposed on the LF party by Lebanese authorities. These measures included arresting and trying party figures in civil and military trials; prosecuting members of student divisions; raiding LF headquarters; and evicting them from their main headquarters in Karantina.⁴⁶ These restrictions also created new opportunities for women, allowing them access to roles that were previously out of their reach, mirroring conclusions in literature pertaining to women’s participation in other revolutionary or armed movements.⁴⁷ According to female party members, as security constraints impeded male members’ freedoms, they conversely opened space for the relative expansion of women’s roles.⁴⁸ Seven female administrative officers were tasked with military responsibilities, including personal protection of the party leader’s wife, meeting with militants in the different regions and distributing aid to the families of detainees.⁴⁹ In parallel, women were also engaged at various levels of the party’s activities, which included semi-secret work with university students, cultural and sports clubs, and the legal defence of detainees. They also played direct roles on the ground through distributing pamphlets, participating in protests, organising sit-ins and demonstrations, and confronting security forces in the streets.⁵⁰

The change in women’s roles during Geagea’s incarceration (1994-2005) cannot be read separately from the fact that it was also during this time that Sethrida Geagea, Samir’s wife, assumed primary leadership of the LF. According to a party official, this contributed to “maintaining the cohesion and continuity of the party.”⁵¹ There was a consensus among interviewees who regarded Mrs. Geagea as inherently possessing the personal characteristics necessary to assume leadership of the party. They also recognised that some party members helped create a supportive environment for her. Despite this, Mrs. Geagea also faced pushback from officials and party figures, who rejected the idea of female leadership, seeing themselves as more deserving of this position. As female party members acquired more power, they also faced security and political restrictions – some were even

.....
⁴⁵ Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female members of the Lebanese Forces party, Beirut, 16 March 2018.

⁴⁶ *Encyclopaedia of Lebanese Parties*, Part 2, Edition International, 2006, Beirut, p. 93-95.

⁴⁷ Linda M. Lobao, “Women in Revolutionary Movements: Changing Patterns of Latin American Guerrilla Struggle,” *Dialectical Anthropology*, Vol. 15(211), 1990, p. 217.

⁴⁸ Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female members of the Lebanese Forces party, Beirut, 16 March 2018.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Interview carried out by the research team with an official in the Lebanese Forces party. Tabarja, 15 September 2017.

prosecuted. Interviewed female party members cited the arrest and detention of Antoinette Shahine in 1994 – and her torture in prison – as a key example of the challenges some LF women endured during this period as they gained more prominence within the party.⁵²

Despite Mrs. Geagea's role in the party and the increased participation of other women, this did not translate into the permanent ascent of women to key roles in the party's political activities, nor were women's issues ever a priority for the party. Party officials cite the LF's preoccupation with more urgent issues, such as "the Syrian occupation and the incarceration of the party's leader."⁵³ Despite these issues having been resolved, there is still a discrepancy between the party's public presentation of itself as an institution supportive of women, one that advocates for women's issues and rights, and the actual status of women within the party, as discussed further below.

3) Structures Impeding the Political Advancement of Women

In 2012, the party announced its political programme and internal codes, giving hope that this would create more space to interact with a broader popular base and perhaps generate greater opportunities for women. According to one female member, "the party has become a political entity, meaning that it now communicates with all people, and will be involved in [national political] decisions."⁵⁴ However, the percentage of female members in the party still does not exceed 30%. Female member responsibilities vary from working in student divisions to taking over the responsibilities of the general secretariat – the highest administrative position available. Between these two poles, the accessible positions within the party extend to the employment sector, that includes syndicate workers (doctors and bankers), the department for social affairs, the department that looks after the rights of the martyred and the wounded, and the department for women's empowerment – which is fully staffed and run by women.

Some female members also occupy positions of responsibility in various party offices, particularly the Public Policy Office and the Bureau for Relations with Foreign Parties. Despite this, most of the women's duties involve stereotypical roles such as caregiver positions in the agency that looks after the rights of the martyred and the wounded, or other roles far removed from the arena of political decision-making such as positions relating to electoral nominations and the chairmanship of some political offices. Though the importance of women's the party's intermediate administrative and

52 Shahine was a member of the Lebanese Forces party and was arrested on charges of murdering a priest. After leaving prison in 1999, Shahine became an activist, advocating against torture and the death penalty. For more about her experience: "Antoinette Shahine on the 22nd anniversary of the bombing of the Church of Our Lady of Deliverance," YouTube, 1 March 2016, available at: <https://bit.ly/2P9ttGK> [last accessed 10 August 2018]; "Amnesty International Criticises the Torture of Women in Lebanon: Rape, Trussing and Extinguishing Cigarettes on Bodies," Portal, 23 August 2001, available at: <https://bit.ly/2M9d4nG> [Last accessed 10 August 2018].

53 Interview carried out by the research team with an official in the Lebanese Forces party, Dbayeh, 14 August 2017.

54 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female members of the Lebanese Forces party, Beirut, 16 March 2018.

grassroots levels cannot be denied, what must be noted is their significant absence in any political decision-making.

Few women occupy field positions that require public interaction such as "regional office manager" or "central office manager." These roles are considered crucial to the party's activities and to building its popular base. According to the party's internal regulations, regional offices are decentralised party bodies whose purview is the judiciary in the administrative organisation of the Lebanese state,⁵⁵ while the central offices form the essential units of the decentralised geographical structure of the party.⁵⁶ Female party members point out that the responsibilities such positions entail are incompatible with women's social status and their family obligations. One explained further: "All the work falls on the departmental heads. They have to be in constant contact with the public, entering people's homes and ready to receive people at any time and be available to listen to their needs. Such a thing isn't at all easy for a woman."⁵⁷ According to female party members and party leaders, field positions involve much dedicated and time-consuming work with regional party bases, and time is not a resource easily available to female party members who have to balance taking care of their families with their party duties. Many women often withdraw from party activities when they get married and start families, citing a lack of moral and logistical support from family members, in addition to the burdens of their reproductive roles. One female member explained: "I'm actively involved because I'm single. If I were married things would be different."⁵⁸ The comments of LF members align with what we know from previous studies investigating the effects of family responsibilities and spousal power dynamics on women's careers. The study found that financial independence and the ways it impacted family decision-making had a positive impact on a spouse's ability to participate in political activity and amass political experience.⁵⁹

Interviewees also added that many positions of influence are linked to campaigning for "elections," and that it was therefore preferable to have members who are readily accepted by the party's popular base – in most cases men. This undoubtedly makes it much harder for women to accumulate political experience and foundations necessary to enable them to play representative roles in later political life. The party has undertaken no initiatives to help improve these conditions, except for the

55 The Lebanese state is administratively divided into 8 governorates (the first level of administrative divisions) and 25 districts (second level). See: Institutional and Administrative Organisation of the Lebanese Territory (2016), available at: <https://bit.ly/20x-28gw> [Last accessed 11 August 2018].

56 The internal structure of the Lebanese Forces party can be found through its own rules of procedure. It is available at the following link: <https://bit.ly/2nzoQc6> [Last accessed 28 June 2018].

57 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female members of the Lebanese Forces party, Beirut, 16 March 2018.

58 *Ibid.*

59 A pivotal study by Nancy Burns concluded that family hierarchies and power dynamics had more impact on women's experiences than the family structure (i.e. with or without children). Consult: Nancy Burns, et al. *The Private Roots of Public Action: Gender, Equality, and Political Participation*, Harvard University Press, 2009, p. 331-333.

general secretariat's largely forgotten directive to "ask regional coordinators to appoint women in committees and give them leadership roles at the regional level."⁶⁰

With regards to municipal elections, which constitute a crucial part of Lebanese political life, there are no precise figures on either the percentage of female candidates, or the number of women who win representative seats for the party.⁶¹ Party leadership supported the candidacy of women in the most recent municipal elections, but this support was limited in areas where, in an effort to maintain sectarian balance, priority was given to forming alliances between various parties through political compromises and access to seats. In addition, in those situations where the party was forced to form alliances with other political forces, the first order of concern, according to all interviewees, is that they will primarily benefit the party, since "we cannot risk losing a seat."⁶²

The LF has maintained a presence both in parliamentary houses and in most of the governments formed after Samir Geagea's release from prison. Yet in recent years – including the 2018 Parliament – the LF's parliamentary bloc has included only one woman – Sethrida Geagea. There has been no other woman chosen to serve as minister in the executive branch. This dearth of women extends to the party's internal executive body, as well as its ministers and deputies. This questions the seriousness of the party's commitment to supporting more representative roles for women outside the framework of political familism – represented by Sethrida Geagea's permanent presence in Parliament.

Furthermore, the LF has not undertaken any structural reforms that would allow for the increased participation of women within its ranks. This is evidenced in the lack of clear vision on women's participation such as a lack of quotas for representation. One female party official attributed this to disagreement within the party. Some in the party reject the adoption of quotas and think political promotions should be granted on the basis of merit and not simply to fulfil quotas. Others maintain that quotas are a necessary mechanism for promoting women's participation in public life.⁶³ Still, the party remains firmly opposed internally to the adoption of quotas, while maintaining a neutral public stance, declaring that it will neither defend nor reject the adoption of quotas, fearing lost opportunities for political compromise and settlement during this time of prolonged political crisis and the repeated extensions of Parliament's term.⁶⁴

60 Interview carried out by the research team with an official in the Lebanese Forces party, Mearab, 22 August 2017.

61 Nationally, the number of women who ran for candidacy in the 2010 and 2016 elections was quite close, with the number of female candidates in Lebanon rising from 1346 to 1485 between elections. The percentage of female winners rose from 4.7% in 2010 to 5.6% in 2016. These figures derive from a presentation by the Lebanese Commission for Lebanese Women's Affairs on the results of women's participation in municipal elections in July 2016.

62 Interview carried out by the research team with an official in the Lebanese Forces party, Tabarja, 28 July 2017.

63 *Ibid.*

64 Interview carried out by the research team with an official in the Lebanese Forces party, Tabarja, September 25, 2017.

There is also a lack of female participation in drafting internal documents. Female party members pointed out that the party's internal rules were written by men, who were solely concerned with drawing up the party's internal structure without any consideration for women's issues such as violence or sexual harassment. As such, the internal rules are devoid of any measures to protect female party members in cases of gender-based abuse. The opinions of female party members were divided between those who saw the need for an official document protecting women and those who deny the very existence of such incidents within the party.⁶⁵ The former claimed that such abuses occurred and the current 'adherence to Christian values' does not guard against harassment.

