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**POST PROJECT EVALUATION  
FOR THE  
UNITED NATIONS DEMOCRACY FUND**

**EVALUATION REPORT**

**UDF-18-805-LEB**

Promoting Gender-Sensitive Personal Status Laws in Lebanon

20-09-2022

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**Disclaimer**

The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluator. They do not represent those of UNDEF or any of the institutions referred to in the report.

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## I. Executive Summary

This report presents the evaluation findings of the project “Promoting Gender-Sensitive Personal Status Laws in Lebanon” implemented by KAFA (Enough) Violence and Exploitation from 01/09/2020 to 28/02/2022 (24 months), without extensions. The UNDEF grant amounted to USD 198,000, of which 10% were retained by UNDEF for monitoring and evaluation activities.

The project’s objective was to strengthen advocacy efforts towards a gender-sensitive Unified Personal Status Law (UPSL) in Lebanon.

The issue of the Lebanese personal status law has been historically complex and multidimensional, as political confessionalism and religion-based personal statuses are interrelated and maintained by denominational norms.

To address this problem, the implementing agency decided to benefit from the momentum, and to directly and openly tackle political confessionalism and the powers of religious leaders.

The project was based on three essential and complementary outcomes:

- Strengthening the capacity of civil society and media to advocate for and raise awareness about civil personal status laws.
- Raising the public opinion’s awareness of the discriminatory impact of religion-based status laws and courts on women and their families.
- Increasing the pressure on legislators to support the draft civil personal status law, via political and media coalitions.

### *Coherence*

The project was in line with the mandate and strategic objectives of UNDEF, the implementing agency, national programmes, and external cooperation priorities, including the UN Framework for Cooperation on Sustainable Development. There were synergies with other CSO projects, and there was coordination with other feminist organisations and platforms. However, the project was almost always linked to KAFA, with little ownership on the part of the other stakeholders interviewed.

### *Relevance*

The project was highly relevant insofar as it strengthened the role of the Lebanese civil society and different stakeholders (media, CSOs, and political groups) in advocating for the non-religion-based and gender-sensitive personal status law. It was also relevant in as much as it met the needs of beneficiaries to better understand the legal, social, and political issues of the confessional personal status laws, through the communication campaign and the debate around KAFA’s proposed personal status law. The project came at the right time, and given the health crisis of COVID-19, the activities -which mainly revolved around an awareness campaign, trainings, and (online) networking- were very suitable. The project successfully adapted to the challenges of the pandemic and the continuous changes of the context. However, the project design lacked sufficient articulation, and the activities lacked sufficient links between them.

### *Effectiveness*

The project effectiveness was reasonable, as activities and results were well-thought out and made a significant contribution towards attaining the target outcomes. Yet, it should be noted that the project documents demonstrated some weaknesses in the presentation of the intervention rationale.

Outcome indicators were not SMART<sup>1</sup>, and despite the detailed quantitative data provided by the grantee, it was difficult to capture all the levels of change and to reflect the synergies between different activities.

### *Impact*

Several project elements were very impactful, especially at the political level, as the project succeeded in evoking the interest of the media and mainstreaming the debate about the personal status law.

During the 2022 election campaign, the position towards the UPSL became a key issue of debate and a selection criterion between candidates.

Through networking activities and agreements with the media, CSOs, and political groups, the project succeeded in building and bringing together a multi-stakeholder group mobilised to work on attaining a gender-sensitive non-religion-based personal status law. The group also succeeded in challenging the power dynamics related to religion-based courts. Change was also noted on the level of beneficiaries' knowledge about the UPSL and its legal and political repercussions. New advocacy measures were adopted at the level of the CSOs, media outlets, and political groups that took part in the project.

However, the project's impact was limited by external factors such as changes in the political situation and the economic crisis in the country.

### *Sustainability*

The project was inherently sustainable as it was part of KAFA's integrated and continuous political change strategy. Additionally, the nature of many activities was relatively sustainable, as was the case for learning outcomes, the public's interest in the issue of personal status laws, and the resources of the awareness-raising campaign and the media contents, all of which were made available for public use. Still, the sustainability of the project could have been strengthened by a follow-up strategy with stakeholders, and especially by a shared advocacy strategy.

### *UNDEF added value*

Incontestably, UNDEF's support was an added value to the project. It created a conducive environment for legal and political debate on the UPSL and paved the way for future joint awareness-raising activities, among CSOs, political groups, and emergent young political leaders, all brought together by KAFA.

The project's communications campaign that went viral also helped UNDEF gain visibility.

## **II. PROJECT CONTEXT AND STRATEGY**

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<sup>1</sup> S: Specific, M: Measurable, A: Attainable, R: Relevant, T: Time-bound.

(i) *Development context*

Although the Lebanese constitution guarantees equal rights for all citizens, the confessional system institutionalises inequalities and hinders the development of a gender-sensitive civil UPSL in Lebanon. The Lebanese confessional system originated from capitulations between the Ottoman Empire and the European powers since the 16th century. Confessional communities were backed by the 1926<sup>2</sup> Constitution. Thus, Article 9 guarantees for the populations the respect of their personal statuses and religious interests, regardless of their rite. Each community therefore has its own personal status law, which is under the jurisdiction of the confessional court and the celebration as well as the dissolution of marriage are subject to very specific rules set by religious leaders of each community. The Lebanese legislative system revolves around a two-sided communitarianism: on the one hand, the religion-based system defines the personal status, that is to say family law, marriage, filiation, and succession, and on the other hand, it founds the Lebanese political system by allocating functions in the government, the judiciary, and the administration based on denominational belonging.

