



FINAL REPORT – PART 2 | 14.07.2017

# PATRIARCHY AND SECTARIANISM: A GENDERED TRAP

## BASELINE OF WOMEN IN POLITICS: THE CASE OF LEBANON

Commissioned for the Hivos Women Empowered of Leadership (WE4L) Programme, which is funded through the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women (FLOW) Programme. Research conducted by Beyond Reform and Development..

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# CHAPTER 2 - WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LEBANESE POLITICAL PARTIES

Lebanese political parties depend on sectarian, family and clientelistic relationships with their voters.<sup>78</sup> Below is a breakdown of political parties' representation in parliament:

## Political Party Seats in the Parliament<sup>79</sup>:

POLITICAL PARTY	SEATS IN PARLIAMENT
Future Movement	29
March 14 Affiliated Independents	15
Lebanese Forces	5
Phalanges	5
Democratic Gathering Bloc	11
Democratic Left Movement	1
Jama'a Islamiyah	1
National Liberal Party	1
Ramgavar	1
Liberation and Development Bloc (Amal Movement)	13
Free Patriotic Movement	19
Loyal to the Resistance Bloc (Hezbollah)	13
Marada Bloc	4
Ba'ath	2
Syrian Socialist National Party	2
Tachnak	2
Lebanese Democratic Party	2
Haghnag	2

<sup>78</sup> *Clientelism as the Link between Voters and Political Parties*, LCPS, May 2015.

<sup>79</sup> The Lebanese Transparency Association, 'National Integrity System Study' Lebanon 2011

## WOMEN AND POLITICAL PARTIES

The political parties that emerged in French Mandate Lebanon were largely reserved for male members.<sup>80</sup> The increase of female activism in post-colonial Lebanon was reflected to a certain degree within political parties, including the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP).<sup>81</sup> In her article in the *Journal of Revolutionary Socialists of the Middle East*, Yolla Sharara<sup>82</sup> suggests that in 1975, as part of the activities of International Women's Day, the Democratic Party initiated a meeting between representatives of all parties to discuss women's issues and to possibly agree on common course of action in that regard. Ironically, all the political parties had included paragraphs devoted to promoting women's rights in their programs and it seemed that all parties were supportive of civil marriage, equal pay, equality between men and women, and education for women.<sup>83</sup> The outbreak of civil war ended the possible agreement over women's issues as the question of women sat at the heart of the negotiations between the right and left, as it also became the point of rupture, and it was actually the left (then represented by Kamal Jumblatt) who compromised the independence of personal status for unity with its Muslim allies and thus put the question of civil marriage and women's rights aside.<sup>84</sup> Since all political parties from across the political spectrum were supportive of women's rights, the question has to be asked, why in 2017 do political parties still fall short on the issue of women's representation?

In the past, women resorted to establishing their own separate organizations and associations as they understood that opportunities for engaging in political parties and militias were limited.<sup>85</sup> Some examples of those associations are: the Union of Female Progressives, the Democratic Assembly of Lebanon Women (RDFL), and The League of Women's Rights (LWR). RDFL and LWR are still active today.<sup>86</sup> Efforts have been made to promote and increase women's political participation in political parties through NGO programs, largely in collaboration with ministries and INGOs. Some local NGOs working on the issue include the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) that has worked on promoting women's participation in elections and Lebanese Organization for Studies and Trainings (LOST) that held trainings and seminars to promote women's political participation; the UNDP, Women in Front and RDFL among others continue to work on the issue of women's representation. Despite the efforts made to counter the status quo, Lebanese political parties are still

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<sup>80</sup>Thompson, E., 'Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon'

<sup>81</sup>Kingston, P.Dr., 'Women and Political Parties in Lebanon: Reflections on the Historical Experience'

<sup>82</sup> In 1975 the women's organisations held a congress to discuss the laws relating to personal status, and demanded optional and non-compulsory civil marriage. A law forbidding discrimination against women in the family was presented by women from the Democratic Party, Yolla Sharara

<sup>83</sup>Yolla Sharara: '*Women and politics in Lebanon*', Jan 2013.

<sup>84</sup>Yolla Sharara: '*Women and politics in Lebanon*', Jan 2013.