It must be noted that one mechanism does exist which encourages more active female participation in the LF's political life, in the form of a group that has replaced what was once known as the "Women's Committee." Despite drafting plans for this group's operations in 2017, it still has no clear structure. It works in cooperation with the party's political education office to conduct sessions for the political education of women in different regions, and also lobbies for increasing the number of women in leadership positions.⁶⁶ But there remains a crucial rift within the group, a discrepancy between that which is considered "feminist" and that which is considered "political." These concepts are conceived of as either theoretically or practically separate (evident in the separation of tasks and roles), as those female members who play political roles are not subscribed to this group and do not see a need to be subscribed to it either.⁶⁷ This raises questions about women's expected roles within the political sector,⁶⁸ and underlines the importance of not creating political structures that relegate women and their issues to their own special groups or entities.⁶⁹

4) Public Discourse vs. Internal Exclusion Practices

An examination of the LF's dynamics, practices, and positions reveals other discrepancies between its public advocacy for women's participation and the reality of what women face within the party. At the forefront of these is the concept of "party interest," which refers to the priority placed on winning municipal and parliamentary seats. During interviews with female party members, we were told that the party only nominates a woman if they believe she will be able to win enough votes to secure them a parliamentary or municipal seat. One female leader confirmed this was the main concern:

65 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female members of the Lebanese Forces party, Beirut, March 16, 2018.

66 Externally, this group supports partnerships with women's organisations, either by collaborating on activities or by adopting the draft laws by which these organisations operate.

67 Interview carried out by the research team with an official in the Lebanese Forces party, Dbayeh, August 14, 2017.

68 One feminist believes that this women's affairs group should include both women and men working together to integrate women's issues into the party's agenda by politically empowering female party members. It should also work on lobbying the party to defend women's issues by applying gender-based approaches in all areas (structural, communication, resources, speech). From an interview carried out by the research team with a human rights activist from Lebanon, Beirut, July 26, 2017.

69 "Ghettoising women's politics" as explained by Kishwar 1996 in Deborah J. Smith, *Finding power: Gender and women's political participation in Rajasthan, India*. PhD thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science (United Kingdom), 2005, p.182.

“There are issues that are unsuited for a feminist approach. When making decisions, the party’s leader does not think about whether an issue has to do with women or men. He considers only the party’s interests.”⁷⁰ Thus, competency is brought up as the fundamental criterion through which to read the causes for women’s limited roles. According to the majority of interviewees, the party assigns tasks to the right person – female or male – and there is no gender discrimination.

Female party members argued that they only had to “prove themselves” in order to be promoted. One of them noted: “When you work and help people, they begin to trust you. You work with all your heart and give as much as you can to the party and then you get promoted;” while another commented: “The problem is women themselves. They do not want leadership positions, and don’t enjoy political activities. Women do not like political work.”⁷¹ Patriarchal culture seems to have become rooted in these women’s perception of their own participation and their determination to prove themselves. They need only have the will and work hard enough before requesting promotions, while the same discourse does not apply to their male counterparts. Some responses indicate that these structural factors remain hidden to some. The same factors limit women’s ability to gain political experience, and thus their lack of capacity.

This concept of “party interest” overlaps the idea of “confessional or sectarian interest,” exercised through the political alliances made by the party to increase their chances of winning electoral seats. Female party members pointed to the mixed electoral districts that push the party to study candidates’ names and form alliances in a way that ensures a seat for the “confession” at large.⁷² They also recognised and defended the importance of confessional interest because they saw it as a guarantee that represents the “rights of all [confessions].”

In a context where party and confessional interests take precedence, female party members acknowledged their views are marginalised and not taken seriously. “If we are part of a group of men, any idea put forward by a woman is not attacked exactly, but not taken seriously either,” stated one woman. They also pointed out how critics are quick to castigate the clothes and appearance of the female party leader instead of interacting with her ideas and positions. One female party member said that most male members of the party saw female members only as “women,” regardless of their “political leadership roles.”⁷³ Another female party member described her experience of running for a leadership position within the party and the opposition she faced, having to listen to the oft-repeated question: “Why a woman, are there no longer any men?”⁷⁴

70 Interview carried out by the research team with an official in the Lebanese Forces party, Mearab, 22 August 2017.

71 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female members of the Lebanese Forces party, Beirut, 16 March 2018.

72 Electoral seats are divided by confession to ensure representation for the different communities residing in the geographical areas within each electoral district.

73 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female members of the Lebanese Forces party, Beirut, 16 March 2018.

74 *Ibid.*

It appears that the party is only partially committed to women’s issues and support for women, a position reflected in its public discourse. The LF has put forward a number of bills on women’s rights, including a bill to amend the provisions of articles 503 and 504 of the Penal Code relating to marital rape, as well as proposing a law to protect minors from child marriage. Still, the party rejects any amendment pertaining to the Lebanese nationality law, which prevents Lebanese women from granting citizenship to their non-Lebanese spouses and families “because of the specificity of the situation in Lebanon and the fear of demographic imbalance and [that this might be used as] a cover-up for naturalisation projects.”⁷⁵ One female party member agreed: “When it comes to citizenship, I don’t think about women. Rather, I think about my existence at large, I step out of my feminism because my main concern and fear is the existence and survival of my confession.”⁷⁶

In conclusion, the LF’s political development has not changed its overall vision or perspective on women’s roles within the party. During the incarceration of Geagea, when women had some opportunities to play greater roles, they found that they still could not rise to leadership positions – with the sole exception of Sethrida Geagea – and there was no priority given women’s empowerment. Today, female party members face structural obstacles imposed by the roles available to them. This impedes their political progression, and poses other challenges related to the disparity between the party’s general pro-women discourse and internal practices that actually mirror the general political system in Lebanon, i.e. confessionalism and political familism. Some female party members accept this and insist that it is necessary in order to secure party and confessional interests, while others – even if only on an individual basis – are trying to challenge men’s power within the party and gain political advancement.

II. “You Stink/*Tole’t Rehetkom*”: Limits of Horizontal Mobilisation?

1) Social Protest Gatherings in Lebanon

Social movements can be defined and analysed in numerous ways with a variety of theoretical and methodological assumptions.⁷⁷ This study adopts a definition of social movements as a collective effort to change the character of given social relations in a particular society. It is an attempt, carried out by groups outside the political system, to influence political decision-making by making demands of the state. The movement operates under the awareness that its goals cannot be real-

75 Interview carried out by the research team with an official in the Lebanese Forces party, Tabarja, 12 October 2017.

76 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female members of the Lebanese Forces party, Beirut, 16 March 2018.

77 There are various approaches to the study of social movements, including the organisational approach undertaken Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian. This sees such movements as a type of collective behaviour that contradicts “organisational” and “institutional” conduct. Mayer Zald focuses on change as a key dimension of the emergence of social movements, while Charles Tilly studies social movements in light of the political process, where excluded groups attempt to gain access to the existing political system. Alain Touraine focuses on the struggle for resources, while Alberto Melucci, on the other hand, appears to be more interested in culture and identity as the lens through their action. For more, see: Mario Diani, “The concept of social movement,” *The Sociological Review*, Vol. 40 (1), 1992, p.1-25.

ised through direct political or institutional mechanisms, and that the acquisition of power is not its ultimate purpose.⁷⁸

Civil society movements were a major part of the Arab revolutionary mobilisations that began at the end of 2010. Lebanon, like many Arab countries, witnessed anti-government demonstrations on various occasions, most notably in the protests sparked by the garbage crisis in 2015. These, however, cannot be understood without understanding the 2011 Anti-Sectarian Movement, a campaign to “overthrow Lebanon’s confessional system.” In March 2011, thousands of demonstrators took to the streets of Beirut chanting: “The people want to overthrow the confessional system;” “confessionalism is the opium of the people;” and “revolution, revolution against confessionalism.”⁷⁹ Campaign organisers succeeded in mobilising thousands of demonstrators, and the campaign is considered one of the most important movements launched against Lebanon’s confessional system since the end of the civil war. The movement quickly dissipated because of internal divisions among its constituent elements, and disagreements over how to deal with the country’s sectarian symbols and reshape Lebanon’s political future.⁸⁰

Following the anti-sectarian demonstrations, another mass protest campaign arose in the summer of 2015 – which became known in Arabic as the HIRAK (‘movement’) of Summer 2015, though English-language media largely referred to it as the ‘garbage crisis protests. The cessation of waste collection in Beirut and Mount Lebanon and the subsequent accumulation of garbage in the streets, saw demonstrations begin in outer districts, town centres, and finally in the capital.

The 2015 movement reignited the possibility of challenging the central authorities and emboldened the realisation that people could confront power directly in the streets. This was especially the case as the garbage crisis coincided with a precarious political and security situation, centring around a prolonged power vacuum and ineffectiveness in the country’s political institutions. Basing itself on “past labour and civil struggles,”⁸¹ by August 2015, the movement was mobilising new social groups, and by raising the bar for demands vis-à-vis the authorities.⁸² From what most interviewees ex-

78 Jack A. Goldstone, “More Social Movements or Fewer? Beyond Political Opportunity Structures to Relational Fields” *Theory and Society*, Vol 33 (3-4), Special Issue: Current Routes to the Study of Contentious Politics and Social Change (Jun. - Aug. 2004), p. 337-338.

79 Marie-Noëlle AbiYaghi et Myriam Catusse, “Liban: le mouvement pour « la chute du système confessionnel » et ses limites,” in Michel Camau et Frédéric Vairel. *Soulèvements populaires et recompositions politiques dans le Monde arabe*, Presses universitaires de Montréal, 2014, p.250-273.

80 Marie-Noëlle AbiYaghi et al., “From Isqat an-nizam at-ta’ifi to the Garbage Crisis Movement: Political Identities and Anti-Sectarian Movements,” in Rosita Di Peri and Daniel Meier (eds.), *Lebanon Facing the Arab Uprisings Constraints and Adaptation*, London, Palgrave Pivot, 2017, p. 73-91.

81 The movement coincided with a time when the parliamentary elections had already been twice postponed since 2009 and when there was a vacancy in the presidency of the Lebanese state.