Political confessionalism and religion-based personal statuses are interrelated, so as a result of maintaining this confessional federal structure, all attempts at personal status reforms have failed. Extra-community matrimonial relations are legally prohibited and socially discouraged, thus depriving many of their right to civil marriage, and, above all, hindering any possibilities of decompartmentalising the society.

At the end of the civil war (1975-1990), article 95 of the Constitution amended after Taëf proposed the creation of a “national committee mandated with developing a transition process to end the country’s political confessionalism”. Since then, every time personal status reforms were brought up, the debate on civil marriage was met with opposition from religious authorities and politicians.

In 1998, the then President of the Lebanese Republic, Elias Hraoui, presented to the Council of Ministers a bill reforming the optional personal status, but the project was stopped by the opposition of Deir el Fatwa.

In 2019, the Minister of Interior Hassan Raya, who was the first woman to obtain this sovereign position, indicated that she supported the establishment of optional civil marriage in Lebanon. Once again, the proposal did not succeed due to the opposition of Deir el Fatwa.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://books.openedition.org/puam/1016?lang=fr>

### Religion-based laws impeding women's rights:<sup>3</sup>

In Lebanon, family disputes such as divorce, property rights, and custody of children, or the division of inheritance, are within the remit of religion-based courts, and laws often favour men over women. The absence of a civil code leads to the non-specialisation of judges and the absence of accountability<sup>4</sup>. Concurrently, religion-based laws differ between the 18 faiths in Lebanon, which have their own jurisprudence and courts that are not State-controlled.



**Figure 1. Ring (strategic road bridge in the centre of Beirut).**

*The first line in green says “Oh, my wonderful homeland”. Below, in black, someone has added: “Confessionalism has ruined us (literally burnt)”. Photo: Nohad el-Hajj*

### Victims of domestic violence under the influence of religion-based rulings:

In 2021, the number of incidents of domestic violence increased from 747 in 2020 to 1468, according to statistics collected by Lebanon's Internal Security Forces (ISF).<sup>5</sup>

On April 1, 2014, the law on domestic violence passed by the Lebanese Parliament was a step forward for the rights and safety of women in Lebanon, but it remains insufficient because it does not address

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.middleeasteye.net/fr/decryptages/le-liban-peut-il-sextirer-du-confessionnalisme>

<sup>4</sup> Further, while the courts and religion-based laws should comply with the provisions of the Lebanese Constitution, the Court of Cassation, which is the highest civil court in the Lebanese judicial system, has very limited oversight over religion-based courts' proceedings and decisions, resulting in a lack of accountability: Christian courts are administratively and financially independent, and Muslim courts, although historically affiliated with and funded by the State, are operationally independent of State institutions.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20210211-lebanon-reports-of-domestic-violence-double-in-12-months/>

the risk of marital rape and other abuses to women, and above all, does not solve the problem of access to justice for female victims of violence.

### **Barriers to access to justice in religion-based courts:**

A 2015 research report entitled “Women’s Rights under Lebanese Personal Status Laws”<sup>6</sup> and published by Human Rights Watch found that discrimination against women results not only from laws, but also courts’ procedures. All the women interviewed by Human Rights Watch said numerous procedural obstacles, including high fees, protracted lawsuits, and the lack of legal and material assistance during legal proceedings kept them from accessing religion-based courts and obtaining what little limited rights they had.

#### **(ii) *The project’s objective and intervention rationale***

KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation is a feminist secular non-governmental civil society organisation<sup>7</sup>. It is known among the Lebanese civil society for its feminist approach, which not only demands more rights for women, but also analyses and questions the relationships shaping society, which produce inequalities, discrimination, and violence. KAFA’s intervention strategy is founded on the observation that political confessionalism and religion-based personal statuses lead to inequality and violence against women. This observation was followed by a firm political stand against religion-based courts and for a civil State and a civil personal status law.

In 2018, KAFA catalysed reflection on a UPSL as a political and legal alternative. An expert legal advisor provided an initial draft<sup>8</sup> which was finalised through a participatory consultation with women commissions within political parties, lawyers, and other stakeholders.

### **The intended project outcomes were:**

- ✓ Outcome 1: men and women in Lebanon are more aware of the discriminatory impact of religion-based status laws and courts on women and their families.
- ✓ Outcome 2: the capacity of civil society and media to advocate and raise awareness about civil personal status laws has increased.
- ✓ Outcome 3: pressure on legislators to support the draft UPSL has increased.

The objective of the project was to strengthen advocacy efforts towards a gender-sensitive civil UPSL in Lebanon.

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<sup>6</sup><https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/01/19/unequal-and-unprotected/womens-rights-under-lebanese-personal-status-laws>.

<sup>7</sup><https://www.end-violence.org/members/kafa-enough-violence-exploitation>

<sup>8</sup>[https://kafa.org.lb/sites/default/files/2021-09/qanoun-mwahhad-en-web\\_0.pdf](https://kafa.org.lb/sites/default/files/2021-09/qanoun-mwahhad-en-web_0.pdf)

### *(iii) Project strategy and approach*

The project came to be during a period of very tense social and political crises. From October 2019 until April 2020, hundreds of thousands of protesters mobilised to accuse the political class and the confessional system of destroying the country. The overall climate was characterised by instability, confrontations, and tensions, as well as by a great will for change<sup>9</sup>.

In this context, the project's strategy aimed to present a political alternative and to strengthen the civil society's capacity to advocate against the confessional system, and for a UPSL that would enshrine gender equality.

Thereupon, the project strategy was built around four specific and complementary areas of interest:

- ✓ Educate and inform the public opinion about the repercussions of the confessional personal status laws and the importance of an alternative unified personal status law.
- ✓ Build the capacity of civil society for advocacy in favour of a unified personal status law.
- ✓ Create a coalition (media, public figures, politicians, CSOs), to advocate for the unified personal status law.
- ✓ Put more pressure on politicians to adopt the UPSL.

### *(iv) Logical Framework*

The following table presents the project's intervention rationale, broken down into three outcomes.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.psa.ac.uk/psa/news/what-lebanon%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%98thawra%E2%80%99-revolution-about>

Project activities

Intended outputs

Medium-term impacts/outcomes

Project objective

Outputs for Outcome 1: Men and women in Lebanon are more aware of the discriminatory impact of religion-based status laws and courts on women and their families.			Project objective
1.1.1 Preparatory phase	<b>1.1 Five hundred (500) citizens engaged through public debates</b>	<b>Outcome 1:</b> Men and women in Lebanon are more aware of the discriminatory impact of religion-based status laws and courts on women and their families.	
1.1.2 Hold debates, conducting a show-of-hand tally of support before and after the activity			
1.1.3 Disseminate photos and/or videos of debates online, focusing on sharing interesting discussion points and successful tallies			
1.2.1 Brainstorm list of topics for reports and identify stories from women with whom KAFA work and share with external consultant	<b>1.2 Forty (40) digital stories and investigative reports produced for KAFA online platform</b>		
1.2.2 Film and write reports and stories (consultants and trained journalists). Monitor (KAFA).			
1.2.3 Disseminate gradually on KAFA online platforms			
1.2.4 Evaluate social media reach and produce social media report			
1.3.1 Brainstorm content of short film 'With or Against Me' with contracted company and organise timeline.	<b>1.3 <sup>10</sup>(Amended) Four (4) animated videos on the content of the UPSL) are produced</b>		
1.3.2 Write script (contract). Approve prior to filming (KAFA).			
1.3.3 Film and edit (contract). Approve final product (KAFA)			
1.3.4 Disseminate final awareness tool across KAFA platforms, using Facebook live feature, paid advertising on social media, and a variety of media platforms			
1.3.5 Produce media report with results of media reach			
1.4.1 Inform external consultants of details of project, main points, and expectations. Sign contract	<b>1.4 Toolkit on the content of the drafted civil personal status law is produced</b>		
1.4.2 Write the toolkit (consultants). Monitor punctual completion, give feedback, and			

<sup>10</sup> Output 1.3: One awareness tool produced, filmed, and disseminated (amended activity in M2; producing 4 animated videos on the content of the UPSL)

approve final draft (KAFA)			a gender-sensitive civil personal status law in Lebanon
1.4.3 Print the toolkit and promotional materials (abridged manuals, flyers, Q&As)			
1.4.4 Disseminate the toolkit by sending to CSOs, publishing online, and sharing through KAFA's online platforms			
1.4.5 Evaluate social media reach and produce social media report			
1.5.1 Outline media campaign, including specific budgets for different components.	<b>1.5 Fifty thousand (50,000) people informed through media campaign</b>		
1.5.2 Contract company to create content.			
1.5.3 Book Billboards, tv spots, etc.			
1.5.4 Conduct 16-day media campaign (including a social media campaign)			
1.5.5 Write media report			
<b>Outputs for Outcome 2:</b> Capacity of civil society and Media to advocate and raise awareness about civil personal status laws has increased.			
2.1.1 Identify CSO activists to be invited to participate based on geographic location, religious and political affiliations, gender, and function and scope of CSO and members in the coalition	<b>2.1 Sixty (60) civil society activists trained on personal status laws</b>	<b>Outcome 2:</b> Capacity of civil society and Media to advocate and raise awareness about civil personal status laws has increased	
2.1.2 Design training methodology, content, and materials.			
2.1.2 Conduct 4 trainings, with 15 CSO activists in each			
2.1.3 Gather evaluation material and feedback from participants.			
2.1.4 Send promotional materials, awareness tools, and contact details of the project coordinator to all CSOs			
2.1.5 Provide logistical support if required by CSOs to local advocacy campaigns; monitor activities that result from the training.			
2.2.1 Contact organizations regarding membership of the coalition, and collect list of members	<b>2.2 <sup>11</sup>(Amended) Networking and preparing the ground to form the coalition after the elections in 2022 – meanwhile we are contacting political movements and parties not in power</b>		
2.2.2 Organize first meeting, and draft coordination plan			
2.2.3 Hold first meeting of the coalition, and agree on the coordination plan			
2.2.4 Hold seven more meetings of the coalition (M2)			

<sup>11</sup> Output 2.2: A coalition for the adoption of a civil personal status code is formed (amended: networking and preparing the ground to form the coalition after the elections in 2022)

2.3.1 Identify journalists to be invited to participate based on geographic location, religious and political affiliations, and gender	<b>2.3 Thirty (30) journalists/media contributors trained on content and impact of current personal status laws and content of draft civil code</b>		
2.3.2 Design training methodology, content and materials. Sign contract with consultant			
2.3.3 Conduct a 2-day training with 30 journalists			
2.3.4 Gather evaluation material and feedback from participants.			
<b>Outputs for Outcome 3:</b> Pressure on legislators to introduce or support the draft civil personal status law has increased.			
3.1.1 Write letters	<b>3.1 <sup>12</sup> (Amended)</b> <i>Political movements and parties not represented in the government or the parliament provided with informational materials</i>	<b>Outcome 3:</b> Pressure on legislators to introduce or support the draft civil personal status law has increased.	
3.1.2 Acquire addresses and emails of all parliamentarians			
3.1.3 Prepare and send packages with letter and informational materials / email to all parliamentarians			
3.2.1 Strategic planning and creation of a list of political parties to target	<b>3.2 <sup>13</sup>(Amended)</b> <i>Political movements and parties not represented in the government or the parliament directly approached to engage their support to the draft law</i>		
3.2.2 Draft letters to be sent			
3.2.3 Contact political parties using all possible means, including invitations to public debates, sending emails, using networks, and phoning			
3.2.4 Arrange meetings with parliamentarians			

<sup>12</sup> Output 3.1: All parliamentarians and political parties provided with informational materials (amended as target: political movements and parties not represented in the government or the parliament)

<sup>13</sup> Output 3.2: Seven (7) political parties directly approached to engage their support to the draft law (amended as target: political movements and parties not represented in the government or the parliament as a preparation phase for the elections that will be conducted in 2022 – working on political programs for candidates)

### III. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

This ex-post evaluation for a project funded by the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) aimed to undertake in-depth analysis of projects funded by UNDEF to acquire a better knowledge of projects' success elements, which will in turn help UNDEF to develop its future strategies. Evaluations also help stakeholders to determine whether their projects were implemented in accordance with the project documents and whether the expected results were achieved.

The international expert leading the evaluation prepared a preliminary planning note (Launch Note) in August 2022 based on a review of project documentation (see Annex 2). In the interim, the grantee developed a schedule of interviews that would take place in Lebanon from 28 August to 06 September 2022.

The evaluator led an outcome mapping workshop with the grantee staff, and interviewed representatives of media, political groups, and other organisations, as well as stakeholders working in fields related to the project (for a full list of interviewees, please refer to Annex 3.).

Additionally, the evaluator undertook extensive research and review to gain a comprehensive understanding of (i) the peculiar personal status legislative system in Lebanon, (ii) the complex geopolitical situation -especially after the Beirut port explosion and the worsening of the economic and political crises-, and (iii) of the challenges to legal reform towards a gender-sensitive personal status law in Lebanon.

These issues were discussed in more detail in the Development Context section above. Information was collected, analysed, and presented in this report according to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of coherence, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. The evaluation questions are outlined in detail in Annex 1.

### IV. EVALUATION FINDINGS

#### *(i) Relevance*

Opinions of the interviewed stakeholders confirmed the high relevance of the project, namely given the very weak democratic governance that has been shaken by increased social protest. The project supported advocacy for the secular civil code at the very opportune time of HIRAK.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/11/lebanon-protests-explained/>

The project not only responded to women's need to fully enjoy their citizenship and to have their rights protected through a UPSL, it also responded to the aspirations of social movements to abolish the confessional regime and establish a secular State that equally guarantees the rights of all Lebanese, men and women alike.

KAFA was a pioneer in linking women's situation to the geopolitical situation, and in not limiting their activities to protest and denunciation only<sup>16</sup>. In fact, they played a key role within the HIRAK to identify allies, help build coalitions and influential groups, and build capacity for advocacy. All these efforts steered the public debate around a gender-sensitive alternative to the UPSL.

In 2011, Lebanese protesters demanded "the fall of the confessional system" before experiencing division because of the Syrian cause.

In July 2015, waste piled up in the country and protests took place everywhere. These were centred around environmental issues before quickly changing to demand the abolition of confessionalism.

In 2019-2020, the HIRAK challenged the confessional system and the legitimacy of the political class. The abolition of the confessional system and the establishment of a secular personal status law were demanded by several political groups "for change"<sup>15</sup>.

The project intervention rationale was in line with KAFA's well-thought and highly contextual internal strategy, which strengthened its relevance and effectiveness. However, when assessed as an independent intervention the project in itself lacked a clear theory of change that can be evaluated.

All of the interviewed stakeholders attested to the relevance of KAFA's context analysis, its approaches, and its rational intervention. Nonetheless, neither the logframe nor the results' table described the outcomes' cycle and the change assumptions as planned by the organisation.

Relevance was also limited due to the lack of the project's tactical advocacy strategy dedicated to the UNDEF project, which could have aimed at new political groups, media actors and CSO partners.

The risk analysis as per the project documents did not reflect the complexity of the Lebanese geopolitical context and the reasonable extent to which the project could intervene. The overambitious and not-so-clearly-interrelated project outcomes were vaguely phrased and difficult to assess.

The intervention was designed with technical, organisational, and financial feasibility in mind. Elements that are deemed relevant include the project outcomes, the targeted beneficiaries, the stakeholders' selection, the consultative and unifying approach, as well as the adaptation of project activities to the sanitary situation and political changes.

Due to the challenging context, the work plan was amended four times. Whilst the delay in the formal establishment of CSO coalitions after the election (Output 2.2) and targeting political groups not represented in parliament (Output 3.1 and Output 3.2) were relevant changes given the evolving context and the political situation, they were guided by internal political and context analysis that were not backed by any tactical advocacy strategy. As such, this can be considered to be a weakness on the

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<sup>15</sup> <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-03145303/document>

<sup>16</sup> <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2019/12/Gendering%20Lebanons%202019%20Protests.pdf>

programmatic side.

## **(ii) Coherence**

### **External Coherence**

This intervention was wholly coherent with Lebanon's development objectives and the covenants it signed. Lebanon has ratified many international human rights covenants that protect and promote women's equality, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). It has also undertaken to implement other internationally recognised norms and standards on gender equality, including the Beijing Platform of Action and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Many of these rights are enshrined in the Lebanese constitution. However, Lebanon's host of religion-based personal status laws and court decisions which fail to guarantee equality in marriage and divorce fall foul of these obligations by permitting discrimination against women and violating their rights. As such, this intervention complemented the work of other United Nations agencies, in particular UN Women and UNICEF, to protect women who are victims of violence and to strengthen women's empowerment and their access to justice.

Synergies were achieved with other CSO projects, and coordination was undertaken with other feminist organisations and platforms. Yet, despite the mobilisation efforts and the coalitions created before and during the project, all the interviewees, including religious leaders, linked the civil personal status project to KAFA. When such shared causes are labelled, the challenges that arise are that their appropriation by a large coalition gets limited, and associations begin to compete for legitimacy, visibility, and funds.

### **Internal coherence**

This intervention was in full synergy with the previous interventions of KAFA and contributed to a well-illustrated tactical and political intervention strategy despite the fact that it did not find its source in an independent project-focused theory of change.

It was also entirely coherent with UNDEF's objectives aimed at strengthening civil society and promoting values of democracy and citizen participation in the world. The intervention was planned and implemented in accordance with international human rights and women's rights norms and criteria.

## **(iii) Effectiveness**

The project's effectiveness, albeit reasonable, was limited by the complexity of the issues it addressed, the quality of its design, the context uncertainty, and the numerous challenges that arose throughout its lifespan.

In assessing the project's effectiveness, what should be analysed is the progress towards achieving outcomes set out in the results chain/causal pathway. However, the project lacked a results chain that can be evaluated, and the target indicators were too vague to reflect any progress towards attaining outcomes. Nonetheless, in examining each outcome separately, several factors of effectiveness were

noted. Despite the lack of intentional phrasing, the complementarity of the three outcomes fostered the achievement of the objective that the project sought.

### **Outcome 1: Men and women in Lebanon are more aware of the discriminatory impact of religion-based status laws and courts on women and their families.**

According to those interviewed, one of KAFA's strengths was intelligent communication with the general public. KAFA's communication campaign was deemed to be very effective, with well-developed, well-targeted, and well-disseminated messages. This was done through a politically informed discourse which alternated between messages in the local dialect and clear and impactful slogans, in addition to using true stories to raise awareness and providing legal explanations to spread information.

All the above was done in line with a human rights-based approach and feminist discourse.

KAFA has also managed to secure agreements with mass media (MTV)<sup>17</sup> and alternative media (DARAJ). Once more, they alternated between traditional media (TV, radio) and social media networks and online platforms.

The analysis of sample content from the campaign showed that KAFA succeeded in revealing relevant information about discriminatory laws against women in Lebanon, in better communicating about their negative impacts on women's lives, and in deconstructing cultural norms that normalise the violence and injustice of religion-based laws.

According to the media coverage report provided by the organisation, its communication campaign reached a very large audience of 12 million users.

The campaign also catalysed the engagement of several thousand people on social networks.

To monitor the change in attitude, a WebApp was developed and disseminated online. 1,222 users completed it, and as result of the campaign 1,026 of the WebApp's users were in favour of the UPSL, while 196 were against it.

The two social media campaigns conducted by the project reached more than 12 million people online.

The awareness tools produced and published reached 50,034 people.

Twenty-three awareness sessions targeted 311 men and women.

1,440 new net followers on Facebook  
2,488 new followers on Instagram  
107 new subscribers on YouTube  
More than 700,000 post engagements on Kafa's social media platforms.

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<sup>17</sup> Partnerships with MTV:

- A TV campaign for one month broadcasting the four animated videos 60 times.
- Four live interviews on MTV.
- A campaign on their social media platforms.
- Articles on MTV website.



**Figure 2 Visual of the media campaign**

**Outcome 2: The capacity of civil society and media to advocate and raise awareness about civil personal status laws has increased.**

This result was partially achieved. According to those interviewed, the association's participatory and consultative approach, as well as the clarity and consistency of its political line, gave it legitimacy and trust among the various stakeholders who had become increasingly receptive to the issue of the civil code.

KAFA was aware of the complexity of the issue of confessional personal status laws and its overlap with other law reforms, such as the law of elections, good governance, the rights of minorities, and illegal immigrants etc. As a result, they identified key influential CSOs, journalists, and media workers who can promote and advocate for a unique gender-sensitive personal status law.

Interviewed media officers stated that they gained a better understanding of the complexity of religion-based personal status laws and their negative consequences on women's lives, safety, and participation in social and political life. A team of journalists was trained to cover women's stories in religion-based courts with a gender-sensitive human rights-based approach. Following that training, a series of articles was written and it exposed abuses against women in religion-based courts and explained the need for reforming the laws to protect the rights of women and children.

The training also made it possible to build common ground regarding the issue of personal status laws and the advocacy areas specific to each stakeholder.

KAFA's efforts to finalise the coalition have been ongoing and achieving this outcome would depend on the organisation's ability to produce a joint and sustainable advocacy strategy with the various key players.

**Outcome 3: Pressure on legislators to introduce or support the draft civil personal status law has increased.**

This outcome was put on hold because of the political situation. The explosions in the port of Beirut caused the fall of the government and political unrest, so advocacy with members of the parliament was no longer effective in such a context. Therefore, KAFA changed its target and turned to new

political groups to promulgate the project of a civil UPSL and to gain new political allies (see Amendment in the logical framework, section II (iv) above).

The selection of political movements was very relevant and effective. Even though the bill was not presented to the parliament due to the political turmoil, the political coalition in favour of this law has been expanding and taking shape. The project succeeded in approaching 21 political movements and was adopted by five political groups that even included it in their election manifestos.

#### *(iv) Efficiency*

The project's efficiency was reasonable. Due to the unstable situation in Lebanon on many different levels (political, economic, health, security, etc.), delays and changes to the work plan and timeline occurred frequently. Nonetheless, the project's final narrative report confirmed that all activities, originally planned or updated, have been effectively undertaken despite the changes in the context.

In general, financial resources were appropriately allocated to the activities and materials produced. Some factors strengthened the efficiency of the project; they include KAFA's experience in managing awareness-raising campaigns, its network (media stakeholders and CSOs), and the Convenience of low-cost remote online sessions and meetings as an adaptation to the pandemic. It remains to be said that fluctuations in the United States Dollar exchange rates and prices make it difficult to judge the economic efficiency of the budget. KAFA's project management was adaptive in that it reacted to the context-related challenges in an agile and efficient manner.

#### *(v) Impact*

Stakeholders' testimonies and the evaluator's outcome mapping workshop revealed several elements of change on many levels, as explained below.

##### **Evoking the interest of media and mainstreaming the debate on the UPSL**

The social movement that shook Lebanon at the end of 2019 testified to the exhaustion of not only its political and economic system, but also to the Lebanese people's yearning for change. KAFA's awareness and advocacy campaign discourse succeeded in evoking the interest of media and seizing the change momentum.

Thanks to agreements with media outlets and the multichannel communication strategy, the debate about the UPSL was once again at the forefront of public debate in Lebanon. Reforming the UPSL by abolishing the confessional political system was no longer a demand of women, but a priority for the rule of a civil law that would unite all the Lebanese people. Many TV shows reported on the campaign, including news, talk shows, women's shows, and anti-corruption shows, etc.

The lockdown and the restrictions on movements created an opportune moment for a viral communication campaign. Based on KAFA's media report, internet users' interactions that exceeded 700,000 post engagements testified to the effect it had on the public opinion.

##### **Challenging power dynamics, shifting from a position of claiming to a position of providing proposals.**

According to interviewees, women's rights organisations in Lebanon often demand rights from a legal perspective. This approach placed them in a situation where they're constantly objecting. However, KAFA's feminist perspective was a game-changer and challenged the power of religious leaders. Following the awareness-raising campaign, many religious leaders spoke up to defend the legitimacy of the confessional system.

During the 2022 election campaign, the position towards the UPSL became a key issue of debate and a selection criterion between candidates.

Both the HIRAK's political and the Lebanese elections observers suggest that the confessional political regime is not soon to be abolished. However, civil society pressure and advocacy through this and other projects is building the capacity of CSOs to ensure more rights over the short and medium term.

### **Structuring and bringing together multi-stakeholder mobilisation in favour of the UPSL**

KAFA is deeply rooted in the Lebanese civil society and is greatly committed to political and social change in Lebanon, which enabled it to build a large stakeholder network.

According to the stakeholders interviewed, the association's participatory and consultative approach, as well as the clarity and coherence of its political stance, gave it legitimacy and trust. This has enabled it to bring together CSOs, media, and political groups and unify their advocacy efforts for a UPSL in Lebanon.

KAFA succeeded in networking with many CSOs, 21 political groups, five of which adopted the project for a UPSL. This was simultaneously accomplished in partnership with an online media platform, Daraj, Annahar newspaper, and the MTV Lebanon channel.

"Kafa is more than a women rights organisation, it is considered to be a political key player in the change movement. Kafa has a clear political vision and fights for the cause of a fair society. It has the necessary credibility among CSOs and political groups."

**Tarek Zeidan, President of Helm Association**

### **Changes at the organisational level:**

The change took place at the level of KAFA itself, whose political role became clearer. Its president, Zoya Rouhana, decided to run for the legislative elections and to defend the draft UPSL through direct political participation.<sup>18</sup>

KAFA's proposal sparked discussions within political groups, not only about the UPSL, but also about women's rights. Feminist organisations became more than activists demanding rights, but rather key players who actively participate in political change.

The debate also extended to the partner media outlets, namely Daraj, which, in order to respect the human rights approach, adapted its editorial line with regard to women issues and the matter of religion-based courts.

"We facilitated a debate within our team about the best way to consider the stories of women who were victims of the discriminatory laws of the religion-based courts. What angle? What diction? How to avoid clichés, judgement, jumping to conclusions, etc.? Our team of young journalists reflected upon and debated many elements in light of the training facilitated by Kafa."

**Diana Mkalled, Editor-in-Chief of**

### **Changes at the individual level**

All interviewees, who were stakeholders knowledgeable about the Lebanese civil society and politics, report that they acquired more knowledge about the discriminatory laws implemented by religion-

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/media-resources/news/interviews/5815-lebanon-this-election-has-brought-to-the-forefront-new-voices-speaking-about-rights>

based courts. Through training, debates, and meetings with people working on human rights, they gained a better understanding of the complex issues of the religion-based personal status and its multidimensional implications, not only on the rights and lives of women, but also on elections, governance, and political sectarianism.

Beneficiaries of trainings, media workers, and CSOs stated that they acquired more skills to advocate for a non-religion-based gender-sensitive personal status law, and that they try to share their skills with their colleagues and embed them into their strategies.

#### *(vi) Sustainability*

In such a complex and unpredictable context like that of Lebanon it is difficult to gauge sustainability. However, the assessment of the interviewed stakeholders and the evaluator's analysis were overall very positive. Several elements of sustainability were observed throughout the project, these include: (i) KAFA -being an established key civil society player- acquiring a favourable position for advocacy with the emerging political movements, especially through outreach activities and advocacy for the UPSL carried out before the election; and (ii) "Parties of Change" managing to obtain 19 seats in the parliament, including in the areas of traditional parties. Observers of the Lebanese elections explained that these new young deputies will be able to present to the parliament new questions on the reform towards a secular state and UPSL.

The media advocacy capabilities in favour of the UPSL have greatly improved, and the messages disseminated in support of the UPSL were various and illustrate the inequalities against women (economic, social) as a result of the confessional laws. The language used was inclusive and gender sensitive.

The changes observed at the level of organisations and individuals who benefitted from the training also seemed to be able to continue and mature in the long term. Stakeholders considered that they became better-skilled interlocutors about confessional Laws and the UPSL.

The consistency of KAFA's strategic and political stance and the continuity of its work on coordination with political groups and CSOs was also considered to be an important element of sustainability. This is in addition to its expertise and resources.

All resources produced within the framework of the project, the communication campaign materials, as well as the investigation and media articles were made publicly available on KAFA's online platform.

#### *(vii) UNDEF added value*

UNDEF's peculiarity lies in its support for civil society as a key player in building democracy and enjoying citizenship, and this project was perfectly in line with this rationale.

The project enabled NGOs and political groups to better organise themselves, exchange, and collaborate on the draft UPSL, despite how diverse the themes and interests were. It also made it possible to strengthen the capacity of several civil society actors to advocate for the personal status law.

UNDEF's credibility and impartiality strengthened the project's credibility against conspiracy theories and attempts to take the cause to an international level purely to serve the purpose of geopolitical issues. Also, the communications campaign that went viral helped UNDEF gain more visibility.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

1. The project was highly relevant. It addressed the complex and delicate issue of needing a UPSL in Lebanon to guarantee the citizenship and rights of Lebanese women.
2. KAFA is very familiar with the political context, the legal aspects of the confessional personal status law, and its consequences on women's lives. It is undeniable that the team's activism, its political stance, and the credibility that KAFA has within the civil society were all assets to the success of the project.
3. The multi-stakeholder approach was very relevant and considered the multidimensional nature of the problem. The organisation's feminist approach was also considered to be relevant in the highly polarised context of Lebanon, because it calls into question systemic inequalities instead of focusing on problem symptoms.
4. We often observe discrepancies between formats, rationales, and political and programming temporalities. This project followed a very relevant internal strategic stance with suitable adaptability and context-appropriate reactions to political fluctuations. Nonetheless, the design of the project was not formulated in such a way that clearly translates the organisation's rationale and theory of change.
5. The awareness campaign was especially effective in terms of the quality of the content and the extent of its dissemination. The feminist lens and the human rights approach are highly appreciated when managing large scale awareness campaigns to disseminate human rights and women rights principles. Training CSOs and media actors was also effective given their improved capacities to advocate for the UPSL.
6. The project's main added value was evoking the interest of the media (television, radio, social networks) in the personal status law and sparking a public debate around it.
7. The project has also created a dynamic of synergy and collaboration between NGOs, media outlets, and new political groups. It succeeded in mainstreaming the cause of the UPSL and making it a key issue for any political debate.
8. The project had elements of sustainability, as it triggered changes at the level of organisations and individuals who benefitted from the training and acquired a favourable position for advocacy with the emerging political movements. It also was a part of a larger strategy adopted by KAFA that is still ongoing and would likely obtain other funding opportunities.
9. By funding the project, UNDEF has shown great audacity, flexibility, and trust in its partners.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

### **For KAFA:**

Ensuring that projects are designed to achieve an objective of programmatic focus, by working towards supporting outcomes that can be evaluated through SMART indicators. In so doing, it would become possible to illustrate that changes can be attained even in a fluctuating context like that of Lebanon.

It is recommended to create space for learning during the project's lifetime to capture all challenges and the subsequent adaptation strategies. This would enable UNDEF and other stakeholders to learn from the experience.

One of the great challenges of feminist and social movements in Lebanon and other countries in the region is the appropriation of causes by the most active and visible organisations on the expense of sustainable collaboration. It is therefore recommended to better reflect partnership strategies between CSOs, especially feminist CSOs, and to draft a shared advocacy strategy to carry out monitoring and evaluation.

It is important to develop a plan for the use and republication of the resources produced within the framework of the project to ensure sustainability and follow-up.

The next phase should focus on developing a strong and large coalition with a targeted advocacy plan that may include CSOs, media, and influential leaders.

Given the particular specificities of the context, it is suggested to include learning activities such as after-action analysis or the learning workshop in the project.

The project was highly relevant and therefore should be supported through an additional phase to focus on building alliances and on developing a research policy and an advocacy action plan.

## VII. LESSONS LEARNED

There are important elements that influence the effectiveness of the implementation of an advocacy project other than the technical and financial capacity of the funded organisation. They include:

- The clarity of the organisation's internal strategy and the consistency of its positioning regarding the project's objective.
- The credibility of the organisation and its members among CSOs and drivers of change relevant to the intervention.
- The social capital of the organization, which enables it to mobilize key stakeholders and allies in the field.
- The capacity of the organisation to analyse the political context, manage risks, and adapt activities to the situation.
- The organisation's capability to follow up on its advocacy activities and capture the path towards change.

External coherence and synergy between the organisation's different projects/interventions require a minimum of formal and systematic coordination such as the collaboration that took place with a feminist platform in the case of this project.

Advocacy projects in highly complex contexts require rigorous monitoring to (i) strengthen coalitions and ties despite changes to the positions of stakeholders and changing power dynamics; and to (ii) capture and adapt to the different levels of changes that could occur.

## Annex 1: Evaluation questions

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
Relevance	To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to the context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was the objective of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context?</li> <li>Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why?</li> <li>Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse?</li> </ul>
Coherence	The extent of the compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent did this intervention fit the context and the development priorities?</li> <li>To what extent is this intervention coherent with other interventions which have similar objectives?</li> <li>To what extent is the intervention coherent internally?</li> <li>To what extent is the intervention coherent with wider UNDEF objectives?</li> <li>To what extent is the intervention coherent with international obligations?</li> </ul>
Effectiveness	To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve the objective and goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent has the project's objective been reached?</li> <li>To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not?</li> <li>Were the project activities adequate to make progress towards the project objective?</li> <li>What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this?</li> </ul>
Efficiency	To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was there a reasonable relationship between project inputs and project outputs?</li> <li>Did institutional arrangements promote cost-effectiveness and accountability?</li> <li>Was the budget designed, and then implemented, in a way that enabled the project to meet its objective?</li> </ul>

Impact	To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to democratization, or to direct promotion of democracy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have the targeted beneficiaries experienced tangible impacts?</li> <li>▪ To what extent did the project contribute to strength capacity of civil society to advocate for The unified personal status law</li> <li>▪ Was the pivot to work with political movements and parties not represented in the government or the parliament meaningful, effective and impactful in the realizations of objectives in this project?</li> <li>▪ To what extend did the project contribute to better-equipped political movement and OSCs with good arguments in favor of unified personal status law</li> <li>▪ To what extent has the project enhanced coordination, coalition and joint-advocacy activities between different OSCs and political movement</li> </ul>
Sustainability	To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent has the project established processes and systems that are likely to support continued impact?</li> <li>▪ Are the involved parties willing and able to continue the project activities on their own (where applicable)?</li> </ul>
UNDEF value added	To what extent was UNDEF able to take advantage of its unique position and comparative advantage to achieve results that could not have been achieved had support come from other donors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What was UNDEF able to accomplish, through the project, that could not as well have been achieved by alternative projects, other donors, or other stakeholders (Government, NGOs, etc).</li> <li>▪ Did project design and implementing modalities exploit UNDEF's comparative advantage in the form of an explicit mandate to focus on democratization issues?</li> </ul>

## Annex 2: Documents reviewed

### Project documentation:

- Mid-term progress and final narrative and financial reports
- Milestone verification reports
- UNDEF Programme Officer mission notes
- Newsletters
- Annexes: all documents produced through project activities
- Manual for good practices
- Awareness campaign videos
- Partnership contract
- The CEDAW Committee of Lebanon's Periodic Report
- The Lebanon Universal Periodic Review

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"Women's Rights under Lebanese Personal Status Laws", 2015, Human Rights Watch, Lebanon.

F.Anderson, 2002, Women in Democracy: evolutions over a decade, Oxford University, Melbourne.

Ahmad Beydoun, 2009, Liban : Communautarisme et démocratie, les cahiers de l'orient, Centre d'études et de recherches sur le Proche-Orient.

### Annex 3: Schedule of interviews

<b>Oragnisation</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>KAFA team</b>		29-08-2022
<b>MADA</b>	Kareem Seif Eddine	05-08-2022
<b>Beirut Toukawem</b>	Hiba Tohme	05-08-2022
<b>Chimalouna</b>	George Tawk	02-09-2022
<b>Lihaqqi - Activist, feminist group</b>	Marie Rose Rahme	06-09-2022
<b>Journalist</b>	Mariam Seif Eddine	01-09-2022
<b>Journalist - Daraj</b>	Diana Moukalled	29-08-2022
<b>National Stakeholder</b>	Lina Abou Habib	01-09-2022
<b>Helem</b>	Tarek Zeidan	01-08-2022
<b>National Stakeholder</b>	Joumana Haddad	30-08-2022
<b>LADE</b>	Ali Sleem	30-08-2022
<b>Lihaqqi, Activit, feminist</b>	Nay El Rahi	09-09-2022

#### **Annex 4: Acronyms**

NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
CSOs	Civil society organisations
UPSL	Unified Personal Status Law