<sup>85</sup>Lebanese Women and Political Parties: History, Issues and Options for Reform Dr Marguerite Helou

<sup>86</sup>Kingston, P.Dr., 'Women and Political Parties in Lebanon: Reflections on the Historical Experience'

not overly representative and inclusive to women, especially in executive and senior positions.

To better understand female participation in political life, this study looked at the different levels of participation, classified under positive (participation in meetings, in board meetings, in committees, in leadership positions within political parties, etc.), and negative participation (women are physically present, but are not active, or are assigned to carry out soft tasks, etc.).

Level of Participation	
<b>Active Participation</b>	Women are nominated by the political group to municipal elections
	Women are nominated by the political group to parliamentary elections
	Women are nominated by the political group to union elections
	Women head committees, based on their competencies
	Women participate in executive committees
	Existing mechanisms to support female participation in a political group
<b>Negative Participation</b>	Women are assigned to positions that help the political group gain popularity
	Women are only responsible for hosting conferences rather than chairing them or facilitating the conversations
	Women are assigned to positions that are not within their areas of expertise

## EXCLUSION OF WOMEN IN AND FROM POLITICAL PARTIES

The first and most obvious instance of discrimination against women is found at the national level. Women are critically underrepresented in state institutions, as only 4 out of 128 parliamentarians are women (3.12%) and 1 out of 30 ministers is a woman (3.3%), with the Minister of State for Women's Affairs being a man. This exclusion of women from politics is also reflected at the level of political parties, with only one out of the biggest eight parties having a female Secretary General (the Lebanese Forces).

	% of female parliamentarians	% of female ministers	Secretary General's gender
FPM	5.56 (1/18)	0 (0/2)	Male
Future Movement	3.80 (1/25)	0 (0/2)	Male
Lebanese Forces	12.5 (1/7)	No position	Female
Amal Movement	0 (0/13)	33 (1/3)	Male
Hezbollah	0 (0/12)	0 (0/2)	Male
PSP	0 (0/7)	0 (0/2)	Male

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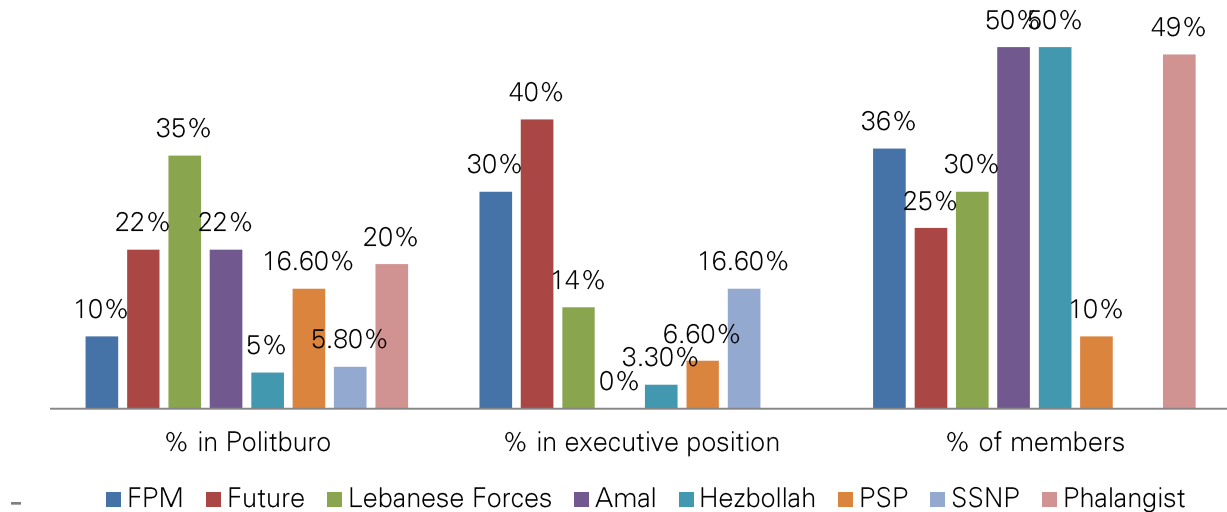
SSNP	0	(0/2)	0 (0/1)	Male
Phalangist	0	(0/5)	No position	Male

When interviewing political leaders and political activists, the research team found that the general discourse is usually very positive towards female participation in politics. In fact, the discourse often encourages women to run and enter politics. However, an in-depth look into the structures and current constituencies of political parties shows that women are rarely represented in executive bodies, and often hold positions within women's committees that are commonly invested in organizing outreach events and holding training events, as opposed to participating in traditional forms of politics.