82 Carol Kerbaj, “Politics by Chance” Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, American University of Beirut, 2017, page 6, available at: <https://bit.ly/2w9KCHk> [Last accessed 28 June 2018].

pressed, the 2015 movement was one with “an unlimited and unrestricted framework of demands” that seemed to have emerged spontaneously.⁸³

The movement not only called for an end to the waste crisis, but also for the resignation of the then minister of environment, and accountability for the security and political figures who enabled the security forces’ violent crackdown on protesters. The demands culminated in a call to revive the country’s political institutions through the adoption of a new and modern electoral law that would serve to entirely remodel the Lebanese political scene.⁸⁴

2) “You Stink/Tole’t Rehetkom:” A Spontaneous Protest Movement?

Several groups coalesced during the 2015 protests, the most prominent of which were “You Stink/Tole’t Rehetkom;” “We Must Hold Accountable/Badna Nhasib;” “Youth of August 22” and “Akkar is not a garbage dump/Akkar menna mazbalé.”⁸⁵ “You Stink/Tole’t Rehetkom” began as a hashtag on a young female activist’s Facebook page, in protest against the litter that had piled up on the streets after the closure of the Naa’meh landfill, the main and largest landfill in Lebanon. The hashtag quickly became a standalone Facebook group, and then turned into full-blown campaign after a series of sit-ins were organised by the group in July 2015.⁸⁶ The group defined itself as spontaneous and unencumbered by ideologies or political agendas. The activists interviewed confirmed this, declaring that there were no pre-set “ideological beliefs and political agendas among the members, whether men or women.” One activist referred to the You Stink as “a space created to allow citizens to participate in the country’s politics and to lobby for a new system of political life in Lebanon by mobilising men and women to protest against the government’s approach to public issues, specifically the waste issue.”⁸⁷ The most prominent feature of the movement was its recourse to acts of protest atypical to the Lebanese context, such as breaking into the Ministry of Environment building, documenting the massive accumulation of waste through the use of aerial drones, undertaking initiatives to clean up rivers, and protesting in front of the homes of government officials.

Although social movements are not contingent upon formal action plans, the activists we interviewed nevertheless emphasised a minimum requirement to assign an identity to the movement and define the values by which it operates and establishes its legitimacy. The activists attempted to formulate a political idea based on their campaign, but without restricting their demands to solving the garbage crisis. But they were unsuccessful in presenting a clear vision of that idea, focusing instead on mobilising people without identifying either long-term goals or the groups they sought to target. Thus,

83 Interview carried out by the research team with an expert in syndicate work in Lebanon, Beirut, 30 July 2017

84 Alexandra Kassir, “We are here!: A new wave of anti-sectarian mobilisations in Lebanon,” Website, *Open Democracy*, 12 October 2015, available at: <https://bit.ly/2KSYxae> [Last accessed 4 August 2018].

85 Livia Bergmeijer, “The leaders of a leaderless movement,” *Executive Magazine*, 13 October 2015, available at: <http://www.executive-magazine.com/author/livia-bergmeijer> [Last accessed 4 August 2018].

86 Carol Kerbaj, *op. cit.*, 2017, p. 13.

87 Interview carried out by the research team with an activist in “You Stink/Tole’t Rehetkom,” Beirut, 27 July 2017.

the campaign appeared to consist of “passionate speech, flimsy demands, performative posturing and symbolic victories without a set of clear aims or a unified political agenda.”⁸⁸ This is evidenced in the appealing slogans that were put forth, such as calling for building a state of institutions and for fighting corruption, but which were not backed by a political programme nor a political vision. Alongside the spontaneity of the campaign and temporary alignment of heterogeneous groups, the specific garbage crisis⁸⁹ that generated the protests in the first place also served to curtail the possibility of setting out a clear political vision and well-defined objectives.⁹⁰

2.1) The Limits of Unstructured Organisation

The campaign adopted a largely unstructured horizontal framework,⁹¹ hoping to do away with the notion of having a leader or *za'im*. From what we have learned from social movements elsewhere, horizontal and unstructured frameworks are the most appealing to groups of young activists, since they tend to eschew hierarchies and the systemic restrictions that plague political parties and professional or labour syndicates. This in turn provides them with more space to exercise direct democracy within their movements.⁹² According to one activist, “participatory leadership is one of the most prominent characteristics of the campaign, which is unusual in Lebanon.”⁹³ From its inception the movement divided itself into various committees (media, finance, and logistics) rather than do away with structural organisation completely. The committees, which include members who met at the very beginning of the campaign, continue to meet periodically and plan campaign activities but have never adopted internal processes despite having discussed the issue. According to one activist, a voluntary consensus was reached on “a set of customary rules laying out some basic values, most notably respect, secrecy, voting, participatory leadership, and equality between all campaign members.”⁹⁴

The interviewed youth and women's groups agreed on the positive aspects of the movement's structure, with some believing that it helped to involve everyone in discussions when decisions

88 Carol Kerbaj, *op. cit.*, 2017, p. 13.

89 Analysing the differences between revolutions and social movements, Baysinger discusses the importance of the so-called passive alliance – where opposing political groups that unite despite theoretical differences in order to achieve a common goal. See Mark Beissinger, “The Semblance of Democratic Revolution: Coalitions in Ukraine's Orange Revolution,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 107 (3), August 2013, p.2.

90 This included groups aligned with what were known as the March 8 and March 14 coalitions, in addition to people who were active in left-wing parties and others active in non-governmental organisations.

91 Freeman emphasises the impossibility of a completely unorganised movement or organisation, leaving the possibility open for flexible, non-hierarchical structure. Over time, however, unstructured movements lose their effectiveness and the division of tasks becomes unfair, a trend reproduced in the workings of the campaign. See Jo Freeman, “The Tyranny of Structurelessness,” Website, *JoFreeman.com*, 2013, available at: <https://bit.ly/2w50POg> [Last accessed 4 August 2018].

92 Based on the experiences of social movements with horizontal structures. See Tova Benski et al., “From the streets and squares to social movement studies: What have we learned?,” *Current Sociology*, 61(4), 2013, p. 549.

93 Interview carried out by the research team with an activist in “You Stink/*Tole't Rehetkom*,” Beirut, 27 July 2017.

94 Interview carried out by the research team with an activist in “You Stink/*Tole't Rehetkom*,” Beirut, 15 July 2017.

needed to be made. Others felt the lack of a clear chain of command served to cause confusion and undermined follow-through on finalised decisions. For example, “in many cases a decision would be made unanimously, when suddenly a leading activist would take matters into their own hands and decide something on their own, going on to meet with some government parties, thus contradicting the majority's refusal to conduct any negotiations on the side with the authorities during protests.” There were also problems with “making individual decisions to either include or dismiss certain individuals from the executive Committee,” or with people “not complying with the agreed-upon distribution of tasks.”⁹⁵

There was both internal and external criticism of the movement. This included condemnation of the fact that a handful of people had monopolised representation and excluded others – especially volunteers – and a denouncement of the dominant elitist public discourse that paid no consideration to citizen input on the options before them.⁹⁶ The most prominent example was the refusal of campaign leaders – throughout the duration of the movement – to openly announce subsequent steps or to inform citizens of what had been planned or proposed via the media.

To counter this confusion, in 2016 consensus was reached to elect volunteer members to allow them more active roles. Consequently, out of three candidates, one young woman won the election, which came as a “relief” to some of those we interviewed.⁹⁷

3) Women in the Campaign: True Participation or Tokenism?

During the 2015 protests, women young and old defied stereotypes about their place in the public sphere and emerged as a forceful presence engaging with the movement at all levels, from sit-ins to face-to-face confrontations with the security forces.⁹⁸ There are no precise numbers in terms of the members and volunteers associated with the “You Stink/*Tole't Rehetkom*” movement, but a former member estimates that the percentage of women during that period was no more than 20%. More than one campaign leader asserted that the goal from the beginning was to bring young women into the ranks, but that no women were involved in organisational before the mass demonstrations of 2015,⁹⁹ while other young women disagreed, maintaining that they were present and active from the outset.¹⁰⁰

As well as physical street involvement, mobilising and organising, women's participation in the campaign included issuing public statements, working on technical matters regarding environmental

95 Interview carried out by the research team with a former activist in “You Stink/*Tole't Rehetkom*,” Beirut, 25 October 2017.

96 Interview carried out by the research team with a journalist and Lebanese activist, Beirut, 27 August 2017.

97 Interview carried out by the research team with an activist in “You Stink/*Tole't Rehetkom*,” Beirut, 27 July 2017.

98 Interview carried out by the research team with a former activist in “You Stink/*Tole't Rehetkom*,” Beirut, 25 October 2017.

99 Interview carried out by the research team with an activist in “You Stink/*Tole't Rehetkom*,” Beirut, 27 July 2017.

100 Interview carried out by the research team with a former activist in “You Stink/*Tole't Rehetkom*,” Beirut, 25 October 2017.

issues, and taking on internal organisation tasks. Despite this, several activists pointed out a number of exclusionary practices that impeded both women's participation and effectiveness, as well as the constricted image of women put forth by the campaign itself.

For example, there was little female representation in coordination meetings, and when women were present, they were marginalised. One female activist explained: "The final word was always for the man who raised his voice. When we started to talk, we were ignored or silenced, and were mocked and ridiculed when we challenged the loudness of their voices."¹⁰¹ Female activists posited that one reason for this poor treatment was the presence of some political leaders at these meetings. Attendees got caught up in speechmaking to the exclusion of all else, and were quick to ignore and ostracise young people – particularly women – from the discussions, under the pretext of their lack of political experience. Similarly, many female activists internal and external to the movement felt relegating women to issuing public statements was not really including them in the process, but rather was "a form of tokenism used to cover up the near-absence, or outright lack, of women's participation in the actual drafting of these statements."¹⁰²

In addition, the movement – and participants in the 2015 HIRAK in general – adopted a patronising, protectionist approach towards women, reflected in their discourse about the violent crackdowns by the security forces during the protests. There was strong condemnation of the use of violence against women on the basis that women required safeguarding and were unable to protect themselves, but no rejection of violence outright.¹⁰³ Arrests of women were also similarly condemned and protestors taunted the security forces with such statements as "you flex your strength against girls," implicitly emphasising women's vulnerability.

One female feminist activist who participated in the campaign mentioned the slogans used by the campaign itself, which were heavy with prejudice, patriarchal attitudes, and discrimination against women, such as "this square is full of men" and "we weep for the homeland like women." The first slogan extolls the virility and masculinity of men, excluding the possibility of women's strength in the arena; while the second denigrates women for being emotional.¹⁰⁴ It is also remarkable how strikingly similar these slogans are to the type of language used by the authorities against the protestors, in statements such as "If you were my sister, I would have known exactly how to deal with

101 Interview carried out by the research team with a feminist activist in Lebanon, Beirut, 22 August 2017.

102 Interview carried out by the research team with a feminist activist and human rights activist in Lebanon, Beirut, 26 July 2017.

103 Taken from a talk by Reine Nemer, member of "The People Call For" coalition on "The Movement in its Gender Dimensions," a panel organised by the Department of Social Sciences and Media Studies at the American University of Beirut, Al-Asfari Centre for Civil Society and Citizenship, the Sindiyana Hamra Club and the Secular Club at the American University of Beirut, 28 October 2015.

104 Interview carried out by the research team with a feminist activist in Lebanon, Beirut, 22 November 2017.

you,"¹⁰⁵ which reproduced the idea of the state's patriarchal guardianship over its citizens, and how it sees its relationship to them through the idea of kinship.

The movement at large also dealt poorly with the issue of sexual harassment towards female demonstrators, whereby any mention of it was considered offensive and harmful to the movement as it could be exploited by the authorities to denounce the movement and its objectives.¹⁰⁶

There was also no attempt to adopt "a position towards the patriarchal system,"¹⁰⁷ and a discriminatory discourse emerged that refused to include women's issues in any discussions on the pretext that such issues have their own "spaces," "occasions," and "circumstances."¹⁰⁸ This discourse is common in social movements with political objectives, which consider women's issues and their strategic goals – such as achieving gender equality – as requiring structural change and thus low prioritisation until a later stage.¹⁰⁹

According to the female activists we interviewed, these patriarchal attitudes towards female participants did not exist in a vacuum, but intersected with other discriminatory attitudes, such as those based on class and confession. For example, despite the fact that the movement portrayed as acting on behalf of the economically deprived to achieve greater economic and social justice, many affiliated with the movement used the term "infiltrators" to describe some of the demonstrators – especially those who resorted to violence in confrontations with security forces and other demonstrators. These demonstrators appeared to belong to lower social strata and specific confessions.¹¹⁰ One of

105 *Ibid.*

106 Yara Nahlé, *Sawt al-Niswa*, "The patriarchal regime kills, it should also be toppled," *Al Manshour Socialist Forum*, 2015, available at: <https://bit.ly/2MicnZ8> [Last accessed 28 June 2018].

107 The 2015 *Hirak* also treated women's issues in isolation from the confessional system, clientelism and patriarchal relations. It never once addressed the problems women face as evidence and symptoms of the larger political rot, and it became clear that there was a need to document women's experiences in the movement and record the violence and exclusion they were subjected to. Thus, a "feminist bloc" was born, gathering feminist groups and young activists who felt the need for "feminist solidarity" and a "safe space for women" to give women the required space to express their opinions and work together to produce knowledge about the links between the confessional system, violence and patriarchal power dynamics. The Feminist Bloc raised slogans previously absent from the movement, related to "racism, sexual harassment, women's refugee rights" and other such issues. It documented the cases of harassment against young women on the street and raised banners declaring that "[the] patriarchal system kills," not as a rhetorical slogan, but rather as a descriptive one for the purpose of discussing and thinking about the links between patriarchal violence and social and economic violence. (From a talk by Lamia Mughniyeh, *Sawt al-Niswa* in a panel on "Mobility in its Gender Dimensions" organised by the Department of Social Sciences and Media Studies at the American University of Beirut, the Asfari Centre for Civil Society and Citizenship, the Sindiyana Hamra Club and the Secular Club at the American University of Beirut, 28 October, 2015).

108 Interview carried out by the research team with a feminist activist and human rights activist in Lebanon, Beirut, July 2017.

109 Waylen distinguishes between the practical objectives that women's movements can adopt, such as economic and social demands, and strategic goals, such as equality and gender justice. The latter are never adopted by broad political factions because they are seen as requiring extensive mobilisation and a long-term commitment to structural change. See Waylen, previous reference.

110 Marie-Noëlle AbiYaghi et al., "From Isqat an-nizam at-ta'ifi to the Garbage Crisis Movement: Political Identities and Anti-Sectarian Movements," in Rosita Di Peri and Daniel Meier (eds.), *Lebanon Facing the Arab Uprisings Constraints and Adaptation*, London, Palgrave Pivot, 2017, p. 73-91.

the female activists recalls hearing distinctly: “The infiltrators are from the poorer classes, they are the ones rioting, while the rest [of the demonstrators] are ‘reasonable’ and ‘respectable’ and ‘decent university students.’”¹¹¹ This form of moralising, is, according to the feminist activists who took part in the movement, an embodiment of “patriarchal values *par excellence*.”

The experiences of the women we spoke to from the “You Stink/*Tole’t Rehetkom*” movement characterise it as a space unwilling to make room for either women’s representation or empowerment. Some time into campaigning, the women we interviewed found themselves side-lined, either as a result of the horizontal structure the campaign employed, where leadership and representation were limited to a few activists; or through the cynical use of women in the media to give the campaign a more progressive image; or because the discourse adopted by the movement prioritised a sanitised image of itself, and refused to engage in controversy to the detriment of female participants.

III. Teachers’ Syndicate in Lebanon: Women at the bottom and men on top

The Teachers’ Syndicate was originally established in 1938, but spent decades as a collection of various groups divided over politics and influence, until they were united in 1992 as the “Teachers’ Syndicate of Lebanon.” Headquartered in Beirut, it has branches the North, the Bekaa, Mount Lebanon and Nabatieh. Although there are no official statistics on the percentages of male and female members, most syndicate members we met with agree that the proportion of women could be as high as 75%. This is in keeping with the numbers of male and female teachers in Lebanon for the 2016–2017 academic year, whereby out of a total 102,988 registered teachers, there are 81,680 women (79.3%) and 21,308 men (20.7%).¹¹²

These rates are not surprising. Worldwide, teaching is most widely associated with women – especially at the elementary and primary stages of education. Teaching is compatible with women’s general social conditions and family duties, it is closely related to women’s traditional roles as caregivers and general societal perceptions that women are more capable of caring for and educating children. There is also the commonly-held view in more conservative societies that it is safer for children, especially younger ones, to be around women.¹¹³ These reasons mirrored the views of female syndicate members interviewed. Many ended up in the educational field “accidentally.” Some were driven to it by war, social conditions (such as getting married and starting a family), and

111 Interview carried out by the research team with a former activist in “You Stink/*Tole’t Rehetkom*,” Beirut, 25 October 2017.

112 “Statistical Bulletin for the academic year 2016–2017,” Educational Centre for Research and Development, 2018, page 39, available at: <https://bit.ly/2M0Covi> [Last accessed 4 August 2018].

113 One UNESCO study states that professions with more than 70% women are seen as highly feminised. See Fatima Kliheer, “Women and the Teaching Profession Exploring the Foundation Debate,” UNESCO, 2011, pp. 12–14, available at: <https://bit.ly/2MoS23P> [Last accessed 10 August 2018].

economic circumstances,¹¹⁴ while others were motivated by the material and moral privileges the profession confers. Working as a teacher provides a relatively stable income and working hours, and teachers’ children receive tuition-free education at the schools where their parents are employed.

The different economic, social, and cultural backgrounds of female teachers constituted the main variables in their reasons for becoming teachers. For example, economic class and working in a smaller school were both major factors affecting whether or not a teacher saw the profession as a source of “security” on the personal, family and economic levels. These variables were also reflected in the strength of a particular teacher’s tie to the Syndicate or their level of involvement in it, as is explained further below.

1) Relationship with the Syndicate: Inactive Membership and Symbolic Commitment

The Teachers’ Syndicate is not a professional union and membership is not a condition for being employed as a teacher. The only conditions for membership are 1) being employed at a private school, and, 2) not being a member of any other syndicate or association.¹¹⁵ Most female teachers interviewed joined the Syndicate either because of curiosity, potential professional and financial security, or because a number of their colleagues were already enrolled.¹¹⁶

For example, the role of the Syndicate in providing “legal protection” was considered by interviewees, as one of the most important factors affecting women’s membership. One female teacher explained: “I joined the Syndicate and the school principal [a cleric with extended powers since he is also an administrator] has to think twice now when it comes to me. He no longer causes me any harm, but has instead turned [his abuse] onto those who do not know their rights.”¹¹⁷ A female member also pointed out that Law No. 46¹¹⁸ has restored both trust and belief for some in the Syndicate’s work, spurring more female teachers to join its ranks. In parallel, some teachers joined the Syndicate after facing opposition to their potential membership from school administrations, who feared teachers might become aware of their rights and/or actively campaign to demand those rights. For example, one female teacher described how her school’s director – who presides over 350 male and female teachers – had actually withdrawn the teacher’s application to join the Syndicate.¹¹⁹ A final

114 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female teachers, Beirut, 24 March 2018.

115 More information on membership requirements can be found on the Syndicate’s website: <https://bit.ly/2vJ08c1> [Last accessed 28 June 2018].

116 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female teachers, Beirut, 13 April 2018.

117 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female teachers, Beirut, 24 March 2018.

118 Law No. 46 dated 21 August 2017, was issued after years of lobbying by public and private sector employees in Lebanon to increase wages and adjust salaries according to cost of living. It applies to the majority of public sector employees, but not private sector employees, including private school teachers, because of the refusal of school administrations to enforce the law and to apply it to workers in government and public institutions that are not subject to the provisions of the Labour Code. The Teachers’ Syndicate played a role as part of the Trade Union Coordination Committee in lobbying for the adoption of the law.

119 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female teachers, Beirut, 24 March 2018.

motivating factor for joining the Syndicate was its a mutual fund.¹²⁰ However as the female syndicate members interviewed all came from middle-class backgrounds, this was considered an added incentive rather than an essential one.

While all of these were incentives when these female teachers first joined the Syndicate, some today – after long years of membership – expressed a negative attitude toward the Syndicate, with little enthusiasm or desire to actively contribute. Most saw the Syndicate as an ineffective “structure that makes no real difference” in light of the general breakdown of the rule of law, the state, and the political regime in Lebanon. Some women stated that they only involve themselves during internal elections. When asked why, some saw this mistrust as simply part of the prevailing political condition in Lebanon, where little priority is given to general public affairs.

The women’s various positions toward the Syndicate translated into their level of membership, commitment, and roles within the Syndicate. There were discrepancies between some members who said their participation as almost “nil,” and those who are mainly active through campaigns outside the framework of the Syndicate or by way of the political parties with which they are affiliated. In general, the involvement of female teachers in the Syndicate includes: lobbying; engaging in syndicate activities; taking part in internal elections (as voters or candidates)¹²¹; attending meetings to express their opinions; participating in discussions and brainstorming sessions; working on raising teachers’ awareness of their rights; and organisational and media roles. Some teachers also work with school associations, which furthers their experience in syndicate work. Many however, described their involvement in the past tense, relegated to particular stages over their years of membership. The majority of the women we spoke to were currently inactive members and saw the Syndicate as having no real role.

Recent syndicate executive council elections saw very few women elected to leadership roles despite the far higher proportion of women in the general assembly of the Syndicate. During the last executive council elections in July 2017, only one woman was elected to the twelve council seats.¹²²

On the regional level, there are two female council chairpersons, one each responsible for the Bekaa

.....
120 According to the Teachers’ Syndicate website: “A Mutual Fund was set up to support the educational staff in the private schools under Law No. 660/97 dated 24/7/1997, after a long struggle by the Council of Teachers Syndicate in Lebanon. The main goal of this was to showcase the spirit of cooperation and solidarity between teachers in facing the difficult social and humanitarian conditions that each of them may experience, and to support them after they reach the legal age of retirement, when teachers, men and women, should have the peace of mind that they and their families will be adequately cared for. The Fund is supervised by a board of directors of eight members, chosen by the Syndicate’s Council by secret ballot, with two-thirds of its members chosen from among the teachers affiliated with Syndicate, and who have been members for at least two consecutive terms.” For more, see: <http://teacherssyndicate.com/boxes/1/en> [Last accessed 17 August 2018].

121 Interview carried out by the research team with an official in the Teachers’ Syndicate, Beirut, 25 July 2017.

122 The list of members of the successive executive councils can be found on the Syndicate’s website: <https://bit.ly/2vJ08c1> [Last accessed 28 June 2018].

and the South. Again, although the women in the general assemblies for the different branches outnumber the men, their participation in the regional executive councils, according to statements from the two female branch leaders, is much less than that of men, usually four or five women out of twelve members.¹²³

The absence of women in the executive council and branch councils can be attributed to two problems. The first relates to the varying membership percentages in the different branches, which affect the number of teachers, whether men or women, who attend the general assembly meetings where rulings are issued. Based on female teachers’ responses, the number of attendees in general assembly meetings in the North or Bekaa branches can reach up to 300 or 400 people, compared to the no more than 20 or 30 people at meetings in Beirut. The Beirut branch has the lowest participation nationwide due to a lack of interest, which in turn affects the level of compliance with decisions undertaken by the executive council.¹²⁴ Women affiliated with the Syndicate explain that no annual or periodic plan is issued to increase awareness of the Syndicate’s work or activities. Members lack of confidence in the Syndicate’s leaders as a result of insufficient achievements, as well as a sense of apathy toward the general situation of the country and the workings of the various political parties. The second problem lies in the elections at the branch level, where members are elected according to “recommendations.” The council decides prior to elections who will run and how to form alliances, and who will ultimately manage the regional branch, an approach that reproduces patterns of the country’s political parties including adherence to confessional quotas.

In light of these limits to women’s advancement within the Syndicate, one female teacher asked: “If I am not in the executive council, am I an actual member of the Syndicate?”¹²⁵ According to many male and female teachers interviewed, the term “syndicate member” has become synonymous with membership in its executive council. This strengthens members’ perceptions of the ineffectiveness of their roles within the Syndicate. As they see it, to be an effective member is to have a seat on the executive council.

2) Obstacles to the Advancement of Women in the Syndicate

Based on the analysis of focus groups and interviews, there are three types of factors that impede women’s roles and their increased activity as syndicate members. First, there are the institutional factors related to the Syndicate’s structure, its practices and positions towards issues concerning female teachers. Second are external factors influencing the Syndicate’s activities and management. Third are the personal factors influencing female syndicate members, particularly how their social and family responsibilities impact their ability to perform their roles.

.....
123 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female teachers, Saida, 20 July 2017.

124 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female teachers, Baalbek 18 September 2017 and Bar Elias, 25 August 2017.

125 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female teachers, Beirut, 13 April 2018.

2.1) Structures and Practices Unwelcoming to Women

When asked about challenges at the institutional level of the Syndicate, female syndicate members said there “[exists] a structural imbalance at the constitutional and organisational levels.”¹²⁶ Notably, the Syndicate works without an internal system, either at the level of the executive council or the branch councils, and has failed to devise such a system for 30 years. Female syndicate members attributed this to the fact that the Syndicate is controlled by various political parties, and that it was previously also subject to much interference on the part of private school administrations. Most interviewees, both men and women, maintained that the lack of an internal system has created “an unhealthy and undemocratic situation” within the Syndicate, weakening its administrative capabilities and effectiveness.

There are also no internal policies or codes dealing with discrimination and issues of gender-based violence. Although a section entitled “Legal Consultations and Reviews” is available on the Syndicate’s website, the “Legal Review Form” only asks for the most basic information from the person submitting a request for review, including name, affiliation number, branch, school name, and object of the review. There are however no pathways to classify the requests for review on the basis of gender or to analyse the types of issues faced by female teachers.¹²⁷

Additionally, as the makeup of the executive council is constituted through elections, it does not necessarily include representatives from all regions.¹²⁸ Though branch officials are welcome to attend executive council meetings, their presence does not grant them the power to vote on decisions, meaning that branch positions and viewpoints do not affect the council’s decisions.¹²⁹ Distorted representation is exacerbated by confessional quotas¹³⁰ at both the executive and branch levels.

The Syndicate also largely fails to maintain periodic communication with constituents in smaller schools, who receive information about election dates, alliances, candidates, and general syndicate news only through political party representatives or television. Female syndicate members saw this as shameful, showing that the Syndicate fails to represent a diversity of women’s opinions and viewpoints with regard to the alliances being formed and the issues being discussed.

These shortcomings also affect women’s daily interactions and relationship dynamics within the Syndicate. According to one female member, the Syndicate operates according to a “hierarchical”

126 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female teachers, Beirut, 24 March 2018.

127 Additional information can be found on the Syndicate’s website: <https://bit.ly/2vJ08c1> [Last accessed 24 June 2018].

128 The majority of the executive council members are from Beirut and Mount Lebanon.

129 According to a former syndicate leader, there was a draft project to consider branch officials as members of the executive council, but it was refused and ultimately rejected by the executive council (from an interview carried out by the research team with an activist in the Teachers’ Syndicate, Beirut, 21 August 2017).

130 Meaning the distribution of seats on the executive council on a confessional basis between Muslims and Christians.

system of leadership whereby promotions are attained through “seniority.” This explains why young people are excluded from leadership roles, and why experienced men have monopoly over the upper ranks. One female member said: “Discrimination here is hidden and indirect. Our colleague in the Syndicate is a man and everyone listens to him ... who am I? I’m just a new member, a young woman, and of course I know nothing about syndicate work. He has been a syndicate member for the past 30 years.”¹³¹

Interviewees raised behavioural trends and attitudes towards women in the Syndicate. For example, any woman playing a political role is characterised as “a tomboy.”¹³² In another instance, during one executive council session, members referred to a fellow female council member as “the joke of the council.” Female members of the Syndicate all expressed their discomfort with and categorical rejection of these descriptors because they denigrate women and dismiss them as effective political actors.

Finally, in recent years the Syndicate’s chosen campaigns have prioritised economic issues, including: the adoption of the salary-scale bill; advocacy against the separation of the private and public sector salary grids, protesting their exclusion from the Higher Council for Curriculum Development meetings at the government-affiliated Centre for Educational Research and Development; and protesting blocks to teachers accessing social security benefits before the age of 64.¹³³ The syndicate does not, however, respond to complaints of discriminatory violations put forward by female teachers (see Table 1 below). Some female syndicate members feel discrimination is practised implicitly and indirectly in Beirut, especially in bigger schools, which have rules that make direct discrimination more difficult. Other members, particularly those in the regions outside Beirut, recount more direct discriminatory practices due to the smaller size of schools, the lack of supervision and poor economic conditions, contributing to an atmosphere that enables such violations.

131 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female teachers, Beirut, 24 March 2018.

132 This term, literally meaning “sister of men” in Arabic, has more negative connotations than the English “tomboy.” Originating in the Lebanese dialect, it is a descriptor applied to women perceived as strong (and therefore masculine), or who have achieved economic or political success. It implies a woman who has overstepped the bounds of her social role and been stripped of all her feminine attributes.

133 These links provide access to some of the Syndicate’s news and demands:

<https://bit.ly/2B9ELHT>

<https://bit.ly/2MNdUmx>

<https://bit.ly/2P8Qfyr>

[Last accessed 24 June 2018].

Table 1: Forms of discriminatory practices against female teachers

- Salary and financial discrimination
- Arbitrary dismissals
- Working hours that exceed legal limits
- Absence of nurseries
- Being fired from work when falling pregnant
- Violations of maternity leave law (some schools do not give women more than 15 days off)
- Discrimination against women seeking to add their husbands or children to their social insurance
- Discrimination in relation to tax reduction and obtaining access to the Compensation Fund
- Certain schools only employing married teachers
- Failing to register women to receive public social and health insurance as stipulated by law

2.2) Confessional Quotas and Marginalisation of Syndicate Work: Private Schools and Political Parties

There are two primary external influences on the Syndicate's work, and women's roles therein. The first is private school administrations and the second are political parties. Female syndicate members recount that private school administrators try to restrict teachers' enrolment in the Syndicate indirectly. Teachers are often promised financial compensation in an effort to convince him or her of the Syndicate's overall ineffectiveness. One female member explained: "From time to time, the administration will give teachers a 200 or 300 thousand Lebanese Pound raise, and thus the demands you're making from the government [for better financial compensation] become worthless."¹³⁴ This indicates that some schools are threatened by the Syndicate's work, and fear that teachers will become aware of their rights and of the existence of an organisation that can help them demand those rights.

Female teachers also said that they are often subjected to direct pressure. One explained: "During one demonstration, I came to school but did not enter the classroom, because I wanted to participate in the protest. The director did not stop me, but warned me against making any statement to the other teachers."¹³⁵ Administrations may go so far as to prevent schools from observing strikes and prevent teachers from participating in syndicate activities or making statements to the media even outside of school grounds and hours. This affects many teachers, both those who comply, and those who ignore these pressures, risking their jobs.

134 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female teachers, Beirut, 24 March 2018.

135 *Ibid.*

Religious schools also use their religious authority to indirectly intimidate their teachers. This has great influence on the choices and attitudes of many teachers, since their relationship with the clergymen – who are both the school's administrators and practise religious roles within the community – transcends the bounds of the school. These clergymen are also responsible for administering marriages, divorces, inheritance issues and other such personal matters. One female teacher explained:

*"Nobody is aware of this problem. There is a great fear of the clerics, especially in religious schools. The priests and the nuns have a strong religious authority and they use it against you, knowing that you are dependent on this authority. All the people in leadership positions who are of the same confession are also their parishioners, and the parish is responsible for [administering] marriages, divorces, and inheritance issues. In other words, they look out for their own interests from several angles."*¹³⁶

Political parties have exerted strong influence since the establishment of the first syndicates in Lebanon in 1909, with the old parties having taken part in the formation of syndicates and unions.¹³⁷ In terms of the parties' influence on the Syndicate, female members see "the Teachers' Syndicate [as] a pie divided and shared among the various parties, representing only the parties' interests."¹³⁸ As such, this has resulted in some members' rejecting the Syndicate taking a political stance, because it negatively affects their membership and reproduces competition among political parties in the Syndicate's operations. For example, executive council elections – which must adhere to confessional quotas – reproduce party alliances, which are also often based on confessional and political balance. Members who belong both to a political party and to the Syndicate then formulate key decisions, such as when to strike or hold a demonstration, according to the political position of the party to which they belong, and not necessarily to that of the Syndicate.

This interference in syndicate work means that party affiliation takes precedence over other considerations, resulting in even lower levels of female participation. According to female members, party consensus is imposed on the women of the Syndicate, marginalising them further as party interests overshadow their own. One female member explained: "I was running as an independent candidate [in the executive council elections]. Instead, they made a settlement behind the scenes and agreed

136 *Ibid.*

137 Before the war, the Lebanese Communist Party was a pioneer in establishing syndicate federations. After the war, the new parties helped to form their own syndicates and federations. See: Ghassan Saliby, "Organisational Needs to Strengthen the Participation of Women in Syndicates in Lebanon," Lebanese Women's Democratic Caucus, 2014.

138 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female teachers, Beirut, 13 April 2018.

on who the members should be, then called me, asking me to withdraw, so that they wouldn't have to organise elections." According to female syndicate members, women are often numbers to be added or subtracted from a larger consensus¹³⁹ and disposable when necessary. But female syndicate members also acknowledged subjective factors, blaming themselves for the low number of politically ambitious women interested in "waging political or syndicate battles or organising electoral campaigns," with many shying away from arguing for their legitimate access to leadership positions within parties since "conflict is not an option."¹⁴⁰

2.3) How Social Duties Impact Women's Participation in the Syndicate

Women also cited personal reasons influencing their participation, namely, their social standing and family responsibilities. Interviews revealed that most prominent among these was the societal view of politically active women. One pointed out that she is often asked: "why do you leave home, your family and your responsibilities?"¹⁴¹ This is not limited to married women, as single women working in the public or political field are often accused of neglecting their futures by not prioritising starting a family. These social stereotypes are supported by the fact that women see work in the education sector as compatible with their family responsibilities and obligations. They are therefore not expected to engage in time consuming political activities through work in the Syndicate.

Female syndicate members also cited the burdens imposed on them by familial obligations and their expected roles in child bearing, childcare and education, which are rarely placed upon men. These commitments make it difficult for women to engage in any syndicate activity and in turn mean that they cannot gain the experience or expertise necessary to play leadership roles. Female members also emphasised a lack of familial support, manifested in blame and accusations of carelessness and neglect when syndicate work takes time away from their obligations at home. One woman said: "My friend is a very active party member with a leadership position. Her husband has nothing to do with the political field, and whenever she returns home late after some meeting, it starts an argument at home."¹⁴²

IV. The Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union: Limited Vision for Women

1) The Union as Social Safety Net

The Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union (formerly known as the Union of Lebanese Handicapped) was established in 1981 as a non-sectarian non-profit organisation advocating for the rights of people with disabilities. During the civil war the Union also worked to strengthen civil peace,

.....
139 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female teachers, Beirut, 24 March 2018.

140 Interview carried out by the research team with an activist in the Teachers' Syndicate, Baalbek, 7 August 2017.

141 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female teachers, Beirut, 24 March 2018.

142 *Ibid.*

undertaking direct relief and aid work and organising numerous peace marches. In recent years, it took part in the 2011 Anti-Sectarian Movement, demonstrations protesting the extension of the parliamentary mandate and the presidential vacuum, and in the popular mobilisation during the summer of 2015.

Today, along with thousands of male and female supporters and volunteers, the Union lists 1,200 members with motor impairments. This number represents 1.4% of the total 80,703 disabled persons (62% men and 38% women) registered with Lebanon's Ministry of Social Affairs in 2013.¹⁴³ The Union does not have clear membership figures for women, but according to the female members and leaders within the Union, most women enlist either for support and assistance or to become volunteers or members. Their main reason for joining the Union was wanting to become part of a framework that provides solidarity and support to persons with disabilities, and find a place that allows them "breathing room" from rampant social discrimination.¹⁴⁴ It also represents a social safety net that promotes their "self-confidence" and empowers them to overcome discriminatory social attitudes. This network allows them to connect with other people with disabilities by engaging in social activities in villages, schools, and universities, in volunteering or establishing their own organisations, thus expanding their social networks, improving their communication skills, and integrating them within the larger community. Membership also makes them aware of the rights of persons with disabilities and gives them access to support or employment initiatives.

The perceptions of members who consider the Union a social safety net and place of support back previous findings on gender, disability, and the political participation of women with disabilities. These findings indicate that such organisations or support groups help women with disabilities overcome social isolation and improve their self-confidence. Joining such groups also empowers women and motivates them to mobilise politically or participate in political activities – especially in advocacy for people with disabilities – far more than their male counterparts.¹⁴⁵ These social networks have larger positive effects on disabled women because their situation is more difficult to navigate than

.....
143 It is estimated that rates of disability are higher for males than females because of the large number of men who took part in the Lebanese civil war. Motor impairments thus represent the highest proportion of types of disability, about 53%. Registering with the Ministry provides disabled persons with the opportunity to attain a special identity card that facilitates access to medical, employment, and educational services for persons with disabilities. However, it is important to note that many people with disabilities in Lebanon do not register for the card primarily to escape the social stigma associated with disability. Moreover, as the definition of disability adopted by the Ministry does not cover all types of disabilities (for example, it excludes hearing disabilities), the existing figures of registered persons do not at all accurately reflect the actual number of disabled persons in Lebanon. Consult: UNESCO, "Social Inclusion of Young Persons with Disabilities (PWD) in Lebanon: Where do we stand and what should be done to promote their rights?," UNESCO, Beirut, September 2013, p. 9-11, available at: <https://bit.ly/1RTozXv> [Last accessed 13 August 2018].

144 One of them explained by saying: "In the Union you do not feel handicapped. In the Union I found myself and I now know my strengths." From a focus group conducted by the research team with a number of union members, Beirut, 11 March 2018.

145 Lisa Schur, "Contending with the "Double Handicap," *Women & Politics*, Vol. 25(1-2), 2003, p. 56-57.

disabled men. Women have to contend with “double repression”¹⁴⁶ or a “double ‘handicap,’”¹⁴⁷ owing to the fact that they are first, women, and second, disabled. Motor disabilities are more visible and carry the most social stigma, consequently serving to isolate women and setting them apart as “other.” Intersectionality helps explain these women’s othering through the lenses of disability and gender, as well as the economic and social class.¹⁴⁸

Interviews and focus groups with disabled female union members confirmed that women attribute all difficulties and challenges related to their political activity in the Union to the social discrimination and stigma they are subjected to. These stigma also relate directly to the configuration, structure, practices, and attitudes of the Union. This analysis begins from the standpoint of women’s experiences in their social environments – with their families and surrounding communities – and ends with the Union and the ways in which it interacts with these factors.

2) Female Union Members and their Social Environments

Disabled people’s choices and activities are directly influenced by societal factors and their communal context.¹⁴⁹ Women are doubly affected by disability as they experience negative interactions through social, family, cultural and political structures, rooted in social stigma that perceive them as weak.¹⁵⁰ This makes them susceptible to marginalisation and neglect, and sometimes to violence, injury, abuse, or exploitation. Female union interviewees said that they are still perceived as vulnerable individuals in need of charity, or who must have decisions made for them as they are incapable of handling their own simple affairs.

This includes the way these women’s own families perceive them as weak and vulnerable. One member said: “Families do not accept the idea that women with disabilities may be candidates for high office. They always consider that we suffer from some kind of deficiency.” Another explained: “When I started working with the Union, I had to keep challenging my family until they were convinced.”¹⁵¹ Most interviewees had to face down opposition from their families in order to be allowed to participate in the Union. They were unable to make the decision freely, and the resistance they faced was based on the perception that the challenges of their disability or mobility were too big to surmount, as well as negative societal attitudes towards women with disabilities who are perceived as too ‘active’ or ‘mobile.’ One woman said: “Our parents tell us, ‘you go out too often,

146 Ravi K. Thiara, Gill Hague & Audrey Mullender, “Losing out on both counts: disabled women and domestic violence,” *Disability & Society*, Vol. 26(6), 2011, p. 759.

147 Lisa Schur, *op. cit.*, 2003 p.33.

148 See footnote 13.

149 World Health Organisation & The World Bank, “World Report on Disability,” Malta, WHO Cataloguing in-Publication Data, 2011, p. 4-6, available at: <https://bit.ly/2JFpXDh> [Last accessed 13 August 2018].

150 Diane E. Taub, Penelope A. MCLorg & Patricia L. Fanflik, “Stigma management strategies among women with physical disabilities: contrasting approaches of downplaying or claiming a disability status,” *Deviant Behavior*, Vol. 25(2), 2004, p.170-171.

151 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female union members, Beirut, 11 March 2018.

sometimes for days on end when you have activities. You are girls, we’re afraid you might end up in dangerous situations, and we’re hearing a lot of talk because of your work.”¹⁵²

There is a legitimate aspect to this fear. Female union members who had to rely on public transport spoke about their fear of being harassed or exploited, hindering their ability to participate in various activities. This is not surprising, given that women with disabilities are the most vulnerable to harassment and sexual violence worldwide.¹⁵³ These difficulties lead some women to believe that simply having the individual will to participate in their communities is not enough – they must also have the support of their families and social environments at large.

Similarly, female union members implied that the “system of social values” that dictates the family’s attitudes toward disability also frowns upon disabled women playing political roles. One member explained her parents’ own social pressures: “The neighbours gossip, wondering how I’m allowed to leave the house and come home late given my disability. [Such talk] is unacceptable to my family because we are, first and foremost, people with ‘oriental’ values.”¹⁵⁴ Such pressures can force female members to reduce their interaction with the Union or resign altogether.

Some women with disabilities face even further layers of pressure from their families to work and make money. One of them recounts her personal experience: “My parents are conservative. When I tell them that I’m going to an [Union] activity they tell me, ‘you want to go alone?’ And yet they don’t have any problem or objection to the fact that I go alone to work.”¹⁵⁵ This reflects the diverse socio-economic backgrounds of disabled women’s families. Some require additional financial resources to be able to provide for a family member with a disability. In addition, women with disabilities face much difficulty in accessing secure jobs in comparison to other women,¹⁵⁶ meaning many are often financially exploited by their low-income families when they do gain employment.

Many of the female union members interviewed repeatedly raised their right to choose their partners. Because of social stigma and widespread perceptions around the reproductive capabilities of women with disabilities, families and society set down preconditions of who exactly disabled women are allowed to consider as future partners.¹⁵⁷ One young woman explained: “My mother says, you’re not supposed to marry an ordinary person. He has to be like you, with a case similar to yours so that he won’t betray you or love someone else and marry her behind your back. So that he

152 *Ibid.*

153 “Thematic study on the issue of violence against women and girls and disability,” United Nations General Assembly, 30 March 2012, p. 6-7, available at <https://bit.ly/29Uvtyo> [Last accessed 13 August 2018].

154 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female union members, Beirut, 11 March 2018.

155 *Ibid.*

156 Lisa Schur, *op. cit.*, 2003, p.33.

157 Ingrid Van der Heijden, Jane Harries & Naeemah Abrahams, “In pursuit of intimacy: disability stigma, womanhood and intimate partnerships in South Africa,” *Health & Sexuality*, 2018, p.2-3

won't hold your disability against you."¹⁵⁸ Another said: "I suffer a lot. Young men look at me and like my personality, but they don't accept to marry me because of what I look like on the outside."¹⁵⁹ Young women are aware of these limitations but criticise societal perceptions and family attitudes that can hinder them more than the disability itself.

3) Union Structures and Practices: The Hidden Ways Women are Short-Changed

Though female union members had much to say about their social challenges and how these influence their integration and activities in the Union (which they refer to as their "second home"), they had little to say about internal difficulties at the Union arising from its structure and practices. They responded overwhelmingly: "There is no discrimination in the Union, and gender was never an issue."¹⁶⁰ They emphasised there is no need to discuss the discrimination women might face in trying to ascend to decision-making positions. However, further analysis of their comments revealed some shortcomings.

First, the percentage of female members within the Union varies by region. It is lower in Beirut and higher in other regions. Women's relationship to the Union is measured by their daily attendance at its regional centres. This drop in participation in activities and events witnessed in Beirut is often due to women's professional commitments and their engagement in work in order to generate income. There are less employment opportunities for persons with disabilities – especially women – outside the capital, allowing more involvement in union activities. Union work in the regions is also mainly focused on service and development, which encourages and attracts more members. A different type of work is undertaken in Beirut, where the Union's main office is. The Beirut headquarters manages programmes and projects, and interacts with donors and other members of civil society. This means that it is more than just another "branch" in the common sense of the word, and is less capable of attracting a larger audience.

The regions outside Beirut also have less public space, and less access to those spaces for people with disabilities. This turns the Union centres in the regions into essential meeting spaces for persons with disabilities and strengthens members' affiliation. It is worth mentioning that in terms of the Union's organisational structure the Union's general assembly includes able-bodied members and volunteers who support, advocate, and lobby for Union causes without having the right to vote or stand for office.¹⁶¹ This reflects the Union's tolerant and open-minded approach, and its commitment to the promotion of integration.

Union members are involved in several types of work, including volunteering, mobilising, promot-

158 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female union members, Beirut, 11 March 2018.

159 *Ibid.*

160 *Ibid.*

161 Interview carried out by the research team with a union activist, Beirut, 11 August 2017.

ing awareness for law 220/2000,¹⁶² taking part in in marches, demonstrations, vigils, and protest campaigns, and helping set up summer camps. Moreover, the current union director is a woman, and there are also many women managing programmes both in Beirut and the regions.¹⁶³ The Union has also organised political empowerment workshops for women with disabilities and led awareness campaigns on the importance of participation in decision-making. Accordingly, the successive administrative boards of the Union have included women in varying proportions. However, men have always formed the majority of attendees, with only one or two female members at a time.¹⁶⁴ During the last elections for the administrative board in 2016, union leaders invited and encouraged two young women from the Bekaa to run for membership. Both won, meaning that women held only two out of twelve seats on the board.¹⁶⁵

Despite this, the Union generally operates according to a hierarchical structure, with very few young women on the administrative board. According to union leaders, "female activists have very little experience in the Union," and they describe the potential participation of young women in the board as risky, as they have not gained adequate experience.¹⁶⁶ Consequently, successive administrative boards have been constant in their opinion that the board should be made up of people who have been with the Union for years and gained experience leading the Union. This again reflects general political activity in Lebanon, with leadership positions dominated by older, more experienced *zu'ama*, who have held positions of authority for decades.

A large number of the male and female union members interviewed were satisfied with this situation, but there was observable confusion between work in the leadership of the Union and work on the projects and programmes – the latter primarily attended by women. One female member explained: "It is not necessary for someone to be part of the administrative board in order to be active. The desire to fight for one's rights comes from the heart and there is no need for a job title."¹⁶⁷ Such views indicate that female members may prefer to work outside the leadership. When asked about their unwillingness to participate in leadership roles, they cited professional commitments, which allow them to maintain some measure of economic independence. Many women affirmed: "My job takes up all my time, and this prevents me from volunteering more and certainly prevents me from

162 Law No. 220, or the Disability Rights Act, was passed by the Lebanese Parliament in 2000 and is a law specific to persons with disabilities. The law stipulates a large number of rights for persons with disabilities, however, to date, the applicable decrees of the law have not been issued. See: The Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union (LPHU), "Law 220/2000," available at <https://bit.ly/2Mk3M7L> [Last accessed 13 August 2018].

163 Mrs. Silvana Lakkis is the chairperson of the federation. Mrs. Hanin Al-Chemali is the director of programmes and Projects, and Mrs. Samar Al-Toufaily manages the Baalbek Centre.

164 Interview carried out by the research team with a union activist, Bar Elias, 15 September 2017.

165 Interview carried out by the research team with a union activist, Beirut, 11 August 2017.

166 *Ibid.*

167 Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female union members, Beirut, 11 March 2018.

developing myself and carrying out more important roles.”¹⁶⁸ Female members are aware that promotions within the Union require greater time commitment and presence in Beirut, and many of them live in more distant regions (specifically the Bekaa or the South) with no access to suitable transport. One woman explained:

*“I don’t have a car and so I have to use public transport. Because of my financial situation, I can’t take a taxi, so I take the bus. This is really a problem for me, because of the verbal abuse I face and the difficulty of using public transport without anyone’s help. My parents also refuse to allow me to stay out at night.”*¹⁶⁹

Although the Union has taken several steps toward empowering women, there are no internal measures to mitigate the difficulties that impede women from advancing within its ranks. For example, there has been no effort to organise meetings in regions outside Beirut to find alternative ways for these women to participate.

The Union’s 2016 five-year action plan, made no mention of women’s issues, the particular rights of women with disabilities, or the roles of women in the leadership and management of the Union. The plan only included one reference to the need to eliminate discrimination, without any further detail, or any reference to the special impact of discrimination on women with disabilities. The plan lists no goals or recommendations related to issues of gender equality and women’s empowerment. Though the plan raises questions about priorities for action in the coming period – education, employment, health, and civil rights – absent are any proposals related to the rights of women with disabilities as put forth by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.¹⁷⁰

One of the most prominent examples of this sort of exclusion can be found in the Disability Monitor Initiative. The Monitor’s website has statements with regards to violations of the right to work, the right to disabled access facilities, the right to access health services, and the right to travel, without mention of any gender-based issues or the specific types of violations that affect women with disabilities.¹⁷¹ The DMI’s form for reporting abuse fails to include options for gender-based complaints or allow complainants space to provide any indication of whether abuse occurred as a result of gender discrimination, except for having to fill in one’s gender on the form. This indicates the DMI only monitors general rights-violations affecting persons with disabilities in Lebanon.¹⁷²

.....
¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ Focus group carried out by the research team with a number of female union members, Bar Elias, 25 August 2017.

¹⁷⁰ Article 6, item 1 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: “States Parties [to the Convention] recognise that women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple discrimination, and in this regard shall take measures to ensure the full and equal enjoyment by them of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.” For further information on the Convention, please visit the following link: <https://bit.ly/2wa0klR> Last accessed 13 August 2018.

¹⁷¹ More information can be found on the website: <http://disabilitymonitor.net> Last accessed 13 August 2018.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

When compared with the three other entities in this study, the Union is the most welcoming space for women both in leadership and rank and file positions. However, its structure, interventions and activities do not acknowledge the challenges for with women with disabilities outside of their disabilities, their youth, and their lack of experience. It remains an organisation that favours older, more experienced individuals.

Conclusion

This study explored the institutional structures, practices and attitudes of four public entities as well as the experiences of women involved with them. In seeking to understand the challenges and obstacles faced by women in these entities the study began with the hypothesis that more women in leadership can contribute to breaking stereotypes about women being unqualified for politics and governance, and help achieve gender equality in the long term.

We found that the participation of most women in the Lebanese Forces during its militia years was limited to caregiving and service roles. Even those women who assumed direct military roles did so only temporarily and under the leadership of men. During the incarceration of Geagea – when the party’s activities were confined by the government, thus theoretically opening up greater opportunities for women – only Sethrida Geagea, ascended to leadership. This confirmed the entrenched political familism within the party.

Thus, the party’s structure and practices dictate certain roles for women corresponding with traditional perceptions of them as mothers and caregivers. As a result, most roles played by women within the party are in the social affairs branch, the branch that looks after the rights of the martyred and the wounded, and the branch for women’s empowerment. Field positions that require interaction with the party’s popular base are usually occupied by men, meaning that women are denied access to the opportunities to build political and electoral alliances provided by these positions. The intersection of “party interest” and “confessional interest” remains the primary factor for excluding women, particularly when the formulation of political balances always prioritises securing electoral seats.

“You Stink/*Tole’t Rehetkom*” illustrates the limits of unstructured horizontal models, whereby a handful of activists assumed leadership without involving baseline campaign constituents, especially women. Women’s participation was used to present an “appealing” front for the media, without involving women in the actual formulation of the statements they were expected to present. The campaign adopted a patronising, paternalistic discourse with regards to female activists and protestors, assuming that, as women, they required protection. It also avoided

discussion of sexual harassment against demonstrators on the ground in order to safeguard the appearance of the movement and campaign, ignoring the way this harassment alienated women and influenced their participation in campaign activities.

The case of the Teachers' Syndicate was striking. In an entity where women represent 75% of baseline membership, women remain rare in leadership positions. Their absence is due to several factors. General assemblies are usually held in Beirut, whereas the majority of members live in regions outside the capital – translating into a lack of representation for women voting at meetings. Women who had access to syndicate board meetings were often ridiculed and judged based on their appearance, rather than their ideas. Similarly, the interference of political parties in syndicate work affects members' interaction with the Syndicate, especially those that are dual members of the Syndicate and a political party. This means party-backed decisions and choices are given priority over the Syndicate's, especially when it comes to candidacy in board elections. Ultimately, women pointed to the fact that their social obligations and family responsibilities meant that their engagement in syndicate work or political action in general was negatively perceived.

In the Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union, members were more eager to talk about the challenges arising from their social environments rather than the internal environment of the Union. They described how the stigma they face not only impedes them from participating in political activities, but also shaped their families' attitudes, seeing them as disabled women whose mobility, activities and working potential must all be controlled. Given these environmental factors, most women with disabilities saw the Union as a social safety net, providing them with space for their political advancement. However, as in the case of the Syndicate, political advancement within the Union requires keeping up with activities and meetings at its central office in Beirut, which is impossible for many women given transport and public safety issues. Most of these difficulties stem from outside of the Union, but its structures and practices do not provide measures to deal with such difficulties.

The common denominator in these four cases is that their configurations and structures are not welcoming to women. Rather, they are set up to suit men and do not consider the ways in which the particular expectations and obligations upon women might affect their organisational experiences. Consequently, there are no tools made available to women that might help them adjust to and balance the competing responsibilities of their various social roles should they wish to seek political advancement, forcing them to choose one over the other.

The similarities among the four entities within the larger context of Lebanese politics were quite evident. Familism is the basis upon which the Lebanese Forces party is founded and works; confessional quotas persist in the makeup of the executive council of the Teacher's Syndicate; pa-

triarchal discourse has been used to denigrate women and their abilities within the "You Stink/*Tole't Rehetkom*" campaign and was reproduced in how authorities referred to female activists and protestors; and factors such as "seniority" and "experience" – highly destructive to the potential of women with disabilities – are emphasised in the Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union. Many of those we interviewed had reconciled themselves to this system, its deficiencies and downsides, and did not see any alternative to it. They were resigned to it as the sole framework through which they can participate politically – especially if it provides them with some kind of protection, whether existential, or social and economic security. This is an indication of how deeply rooted this system and its patriarchal values are. The effect is to confine women to political roles where they can only partially participate, or, worse, are mere tokens. This study prompts further questions of what entities, if any, are working to break down these barriers or trying to find alternatives to the existing political culture with avenues that allow women to participate more fully.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

سهام النجار، "الدراسة الواحدة الجامعة للدراسات الوطنية في سياق مشروع تعزيز دور الأحزاب والنقابات في النهوض بالمشاركة السياسية للنساء"، التجمع النسائي الديمقراطي اللبناني، ٢٠١٤.

سيسيل بيشو، أوليفيه فيليول، ليليان ماتيو. ترجمة عمر الشافعي، مراجعة وتحريرو د. دينا الخواجة، " قاموس الحركات الاجتماعية"، مبادرة الإصلاح العربي، ٢٠١٧.

غسان صليبي، "دراسة وطنية: احتياجات تنظيمية لتعزيز مشاركة النساء في النقابات في لبنان"، التجمع النسائي الديمقراطي اللبناني، ٢٠١٤.

Tiffany D. Barnes & Michelle M. Taylor-Robinson, "Women Cabinet Ministers in Highly Visible Posts and Empowerment of Women: Are the Two Related?" in: Amy C. Alexander, Catherine Bolzendahl and Farida Jalalzai (eds) *Measuring Women's Political Empowerment across the Globe. Gender and Politics*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2018, p. 229- 255.

Mark Beissinger, "The Semblance of Democratic Revolution: Coalitions in Ukraine's Orange Revolution," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 107 (3), August 2013, p. 574-592.

Tova Benski et al., "From the streets and squares to social movement studies: What have we learned?", *Current Sociology*, Vol. 61(4), 2013, p. 541-561.

Nancy Burns et al. *The Private Roots of Public Action: Gender, Equality, and Political Participation*, Harvard University Press, 2009.

Hilde Coffe & Selin Dilli, "The gender gap in political participation in Muslim majority countries," *International Political Science Review*, 2015, Vol. 36(5), p. 528-529.

Mario Diani, "The concept of social movement," *The sociological review*, Vol. 40(1), 1992, p.1-25.

Joakmin Ekman & Erik Amnå, "Political participation and civic engagement: Towards a new typology," *Human affairs*, Vol. 22(3), 2012, p. 283-300.

Silvia Erzeel & Ekaterina R. Rashkova, "Still men's parties? Gender and the radical right in comparative perspective," *West European Politics*, Vol. 40(4), 2017, p. 812-820.

Jack A. Goldstone, "More Social Movements or Fewer? Beyond Political Opportunity Structures to Relational Fields," *Theory and Society*, Vol. 33(3-4), Special Issue: Current Routes to the Study of Contentious Politics and Social Change (Jun. - Aug., 2004), p. 333-365.

Nizar Hamzeh, "Clientelism, Lebanon: Roots and Trends," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 37(3), 2001, p. 167-178.

Sune Haugbolle, "The (little) militia man: Memory and militarized masculinity in Lebanon," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, Vol. 8 (1), 2012, p. 115-139.

Suad Joseph, "Political Familism in Lebanon," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 636(1), 2011, p. 150-163.

Ingrid Van der Heijden, Jane Harries & Naeemah Abrahams, "In pursuit of intimacy: disability stigma, womanhood and intimate partnerships in South Africa," *Health & Sexuality*, 2018, p.1-14.

Fatima Sbaity Kassem, "Can Women Break through the Political Glass Ceiling?", in *Party Politics, Religion, and Women's Leadership*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2013, p. 203-230.

Fatima Sbaity Kassem, *Party Variation in Religiosity & Women's Leadership Lebanon in Comparative Perspective*, Columbia University (Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences), 2011.

Farid el Khazen, "Political Parties in Postwar Lebanon: Parties in Search of Partisans," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 57(4), 2003, p. 605-624.

Lamia Rustom Shehadeh, "Women in the Lebanese militias" in *Women and War in Lebanon*, University of Florida Press, 1999, p. 145-66.

Linda M. Lobao, "Women in Revolutionary Movements: Changing Patterns of Latin American Guerrilla Struggle," *Dialectical Anthropology*, Vol. 15(211), 1990, p. 211-232.

Pippa Norris & Ronald Inglehart, "Cultural Obstacles to Equal Representation," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 12(3), 2001, p. 126-140.

Elizabeth Picard, "Is the Consociational system reformable?", Institut de Recherches et d'Etudes sur le Monde Arabe et Musulman, 2015, available at: <https://bit.ly/2P8ZIPW> [Last accessed 4 August 2018].

Lisa Schur, "Contending with the "Double Handicap," *Women & Politics*, Vol. 25(1-2), 2003, p.31-62.

Hakan Seckinelgin & Jennifer F. Klot, "From Global Policy to Local Knowledge: What is the Link between Women's Formal Political Participation and Gender Equality in Conflict-affected Con-

texts?", *Global Policy*, Vol. 5(1), February 2014, p. 38-39.

Lewis Sinder, "The Lebanese Forces: Their Origins and Role in Lebanon's Politics," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 38(1), 1984, p 1-33.

Deborah J. Smith, *Finding power: Gender and women's political participation in Rajasthan, India*. PhD thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science (United Kingdom), 2005.

Diane E. Taub, Penelope A. MCLorg & Patricia L. Fanflik, "Stigma management strategies among women with physical disabilities: contrasting approaches of downplaying or claiming a disability status," *Deviant Behavior*, Vol. 25(2), 2004, p.169-190.

Ravi K. Thiara, Gill Hague & Audrey Mullender, "Losing out on both counts: disabled women and domestic violence," *Disability & Society*, Vol. 26(6), 2011, 757-771.

Charles Tilly and Lesley J. Wood, *Social Movements 1768-2012*. Routledge, 2015.

Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman & Henry E. Brady, *Voice and Equality*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1995.

Jocelyn Viterna, *Women in war the micro-processes of mobilization in El Salvador*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Goergina Waylen, "Analysing Women in the Politics of the Third World," *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* Vol. 9, Gender, Colonialism, Technology and 'Development' (December 1997), p. 1-14.

Marie-Noëlle Abi Yaghi et Myriam Catusse, "Liban : le mouvement pour « la chute du système confessionnel » et ses limites," in Michel Camau et Frédéric Vairel. *Soulèvements populaires et recompositions politiques dans le Monde arabe*, Presses universitaires de Montréal, 2014, p.250-273, available at: <https://bit.ly/2vHpety> [Last accessed 27 June 2017].

Marie-Noelle Abi Yaghi et al. "From Isqat an-nizam at-ta'ifi to the Garbage Crisis Movement: Political Identities and Antisectarian Movements," in Rosita Di Peri and Daniel Meier (eds.), *Lebanon Facing the Arab Uprisings Constraints and Adaptation*, London, Palgrave Pivot, 2017, p. 73-91.

