IN BRIEF

BRIDGE: Building Rights, Dignity and Gender Equality in Lebanon

An initiative led by UN Women Lebanon and supported by the Government of Canada.

Background

Lebanon continues to face deep and interconnected political, economic, social and security challenges that have significantly affected governance, public institutions and social cohesion. While important progress has been achieved in advancing women's rights and participation, structural gender inequalities remain deeply entrenched across political, economic and social spheres.

According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2025, Lebanon ranks 136th out of 148 countries globally and 145th in political empowerment.[1] Women remain significantly underrepresented in elected office and public decision-making, occupying only 8 of 128 parliamentary seats and 10.37 per cent of municipal council seats nationwide.[2] At the same time, women and girls continue to face multiple forms of discrimination, unequal access to resources and opportunities, and persistent barriers to protection from gender-based violence.

The impacts of Lebanon's economic crisis, institutional fragility and recent conflict have further intensified these challenges. Women and girls have been disproportionately affected by displacement, livelihood losses, increased unpaid care responsibilities, reduced access to essential services and heightened risks of violence. At the same time, they continue to play critical roles in sustaining households, communities, humanitarian response efforts and recovery processes.

Against this backdrop, there is a critical opportunity to ensure that Lebanon's reform, recovery and reconstruction efforts are inclusive, gender-responsive and reflective of the rights, priorities and needs of women and girls.

With the support of the Government of Canada, UN Women is implementing BRIDGE: Building Rights, Dignity & Gender Equality in Lebanon (2026 - 2029), an initiative designed to advance women's leadership and participation, strengthen gender-responsive governance and accountability, promote positive social norms, and ensure that women and girls can live free from all forms of gender-based violence. Through this initiative, Canada and UN Women reaffirm their shared commitment to advancing gender equality, women's rights, and women's leadership in Lebanon.

1. World Economic Forum. (June 2025). Global gender gap report 2025.
2. Chebaro, A. 2025. "Lebanese Women: From Political Participation to Party Leadership." UN Women and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon. Beirut: UN Women.

LEBANON TODAY
Figures at a glance

136/148
GLOBAL GENDER GAP RANKING

6%
WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT

10%
WOMEN IN MUNICIPAL SEATS

1 IN 5
MEN APPROVE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Building on Results

BRIDGE builds on the achievements, partnerships and lessons learned from UN Women's Women's Participation in Leadership (WPIL) programme, implemented with the support of the Government of Canada between 2022 and 2025.

WPIL contributed to tangible progress in advancing women's leadership, participation and representation in Lebanon. The programme supported the increase of women's representation in municipal councils from 5.4 per cent in 2016 to 10.37 per cent in 2025, strengthened feminist advocacy and collective action through the Feminist Platform in Lebanon, contributed to the adoption of voluntary gender quotas within political parties, and supported women parliamentarians in advancing gender-responsive legislative reforms.

WPIL Key Achievements

OVER 3,200
PARTICIPANTS DIRECTLY REACHED

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION DOUBLED IN MUNICIPAL COUNCILS TO
10.37%
FROM 5.4% IN 2016

Strategic Alignment

The project contributes to the priorities set out in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2023–2025) for Lebanon, the UN Women Global Strategic Plan (2026–2029), and the UN Women Lebanon Strategic Note (2023–2027), anchoring it with the UN global and country-level strategies. At the national level, it aligns with the National Strategy for Women in Lebanon (2022–2030), the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women and Girls (2019–2029), and the Strategic Plan for the Protection of Women and Children in Lebanon (2019–2026), and will inform the upcoming second National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2026-2029).

The project also aligns with Canada's continued commitment to advancing gender equality, inclusive governance, human dignity, peace and security. By strengthening women's political participation, leadership and protection from violence, BRIDGE contributes to more inclusive reform and recovery processes and reinforces the critical role of women's participation in building accountable governance, peace and security in Lebanon.

Vision

Building on these achievements and lessons learned, BRIDGE seeks to advance a vision for gender equality in Lebanon by strengthening women's leadership, gender-responsive governance, and protection from violence.

ULTIMATE OUTCOME

Women and girls in Lebanon participate equally and meaningfully in decision-making processes and live free from gender-based violence.

Outcome 1: Strengthened national and local institutions with improved capacity to promote, implement, and monitor gender-responsive laws, policies, and reforms, contributing to strengthened participation and representation in decision-making roles across state institutions, public administration, and civil society structures.

Outcome 2: Strengthened institutional and community-based mechanisms with improved capacity and coordination to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls, ensuring accessible, survivor-centred, and quality services for women and girls in all their diversity.

Our Strategy for Change

To achieve its goals, the project adopts a multi-layered, transformative approach that tackles the interconnected structural, institutional, and social barriers to gender equality and women's empowerment across the micro, meso, and macro levels:

- **At the micro level, the project focuses on empowering women and girls in all their diversity to exercise voice, agency, and leadership within their families, communities, and institutions**. It strengthens their capacities, confidence, and networks to participate meaningfully in public life and to access quality, survivor-centered, and multisectoral services for protection, justice, and recovery from all forms of gender-based violence. It also ensures that targeted vulnerable groups, such as refugees, migrant workers, women with disabilities, and women and girls of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, benefit equitably from these interventions, contributing to the realization of the principle of leaving no one behind.
- **At the meso level, the project works to establish an enabling environment by reinforcing community and institutional ecosystems that support gender equality and social cohesion**. Through partnerships with ministries, parliament, municipalities, women's rights organizations, feminist networks, media actors, and religious and community leaders, it promotes positive social norm change, strengthens coordinated prevention and response to violence against women and girls (VAWG), and fosters gender-responsive local governance and peacebuilding.
- **At the macro level, the project engages strategically with national institutions to advance gender-responsive laws, policies, and institutionalize accountability mechanisms**. This includes supporting implementation of the National Strategy for Women in Lebanon (2022–2030) and the forthcoming second National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.

Strategic Pillars

The project is structured around three main pillars:

PILLAR 1

Leadership and Participation

Expanding pathways for current and aspiring women leaders and youth actors to participate in political, civic and public life through engagement with political parties, civil society organizations and national and local public institutions.

PILLAR 2

Feminist Advocacy and Gender-Responsive Reform

Supporting feminist movements, civil society coalitions, political actors and national and local public institutions to advance gender-responsive laws, policies and accountability mechanisms.

PILLAR 3

Institutional and Community-Based VAWG Response

Increased effectiveness and coordination of institutional and community-based mechanisms to prevent and respond to VAWG, including among displaced populations.

Theory of Change

BRIDGE is built on the understanding that meaningful progress towards gender equality requires simultaneous transformation at the individual, societal and institutional levels.

If women and girls in Lebanon, in all their diversity, are protected, empowered and able to fully exercise their agency, rights and leadership within their communities and institutions;

And if institutions adopt and implement gender-responsive laws and policies and establish robust accountability mechanisms to uphold women's rights and equality;

And if the socio-political environment, including political parties, communities, social actors and political actors, upholds women's rights, promotes gender equality and provides inclusive and enabling conditions for women's full, effective and meaningful participation and leadership;

Then women and girls in Lebanon will influence and participate equally and meaningfully in decision-making and governance processes and live free from gender-based violence, contributing to more inclusive, accountable and peaceful governance and stronger social cohesion.

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls: Prevention and response to violence against women and girls is a core component of BRIDGE and is integrated across the initiative's theory of change.

BRIDGE addresses multiple and intersecting forms of violence, including political violence, online and technology-facilitated abuse, domestic violence, sexual harassment in workplaces and public spaces, trafficking, and violence rooted in discriminatory family laws governing marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance.

Partnerships

BRIDGE is implemented through partnerships with national and local public institutions, women's rights organizations, feminist networks, civil society organizations, universities, media actors, political stakeholders, justice and security institutions, and community leaders. These partnerships are central to advancing sustainable, locally owned and gender-responsive change across Lebanon.

BRIDGE AT A GLANCE

Duration: 2026–2029

Budget: CAD 7 million (2026–2029)

Expected reach: 1,990 individuals (1,785 women and girls)

Expected engagement: 38 institutions