	% of women in Politburo	% of women in executive position	% of female members
FPM	10 (3/30)	30	36
Future Movement	22 (7/32)	40	25
Lebanese Forces	35	14	30
Amal Movement	22 (4/18)	0	50
Hezbollah	5 (1/20)	3.3	50
PSP	16.6	6.6	10
SSNP	5.8 (1/17)	16.6	N/A
Phalangist	20	N/A	49

The below is a comparative graph of levels of female participation in all the studied political parties. It shows that the political party with the highest level of female participation in its political bureau is The Lebanese Forces, and the party with the least contribution from women is Hezbollah, with only 5% of its politburo made up by women. Some of the reasons why women are not reaching senior positions in political parties include:

**WOMEN IN POLITICAL PARTIES**



## — INTERNAL REGULATIONS AND THE LACK OF AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

During the research, it was found that no one political party of the eight at hand have included, or intend to include, provisions on the local level to guarantee the optimized participation of women. This includes practices such as ensuring that meeting times and locations are based on the needs of all attendants and not just the majority (a majority that is usually male).

All eight political parties reviewed, studied and interviewed do not mention provisions that guarantee the right to maternity leave, for both men and women in their policies or bylaws. In a highly competitive political sphere, individuals always seek to keep their connections nurtured, to educate themselves further, to raise more money and national support and look for career advancement within their political parties. However, there are no provisions in any political party that guarantee that women can

'Politicians, decision makers, employers, public institution officials, etc. are usually men. They will never understand the practical needs of women.'

*Senior female official from the Lebanese Forces*

return to their position after 70 days of maternity leave. What this means is that women's needs are not taken into consideration and that the environment is generally not supportive of women. Female participants in this study continuously stated that time constraints were a serious challenge to their participation as most of them cannot attend afternoon or late night

meetings, neither can they afford to join events on weekends and this excludes women from formal decision making. Additionally, as women constitute 2 - 10% of executive boards, their failure to attend meetings is often considered tolerable and unimportant, as a result, there is a the lack of measures to ensure that meeting times are adapted to take women's schedules and needs into account.

As a consequence, most of women politicians are either divorced or widowed, but few are middle-aged married women. When asked about their constituency, Phalanges respondents for example, as well as respondents from FPM, explained that most female members are either above 50 or below 30.

## — BYLAWS DO NOT INCLUDE QUOTA<sup>87</sup> TO GUARANTEE SEATS FOR WOMEN IN INTERNAL ELECTIONS

<sup>87</sup> The quota system was proposed during the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, as a measure or procedure that can be used as an interim and temporary solution to solve the problem of women's poor participation in political life and the presence of obstacles that prevent their access to decision-making positions.

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The majority of political parties integrate in their bylaws a provision about gender equality. Some even highlight the importance of women in society and commit to “eliminate all legal and social distinctions between men and women”.<sup>88</sup>

“Women do not have the political experience to be involved in public service”.<sup>1</sup> *Michel Aoun, president of the Republic of Lebanon.*

However, a great number of interviewees, who are either in senior or executive positions in all eight political parties, were surprisingly opposed to the quota system, claiming that it is ‘discriminatory as a measure’, and explaining that women should not be given special attention to be motivated to run and win. In some cases, it was noted that a quota for women might put the party’s success at risk due to the absence of “enough” qualified women in its cadre.

	Gender-sensitive language in bylaws	Supports National Quota	Has Quota in Bylaws
FPM	Only for Women Committee	No	No
Future Movement	No	Yes	Yes: 40%
Lebanese Forces	Only for Women Committee	Yes	No
Amal Movement	No	Yes	No
Hezbollah	No	No	No
PSP		Yes	No
SSNP	Only membership	N/A	No
Phalangist	Only membership	Yes	Yes: 20%

— ROLE OF WOMEN'S COMMITTEES IN POLITICAL PARTIES

“Women enter politics in mourning clothes.” Former MP Nayla Moawad

The establishment of women’s committees alone is not an effective way of encouraging broader participation among women within the political process.<sup>89</sup> Political parties must be able to include more women in their politburo and leadership

positions based solely on their qualifications rather than their ties with political leaders or on the basis of their gender. The deep, imbedded nature of the political party system in Lebanon means that it is important to have women participate to increase the potential for the effective change and reform that could promote gender equality in Lebanon.<sup>90</sup>

— LACK OF TRAINING ON GENDER EQUALITY

One of the reasons for the existing discriminatory practices is perhaps lack of knowledge among men –but also women- on gender equality and opportunities to

<sup>88</sup>The Charter of the Free Patriotic Movement Party

<sup>89</sup> United Nations, Women Watch ‘Political Participation’, Ch.3

<sup>90</sup>Human Rights Documents Online“*Emerging Voice: Young Women in Lebanese Politics*” International Alert. 2011.

mainstream this concept. Many respondents expressed the need for basic education for all party members on gender equality and women's issues.

### — FEMALE POLITICIANS ARE SEXUALIZED AND PATRONIZED

Women are highly sexualized and objectified in the media, on the news and in general education throughout Lebanon. This is dangerous for women in general and women

Asked about their events, female respondents explained that men in general don't attend workshops on issues related to women's rights, thinking that women's issues don't concern everyone, and rarely are there men in parties' women's committees for that same reason.

engaging in politics specifically as in some cases their ideas, opinions and arguments are taken lightly and addressed with demeaning and often condescending attitudes of dismissal. Additionally, older men in political parties often treat women in a patronizing manner because the women are assumed to lack political savvy or that their political activity is minimal. None of the studied political parties showed interest or readiness to address these informal exclusionary practices that make the political environment extremely hostile for women. Consequently, female politicians have repeatedly expressed their concerns that they are not valued for their actual expertise and input. To date, and as a reflection of the power-sharing system, the ability of Lebanese female politicians to gain office is still linked to familial representation and political inheritance. Hence, female politicians are often widows, sisters, aunts, daughters or wives of living or late politicians. Currently, all four female members of parliament are related to former or current political leaders. Although this does not deprive them of their skills and qualities, the absence of any "independent" female MP can hardly be a coincidence:

- Sethrida Geagea: Spouse of Lebanese Forces Leader Samir Geagea
- Bahia Hariri: Sister of late Prime Minister Rafic Hariri
- Gilberte Zwein: Daughter and granddaughter of former prominent MPs
- NaylaTueni: Daughter and granddaughter of former prominent MPs

### — OVER-CENTRALIZATION AND SOCIETY'S DISAPPROVAL OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL WORK IMPEDE FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

Design mechanisms to facilitate outreach to women in rural areas, and to guarantee their inclusion and participation in political work are lacking. Most women from rural areas face great challenges when seeking to enter politics, such as: mobility, since almost most major political events take place in Beirut, and a lack of financial capacity to travel long distances, or familial support of freedom of movement, etc. Political parties should be able to design and implement measures that would encourage rural women's access to the political scene.



## GOING FORWARD

Although there is much to be done, some recent improvements have been noted within some political parties:

- *Lebanese Forces (LF)*: The LF is the only party in Lebanon that has appointed a female Secretary General, Dr Chantal Sarkis. This is also noteworthy because of the absence of blood ties between Sarkis and any political leader in the party. In an interview, she explained that the senior officials of the party are considerate of her time and needs, and therefore adapt their times and commitments to her availability, enabling her to work in the party and still commit to and be fully involved with her family.
- *Future Movement*: Currently, 60% of the Prime Minister's (Saad Hariri) advisors are women. The party has imposed an internal 40% quota for women at the executive level, the highest in the country. It has been a vocal supporter of the establishment of a State Ministry for Women's Affairs and seems to be implementing capacity building trainings and workshops for women to promote their chances of advancing in their political careers. The Future Movement also presents excellent outreach mechanisms, encouraging and promoting the participation of women from rural areas.
 

The FPM has initiated a "supporter card" as an alternative to the "membership card" to create ownership and connection with those who are unable to be more active and involved in the party. FPM respondents explained that the "supporters" are mostly women, in line with the party but not seeking or not capable
- *Amal Party*: Amal is the only party that has nominated a female minister to fill one of the three ministerial positions it holds. Also, 36 female members from the Amal Movement won in the municipal elections of 2015, an impressive rise from the eight members elected in 2010.

## — NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During interviews and focus group discussions, participants were asked to supply recommendations for promoting female participation in their respective political parties. The recommendations were as follows:

