



Examining Multidimensional Inequality in the Arab Region through the Capabilities Approach

Presenting a pilot study in Lebanon with a focus on SDG 10



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Abbreviations

AUB	American University of Beirut
CA	Capability Approach
EIJ	Equality, Inclusion and Justice Nexus
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GNI	Gross National Income
HRBAP	Human Rights-Based Approach to Programming
IHDI	Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISE4GEMs	Inclusive Systemic Evaluation for Gender Equality, Environments and Marginalized voices
LUPD	Lebanese Union for People with Physical Disabilities
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MODA	Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis
MPI	Global Multidimensional Poverty Index
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OPHI	Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative
PEG	Poverty Reduction, Decent Employment and Sustainable Growth Nexus
SDD	Social Development Division (ESCWA)
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDG 10	Sustainable Development Goal 10
SDR2	Social Development Report 2 (ESCWA)
SJS	Social Justice and Participation Section (ESCWA)
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (now United Nations Children's Fund)
WEF	Water, Energy and Food Security Nexus
WGSS	Washington Group Short Set
WVS	World Values Survey

Executive Summary

The study aims to take a critical look at Sustainable Development Goal 10 – reduce inequality within and among countries – and to propose a new and innovative research method to capture multidimensional inequalities that remain to be addressed in SDG 10 targets and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at large. The paper suggests that a practical application of Professor Amartya Sen’s well-known yet highly theoretical Capability Approach (CA) – which defines development as amplifying people’s opportunities to lead a life they value – is effectively capable of enhancing the implementation of SDG 10, suited to identify overlapping and multidimensional inequalities that may not be captured otherwise. As a result of the original fieldwork, the study examines the underlying inequalities experienced by three groups in Lebanon – persons with disabilities, educated youth and vulnerable women – and, through the use of radial diagrams, provides a stark visual representation of the gaps that remain to be narrowed between where people are with their lives and where they want to be. The innovative aspect of this research lies in the design of a survey that integrates Professor Martha Nussbaum’s “Central Human Capabilities” list with SDG 10 targets to identify such capability gaps in equality and to present a pilot study on how to integrate the CA further, and better in the 2030 Agenda.

In Section I the paper first provides an introduction, followed in Section II by a literature overview of the 2030 Agenda, SDG 10 and key concepts previously researched by ESCWA, including social justice, equality of opportunity, equality of outcome and equality of autonomy.

In Section III the paper first offers an overview of the CA and then maintains that the practical application of the CA stems naturally from previous ESCWA efforts. Implementation of the CA is thus presented as the next, logical step to arrive at more concrete conclusions of where people in the Arab region want to go with their lives.

In the “Fieldwork” part in Section IV, a methodology is clearly outlined, followed by the fieldwork results. Here, capability failure is revealed in all three communities surveyed in Lebanon, with the vulnerable women group displaying acute capability failure that requires an urgent response.

The study thus showcases that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – and SDG 10 in particular – remains to address multidimensional inequalities in an integrative, holistic, and reflective way of people’s true understandings of well-being. Such conclusions are further elaborated in section V.

The paper ends in Section VI with a set of policy recommendations specific to the Lebanese government to address the concerns of these groups, as well as general recommendations for ESCWA member states on how to best capture their inhabitants’ capabilities and push the 2030 Agenda forward in their own countries.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

One weakness of the 2030 Agenda is that the number-centred targets of its 17 Goals miss important dimensions that aggravate inequality between people and countries, as well as other metrics of importance for well-being. Multidimensional inequality – perpetuated by a combination of differences in gender, ability versus disability, national origin, citizenship or lack thereof, or by living in rural or urban settings – for instance, is particularly difficult to capture, in spite of apparent efforts in this direction. The objective of this technical paper is to take a critical look at the 2030 Agenda, mainly SDG 10 – reduce inequality within and among countries – and present a new and innovative way to capture such multidimensional inequalities. Such a methodology is based on Nobel laureate Professor Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach (CA) – which defines development as the expansion of people’s freedoms¹ – and on the practical application of Professor Martha Nussbaum’s “Central Human Capabilities” list, supported by radial diagrams.

Following an extensive literature review on some major concepts in social justice, equality, freedom and development, fieldwork was conducted with three social groups in Lebanon to identify multidimensional inequalities. The aim was first to identify capability gaps in general well-being, followed by identifying capability gaps with regards to equality. The results showcase capability failure on most metrics of well-being and equality and the radial diagrams in particular provide a visual understanding of the major gaps that must be narrowed by governments and policymakers seeking to reduce inequality. This paper thus presents a pilot study to showcase how the CA can become more operational in development practices, and how it may be further integrated into the 2030 Agenda framework to achieve success in the Arab region.

B. METHODOLOGY

The information and analysis presented in this paper are first based on an extensive literature review. The study makes ample use of UN documentation, mainly previously published ESCWA reports, an array of secondary publications and online resources published by leading scholars, academics, non-governmental organizations, think tanks and policy centres from around the world. Data from surveys, censuses and case studies specific to the MENA region are also featured throughout the paper. Given the breadth of literature on the CA, this study relies heavily on the works of Professors Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. Several of the sources referenced are also available in book form at ESCWA library.

This report also relies on original fieldwork conducted between 14 and 20 June 2019 in Beirut, Lebanon. Each fieldwork session – carried out once per a selected, demographic group – encompassed a survey, followed by a focus group discussion (FGD). The sessions of persons with disabilities and vulnerable women were held in Arabic, and those of educated youth were conducted in English. Such research allowed the obtainment of qualitative and quantitative raw material, data that forms the crux of this study and the primary basis by which the subsequent policy recommendations have been conceived. All survey and FGD questions were designed by cross-cutting Professor Nussbaum’s list of “Central Human Capabilities” with several of the SDG 10 targets, particularly those that talk about the inclusion of people in their own communities, societies and wider regions. Further details of this selection are outlined in the “Fieldwork” section of this paper.

¹ See Sen, Amartya (1999) *Development as Freedom*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pg. 3.

II. OVERVIEW OF KEY THEMES

A. THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: THE RIGHT WAY FORWARD

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015 to ensure the social, economic and environmental well-being of all people in the world.² The SDGs have taken on a broader and more global challenge than the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)³ ever did by focusing on 17 different goals that commit to ‘leaving no one behind’ with social justice at their core. Moreover, unlike the MDGs, the SDGs are designed with a long-term view, to be sustained and realized beyond 2030.⁴

While the MDGs have focused extensively on improving access to health, education and poverty reduction, they have failed to incorporate substantial notions on reducing social injustice and persisting inequalities, particularly within countries. They were furthermore grounded, according to its critics, within a weak human rights framework.⁵ As such, the rights-based approach in the SDGs is particularly noteworthy. Even though there has always been a general consensus that equality is a human rights principle, human rights and development have historically been pursued separately, albeit attempts to integrate them in the Human Rights-Based Approach to Programming (HRBAP).⁶

Until recently this initiative, which defines development as the means to the acquisition of human rights, and human rights as the basis for development, has had limited impact on government, state and international development policy⁷, given their perceived contradictory nature. While the pursuit of human rights has typically been associated with resistance against oppressive powers, institutions and states to uphold basic entitlements of human beings, development has been about working with governments to ensure those same entitlements.⁸

The SDGs provide the first real opportunity to narrow such a dichotomy and pursue human rights and development simultaneously and seamlessly. After all, access to clean water and sanitation, to mention but two examples, are human rights as much as they are development objectives.⁹ More importantly, with notions of equality now firmly rooted in the development framework, the 2030 Agenda has marked social justice as a priority for development and human rights. While social justice and equality issues can be mainstreamed throughout the SDGs, the focus in this paper is on SDG 10. The proposed methodology can, however, be applied to any other SDG.

² United Nations (2015) *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Resolution [A/RES/70/01](#) adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015. Available at: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E.

³ United Nations (2000) *United Nations Millennium Declaration*. Resolution [A/RES/55/2](#) adopted by the General Assembly on 18 September 2000. Available at: <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.pdf>.

⁴ Nawn, Nandan (2015) “For Sustainable SDGs: Righting Through Responsibilities”, *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, Vol. 16, No. 4, pg.1. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19452829.2015.1103713>.

⁵ Zamora, Gerardo; Swift Koller, Theadora; Thomas, Rebekah; Manandhar, Mary; Lustigova, Eva; Diop, Adama and Magar; Veronica (2018) “Tools and approaches to operationalize the commitment to equity, gender and human rights: towards *leaving no one behind* in the Sustainable Development Goals”, in *Global Health Action*, 11:sup1, pg. 80. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/16549716.2018.1463657>.

⁶ See HRBA Portal, “Human Rights Based Approach Portal – UN Practitioner’s Portal on Human Rights Based Approaches to Programming”. Available at: hrbaportal.undg.org.

⁷ Fukada-Parr, Sakiko (2015) “Human Rights and Politics in Development” in Goodhart, Michael, ed., *Human Rights Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3rd edition, pg.180.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pg.184.

⁹ See United Nations (2010) The human right to water and sanitation. Resolution [A/RES/64/292](#) adopted by the General Assembly on 28 July 2010, pgs. 1-3. Available at: https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/64/292.

B. SOCIAL JUSTICE OUTLINED

Social justice has long been the focus of political and moral philosophy, related to fairness and equitable distribution of resources and goods. While it has been difficult to establish a global and universally-accepted definition, social justice is, in essence, about equity, inclusion, non-discrimination and fairness, with a particular focus on reducing socio-economic and political inequalities among people.¹⁰ In 2014, ESCWA member states agreed on the meaning of social justice as applied in the Arab region, defined as the realization of four basic principles: equality, equity, rights and participation.¹¹ Fundamentally, the success of the SDGs in the region depends on efforts made to implement and sustain social justice.¹²

C. ENHANCING SDG IMPLEMENTATION

In spite of obvious policy progress and renewed attention towards social justice, careful examination of most of the SDGs' indicators reveal that equality remains an abstract and a very generalized concept at best, partially ignorant of the needs of certain demographic groups and communities whose own multi-dimensional circumstances must be emphasized and fleshed out further, at the risk of these groups' policy exclusion. One major reason for this has to do with both the language used in the targets and their emphasis on measuring development almost exclusively through quantifiable indicators, which can reveal incomplete understandings of true levels of inequality, including both horizontal and vertical discrepancies.¹³ Furthermore, the politics of language – in defining and selecting indicators – has implications on how the SDGs tackle multidimensional inequality.¹⁴ This inevitably creates inherent omissions to do with inequalities within the SDGs, particularly in SDG 10, which is the focus of this paper. SDG 10 targets are outlined below:

One may even argue that the SDGs originate from utilitarian and welfarist schools of thought, which see value in individual utility and in material manifestations of those utilities, such as happiness, pleasure or physical attainment of things. One of the problems with such approaches is that they tend to focus on achievements only (rather than focus on freedom as well) while ignoring the *process* needed to achieve those outcomes and simultaneously overlooking other accomplishments that are less quantifiable but equally valuable.¹⁵ Indeed measuring inequality by income – through the popular Gini coefficient, the Palma ratio or the Quintile ratio – or by school participation rates or by populations' access to affordable housing (to name but a few), offer incomplete and therefore unsatisfactory assessments of a country's progress, for they tend to ignore real allocations of time and resources within households, communities and nations. This affects matters as income distribution within families, the quality of education children and youth receive and the *kind* of access to housing people enjoy,¹⁶ respectively.

¹⁰ See ESCWA (2019) *Social Justice Matters: A View from the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia*. Available at: <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/social-justice-matters-arab-region-english.pdf>.

¹¹ ESCWA (2014) *Resolutions Adopted at the twenty-eighth session of ESCWA*. Available at: https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/ministerial_sessions/resolutions/tunis_declaration_-social_justice.pdf.

¹² To learn more see ESCWA (2019) *Social Justice Matters: A View from the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia*. Available at: <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/social-justice-matters-arab-region-english.pdf>.

¹³ ESCWA (2016) *Inequality in the SDGs: Fighting Multidimensional Inequality in the Arab Region*, Policy Brief, pg.5. Available at: https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/page_attachments/inequality-sustainable-development-goals-arab-region-en.pdf.

¹⁴ Fukuda-Parr, Sakiko (2019), "Keeping Out Extreme Inequality from the SDG Agenda – The Politics of Indicators", in *Global Policy*, Volume 10, Supplement 1, pg. 68. Available at: <http://www.globalfactcheck.org/documents/2019-01%20SDGs%20and%20inequality%20indicators.%20%20Fukuda-Parr.%201758-5899.12602.pdf>.

¹⁵ Sen, Amartya (1992) *Inequality Reexamined*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation and Oxford: Clarendon Press, pg.6.

¹⁶ See Ulbrich, Phillip; Porto de Albuquerque, João; and Coaffee, Jon (2018) "The Impact of Urban Inequalities on Monitoring Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Methodological Considerations" in *International Journal of Geo-Information*, *SPRS Int. J. Geo-Inf.*, 8(1), 6, pgs.1-18, DOI:10.3390/ijgi8010006.

SDG 10: REDUCE INEQUALITY WITHIN AND AMONG COUNTRIES

Targets:

- 10.1. By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average.
- 10.2. By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or another status.
- 10.3. Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.
- 10.4. Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality.
- 10.5. Improve the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions and strengthen the implementation of such regulations.
- 10.6. Ensure enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions in order to deliver more effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions.
- 10.7. Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.
- 10.a. Implement the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries, in particular, least developed countries, in accordance with World Trade Organization agreements.
- 10.b. Encourage official development assistance and financial flows, including foreign direct investment, to States where the need is greatest, in particular, Least Developed Countries, African Countries, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Landlocked Developing Countries, in accordance with their national plans and programs.
- 10.c. By 2030, reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent.

One of the problems with utility and coefficient indicators is that they tend to assume that everyone starts from the same playing field and that priorities, life choices and needs remain static over time. For example, SDG 1 (ending poverty) and SDG 2 (eliminating hunger) fail to address certain gender dimensions that aggravate inequality, such as time poverty – domestic and care work that goes unpaid, (with women spending three times as many hours in such unpaid work as men)¹⁷ – and women’s unequal access to resources like food, which leads to undernourishment, stunting and malnutrition that can have devastating consequences on their children.¹⁸ Similarly, once a family enters poverty, it is likely to remain poor for generations to come¹⁹, a reality that requires attention, but that is notably absent in the SDGs. While the SDGs are indeed interrelated and overlaps among them can be found constantly, their individual targets and indicators are perhaps more isolated than they should be. Such one-dimensional indicators, no matter how closely they may complement

¹⁷ United Nations (2018) *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018*, pg. 6. Available at: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/report/2018/TheSustainableDevelopmentGoalsReport2018-EN.pdf>.

¹⁸ ESCWA (2016) *Equality in the New Global Agenda: Integrating a Gender Perspective in the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 2 in the Arab Region*, Policy Brief, pg.7. Available at: <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/equality-global-agenda-arab-region-english.pdf>.

¹⁹ Khouri, Rami G. (2019) “Poverty, inequality and the structural threat to the Arab region” in *POMEPS Studies 34: Shifting Global Politics and the Middle East*, pg.29. Available at: https://pomeps.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/POMEPS_Studies_34_Web.pdf.

one another, can fall short in recognizing on-the-ground social realities that are context-based, are subject to local and national variation and are often the cause of overlapping inequalities.²⁰

Even the widely-used Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI), whose origin can be traced to the CA, limits its assessment of inequality in human development average achievements within countries by addressing only three basic dimensions: (1) a long and healthy life (measured by life expectancy at birth); 2) knowledge (determined by expected years of schooling and mean years of schooling); and 3) a decent standard of living (calculated at GNI per capita).²¹ It is, as Sen recognizes, an “intellectually limited index”²², whose assessment of inequality remains superficial (ignoring other aggravators of inequality like the effects of climate change) while overlooking the key concept of *quality* within these dimensions. This may explain why Human Development Reports in the Arab region between 2006-2010 showed progress with regards to inclusive education and healthcare – particularly with regards to improving life expectancy and reducing maternal and infant mortality²³ – yet failed to foresee the Arab Spring, motivated by a youth crisis resulting from frustration of what World Bank researchers have called “a broken social contract”; in other words, Arab states’ inability to combat high youth unemployment rates, declining standards of living and dissatisfaction with the quality of public services and corruption.²⁴ Moreover, the IHDI does not pay attention to the differences between equality of outcome, equality of opportunity (especially with regards to inequalities within different social groups) and equality of autonomy, a concept recently proposed by ESCWA in its Social Development Report (2) on “Inequality, Autonomy and Change in the Arab Region.”²⁵

While the IHDI is certainly commendable (and undoubtedly provides us with much-needed information about countries), it may be more useful to use other frameworks for the purpose of getting to the issues that specific populations and communities are experiencing. For instance, academics studying global poverty have increasingly been looking at the matter through the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), a metric pioneered by Oxford Poverty Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) at the University of Oxford that overlaps education, health and living standards to assess the degree of extreme deprivation.²⁶ In a similar vein, UNICEF adopted the Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA) to understand children’s acute poverty beyond the material wealth of their families.²⁷ Such tools are solid examples that attest to the strength of using more targeted multi-dimensional frameworks slightly to measure well-being and ensure the benefits of development for everyone.

²⁰ To learn of further criticism of the SDGs see Liverman, Diana (2018) “Geographic perspectives on development goals: Constructive engagements and critical perspectives on the MDGs and the SDGs”, in *Dialogues in Human Geography*, Vol. 8(2), pgs.178-179. DOI: 10.1177/2043820618780787.

²¹ UNDP (2018) *Human Development Indices and Indicators, 2018 Statistical Update: Technical notes*, pg.1. Available at: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2018_technical_notes.pdf.

²² Sen, Amartya (2009) ‘Foreword’ in Fakuda-Parr, Sakiko and Kumar, A.K. Shiva (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Human Development: Concepts, Measures, and Policies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pg. xi.

²³ Boutayeb, Abdesslam and Serghini, Mansour (2006) ‘Health indicators and human development in the Arab region’ in *International Journal of Health Geographics*, 5: 61, pg. 1. DOI: 10.1186/1476-072X-5-61.

²⁴ Devarajan, Shantayanan and Ianchovichina, Elena (2018), “A Broken Social Contract, Not High Inequality, Led To The Arab Spring”, *Review of Income and Wealth*, Series 64, Number S1, pg.5, DOI: 10.1111/roiw.12288.

²⁵ See ESCWA (2017) *Social Development Report 2: Inequality, Autonomy and Change in the Arab Region, Social Development Report 2*. Available at: https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/social-development-report-2-english_1.pdf.

²⁶ Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (2018) *Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2018: The Most Detailed Picture to Date of the World’s Poorest People*, pg.1. Available at: https://ophi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/G-MPI_2018_2ed_web.pdf.

²⁷ See UNICEF (2012) *Cross-Country MODA Study. Multiple Overlapping Deprivations Analysis (MODA) Technical Note*, pg. 4. Available at: https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/iwp_2012_5.pdf.

D. EQUALITY OF OUTCOME AND EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

While equality of outcome measures equality in what people actually achieve, equality of opportunity typically lies at the heart of social justice approaches, as it measures whether people with different capacities and backgrounds have the same opportunities to reach equal outcomes. In other words, equality of opportunity is about equity and is dependent on the social context of individual people.²⁸ So, for instance, while it is essential to assess whether two people have the same nutritional output relative to their age, height and weight and to arrange any lingering inequalities between them – this, according to political theorist John Rawls, would be one of the main pillars of social justice, defined as fairness resulting from the equal distribution of a set of primary goods that people need²⁹ – it is perhaps even more imperative to assess what these goods do for human beings and how they potentiate further opportunities. This is the main difference proposed by Sen’s CA. Others have argued that a combination of (1) context – such as gender, age, rural vs urban background, family circumstances; (2) individual effort, a concept which this paper will extend to include the notion of social and collective responsibility; and (3) an element of luck shape inequality of opportunity.³⁰

Ensuring equality of opportunity is particularly crucial within conflict-ridden countries, as increased inequality of opportunities is often the cause of conflict, which in turn aggravates inequalities. Unsurprisingly, in July 2018 the SDG Index and Dashboards Report found that countries riddled with conflict were experiencing some of the sharpest reversals in the attainment of SDGs 2 (no hunger), 3 (good health and well-being) and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions)³¹, deepening inequalities of opportunity that are at great risk of being passed on from present generations to the next. The Arab world, in particular, is especially vulnerable to these U-turns, for 7 of the 26 ongoing conflicts in the world exist in Arab countries, according to the Council on Foreign Relations.³² Two countries are in open civil war (Libya and Syria), one country is “at war” (Yemen), three nations are defined as experiencing unchanging political instability (Egypt, Iraq and Lebanon) and the seventh conflict, described as “unchanging” by the Council, is the Israeli-Palestinian occupation. The Arab region is, therefore, one of the most conflictive areas in the world and has historically been prone to infighting. Importantly, conflict has different impacts on people from within the same country and further embeds inequalities of opportunity within the same social groups.

So, for instance, while child marriage is a recurrent phenomenon in all Arab countries and in many other developing states, its prevalence is especially glaring in conflict-ridden areas.³³ As a result of the Syrian war, child marriage rates amongst Syrians have increased sharply, rising from 13 per cent as recorded in 2006 to 35

²⁸ ESCWA (2018) *From the Idea of Social Justice to the Concept of Inequality*, Policy Brief, pg. 4, Available at: <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/ideal-social-justice-concept-inequality-english.pdf>.

²⁹ Rawls, John (1999) *A Theory of Justice*, Revised Edition. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, pg. xiii.

³⁰ In ESCWA (2017) *Social Development Report 2: Inequality, Autonomy and Change in the Arab Region, Social Development Report 2*, pgs.37-38. Available at: https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/social-development-report-2-english_1.pdf.

³¹ Sachs, J., Schmidt-Traub, G., Kroll, C., Lafortune, G., Fuller, G. (2018): *SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2018*. New York: Bertelsmann Stiftung and Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), pg. 23. Available at: <http://sdgindex.org/assets/files/2018/01%20SDGS%20GLOBAL%20EDITION%20WEB%20V9%20180718.pdf>.

³² Council on Foreign Relations (2019) “Global Conflict Tracker”, Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/interactive/global-conflict-tracker/?category=usConflictStatus>. Last accessed on: 08/07/19.

³³ UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage (2018) *Child marriage in humanitarian settings: Spotlight on the situation in the Arab region*, pg. 4. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/mena/sites/unicef.org.mena/files/2018-08/CM%20in%20humanitarian%20settings%20MENA.pdf>. To see how conflict affects child marriage in host countries like Lebanon see UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon and Government of Lebanon (2019), *Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017-2020 (2019 update)*, pg. 12. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/67780.pdf>.

per cent today, meaning 35 per cent of all Syrian refugee girls are married before they come of age.³⁴ The practice almost exclusively affects girls, whose early union limits their opportunity of education and health and puts them at risk of pregnancy and of child-bearing morbidities. Child marriage is moreover intrinsically linked to economic background, as it is most prevalent among low-income families that resort to harmful coping mechanisms to reduce financial burdens and to protect girls from sexual violence.³⁵ In this regard, child brides are unequal in both opportunities and outcomes respective to boys but also compared to other Syrian girls whose own economic and familial circumstances prevent their early marriage.

To take another case, if we hone in on the current living situations of Syrian refugees living in camps (or informal tented settlements) in host countries like Jordan Lebanon, and Turkey, we find they often take on a gendered dimension. In these settings, the absence of strong community and familial ties that typically protect women back home often pave the way for gender-based violence (GBV).³⁶ This also has the effect of trapping many women in their homes out of fear of harassment,³⁷ greatly reducing their agency and freedom. Women's needs in refugee camps are also regularly grouped with those of children by both local communities and by NGO development projects, feeding victimization narratives that greatly hinder women's empowerment and increase their vulnerability.³⁸ In conclusion, poor Syrian women living in refugee camps have both unequal outcomes and opportunities compared to their male counterparts (when it comes to sexual violence and gender discrimination), but also respective to middle-class and high-income Syrian women, as well as poor Syrian refugee women who do not happen to live in refugee camps but in other informal, and perhaps better safeguarded, accommodation.

While the examples above serve to highlight the inherent inequalities that exist in communities during times of war and conflict – the greatest impediments to the realization of the SDGs – inequalities across social groups, particularly in the Arab region, are present in times of peace too. Indeed violence against women and girls also occurs in stable countries³⁹ and is further aggravated if these women are refugees, migrant domestic workers, have a disability, are elderly or acutely poor. These multidimensional levels of vulnerability create ingrained inequalities that are compounded and sometimes even encouraged by discriminatory policies, non-inclusive legislation and also cultural practices that make social justice largely unattainable.

These two examples also illustrate how gender dimensions and economic background affect an array of social experiences that simply cannot be measured by the utility indicators outlined earlier. As such, when

³⁴ Michael, Saja (ABAAD), Bartels, Susan (Queen's University) and Roupetz, Sophie (University of Leipzig), (2018) *Caught in Contraction: Making Sense of Child Marriage among Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*, ABAAD Resource Centre for Gender Equality, pg. 2. Available at: <https://www.abaadmena.org/documents/ebook.1532340307.pdf>.

³⁵ Tzemach Lemmon, Gayle (Council in Foreign Relations) (2014) *Fragile States, Fragile Lives: Child Marriage Amid Disaster and Conflict*, Working Paper, pgs. 6-7. Available at: https://cfrd8-files.cfr.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2014/06/WP_Fragile_States.pdf.

³⁶ Spencer, R. A., J. Usta, A. Essaid, S. Shukri, Y. El-Gharaibeh, H. Abu-Taleb, N. Awwad, H. Nsour, Alianza por la Solidaridad, United Nations Population Fund-Lebanon and C. J. Clark (2015). *Gender Based Violence Against Women and Girls Displaced by the Syrian Conflict in South Lebanon and North Jordan: Scope of Violence and Health Correlates*, pgs.4-5. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/GBV-Against-Women-and-Girl-Syrian-Refugees-in-Lebanon-and-Jordan-FINAL.pdf>.

³⁷ Leitner Center for International Law and Justice, Fordham Law School (2018) *Gendered-Approach Inputs to UNHCR for the Global Compact on Refugees (2018): Lessons from Abuses faced by Syrian Female Refugees in Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan*, pg. 17. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/5a3bb9b77.pdf>.

³⁸ Jensen, Mie (2019) "Gender-Based Violence in Refugee Camps: Understanding and Addressing the Role of Gender in the Experiences of Refugees", in *Inquiries Journal*, 11(02). Available at: <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=1757>.

³⁹ ESCWA (2017) *Women: Arab Horizon 2030*, pg. 5. Available at: <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/women-arab-horizon-2030-english.pdf>.

SDG 5 seeks to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”⁴⁰ by measuring, among others, the proportion of women and girls subjected to GBV (indicator 5.2.1) and the proportion of women aged 20-24 who were married or in a union before age 18 (indicator 5.3.1), the SDG fundamentally misses the underlying social structures that cause differences among women and girls and the multidimensional inequalities that ensue as a result. In spite of these shortcomings, the SDGs have succeeded in addressing both equality of outcome and equality of opportunity, however dispersedly.

E. EQUALITY OF AUTONOMY

In 2017 ESCWA’s Social Development Report 2 (SDR2) introduced a newly developed social justice notion to add to the concepts of equality of opportunity and of outcome. Equality of autonomy is defined as “the ability of individuals to act independently without restraint, whether legal or social”⁴¹, based on people’s capacity to direct the course of their life through their own decision-making, self-expression and empowerment.⁴² This concept relies on two axes: autonomy as perception of life control – what we may call negative autonomy, in other words, lack of coercion from outside forces like states, financial markets or natural disasters that can limit one’s control over one’s life – and autonomy as an aspiration that is of value, defined as positive autonomy that one can actively seek by placing higher importance on independence rather than on obedience to a family, community or state.⁴³ Equality of autonomy is therefore about self-expression and empowerment in equal access to agency as a driver for social change and increased political inclusion; all made possible through civil and political rights.⁴⁴ It is an important concept because equality of autonomy in an SDG framework that aims to leave no one behind is a major driver towards creating equal opportunities for all. It is furthermore a crucial idea to bear in mind when evaluating the strength of the CA; this will become even clearer in the next section of this paper.

SDR2’s findings, based mostly on data collected between 2010 and 2014 in a few Arab countries by the World Values Survey, showed that perceptions of life control in the Arab region are stronger among the old and the educated.⁴⁵ Youth have very low perceptions of life control as a result of high unemployment rates, yet they exhibit strong levels of self-expression, in large part due to the availability of information technologies and digital communications. The report also showcases the existing discrepancies between countries in the region. For instance, while life control data shows countries like Kuwait and Qatar rank highest in the region, they also rank lowest in self-expression. Both concepts of autonomy are not necessarily correlated and can, indeed, be developed separately.

⁴⁰ United Nations (2015) *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Resolution A/RES/70/01 adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015, pg. 6. Available at: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E.

⁴¹ ESCWA (2017) *Social Development Report 2: Inequality, Autonomy and Change in the Arab Region, Social Development Report 2*, pg.3. Available: https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/social-development-report-2-english_1.pdf.

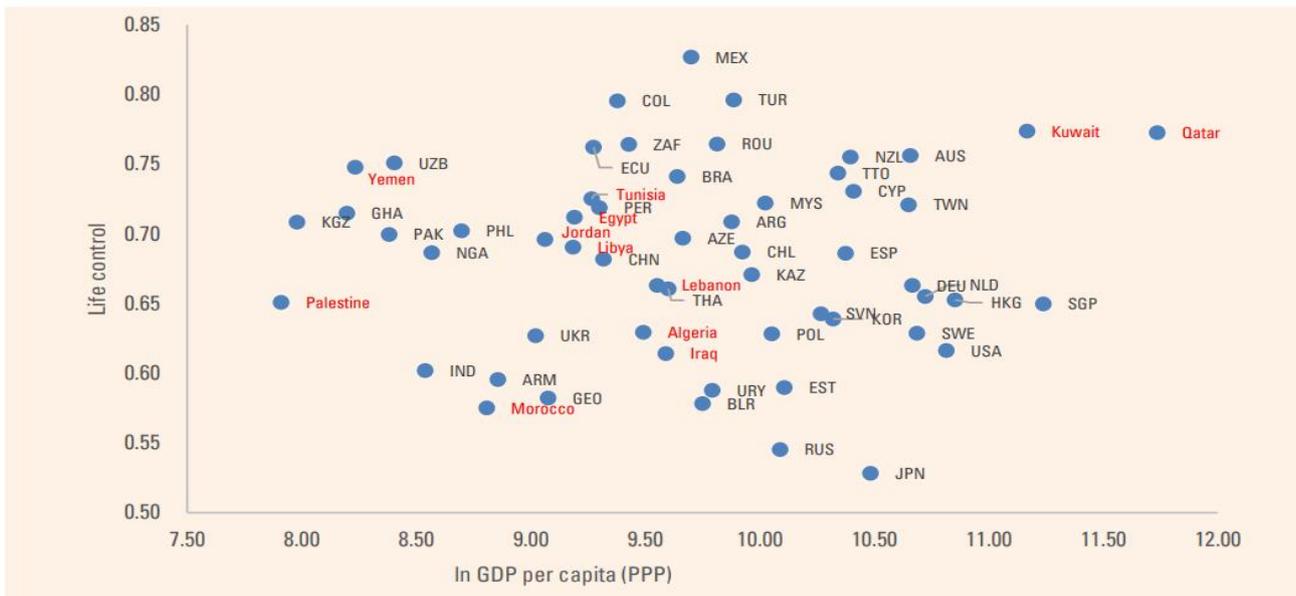
⁴² Ibid, pg. 51.

⁴³ ESCWA (2017) *Social Development Report 2: Inequality, Autonomy and Change in the Arab Region, Social Development Report 2*, pgs.3 and 51 Available: https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/social-development-report-2-english_1.pdf.

⁴⁴ ESCWA (2018) *Policy Brief: From the Ideal of Social Justice to the Concept of Inequality*, pg. 9. Available at: <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/ideal-social-justice-concept-inequality-english.pdf>.

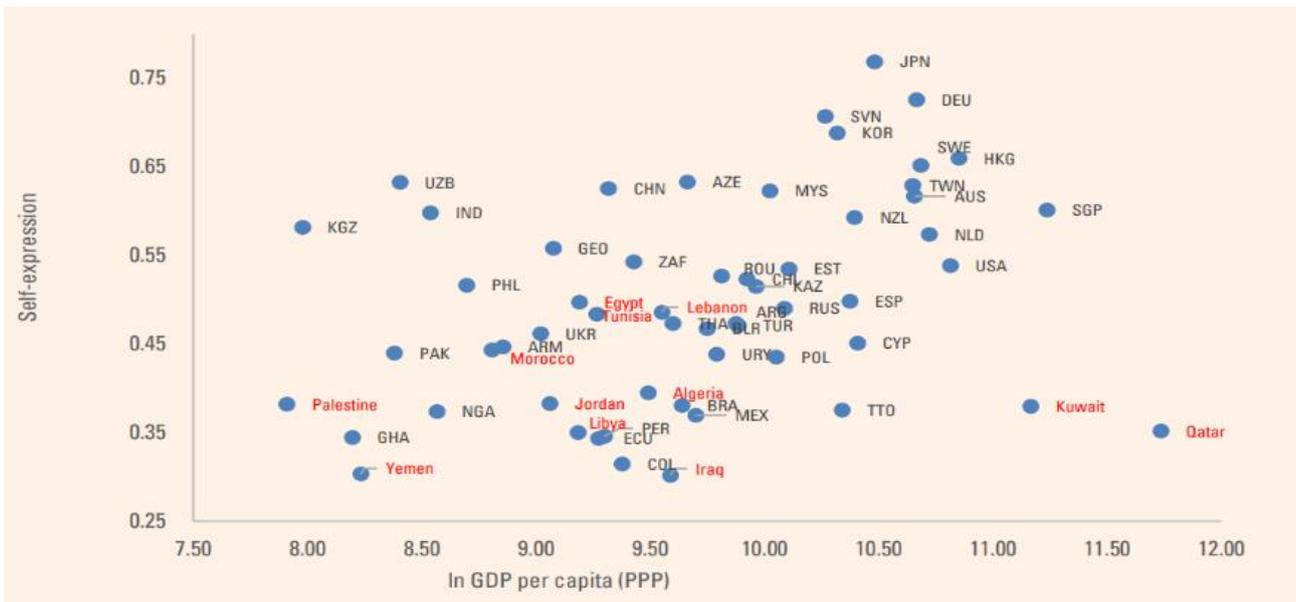
⁴⁵ Inglehart, R., et al. (2014) *World Values Survey: Round Six - Country-Pooled Datafile Version*. Available at: <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV6.jsp>. Madrid: JD Systems Institute.

Figure 1. Perceptions of control over life



Source: UN-ESCWA (2018) Social Development Report 2: Inequality, Autonomy and Change in the Arab Region. Available at: https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/social-development-report-2-english_1.pdf, pg.55.

Figure 2. Perceptions of self-expression



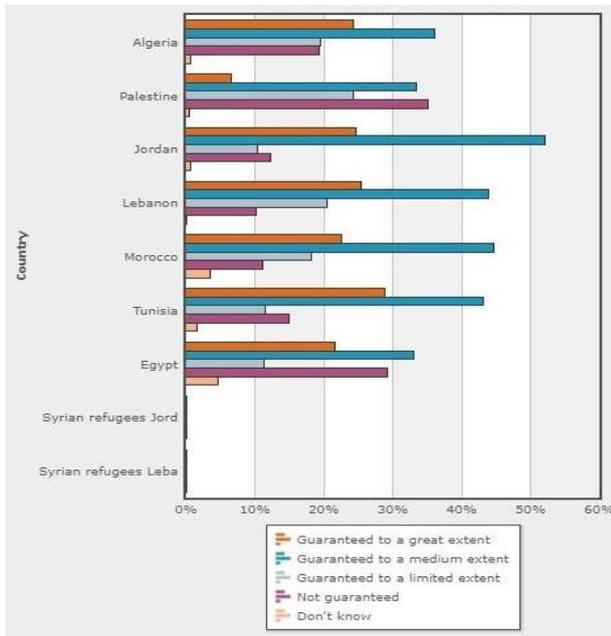
Source: UN-ESCWA (2018) Social Development Report 2: Inequality, Autonomy and Change in the Arab Region, pg.56.

While five years have passed since the latest collection of that WVS data, the Arab Barometer provides us with some more recent insights on how people in the Arab region value and perceive matters that have a direct impact on autonomy. For example, autonomy as life control can be measured by people’s perceptions of the freedom and control they have to: (1) express their opinions, (2) join civil associations and organizations and (3) participate in peaceful protests and demonstrations.

Data collected from the Arab Wave VI in 2016 shows discrepancies across countries in terms of perceptions of all three forms of freedom – represented in figure 3, 5 and 6 respectively – and also showcases differences *within* nations regarding the various “guarantees” to freedom. Tunisia, the first country to spark the Arab Spring in December 2010 and early 2011, has shown significant progress, as all three freedoms feature

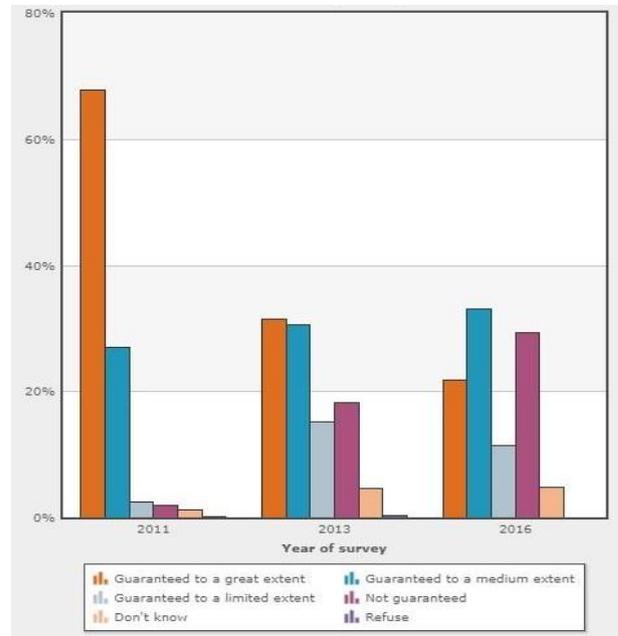
high on the “guarantee” spectrum. In Egypt the story is starkly different. While the freedom to express opinions (figure 3) is perceived as being moderately guaranteed (most likely due to widespread availability of social media and other information technologies), over 50 per cent of Egyptians surveyed believe the right to participate in peaceful protests and demonstrations (figure 6) is not guaranteed. No doubt that perceptions of freedom in conflict-ridden countries like Libya, Syria and Yemen are bound to be much lower.

Figure 3. Freedom to express opinions



Source: Arab Barometer, wave IV (2016). Accessed on: 15 March 2019. Available at: <https://www.arabbarometer.org/survey-data/data-analysis-tool/>.

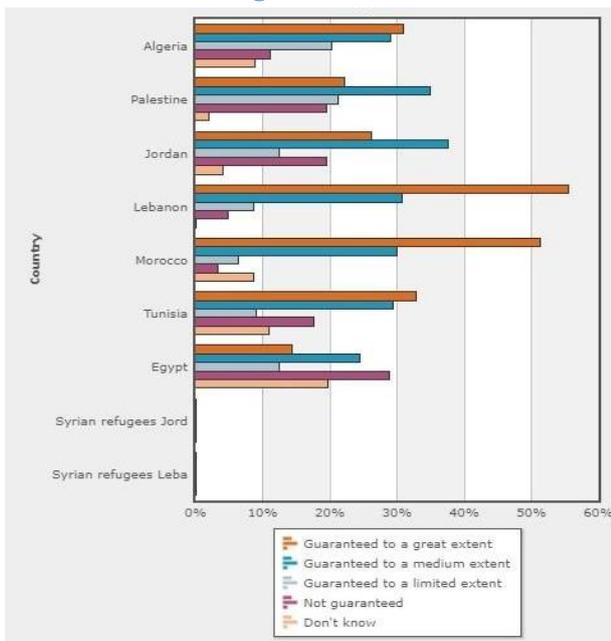
Figure 4. Freedom to express opinions in Egypt



Source: Arab Barometer, wave IV (2016).

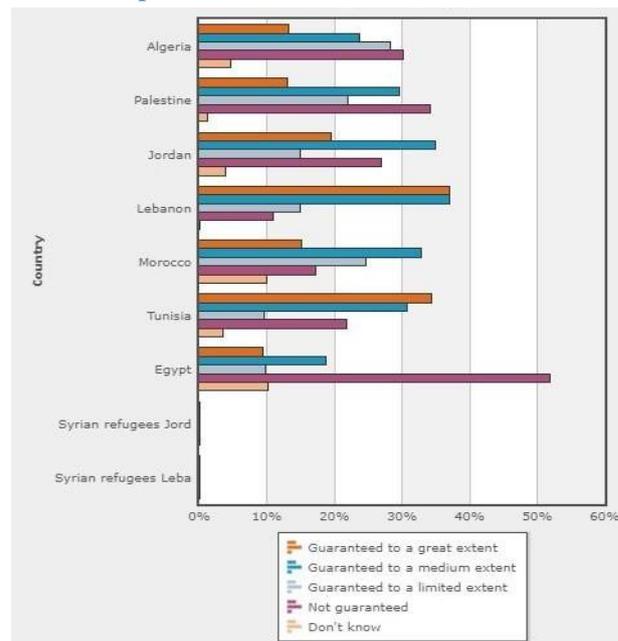
Note: The Arab Barometer’s sample sizes (in thousands) for wave IV were as follows: 1200 in Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia and 1200 plus 300 Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon.

Figure 5. Freedom to join civil associations and organizations



Source: Arab Barometer, wave IV (2016).

Figure 6. Freedom to participate in peaceful protests and demonstrations



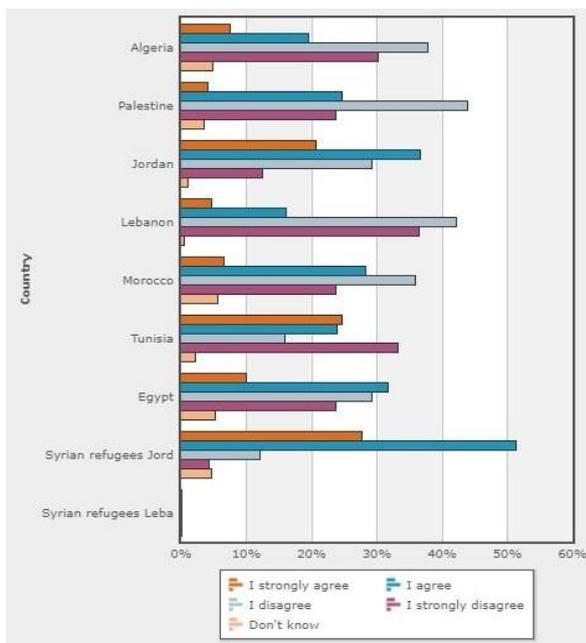
Source: Arab Barometer, wave IV (2016).

Similarly, perceptions on the value attached to independence over obedience can be distinguished; in other words, self-expression (not necessarily in the political sense but in the way one values self-expression and agency relative to others) can be discerned by addressing a variety of intrinsic relationships: between citizens and the state, between men and women and between religious leaders and communities. Again, the Arab Barometer, through data collected in 2016, can reveal several clues as to how much people value independence by assessing several survey statements: (a) citizens must support the government’s decisions even if they disagree with them (figure 7); (b) husbands should have final say in all decisions concerning the family (figure 8) and (c) religious leaders (imams, preachers, priests) should not interfere in voters’ decisions in elections (figure 9).

For instance, most respondents agree that religious leaders should not interfere in voters’ decision-making, indicating a growing schism between politics and religion in a region where both have historically been mutually interdependent. Looking at perceptions as to whether husbands should have the final say in family decisions, most of those surveyed – both women and men– either strongly agree or simply agree with the statement. This is particularly the case for countries that have experienced a revolution in the past few years, including Egypt and Tunisia, which may relate to feelings of loss of control over one’s life due to the political situation. From the data it would be fair to extrapolate that female obedience, both within the household and in broader communities, rather than independence is of more value to Arab societies, which has a direct curtailing effect on women’s self-expression and therefore their equality of autonomy. Finally, when evaluating whether people feel they should support government decisions even if they disagree with them, most of those surveyed disagree with the statement. This would indicate that independence to criticize government policy and have a voice to differ with government trends is of inherent importance and value in the Arab region.

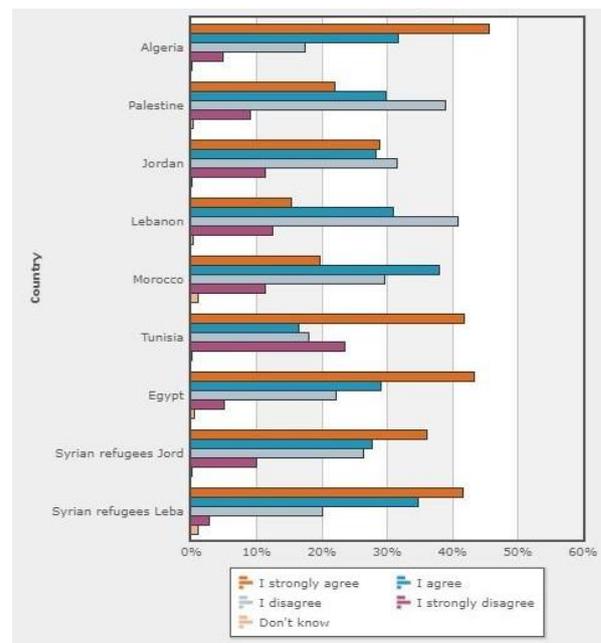
While none of these graphs are conclusive – and none offer complete understandings of life control and self-expression concurrently – they do offer glimpses into “states of doing and being” (a concept now outlined in further detail within the context of the CA) that have a direct effect on both strands of autonomy. As countries with political conflict demonstrate, perceptions of life control and self-expression are decreasing. It would be safe to assume that countries like Libya, Syria and Yemen that continue to be subjected to armed conflict would see even lower figures if surveyed.

Figure 7. Citizens must support the government’s decisions even if they disagree with them



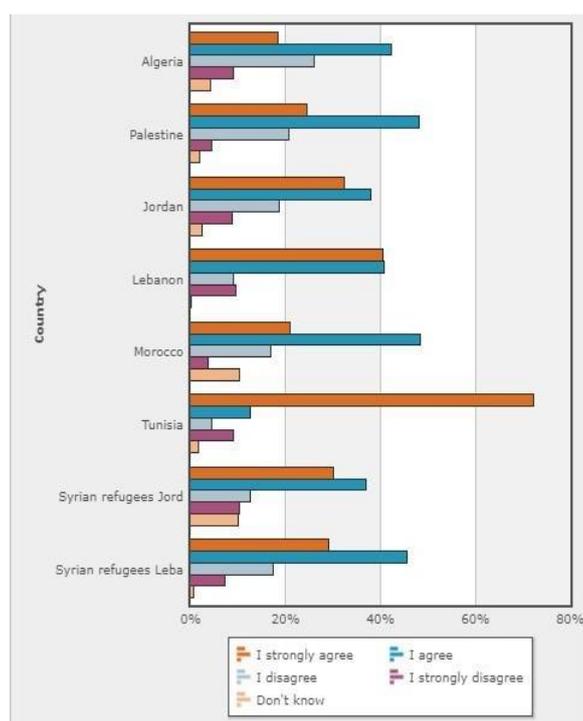
Source: Arab Barometer, wave IV (2016).

Figure 8. Husbands should have final say in all decisions concerning the family



Source: Arab Barometer, wave IV (2016).

Figure 9. Religious leaders (imams, preachers, priests) should not interfere in voters' decisions in elections



Source: Arab Barometer, wave IV (2016).

F. THE NEXUS APPROACH

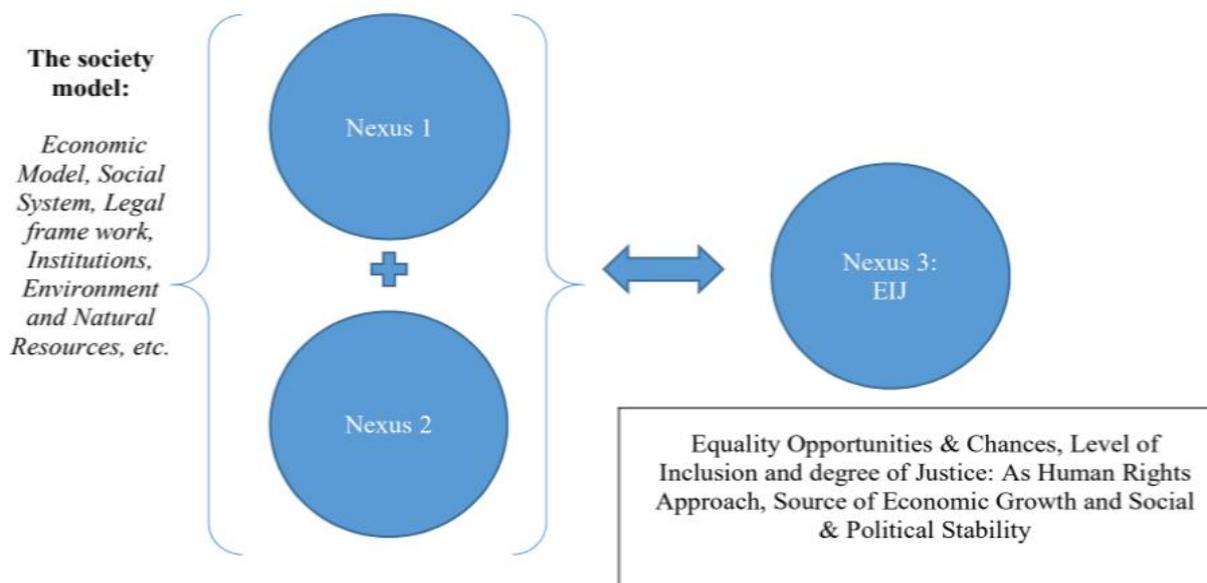
As mentioned earlier, the SDGs overlap on a number of different matters, so treating their targets separately as if they were different entities seems largely inadequate. After all, reducing poverty (SDG 1) promotes inclusive and equitable education (SDG 2), which in turn helps to diminish poverty in the long-term. Furthermore, decreasing conflict and working towards peace (SDG 16) generates greater gender equality and female empowerment (SDG 5) and reduced inequality within and among countries (SDG 10). Dozens of other examples showcase the SDGs' inherently intertwined, complementary and indivisible nature. But how to go about implementing them if they are indeed so mutually dependent on each other? The indicators, as outlined earlier in this paper, present several issues, in spite of the fact that they do serve as a benchmark for evaluating progress in sustainable development. ESCWA's recently envisioned Nexus Approach to mainstream the SDGs in national strategies, policies and programmes of Arab countries adds an important dimension to the numbers-centred targets.

Calling for research and policy efforts that are inter-connected, the Nexus Approach encourages development plans that showcase integrity, coherence, correlation, synergy and effectiveness. The approach exhibits three main thematic clusters of focus: (1) the water, energy and food security (WEF) nexus; (2) the poverty reduction, decent employment and sustainable growth (PEG) nexus; and 3) the equality, inclusion and justice (EIJ) nexus. Recently, ESCWA has proposed a redefinition of the latter to include: (a) migration and displacement – one of the most pressing issues in the Arab region given the impact of the situation of Syrian refugees; 6.7 million (registered) refugees make Syria the country in the world with most refugees;⁴⁶ (b) social protection, especially for migrant workers who often lack legal rights (making their employment and living

⁴⁶ UNHCR (June 2019) *Figures at a Glance*. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>. See World Vision (July 2019) *Forced to flee: Top countries refugees are coming from*. Available at: <https://www.worldvision.org/refugees-news-stories/forced-to-flee-top-countries-refugees-coming-from>.

conditions frequently subject to abuse and exploitation),⁴⁷ and (c) social cohesion, mainly to reduce exclusion, disintegration and extremism.⁴⁸

Figure 10. The Nexus Approach and its Three Clusters Diagram



Source: ESCWA (2017) *Sustainable Development Goals: the 2030 Agenda and the Nexus Approach*, pg.33 Available in Arabic at: <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/2030-agenda-nexus-approach-english.pdf>.

The Nexus Approach parts are from the assertion that any successful national development plan must coherently address all three mutually dependent nexuses, for the failure of one risks the failure of the other two, and therefore the failure of the SDGs. The EIJ nexus, in particular, is firmly rooted in the idea of public participation within and between countries, particularly during decision-making processes.⁴⁹ After all, the approach is committed to being representative, participative (both individually and collectively) and communicative. It places people themselves at the core of development planning and execution. Importantly, the EIJ nexus not only aims to react to poverty and deprivation but also to create an “appropriate environment that enables all peoples to achieve their *potential* through sustainable education (SDG 4), health services (SDG 3) and employment strategies and policies.⁵⁰

For a specific example of how this approach can be constructive, we can turn to the Jordan Vision 2025, devised in 2015 before the SDGs. This national plan aims to target a number of challenges – notably reducing poverty – by boosting economic growth and competitiveness in specific sectors.⁵¹ The plan however fails to address how financial reforms will reduce female unemployment and ensure their social inclusivity, among

⁴⁷ See International Labour Organization (2015) *Protecting the Rights of Migrant Domestic Workers: Good practices and lessons learned from the Arab Region*. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_402364.pdf.

⁴⁸ ESCWA (2017) *Sustainable Development Goals: the 2030 Agenda and the Nexus Approach*, pg.41 Available in Arabic at: <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/2030-agenda-nexus-approach-english.pdf>.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pg.37.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pg.37.

⁵¹ Ibid., pg.53. See *Jordan 2025: A National Vision and Strategy* (2014). Available at: http://www.nationalplanningcycles.org/sites/default/files/planning_cycle_repository/jordan/jo2025part1.pdf.

other gaps.⁵² Reducing female unemployment is therefore a mere possible product of the plan – promoted by women's empowerment – rather than a fully-fledged aim integrated within Jordan's poverty reduction strategy.

The Nexus Approach would place such an issue at the core of such financial reforms to ensure SDG 5. In conclusion, the three-pronged Nexus approach serves as a starting point from which to formulate policy and development recommendations, erect institutions that can uphold social justice and equality and purposefully pursue the SDGs in an integrated manner. After all, the interconnected nature of the SDGs means no single development objective can be achieved without the active realization of the others.

⁵² ESCWA (2017) *Sustainable Development Goals: the 2030 Agenda and the Nexus Approach*, pg. 56. Available in Arabic at: <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/2030-agenda-nexus-approach-english.pdf>.

III. THE CAPABILITY APPROACH

A. LITERATURE REVIEW

Equality of autonomy and the Nexus Approach are two important frameworks to address the SDGs. They assess how the SDGs can and should come closer to the reality on the ground by pinpointing critical notions of equality and social justice that remain to be strengthened throughout the 2030 Agenda. Equality of autonomy in particular pays attention to people's understandings and perceptions of their own freedom and helps bridge gaps in the debate on equality. The EIJ nexus is about ensuring integrated development policies to enable people to fulfil their potential. But we can go further. In May 1979 Professor Amartya Sen, who would later go on to win the Nobel Prize for Economics, delivered a ground-breaking lecture at Stanford University entitled "Equality of What?", where he introduced the concept of "capability" as a more adequate and realistic measure of well-being.⁵³ This concept would then develop into the Capability Approach (CA), the central pillar of the Human Development Reports published since the 1990s.

The capability approach (CA) looks at well-being in terms of whether people have the opportunity to pursue those states of doing and being that *they have reason to value*.⁵⁴ The actual doings and beings, which Sen calls "functionings", are the well-being outcomes and include things like being healthy, well-nourished and educated and doing things like providing for one's family, pursuing hobbies or learning new skills. "Capabilities" are therefore the freedoms or opportunities to pursue things that do good to human beings while looking into the life people *could* lead if these combined opportunities or freedoms – what we may call a capabilities set – are expanded.⁵⁵ While Sen's commitment is with the individual – and therefore his theory of development leans more towards moral individualism – the individual actually serves an instrumental purpose given his or her membership of a community or society.⁵⁶ The CA is therefore plural, taking each person as an end,⁵⁷ and is about securing capabilities for everyone. Once individuals' capabilities are met, then society is considered just.⁵⁸

Capabilities are important because people's resources and capacities are different. To achieve equality development practice must focus on equity – providing an individual with more or fewer opportunities to achieve the same, valuable outcomes if that is indeed what he or she wants. For instance, to take an example outlined by Sen himself, someone living in the mountains needs more food and fuel because of the colder environment they are living in than someone living in flatter terrain.⁵⁹ However, consideration must be given to the provision of more food depending on whether this is something of inherent value to the mountain-dweller; and we can conceive many different scenarios; perhaps this particular person places more value on

⁵³ Sen, Amartya (1979) "Equality of What?" *The Tanner Lecture on Human Values*. Available at: http://www.ophi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Sen-1979_Equality-of-What.pdf.

⁵⁴ Sen, Amartya (2003) "Development as Capability Expansion" in Fukuda Parr, Sakiko, et al., (eds.), *Readings in Human Development*, (2003) pg.12, New Delhi and New York: Oxford University Press. For more see Sen, Amartya (1999) *Development as Freedom*, New York: Oxford University Press.

⁵⁵ Stewart, Frances (2013) "Capabilities and Human development: Beyond the individual – the critical role of social institutions and social competencies", Occasional paper in United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report Office, pg. 1. Available at: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdro_1303_stewart.pdf.

⁵⁶ Grasso, Marco and Di Giulio, Enzo (2003) "Mapping sustainable development in a capability perspective" in Dipartimento di Sociologia e Ricerca Sociale. Università degli Studi di Milano Bicocca and Eni Corporate University, San Donato Milanese, pg. 6. Available at: <https://econwpa.ub.uni-muenchen.de/econ-wp/hew/papers/0309/0309001.pdf>.

⁵⁷ Nussbaum, Martha (2011) *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, pg. 18.

⁵⁸ Nussbaum, Martha (2003) "Capabilities as fundamental entitlements: Sen and social justice" in *Feminist Economics*, 9:2-3, pg.37 Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1354570022000077926>.

⁵⁹ Sen, Amartya and Anand, Sudhir (1994) "Human Development Index: Methodology and Measurement" in *Human Development Report Office Occasional Papers*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, pg. 1.

having more medicines to combat illnesses caused by the harsher environment than having additional food. The CA accounts for this diversity in what people value, allowing for a more plural, personalized, non-income and non-utilities-based approach to equality that considers differences between cultures, regions and demographic groups, as well as the individual changing notions of what is identified as being valuable in life.

At its core, the CA is about securing freedom; the freedom for each nation, community and individual to have the opportunity to choose those things that they have reason to value. After all, the CA is firmly rooted in and committed to the concept of choice⁶⁰, in addition to being fully rights-based, enabling that ever-important bridge between human rights and development. As Professor Martha Nussbaum, one of the most prominent capabilities thinkers to date, articulated “to secure a right to a citizen... is to put them in a position of capability to go ahead with choosing that function if they should so desire.”⁶¹ Thus, while equality of opportunity focuses on facilitating access, the CA is more about having the capability to choose a functioning based on what is of value.

To take a real example of how we may look at development issues and human rights violations through the CA, we can assess the general state of hunger, or being hungry. Hunger is a major obstacle to functionings such as personal well-being, health, a good living standard and ultimately survival. It impedes personal freedom, aggravates inequality and perpetuates social injustice. For these reasons the CA would stipulate that not being hungry (a functioning) is something that all peoples have reason to value. The CA would look into whether the opportunity to choose lack of hunger is present. While this concept may seem abstract, we do not need to look far to find a real-life case. Presently in Yemen, lack of hunger can hardly be a choice, with 20 million Yemenis have been described as being food insecure, and 10 million of them are suffering from extreme levels of hunger.⁶² The fact that this capability is mainly absent in several parts of Yemen means many functionings (and other capabilities) are deprived there too, for instance, the opportunity to provide food security for one’s family or to be free from fear of famine, among others.

The CA is not without drawbacks and capability scholars have long been engaged in active debates on a variety of issues. From a purely theoretical perspective, scholars cannot agree on whether the aim should be to pursue functionings or capabilities as the end goal given their interdependent nature.⁶³ Sen’s followers would argue that it is about securing and expanding people’s choices and opportunities first, as functionings naturally follow from having those opportunities.⁶⁴ Secondly, Sen has been criticized for being too vague by refusing to pinpoint which capabilities are important or necessary and which others are not. This is because Sen is committed to letting people themselves determine what is of value to them through public discourse and discussion,⁶⁵ and what we may call political freedom and participation. As some scholars have noted, however, even this space can be unequal, as those with more resources and education are likely to influence political outcomes in their favour while neglecting the needs of others.⁶⁶ Perhaps even more worryingly, public

⁶⁰ Ul Huq, Mahbub (2009) “The Human Development Paradigm” in Fukuda-Parr, Sakiko and Shiva Kumar, A.K. (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Human Development: Concepts, Measures, and Policies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pg.17.

⁶¹ Nussbaum, Martha (1997) “Capabilities and Human Rights” in *Fordham Law Review*, Volume 66 Issue 2, Article 2, pg. 293. Available at: https://www.palermo.edu/Archivos_content/2015/derecho/pobreza_multidimensional/bibliografia/Sesion3_doc1.pdf.

⁶² UNOCHA (2018) *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2019: Yemen*, pg. 13. Available at: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2019_Yemen_HNO_FINAL.pdf.

⁶³ See, for example, Arneson, R. (2013) “From primary goods to capabilities to well-being” in *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, Vol 16, No. 2. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698230.2012.757910>.

⁶⁴ Robeyns, Ingrid (2016) “The Capability Approach”, in Edward N. Zalta (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter Edition. Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/capability-approach/>.

⁶⁵ Sen, Amartya (2005) “Human Rights and Capabilities” in *Journal for Human Development*, Vol.6, No.2, pgs.158-160. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Human_Rights_and_Capabilities.pdf.

⁶⁶ Deneulin, Severine (2005) “Promoting Human Freedoms under Conditions of Inequalities: a procedural framework” in *Journal of Human Development*, Vol. 6, No.1. DOI: 10.1080/146498805200034257, pg.79.

discourse carries the risk that individuals (and by extent governments and states) may choose inherently unethical or amoral capabilities, given functionings in of themselves are supposed to be morally neutral.⁶⁷

After all, an action such as abusing one's power to the detriment of others is still a *state* of doing and being, a functioning that some people may have reason to value and therefore seek the opportunity to pursue. If enough people value such functionings – whether due to community and cultural backgrounds, socio-economic situations or political views – then those states of doing and being can be given the opportunity to flourish and be protected by cultural practices and national legislation. Fundamentally, however, the capability approach is a metric of well-being, intrinsically linked to the concept of rights, and this example would fail to classify as such. As Sen notes: “Freedom to choose gives us the opportunity to decide what we should do, but with that opportunity comes the responsibility for what we do – to the extent that they are chosen actions. Since a capability is a power to do something, the accountability that emanates from that ability – that power – is a part of the capability perspective, and this can make room for demands of duty – what can be broadly called deontological demands.”⁶⁸

Much work is yet to be done to integrate the CA into social justice implementation, and indeed only a few policies have been developed to enhance social justice with capabilities at their centre.⁶⁹ This is largely because the CA would seem, at first glance, to have little applicability in the real world, particularly when it comes to the rather subjective task of providing opportunities to pursue valuable states of doing and being that few academics have defined. Furthermore, individuals may attach different levels of importance to various functionings that are of value⁷⁰ and, while this variation must be considered, it is impractical, perhaps even impossible, to create development policies that include everyone's priorities (and the distinct weights attached to them). Moreover, well-being measurement indicators tend to analyze macro-data, yet in a development framework that is concerned with the individual, micro-data that is needed is largely unavailable.⁷¹

Nonetheless, development evaluation guides are increasingly being created with a capabilities-centred approach at their core, becoming more integrative and multi-dimensional. The IHDI previously discussed has already taken some necessary steps forward. More recently, the Inclusive Systemic Evaluation for Gender Equality, Environments and Marginalized voices (ISE4GEMs), pioneered by the UN Women Independent Evaluation Office, looks at how to measure inequality through gender, environment and marginalization.⁷² Crucially, the ISE4GEMs place value notions of all three concepts in the hands of people themselves, particularly throughout the evaluation process, moving away from accountability against specific targets in favour of a living and breathing exercise that changes according to the varying situational and social contexts of individuals and what they themselves value and seek.⁷³

⁶⁷ Robeyns, Ingrid (2016) “The Capability Approach”, in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter Edition. Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/capability-approach/>.

⁶⁸ Sen, Amartya (2009) *The Idea of Justice*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, pg. 19.

⁶⁹ Robeyns, Ingrid (2017) *Wellbeing, Freedom and Social Justice, The Capability Approach Re-Examined*, pg.159, Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, pg. 159.

⁷⁰ Sen, Amartya (1993) “Capability and Wellbeing” in Nussbaum, Martha and Sen, Amartya (eds.), *The Quality of Life*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pg. 31.

⁷¹ Lessman, Orturd and Rauschmayer, Felix (2013) “Introduction: The Capability Approach and Sustainability” in *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, Vol.14, No.1, pg.3. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19452829.2012.751744>.

⁷² Stephens, Anne; Lewis, Ellen; Reddy, Shravanti (2018) *Towards an Inclusive Systemic Evaluation for the SDGs: Gender equality, Environments and Marginalized voices (GEMs), Evaluation*, Vol. 24(2) pgs. 225-226, DOI: 10.1177/1356389018766093 journals.sagepub.com/home/evi.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pgs. 230-231.

B. A STEP FURTHER TOWARDS THE SDGS

While the 2030 Agenda commits to ensuring that “all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality in a healthy environment”,⁷⁴ the CA allows us to go a step further by asking whether human beings have the opportunity to fulfil that potential and whether they can indeed pursue those states of doing and being they have reason to value. According to this framework, therefore, development is not merely about fulfilling potentials, but about expanding opportunities to achieve functionings. In other words, it is about expanding individuals’ capability set.⁷⁵ It is important to note, however, that while the CA is a crucial component in the fight for equality and social justice, it does not account for a full theory on justice because of its evaluative nature.⁷⁶ Nonetheless, employing the CA is a step forward in integrating equality into the SDGs because:

1. ESCWA’s SDR2 begged the question as to how we may marry equality in autonomy with key issues in inclusive and sustainable development such as income equality, gender equality and equalities in opportunities and outcomes.⁷⁷ This paper tentatively proposes that the CA maybe this link, for thinking in terms of capabilities allows us to transcend people’s perceptions of their current situations and involve them further in assessing whether SDG targets are in line with promoting opportunities to choose functionings they have reason to value.
2. It allows placing development in the hands of people themselves, giving them greater agency and equality of autonomy to evaluate what functionings are valuable to lead a dignified life. This enables people to have a greater voice in the development process, allowing us to move away from top-down approaches that have little resemblance or applicability to life on the ground, while bearing in mind non-negotiable freedoms, rights and responsibilities that all human beings must be entitled to and must abide by, in accordance with the UN Declaration of Human Rights. In this way, development is civil society-based and from bottom-up.
3. It would be safe to deduce that central governments alone, especially those facing political instability, cannot respond to all of society’s needs. Even if states implement policies and enact laws to ensure vulnerable groups are given agency and freedom to pursue functionings, societal consensus matters too. Citizens must be prepared to engage in the planning and implementation of the SDG framework if it is to succeed, and this is more likely to happen if they have reason to value the development outcomes, particularly, greater equality and social justice within their community and country. This must of course materialize in parallel with efforts made by the state, institutions and legislation regarding citizens on the basis of representation, participation and communication, where civil society must hold such actors accountable.⁷⁸

In conclusion, the CA can – and should – be integrated further into current development frameworks for the purpose of evaluating inequality in the SDGs. To this end it is important to advocate for a concrete set of capabilities to make the approach more applicable, especially if individuals are to be involved in their own

⁷⁴ United Nations (2015) *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Resolution [A/RES/70/01](#) adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015. Preamble. Available at: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E.

⁷⁵ See Gaertner, Wulf and Yongsheng, Xu (2006) “Capability Sets as the Basis of a New Measure of Human Development” in *Journal of Human Development*, 7:3, pgs.311-321. DOI:10.1080/14649880600815891.

⁷⁶ Robeyns, Ingrid (2005) “The Capability Approach: a theoretical survey” in *Journal for Human Development*, Vol.6, No.1, pg. 96. DOI:10.1080/146498805200034266.

⁷⁷ ESCWA (2017) *Social Development Report 2: Inequality, Autonomy and Change in the Arab Region, Social Development Report 2*, pg.52 Available: https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/social-development-report-2-english_1.pdf.

⁷⁸ See Sriskandarajah, Dhananjayan (2018) “A People’s Agenda: Citizen Participation and the SDGs” in Kharas, Homi; Kato, Hiroshi; McArthur, John and Desai, Raj (eds.), *Innovations in Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals*, Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, pg.1.

development.⁷⁹ This can be done by either looking at other scholars who have more specific guidelines on capabilities – Professor Martha Nussbaum has done some excellent work in this space, going further than Sen by outlining a set of human and non-human capabilities that are based on the premise that human beings should have the opportunity to lead a life worthy of dignity⁸⁰– or by asking people and communities themselves what they value and what they would like to pursue. This paper suggests that both can be done conjointly and in a complementary fashion.

C. THE CENTRAL HUMAN CAPABILITIES⁸¹

Nussbaum’s work on capabilities differs from Sen’s economic reasoning in being more inherently narrative, with the aim of understanding people’s desires and motivations and their consequent decisions.⁸² Her focus on a list follows her conviction that certain functionings are central to any human life and should be embodied in constitutional guarantees and basic political principles.⁸³ While many scholars reject her list – for it carries with it some impositions on what kinds of capabilities people should value – the list is important to consider for the practical implementation of the CA:

1. **“Life.** Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one’s life is so reduced as to be not worth living.
2. **Bodily Health.** Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.
3. **Bodily Integrity.** Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.
4. **Sense, Imagination, and Thought.** Being able to use the senses, imagine, think, and reason – and to do these things in a “truly human” way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing, and producing works and events of one’s own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one’s mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid non-beneficial pain.
5. **Emotions.** Being able to have attachments to things and people outside of ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one’s emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety. (Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their development).

⁷⁹ Duraiappah, Anantha Kumar; Roddy, Pumulo and Parry, Jo-Ellen (2005) “Have Participatory Approaches Increased Capabilities?” in *International Institute for Sustainable Development* website, pg.2. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Pumulo_Roddy/publication/253396896_Have_Participatory_Approaches_Increased_Capabilities/links/0c96052f13adc89cb6000000/Have-Participatory-Approaches-Increased-Capabilities.pdf.

⁸⁰ Nussbaum, Martha (2003) “Capabilities as fundamental entitlements: Sen and social justice” in *Feminist Economics*, 9:2-3, pg.40. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1354570022000077926>.

⁸¹ Ibid. pgs. 41-42.

⁸² Robeyns, Ingrid (2005) “The Capability Approach: a theoretical survey” in *Journal of Human Development*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pg.104, DOI: 10.1080/146498805200034266.

⁸³ Nussbaum, Martha (2003) *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pg.74.

6. **Practical Reason.** Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life. (This entails protection for the liberty of conscience and religious observance).
7. **Affiliation.** (a) Being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another. (Protecting this capability means protecting institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech. (b) Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails provisions of non-discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion and national origin.
8. **Other species.** Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.
9. **Play.** Being able to laugh, to play to enjoy recreational activities.
10. **Control Over One's Environment.** (a) Political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association. (b) Material. Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods) and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure. In work, being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason, and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers."

While some of these capabilities are obvious (who would not value living to the end of a human life of normal length?), they give us tangible targets to work with. Importantly, they suggest that to lead a life worthy of dignity, human beings should enjoy things like love and laughter, liberty of conscience, and not being discriminated against. But how can we secure these? And how do we measure them? For one thing we can fine-tune and adapt the list to the Arab region while prioritizing specific capabilities that would seem to be more urgent there. For example, in the context of the wars in Syria and Yemen, the capability to not die prematurely or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living would seem a priority, particularly for survivors of war who may now face a host of other challenges (like GBV or forced labour and exploitation in refugee host countries, which, to some people, may make life not worth living). In this context, enjoying "life", "bodily health" and "bodily integration" would seem to take priority over 'play' or even 'emotions'. This is an interesting way forward to regionalize and culturalize capabilities, something that Nussbaum does indeed advocate for.⁸⁴

Such an approach also follows a similar line of reasoning put forward by Abraham Maslow, an American psychologist who, in 1943, proposed a 'hierarchy of human needs' to explain human motivation and subsequent behaviour.⁸⁵ Maslow theorized that physiological needs – air, water, food, clothing, shelter and sleep – must be met first before moving on to the next layer of the pyramid, the pursuit of safety needs – personal security, employment, resources, health and property, among others. Such needs must be satisfied to move on to the next layer of the pyramid and so forth until we arrive at the final layer: Self-actualization (which can be fulfilled once the previous level, the pursuit of esteem, has been satisfied). Maslow argued that self-actualization is about having the desire to fulfil one's potential, about a human being becoming the most of what he or she could become.⁸⁶ This concept draws obvious parallels with the CA; particularly, on evaluating

⁸⁴ Nussbaum, Martha (2003) "Capabilities as fundamental entitlements: Sen and social justice" in *Feminist Economics*, 9:2-3, pgs.42-43. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1354570022000077926>.

⁸⁵ See Maslow, Abraham (1943) "A theory of human motivation" in *Psychological Review*, 50(4), pgs. 370-396. Available at: <https://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Maslow/motivation.htm>.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

the opportunities that people have to choose what is of value to lead their lives, what we may call their opportunities to fulfil their self-actualization.

“Thinking in terms of capability gives us a benchmark as we think about what it really is to secure a right to someone. It makes clear that this involves affirmative material and institutional support, not simply a failure to impede.”

Martha Nussbaum in ‘Capabilities as fundamental entitlements’ in Feminist Economics, 2003

IV. FIELDWORK

A. PURPOSE

Carrying out qualitative research to discern communities' capabilities and functionings beyond pre-established lists is not new.⁸⁷ Focus group discussions (FGDs) are, in fact, an applied research method that follows Sen's commitment to involving people in their own development, as they can form new perceptions and understandings of choices and opportunities and expand people's capability set.⁸⁸ Surveys can furthermore enable researchers to determine individual priorities and opinions and be able to capture quantitative differences between people's achieved functionings – the opportunities they currently have to pursue what they value – and their desired capabilities – the opportunities they would like to have to pursue what they value.

The CA takes individuals as ends in of themselves, hence the need to conduct surveys to determine individual understandings of capabilities and functionings. However, in a development framework where it is simply impractical to focus only on individuals, and to the extent that individuals form part of society, this study address people's life situation within the context of their community or demographic group. In this way, the aim was to understand current perceptions of capabilities and desired functionings within the communities themselves. The surveys were supplemented by FGDs, designed to pick up the nuanced dimensions that shape a community's experience and that aggravate inequalities between that community and others.

Given the scale of determining capabilities and functionings in specific communities, let alone in individual countries or the Arab region as a whole, the research was tested by conducting a pilot study with three groups – people with physical disabilities, vulnerable Syrian, Lebanese and Iraqi women, and educated youth – and in one country, Lebanon. These groups were chosen for their marginalization and vulnerability, with further details regarding their selection found in subsequent pages. Other groups could have been selected – as the migrant domestic workers' community – but were not surveyed due to time constraints. Lebanon was chosen for practical reasons, not only for ESCWA headquarters in Beirut but also due to its great social and demographic diversity. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development framework that is designed to work for everyone, understanding the needs of different groups, even those whose members may not be citizens of that country, is of vital importance.

As this is a pilot study, a maximum of 20 participants per group was sought; however, the final number of participants was smaller, as outlined in table 1. Each group took different times to answer all the survey questions – sometimes with the aid of the researchers – and then to do the FGDs. Participants were recruited through reputable NGOs and educational groups, as outlined in the table below. More information on these organizations and the demographic details of the participants are included in the appendix.

Needless to say, the findings from such a small sample size are far from comprehensive and do not reflect the capabilities and functionings of all communities in Lebanon, let alone in the Arab region. After all this is a pilot study, and therefore a starting point to future research that can and should be done to integrate the CA into SDG analysis and implementation. It offers one way in which we may look at the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development more comprehensively and holistically.

⁸⁷ See Alkire, Sabina(2002) *Valuing Freedoms: Sen's Capability Approach and Poverty Reduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁸⁸ Schischka, John, Zalziel, Paul, Saunders, Caroline (2008) "Applying Sen's Capability Approach to Poverty Alleviation Programs: Two Case Studies" in *Journal of Human Development*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pg.243. DOI: 10.1080/14649880802078777.

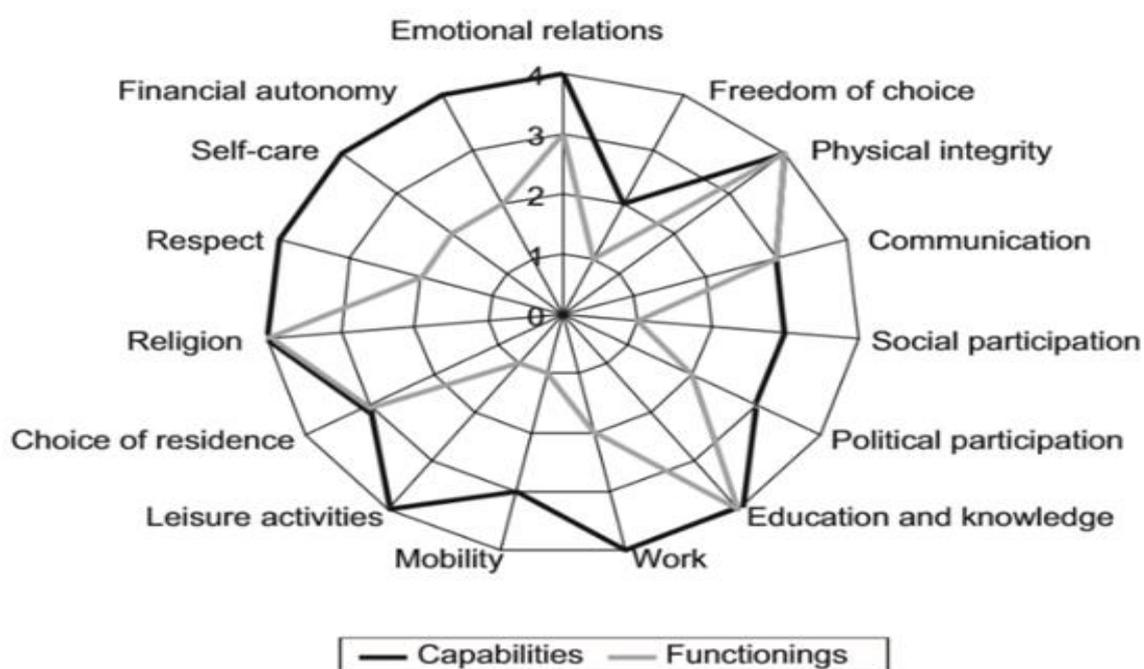
Table 1. Fieldwork sample size

Day of research	Organization	Location	Total participants	Time to complete survey	Time to complete FGD
14 June 2019	Lebanese Union for People with Physical Disabilities (LUPD)	LUPD Main Office, Raouche, Beirut	16	2 hours	1 hour
20 June 2019	Student Secular Club at the American University of Beirut (AUB)	AUB, Beirut	7	30 minutes	30 minutes
21 June 2019	Amel Association International	Amel's Ain El Remmaneh Development Centre, Beirut	10	45 minutes	1 hour 10 minutes

B. METHODOLOGY

A method similar to the one employed was followed in a 2011 study published by ALTER, European Journal of Disability Research called “Disabilities through the Capability Approach lens: implications for public policies”.⁸⁹ In that study, persons with disabilities in a small community in Tuscany, Italy, were asked to rate on a five-point rating scale of 0 to 4 how valuable certain indicators of well-being were (capabilities) as well as whether they were indeed enjoying them (functionings). The capability indicators are loosely based on Nussbaum’s list. Figure 11 below reveals the gaps between functionings and capabilities of this particular group at that point in time, providing a very visual understanding of the greatest capability failures in this community and paving the way for more targeted policy-making.

Figure 11. Gaps between capabilities and functionings in a community of persons with disabilities in Tuscany



Source: Trani, Jean-Francois, Bakhshi, Parul, Bellanca, Nicolò, Biggeri, Mario and Marchetta, Francesca (2011) ‘Disabilities through the Capability Approach lens: Implications for public policies’ in ALTER, European Journal of Disability Research 5 (2011) pg.155.

⁸⁹ Trani, Jean-Francois, Bakhshi, Parul, Bellanca, Nicolò, Biggeri, Mario and Marchetta, Francesca (2011) “Disabilities through the Capability Approach lens: Implications for public policies” in ALTER, European Journal of Disability Research 5 (2011) pgs.154-155.

For the purpose of this current study, a survey was designed to determine major gaps between desired capabilities and achieved functionings in two spaces: (a) general well-being to live a life of dignity (survey Set 1), and (b) general well-being compared to others, in other words, equality in well-being (survey Set 2). The latter set is particularly innovative, as it employs the CA to capture multidimensional inequalities by people asking themselves how equally treated they feel compared to others on a number of capability indicators. It sheds light, for the first time, on the linkages between equality, achieved functionings and desired capabilities.

The survey questions in and of themselves were designed by cross-cutting Nussbaum's list of capabilities with several of the targets set out in SDG 10, in addition to other basic human rights principles enshrined in the UN Declaration of Human Rights and other metrics of well-being. Most of SDG 10 indicators included in the survey sets talk about the inclusion of *people* within their own communities, societies and in Lebanon, and also point to Lebanon's inclusion in the international community for the sake of benefitting its inhabitants back home. The capability indicators were written in both survey sets (outlined below) following UN-preferred language, mainly centred on availability, accessibility, affordability and adequacy. Indicators are also highlighted in different colours to help the reader determine their source.

The survey was first administered to understand people's baseline perceptions of their capabilities and their functionings. As such, participants were asked to rate, from 0 to 4, how valuable certain capabilities were to them, in an effort to capture their desired capabilities. Participants were then asked to rate whether they really enjoy such capabilities in their lives. In other words, they were asked to rate, once more from 0 to 4, their achieved functionings. The aim was to make a basic comparison of where people are on a number of well-being indicators compared to where they want to be, based on what is of value to lead a good life. All individual results were computed to get a median, per indicator, in both achieved functioning and in desired capability.

After the administration of all surveys a 30-minute to 1h FGD was coordinated to supplement the findings. The questions for these discussions were also designed to reflect Nussbaum's list, SDG 10 targets and other human rights principles while giving participants the freedom to discuss their greatest concerns and needs. Particular attention was paid to communities' perception of discrimination and inequality while encouraging participants to think about what can be done to make things better.

All survey ratings were based on the following scale:

Capabilities: 0= not at all valuable, 1 = a little valuable, 2 = of neutral/sufficient/average value, 3 = very valuable and 4 = completely valuable.

Functionings: 0= not at all enjoying, 1 = enjoying a little, 2 = enjoying neutral/sufficient/average, 3 = enjoying a lot and 4 = completely enjoying.

1. Survey questions: Set 1 – Well-being

- Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length.
- To live a healthy (both mentally and physically) life.
- To lead a life that is worth living.
- To have available, accessible, affordable and adequate nourishment and clean water.
- To have available, accessible, affordable and adequate healthcare.
- To have available, accessible, affordable and adequate housing and energy resources.
- To move freely from place to place.
- To enjoy safe, regular and responsible migration.

- To be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence.
- To have opportunities for sexual satisfaction.
- To have choice in matters of reproduction.
- To imagine, think and reason.
- To have some form of education or learning.
- To have experiences of one's choice, including religious, literary and musical.
- To enjoy freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech.
- **To have more voice in the decision-making in national and international financial institutions.**
- To enjoy freedom of religious exercise.
- To have pleasurable experiences.
- To engage with a wide range of emotions – including love, grief, longing, gratitude, anger.
- To not have one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety.
- To plan one's life, to decide about everyday activities and one's own future.
- To live with and towards others.
- To lead a life based on self-respect and non-humiliation.
- **To not be discriminated against based on race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste religion and national origin.**
- **To live in a society that has eliminated discriminatory laws, policies and practices.**
- To live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants and the world of nature.
- To laugh, play and enjoy recreational activities.
- To participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life (political participation, protections of free speech and association).
- To hold property (both land and movable goods).
- To have property rights on an equal basis with others.
- To have freedom from unwarranted search and seizure.
- To work as a human being, exercising practical reason and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers.
- **To enjoy social inclusion.**
- **To enjoy economic and financial inclusion.**
- **To secure income growth.**

Nussbaum's List / SDG 10 / UN Declaration of Human Rights

2. Survey questions: Set 2 – Equality

This set presents a new and innovative way forward in integrating the CA further into current discussions on equality. Participants were again asked to rate, on a scale from 0 to 4, how valuable equality was to them in reference to several other indicators. They were then asked to rate whether they felt they were equally treated compared to others in other communities in Lebanon, in other words, to rate their achieved functionings vis-à-vis equality. All ratings are based on the same scale as in the previous set. While Nussbaum's original list does not touch much on equality per se, the following capability indicators would seem needed for people to fulfil the kind of life as stipulated by her "Central Human Capabilities". This survey set was therefore designed by adapting her list to create equality capabilities and was once more integrated with selected SDG 10 targets,

UN human rights principles and other metrics that would seem important for well-being. Only those indicators that are taken directly from SDG 10 are highlighted in colour.

- Gender equality (vis-à-vis decision-making, access to food, water and other resources).
- Equal access to available, affordable and adequate education for all, including primary, secondary and tertiary education.
- Equal access to available, affordable and adequate financial resources for well-being.
- Equal access to available, affordable and adequate basic commodities (particularly food).
- Equal distribution of financial resources and commodities within the household.
- Equal distribution of workloads within the household.
- Equal access to available, affordable and adequate natural resources (oil, gas and water) in Lebanon.
- Equal access to adequate, decent and dignified employment.
- Equal access to available, affordable and adequate housing conditions for all in your community and Lebanon.
- Equal freedom of political self-expression and assembly.
- Equal freedom to exercise religious and cultural choice.
- Equal voice in political processes in Lebanon.
- Equal access to adequate, available and affordable resources for well-being regardless of urban or rural settings.
- Equality in freedom to move and emigrate with no obstacles.
- **Equal access to safe, regular and responsible migration.**
- Equality in decision-making with regards to general health.
- Equal access to available, affordable and adequate healthcare for all.
- Equal access to an adequate social justice system and a fair judiciary.
- Equal opportunities to enter the labour market.
- Equal opportunities to pursue a profession of one's choice.
- Equal access to the same professional opportunities across countries in the Arab world.
- **Equal access to available and adequate resources for the sake of economic inclusion.**
- **Equal access to available and adequate resources to generate individual income growth.**
- Equal access to available, affordable and adequate reproductive healthcare for all women.
- Equal mobile access to public spaces, to ensure spaces are adapted for wheelchair use and other mobile aides.
- Equal access to medical resources to tackle all disabilities, particularly intellectual disabilities.
- Equality in the face of the law, through the elimination of discriminatory laws, policies and practices.
- **Enhanced representation and voice for developing countries like Lebanon in decision-making in global international and economic and financial institutions.**
- **Development assistance from international actors.**

C. PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

1. *Community overview*

The community of persons with disabilities – whether physical, sensory, intellectual or mental – is one of the most marginalized groups in society everywhere. Part of this exclusion is owed to confusion over what a disability encompasses and how to best measure disabilities, as well as manage them. The Washington Group Short Set of questions (WGSS) defines a person with a disability as anyone who selects experiencing the two highest levels “a lot of difficulty” or a state of “cannot do at all” of four levels of difficulty to at least one of the six most basic activities because of a health problem. These activities are: seeing, hearing, mobility,

cognition (including remembering and concentrating), self-care (like dressing and showering) and communicating.⁹⁰ This means that many older people who have developed degenerative diseases should also be classified as having a disability, even when they themselves may associate their difficulties to old age.⁹¹

In the Arab region, disability rates vary greatly, in part due to the lack of robust data and statistics on disability prevalence. Several countries, including Lebanon, have not gathered data on the prevalence and types of disabilities in the country, which is perhaps unsurprising considering Lebanon has neither ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities nor its optional protocol.⁹² Recent figures – taken by following the WRC and UNICEF standards of estimating a 15 per cent of disability prevalence in any one country – would place the number of persons with disabilities in Lebanon at around 900,000.⁹³

Aside from the complicated task of defining disability and counting who has what (disabilities often go unreported due to the stigma attached onto them), people with disabilities in Lebanon and the wider Arab region have faced long-standing discrimination from governments and society at large, whether intended or not. The National Council for Disability Affairs of Lebanon, for instance, is the only focal point charged with implementing specific articles of the Convention. Moreover, people with disabilities in the Arab region report lower educational levels and employment opportunities, as well as greater difficulties in enjoying social inclusion, political participation and ensuring their rights on an equal standing with others.⁹⁴

The SDGs include several links to the Convention, particularly in SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities – with regard to transport systems and road safety; SDG 4 – Quality Education; SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth; and SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals – especially vis-à-vis gathering robust and reliable data on disability types and prevalence.⁹⁵ SDG 10, however, which is all about equality, contains a modest clause on disabilities, limiting the discussion to empowering and promoting social, economic and political inclusion of all, regardless of things like age, sex, race and disability. The protection of women with disabilities in particular, who face even more vulnerabilities, is not emphasized enough.

⁹⁰ ESCWA (2018) *Disability in the Arab Region 2018*, pg.12. Available at: <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/disability-arab-region-2018>.

⁹¹ ESCWA and Washington Group on Disability Statistics (2018) *Regional Guidebook to Improve Disability Data Collection and Analysis in the Arab Countries: Implementing the Washington Group Questions on Functioning*, pg.22. Available at: https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/page_attachments/wg-escwa_guidebook_disability_stat_8may18_final.pdf.

⁹² United Nations (2006) *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Resolution A/RES/61/106*, adopted by the General Assembly on 13 December 2006. Available at: https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_61_106.pdf and United Nations (2006) *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Resolution A/RES/61/106* adopted by the General Assembly on 13 December 2006. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4680d0982.html>.

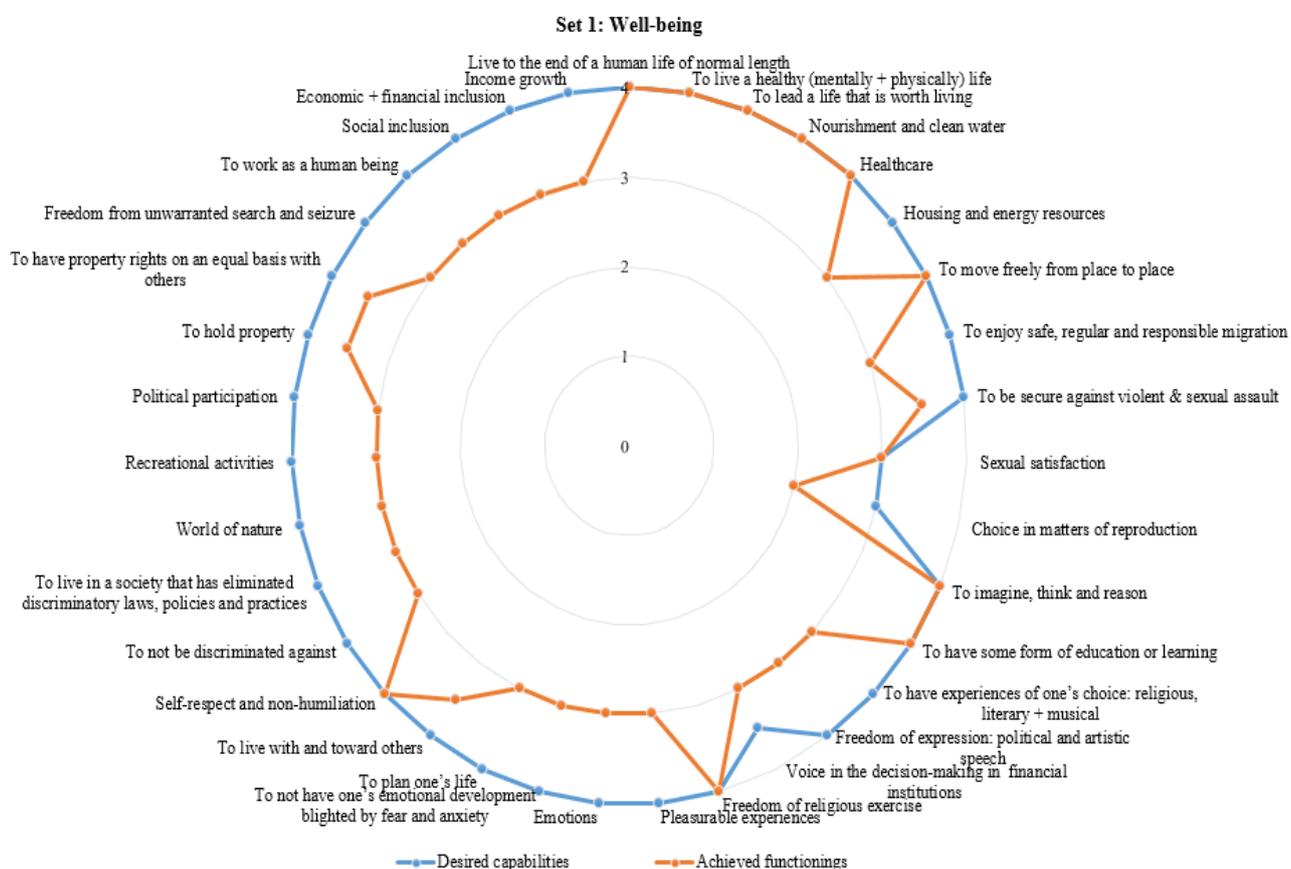
⁹³ Combaz, Emilie (2018) *Situation of persons with disabilities in Lebanon*, K4D Helpdesk service, pgs.11-12, Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5b584da340f0b633af812655/Disability_in_Lebanon.pdf.

⁹⁴ See ESCWA (2018) *Disability in the Arab Region 2018*, pgs.1-174. Available at: <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/disability-arab-region-2018>.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pgs.29-33.

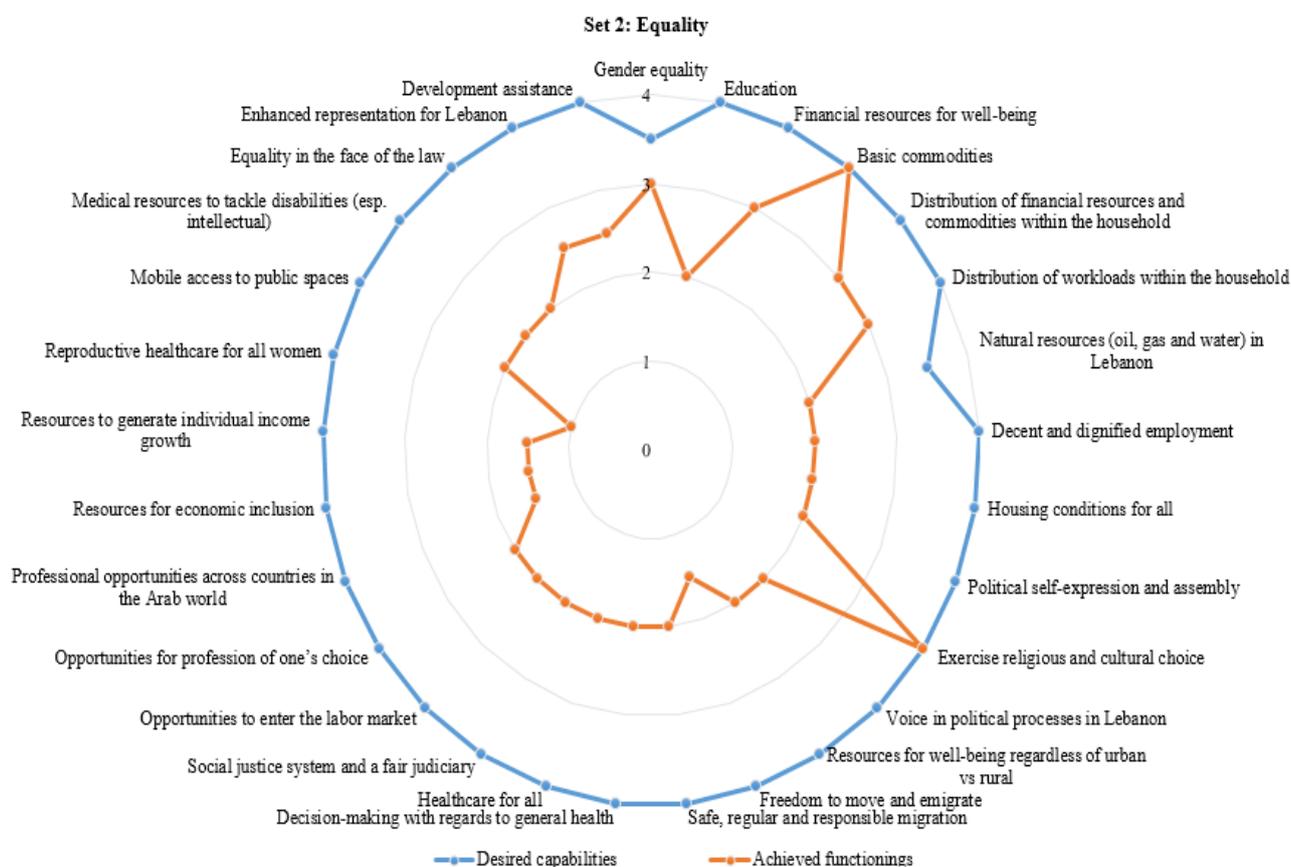
2. Survey results

Figure 12. Persons with disabilities' gaps between desired capabilities and achieved functionings in well-being



At first glance the gap between achieved functionings and desired capabilities in this first set – Well-being – does not appear to be very wide, with most participants reporting that they are enjoying these general states of doing and being “a lot” (a rating of 3). While there is indeed a general capability failure, most achieved functionings fall short of just one value. Several other functionings are met, particularly big ones like “living a healthy (physically and mentally) life” or “having available, accessible, affordable and adequate healthcare” – both of which saw eleven out of fourteen participants rate 3 or 4. The results however need to be taken with a pinch of salt. For one, many participants skipped rating some of the indicators, which were left blank during the computing process. Others wrote the same exact number for all capabilities and functionings. Others used different metrics for evaluation – shifting from Arabic to English numerals inconsistently. Some people wrote illegible numbers – in this case they were left blank during the computing process. For a community that has long faced discrimination, injustice and exclusion in Lebanon, the capability set mentioned above is too optimistic. It does, however, suggest that the lives of people with disabilities in Lebanon are not as precarious as initially thought, though this is most likely due to participants’ home environment and support from family, friends or NGOs and associations like LUPD. More importantly, through this pilot study, such data gives us a real, visual representation of the gaps between where people are with their lives and where they want to be, at least for this particular group of participants.

Figure 13. Persons with disabilities’ gaps between desired capabilities and achieved functionings in equality



Here the gap between functionings and capabilities in Set 2 – Equality – is more pronounced, with most participants reporting enjoying “enough, average or neutral” (a rating of 2) in most functionings when compared to others. In particular, the sharpest gaps include those related to: “equal access to safe, regular and responsible emigration” – seven out of twelve respondents gave a rating of 2 and below; “equal professional opportunities across countries in the Arab world”; “equal access to resources for economic inclusion”; and “equal access to resources to generate individual income growth”. In the latter three, six of twelve respondents rated 1 and below. These are functionings that lie beyond the family environment and other kinds of non-governmental support and that have more to do with the government policies and practices, legislation and the state of the economy. One of the narrowest gaps is on gender equality, a capability that would not seem to be as valuable as the others. Here, seven of thirteen respondents reported enjoying 3 and 4 with regards to this functioning; however, it may have to do with the fact that most of the participants were male (nine out of the total sixteen participants). Finally, some capabilities appear to have been met, particularly: “equal access to available, affordable and adequate basic commodities (particularly food)”, as well as “equal freedom to exercise religious and cultural choice”.

While these results reveal the capability set of a very small sample size at one particular point in time, they provide strong visual representations of some of the major gaps that the community of persons with disabilities at large may be facing and that need to be addressed. Such an approach also allows taking into account personal experiences of multidimensional inequality, compounded by things like age or type of disability. Once more, however, the survey results need to be looked at with further scrutiny. Out of all three participant groups, this one presented the most discrepancies when rating desired capabilities and achieved functionings. The intellectual disabilities of some participants may have affected their capacity to answer questions fully and completely. Indeed, those participants who reported having physical disabilities only gave

more varied ratings and results that are more aligned with the literature on disabilities and what is already known about this community in Lebanon.

3. Focus group discussion results

Main themes

- One participant noted that the capacity to pursue what one values is there; however, the opportunities to do so are not.
- All participants agreed that the main components of inclusion should be equality, non-discrimination and solidarity among all marginalized communities of society.
- There was a lengthy discussion on the fact that the Lebanese government has not yet implemented all the articles of Law 220/2000 for persons with disabilities, particularly Articles 73 and 74 [which define the quota of people with disabilities that must be employed by both the public and the private sector respectively].^a Participants noted that the government must implement the law in its full totality to provide employment opportunities and educational, social, economic and political inclusion to persons with disabilities.
- Participants noted that corruption is the main challenge that the government needs to address. They added that the United Nations and its various bodies and other non-governmental NGOs should implement disability projects themselves instead of handing over the funds to the government, as politicians are not addressing those things that are valuable to this community.
- One participant said that the absence of a public governmental institution dedicated to persons with disabilities means this community needs to conduct regular visits and follow-ups to inform every new minister about their requests and needs.
- Furthermore, it was noted that the government has practically no studies to assess the inclusion of persons with disabilities in social, political and economic life, and has led no efforts to assess the economic benefits of this inclusion.
- One participant also said that the government claims to have no funds for the community even though LUPD submitted a proposal on inclusion in schools that would not require a large budget.
- Overall, it was agreed that better equality would be achieved if there was greater visibility of persons with disabilities, particularly in public spaces, television channels and in the implementation of law 220/2000. Once the government improves the situation of persons with disabilities, it will be working towards greater equality.
- Some participants believed that an increase in personal income does not automatically imply greater equality. One participant believed it did.
- Moreover, participants agreed that Lebanon's enhanced representation at an international level would improve the situation of persons with disabilities; however, participants did not believe improving the lives of persons with disabilities is a priority in the country.
- Participants noted that improving the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions would strengthen the implementation of disability-friendly policies and laws at home.
- Participants added that the government and its relevant stakeholders must implement the objectives agreed with the United Nations, in particular, Goals 5, 8 and 10 of the SDGs.
- Some solutions proposed by participants included: putting pressure on the government by disseminating information and awareness-raising through seminars, social media, demonstrations, leaflets and pamphlets.

^a International Labour Organization Regional Office for Arab States (2015) *Emerging good practices related to the training and job placement of persons with disabilities in Lebanon*, pg. 30. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_232973.pdf.

The FGD supports many conclusions in the Set 2 survey – Equality – mainly, that generating economic opportunities for persons with disabilities – both in Lebanon and beyond – and their financial inclusion is a matter of utmost priority. According to the participants, this can be achieved primarily through the

implementation of laws and greater government involvement – through policies, studies and institutions to protect the rights of persons with disabilities. When asked whether they thought a growing role for Lebanon in the international space would improve the situation of persons with disabilities within the country, the participants noted the change must happen within first. Only then can the country’s role on the international stage be additionally helpful. Overall, the discussion was centred on the rights of persons with disabilities, with little said about how nationality, age, gender and a host of other variables affect this community and can increase inequalities further. The main consensus was that lack of employment opportunities and protection under the law are the two main drivers of inequality for persons with disabilities in Lebanon.

D. EDUCATED YOUTH

1. *Community overview*

Young people aged 15 to 29 in the Arab region account for one-third of the total population.⁹⁶ That is over 105 million people facing major socio-economic challenges, mainly, integration, inclusion and drastic unemployment rates. As of 2018, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has estimated that Lebanon faces a 6.167 per cent unemployment rate.⁹⁷ The ILO also places female unemployment at 9.4 per cent, while male unemployment stands at 5 per cent. The latest values discerning the unemployment rates of the total labour force with advanced education were made in 2007. Back then, 11 per cent of males and 11 per cent of females with advanced education were unemployed.⁹⁸

In 2017, unemployment rates in Lebanon of people between the ages of 15 and 24 stood at 16.5 per cent⁹⁹. The story reflects a worrying trend also seen in other MENA countries, most of which face about 15 per cent lower employment rates compared to other countries with similar levels of income.¹⁰⁰ The overall unemployment rate in Lebanon has also been exasperated by the influx of Syrian refugees, many of whom are youth. A World Bank report in 2017 estimated that between 250,000 and 300,000 unskilled youth in Lebanon became unemployed as a result of the refugee situation.¹⁰¹

Economic stagnation, frustration vis-à-vis widespread corruption and heavily regulated patriarchal social and political structures and institutions have caused dissatisfaction and resentment among this demographic group in Lebanon and the wider Arab region. Furthermore, while educated youth, in particular, would seem to have socio-economic advantages to them – certainly compared to youth that are not educated or who have secondary or primary education only– this community reports low perceptions of life control (freedom to decide the course of one’s life) while placing a high value on autonomy.

Part of this has to do specifically with stagnant economic opportunities, an issue being addressed by the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). In June 2018 the Ministry launched the

⁹⁶ UNDP (2016) *Arab Human Development Report 2016: Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality*, pg.16. Available at: <http://www.arab-hdr.org/reports/2016/english/ExecutiveENG.pdf>.

⁹⁷ The World Bank Data (April 2019) *Lebanon unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate)*. Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS?locations=LB>. Accessed on 08/07/2019.

⁹⁸ The World Bank Data (April 2019) *Lebanon unemployment with advanced education (% of total labor force with advanced education)*. Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.ADVN.ZS?locations=LB>. Accessed on 04/07/2019.

⁹⁹ In Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), (2018) *National Strategic Framework for Technical Vocational Education and Training in Lebanon 2018-2022*, pg. 10. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_633487.pdf.

¹⁰⁰ Dadush, Uri, OCP Policy Center (2018) *Policy Paper: Youth Unemployment in the Middle East & North Africa, and the Moroccan case*, pg.10. Available at: <https://www.policycenter.ma/sites/default/files/OCP-PP-18-12.pdf>.

¹⁰¹ In Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), (2018) *National Strategic Framework for Technical Vocational Education and Training in Lebanon 2018-2022*, pg. 10. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_633487.pdf.

National Strategic Framework for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) 2018-2022 to tackle the fact that “the Lebanese economy does not generate a sufficient number of high-skill jobs to absorb university graduates.”¹⁰²

2. Survey results

Figure 14. Educated young peoples’ gaps between desired capabilities and achieved functionings in well-being

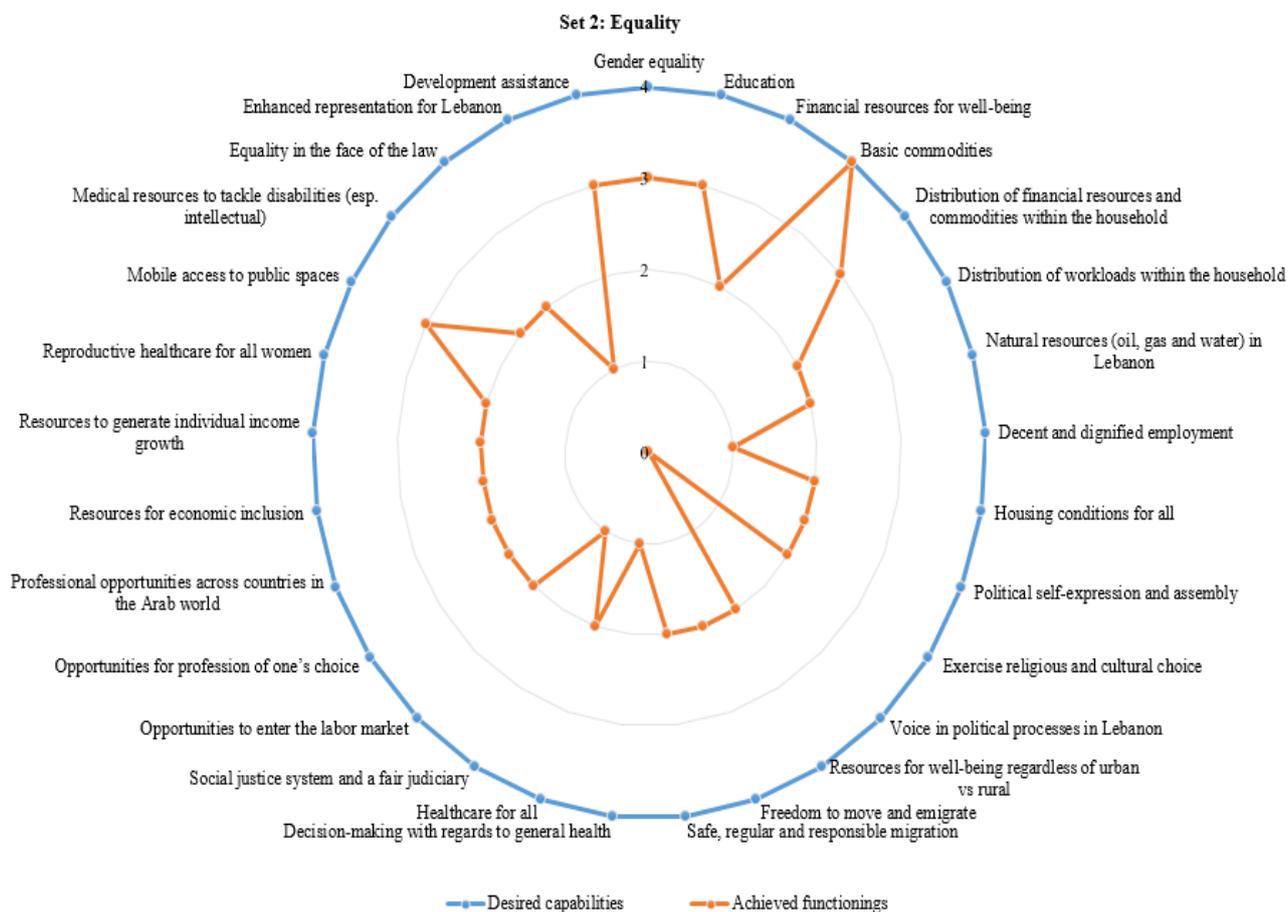


The educated youth group in survey Set 1 – Well-being – presents capability failure in all indicators except for “to have some form of education or learning”, “to have experiences of one’s choice” and “to have adequate, accessible, affordable and available nourishment and clean water”. Some of the most glaring gaps – where capabilities are valued at 4, yet functionings are experienced at 1 – include: “to have more voice in the decision-making in national and international financial institutions” – three participants of seven rated 0, three participants rated 1 and one participant rated 3 – “living in a society that has eliminated discriminatory laws, policies and practices” – where two people rated 0, two rated 1, two rated 2 and one rated 3 (both of these are SDG 10 targets) – and “holding property” – in this case, one participant gave a rating of 0, three rated 1, one rated 3 and two rated 4. Interestingly the latter is one of the greatest capability failures for this group, a largely unattainable capability due to the limited employment opportunities and the expense of housing and real estate in Lebanon. Another interesting observation is that while the individuals in this group do not think they are being discriminated against much (with a median rate of 3), they still experience a median value of 1 when it comes to living in a society that has eliminated discriminatory laws, policies and practices. Other capabilities, such as “engage with a whole range of emotions”, “to imagine, think and reason” or “to work as a human being”

¹⁰² Ibid., pg. 10.

underperform when they should be met at a 4 for a highly educated group (and would, therefore, seem to have greater equality of opportunity and of outcome than others who are not educated).

Figure 15. Educated young people’s gaps between desired capabilities and achieved functionings in equality



Here, too, Set 2 – Equality – shows lower performance than in Set 1 – Well-being – and even greater capability failure. This group feels they are not enjoying any equal voice in political processes in Lebanon, and this is not surprising as the voting age is 21 and six of the seven participants were aged 20. This group are enjoying very little in terms of: “equality in access to adequate, decent and dignified employment” – where six of seven participants rated 1 –, “equality in decision-making with regards to general health” – where three participants rated 0, two rated 1, one rated 2 and one rated 4 –, “equal access to an adequate social justice system and a fair judiciary” – six of seven participants gave a rating of 1 or 0 –, and “enhanced representation and voice for Lebanon in decision-making in global international and economic and financial institutions” (an SDG 10 target) – where five out of seven participants gave a rating of 1 or 0. Similar to the group of persons with disabilities, the gap between functionings and capabilities with regard to equality is narrower than the gap between functionings and capabilities that speak only to individual well-being. This would suggest that while one may feel their life is going in a particular direction, it is generally going in a worse direction compared to others. Some participants in this group noted, however, that they were leading a life better than others and that this state of inequality is wrong.

3. Focus group discussion results

Main themes

- The participants started by stating that income inequality is a huge problem, yet many people think it is not.
- They were greatly opposed to what they described as a “patriarchal mentality” where women:
 - Have less legal access to credit;
 - Face discriminatory laws - particularly as women cannot pass on their Lebanese citizenship;
 - Are still largely told they must obey their husbands;
 - Lack access to decision-making in all spheres;
 - Are deemed “too emotional”.

According to participants, all these make women second-class citizens.

- There was a big discussion about illegal abortions. One participant noted that the government tends to ignore abortions in private, specialized clinics for upper-class Lebanese citizens. Furthermore, there was criticism that there is practically no sex education by the Ministry of Education as is regarded as a big taboo subject. One participant added that religious rules and traditions are incorporated into the decision-making process regarding this topic.
- It was noted that one of the major barriers to employment is "wasta", a form of nepotism that is deeply entrenched in Lebanese society and that offers employment opportunities based on personal connections, rather than expertise or merit. The group concluded that clientelism and wealth, rather than expertise and qualifications, are the two main drivers to secure jobs. Moreover, it was agreed that students who have to work part-time to support themselves are at a disadvantage when pursuing other opportunities; the start-up scene, for instance, is one for wealthy people, those who have the time and the resources to dedicate themselves to a venture that may fail. One participant noted that there are no job opportunities for people working on environmental health and awareness because the government does not set a budget for the agricultural sector.
- According to participants, unequal access to education – public or private – is another major problem in Lebanon. One Syrian participant noted that there are great problems to register at schools, especially for non-Lebanese. Furthermore, participants noted that the passport one carries, as well as one’s family name (which may be blacklisted), can create more or fewer employment opportunities. One Syrian participant added that many politicians are against Syrians finding work in Lebanon.
- Participants agreed that proper education – which builds up critical thinking – is crucial to hold governments accountable, to engage with political decision-makers and to revise policies. Furthermore, the participants noted that proper implementation of the Freedom of Information Act is central to transparency and to involve citizens in the accountability process. They added that there is a need for a strong government that can supply its residents with what they need.
- It was noted that access to public healthcare is very crucial. If people cannot afford their healthcare, this can be life-threatening.
- Participants added that the situation in Lebanon revolves around making money just to survive and agreed on the need to raise salaries. One participant noted that families need US\$4000 per month, but most are getting US\$600. They noted that the economic situation will become worse and that there are not enough resources to implement and follow-up on the needed changes.
- One participant said that it is vital for young people to be able to afford housing. Being able to buy a property of one’s own builds character. It is empowering and provides a sense of security.
- Participants argued that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have been pushing for unfriendly policies in Lebanon. Instead, there should be greater cooperation with countries in the same socio-economic situation to advance progress and further development.
- Some solutions proposed by participants included: greater transparency, reform of welfare policies, progressive taxation and a combination of bottom-up and top-down applications to ensure their implementation. They added that there is a need for youth to solve some of the most pressing issues in Lebanon today.

The conversation here has become one of the general criticisms of the general state of things in Lebanon for everyone rather than just for young, educated people. That criticism was directed towards the underlying structures in place that create and exacerbate inequalities, like “wasta”. This group also showed the most considerable opposition towards gender inequality – even though five of the seven participants were male – and against the double standards imposed on women, particularly with reproductive healthcare. Furthermore, adequate, available, affordable and accessible healthcare and education were seen as significant pillars to improve people’s lives in Lebanon and to reduce inequalities. Education, in particular, is vital for building a society that can hold its government accountable and engage in the policy-making process.

It should be noted that the AUB Secular Club is particularly attuned to many of the social inequalities in Lebanon today, and therefore should not be taken to be representative of what the majority of educated youth think. As one participant put it, “we are aware of the problems, and we want to talk about them. Other students would not be as interested.” They also noted differences between upper-class students and those with scholarships, adding that the latter may be more inclined to talk about these issues. Overall, participants were aware of the intersectionality in the inequalities people in Lebanon experience. One of them noted that “we need interaction between all the different causes and social issues. This is where real change can happen.”

E. VULNERABLE WOMEN FROM SYRIA, LEBANON AND IRAQ

1. Community overview

Poor and/or displaced women face multidimensional vulnerabilities, compounded by their gender, their displaced status and their living conditions. As of June 2019, 23.7 per cent or 220,032 of the Syrian refugees registered by UNHCR in Lebanon are women aged 18–59.¹⁰³ When included with girls, teenagers and older persons, women make up 50.5 per cent of the registered Syrian refugee population living in Lebanon. Most of them fall within the 20–29 age bracket.¹⁰⁴

Key issues this community faces are unemployment and gender-based violence – not just limited to sexual assault and physical aggression, but also psychological violence, denial of services or access to resources.¹⁰⁵ Female heads of households in Lebanon, who do not have a husband or another relative male living with them report higher incidences of harassment and assault.¹⁰⁶ In addition, 45 per cent of Syrian refugee female-headed households live in non-permanent and non-residential shelters compared to 33 per cent of male-headed households,¹⁰⁷ exposing them further to GBV and exacerbating inequalities. GBV is also worsened by the fact that Syrian women do not tend to report cases of sexual harassment and assault for fear of getting into trouble with local authorities over their often invalid residence permits.¹⁰⁸ Besides, 61 per cent of Syrian refugee women are unemployed compared to 35 per cent of men.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³ UNHCR (June 2019) *Syria Regional Refugee Response: Lebanon*. Available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/71>. Accessed on 30/07/19.

¹⁰⁴ UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and Inter-Agency Coordination Lebanon (2018) *VASyR 2018 Vulnerability of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*, pg.147, Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/lb/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2018/12/VASyR-2018.pdf>.

¹⁰⁵ UNHCR (2016) *SGBV Prevention and Response Training Package*, pg.15. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/583577ed4>.

¹⁰⁶ Amnesty International (2016) “*I want a safe place*”: *Refugee women from Syria uprooted and unprotected in Lebanon*, pg. 45. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/i-want-a-safe-place.pdf>.

¹⁰⁷ UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and Inter-Agency Coordination Lebanon (2018) *VASyR 2018 Vulnerability of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*, pg.6, Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/lb/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2018/12/VASyR-2018.pdf>,pg.6.

¹⁰⁸ Amnesty International (2016) “*I want a safe place: Refugee women from Syria uprooted and unprotected in Lebanon*”, pg. 52. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/i-want-a-safe-place.pdf>.

¹⁰⁹ UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and Inter-Agency Coordination Lebanon (2018) *VASyR 2018 Vulnerability of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*, pg.6, Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/lb/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2018/12/VASyR-2018.pdf>, pg.6.

By spring 2017, 70 per cent of Syrian refugees in Lebanon were living below the national poverty line of \$4 per day,¹¹⁰ leading to a proliferation of negative coping strategies – actions and thoughts employed to deal with a stressful situation – related to food and livelihood insecurity. These have largely become gendered, with a higher prevalence in female-headed households, as stressed by a UNHCR report issued in December 2018.

Table 2. Adoption of coping strategies by gender

	Female-headed Households	Male-headed Households
Food-related coping strategies		
Restricted consumption of female members	13%	9%
Borrowed food	53%	38%
Reduced number of meals per day	62%	56%
Livelihood-related coping strategies		
Withdrew children from schools	17%	12%
Had school children involved income generation	7%	5%
Moved to cheaper accommodations	17%	14%

Source: UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and Inter-Agency Coordination Lebanon (2018) VASyR 2018 Vulnerability of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, pg.6, Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/lb/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2018/12/VASyR-2018.pdf>, pg.148.

The pressure of the Syrian refugee crisis on Lebanon has been felt at its worst in border areas and the poorest parts of the country, increasing the socio-economic vulnerability of both the hosted and the hosts,¹¹¹ most notably Lebanese themselves and previously displaced people from places like Palestine and Iraq. This has no doubt exacerbated gender inequalities in a country currently ranked tenth to last in the world for gender gaps by the most recent World Economic Forum Gender Gap Report.¹¹² Furthermore, this continues to be the case despite widespread development and humanitarian aid going to Lebanon (for 2019 UNHCR has a budget of \$562 million, even though only 9 per cent – \$52 million– of it had been funded by February 2019).¹¹³ Much of this aid is targeted towards reproductive healthcare, the fight against violence and discrimination and community empowerment. The transfer of yearly funds to address the situation of Syrians has often been at the expense of vulnerable Lebanese women who are equally needy of such aid.

¹¹⁰ De Bel Air, Françoise, Robert Schuman Centre For Advanced Studies and the European University Institute (2017), *Policy Brief Migration Profile: Lebanon*, pg. 5, Available at: http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/46504/RSCAS_PB_2017_12_MPC.pdf?sequence=1.

¹¹¹ Truppa, Claudia; Leresche, Enrica; Fuller, Arlan; Marnicio, Ariana; Abisaab, Josyann; El Hayek, Nicole; Zmeter, Carla; Toma, Warda; Harb, Hilda; Hamadeh, Randa and Leaning, Jennifer (2019) “Utilization of primary health care services among Syrian refugee and Lebanese women targeted by the IRC program in Lebanon: a cross-sectional study” in *Conflict and Health*, 13:7, pg. 2, Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/s13031-019-0190-4.pdf>.

¹¹² World Economic Forum (2018) *The Global Gender Gap Report*, pg. 8, Available at: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018.pdf.

¹¹³ UNHCR (February 2019) *Fact Sheet: Lebanon*, pg. 1. Available at: <http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20Lebanon%20Fact%20Sheet%20-%20February%202019.pdf>.

2. Survey results

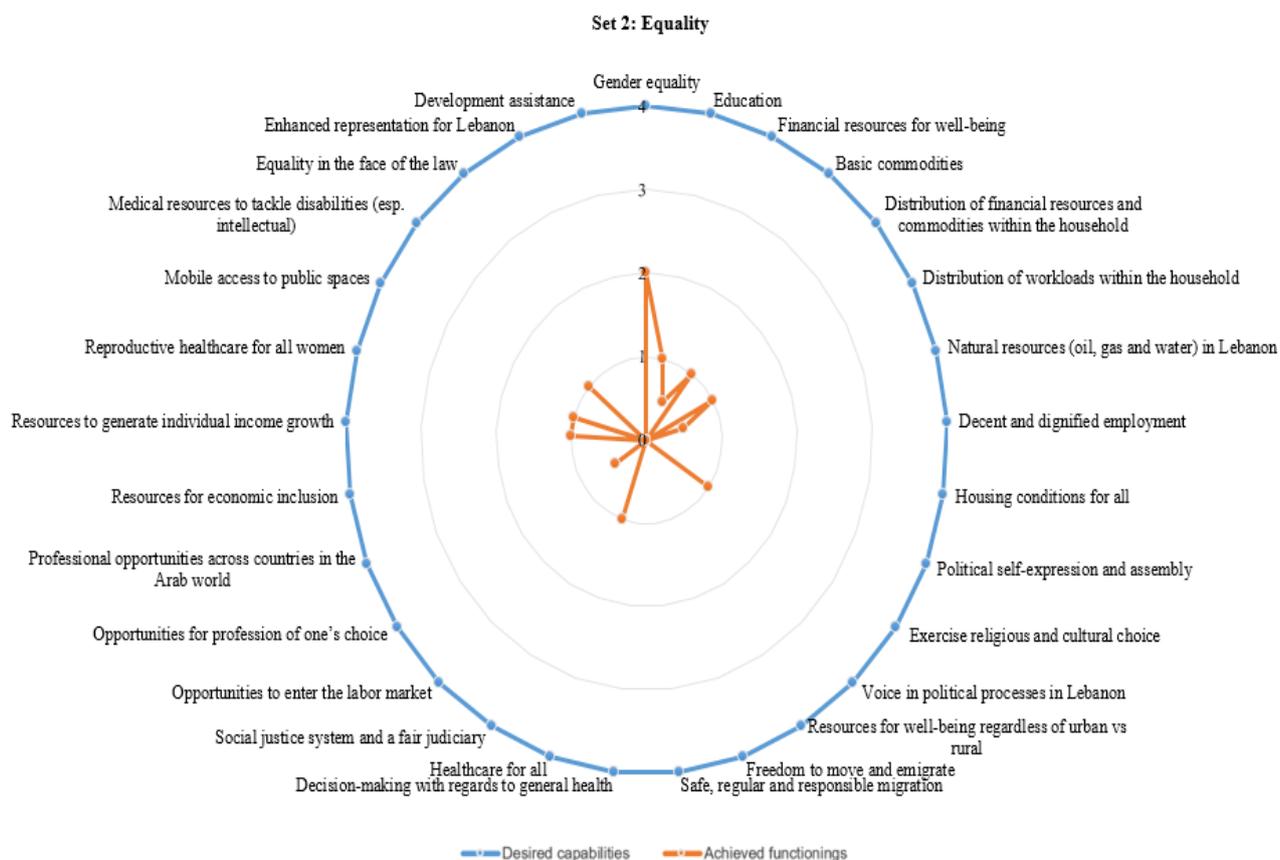
Figure 16. Vulnerable women's gaps between desired capabilities and achieved functionings in well-being



The vulnerable women group in Set 1 – Well-being – experience acute capability failure, with most achieved functionings rarely passing beyond 2, the average/neutral/enough bar. The data reveals some startling gaps, reporting the functioning of “living to the end of human life of normal length” at 0. In this instance, six participants reported they were not enjoying this capability at all, while four participants noted they were enjoying it “a little”. Similar results are to be found with other capability indicators whose median resulted in 0. These include: “to move freely from place to place”, “to enjoy safe, regular and responsible migration”, “to be secure against violent and sexual assault”, “to have a voice in the decision-making in national and international financial institutions”, “to live in a society that has eliminated discriminatory laws, policies and practices”, “to have freedom from unwarranted search and seizure” and “to secure income growth”. Interestingly enough some of these acute capability failures are also failures for the educated youth group.

The narrower capability gaps are found in “to imagine, think and reason”, “to have some form of education or learning”, “to have experiences of one’s choice” and “to live a life of emotions”. Furthermore, and as outlined earlier in this study, the CA allows us to discern those states of doing and being that are of more or less value. For this group, to have the opportunities for sexual satisfaction and to hold property are not as valuable as all the other indicators, despite the fact that the gap between those achieved functionings and desired capabilities remains very large. The results, complemented by the focus group discussion, serve to confirm the desperate life that vulnerable women – particularly Syrians – lead, and the great work that remains to be done to narrow such gaps.

Figure 17. Vulnerable women's gaps between desired capabilities and achieved functionings in equality



Here the capability failure in Set 2 – Equality – for vulnerable women is even more desperately acute. Glaringly, seven of the twenty-nine capability indicators on equality are valued at 4 yet experienced at 0, when most of them relate to equality in access to basic things that are needed to lead a good life that is worthy of dignity. Furthermore, three capability indicators – “equal access to available, affordable and adequate financial resources for well-being”; “equal access to available, affordable and adequate natural resources (oil, gas and water) in Lebanon” ; and “equal opportunities to pursue a profession of one’s choice” – are experienced at 0.5. Eight indicators were given a rating of 1 and only one indicator – gender inequality – was given a rating of 2. Interestingly, this indicator – the only one that just about manages to scratch the surface of what is considered enough, average or neutral – outperforms all others when gender is known to be a cause of great inequalities, particularly among displaced people. This would suggest that the capability failure of this particular group is not understood, by the group itself, as being a product of gender, but by a host of other variables, most notably their displaced status or lower economic background.

Once more, as seen in the persons with disabilities group and the educated youth community, the data makes clear that the attainment of capabilities and functionings in one’s life is one thing, while the attainment of individual capabilities and functionings *compared to others* is quite a different thing. The latter underperforms significantly and showcases the importance of addressing inequality in a conclusive and multidimensional manner, even if participants themselves seem unaware of how their own circumstances, in this case gender, exacerbate such inequalities. The capability failure here is the worst in all six sets, an unacceptable reality that needs to be treated as a matter of emergency.

3. Focus group discussion results

Main themes

- Participants argued that oppression, inequalities and injustices stem from laws. Syrian participants in particular noted that there is no freedom of movement and that there is no residence or living permits. This carries the risk of being stopped on the streets on their way back and forth to work and be deported to the border with Syria. They also pointed out that Syrians cannot work legally. They proposed government incentives for the private sector prompting enterprises to hire Syrians (similar to policies in countries such as Turkey).
- Participants added that, in a very recent move, the government is stopping young women and men from working, when this is an essential source of income for their families. Both the Lebanese and the Syrian participants noted that even if their children go to university, they may face discrimination based on their religion or political views. Participants noted that their sons at university are often pressured to join certain political groups and parties in Lebanon and beyond.
- Syrian participants noted that they have nowhere to go. They added that they cannot return to Syria because there is a risk that their sons over the age of 18 are taken at the border to join the army, with no clarity regarding whom they will fight against or where they will be taken. They noted that they had heard rumours that the war is coming back. They also mentioned other reasons for which they cannot go back to Syria, which include: a) the fact that some places are still very unsafe; b) Damascus has socio-economic problems too, and c) there is discrimination in Damascus against people who live in the villages. They noted that going back to Syria – where they have the chance to rebuild their lives – is the only source of hope; however, this is beyond them.
- One Iraqi participant noted that the Lebanese community sympathizes with refugees, but outside NGOs such as Amel Association International indicate there is no inclusion. She noted that Amel is teaching them skills to become entrepreneurs, but they have no opportunities to put these skills into practice because the government is not allowing them to run businesses.
- Syrian and Iraqi participants noted that living in Lebanon does bring with it some advantages. Women here work, and this has inspired them to become more liberated and pursue work of their own, especially as their income contribution is necessary. They noted that their husbands found it difficult at first to accept that their wives had to work outside the house, but there was no other choice.
- One Iraqi participant noted that she did not want to go back to Iraq out of risking her son being recruited by the army or kidnapped for organ harvesting, which she said was a new trend in Baghdad.
- Syrian participants noted that it was better for 15-year-old girls to get married than to be kidnapped, brainwashed by extremist groups on social media or sexually assaulted.
- All participants noted that hospitalization is a big problem. They added sick patients could be left to die at the hospital door without money or ‘wasta’. One of the participants noted that women are more audacious – raising their voices and demanding their rights – and that hospital admission is more likely in these cases. They also noted that if a patient is Syrian, then their admission is less likely.
- All participants agreed that there is gender inequality at the family and household levels. They added that women work more than men, and when they go out with their friends, they take their children with them. One participant noted that they were so busy working and caring for their children all the time that their life-span would be very short and they would not live past 55.
- Some solutions proposed by participants included: freedom to obtain residency and work permits for women and youth.

The findings from the FGD corroborate those from the surveys. There was little to no conversation of gender per se as a major dimension contributing to their capability failure, aside from inequalities that result from women doing much of the housework and taking primary responsibility for caring for their children. This particular group of women did not perceive gender as a main source of their acute capability failure and instead attributed their situation to unsustainable government policies, few employment opportunities and the uncertainty brought by possible unwarranted search and seizure. Furthermore, much of their capability set is

also aggravated by being in a constant state of anxiety about their family and children, decreasing their daily well-being and preventing them from making decisions like returning to Syria.

While living in Lebanon is a source of acute capability failure, this is still understood as more desirable than the risk of returning to Syria. Interestingly, while this group's capability set is reduced due to the pressures of day jobs and uneven distribution of workloads at home, work has value to this group for the freedom and liberation it provides them away from their husbands. This example shows that the attainment of one functioning may reduce the chances of attaining another, a trade-off based on what is considered more or less valuable to lead one's life. Finally, while the FGD included vulnerable Lebanese women too, the conversation ended up mostly about the experiences of Syrian and Iraqi refugees. The Lebanese women however tended to agree with statements by their colleagues and also felt that discriminatory laws and practices, as well as lack of employment opportunities, presented great impediments to the realization of their own capability sets.

V. CONCLUSIONS

“While there is ground for optimism that the gaps are narrowing, disparities in people’s well-being are still unacceptably wide. Inequality in all its forms and dimensions, between and within countries, limits people’s choices and opportunities, withholding progress.”

Selim Jahan, Director of UNDP’s Human Development Report Office, September 2018

A. MAIN CONCLUSIONS

This pilot study offers a small glimpse into how to look at development in terms of capabilities and functionings. These small sample sizes are obviously inconclusive of the real capability sets of all three communities in Lebanon. However, the method presented in this paper demonstrates an innovative way to approach the needs and aspirations of the people for whom the SDGs are designed, particularly those who have been and continue to be excluded. This is an approach that can work on a much larger scale and anywhere in the Arab region. It is a method that has the capacity to really reveal some of the key gaps between where people are and where they want to be. It presents a way to implement the SDGs in the most targeted way possible by searching to reduce such gaps.

All three groups experienced capability failure on practically all levels – from healthcare to education, to living a life of emotions and enjoying political participation – and some groups experienced this failure more acutely than others. They all attributed their inequality in opportunities and in outcomes to the Lebanese government and to its policies, laws and practices that are perceived to be discriminatory. Other things such as ‘wasta’ and national origin were cited as additional major aggravators of inequality, particularly in finding and securing employment. Surprisingly, Lebanon’s weak economy or the volatile nature of global financial markets were not cited as forces that are compounding these inequalities. The general sensation was that inequalities in Lebanese society are often times promoted by the government’s non-inclusive and discriminatory laws and policies.

One of the other main observations in this study is that capability sets tend to be poorer when compared to the capability sets of the general well-being of others. In other words, all three groups experience capability failure, yet this failure is even more acute when they compare their living standards and well-being to that of others. This corroborates the notion that reducing inequality – especially in the face of the law – is of crucial value to these communities, something that national policies should try to address as soon as possible. In fact, across all groups, some of the greatest capability failures were SDG 10 targets that seek to promote the inclusion and participation of all – both nationally and internationally. The SDG 10 targets are therefore of importance to these communities and governments and states should start making active efforts to narrow the gaps between SDG 10-based desired capabilities and achieved functionings.

From a methodological perspective, the surveys allowed a very visual representation of these groups’ capability sets while the FGDs enabled each group to set their priorities and provide suggestions on how the Lebanese government can address them. These discussions have shown that different development objectives are given different weights or values, depending on the individual or community. Fighting gender inequality, for instance, was not a dimension deemed to be a priority for persons with disabilities or vulnerable women, both of which were preoccupied with other dimensions of inequality perpetuated by legislation and discriminatory policies. For the educated youth, however, gender equality was of absolute importance. It is safe to deduce that individuals and communities only have the time, energy and resources they have to address some inequalities in their lives, and therefore select – whether consciously or unconsciously – the ones that are of most importance or of value to them.

From a theoretical point of view, the CA helps us to address development as a process of freedom for people to choose the lives they want to lead and allows us to view development as an overlapping process that

combines material and non-material well-being conclusively and coherently. It enables us to look at the SDGs targets and indicators and ask about the good they do for human beings. What good is there in increasing representation and voice of developing countries like Lebanon in decision-making in the global international economic and financial institutions, if this enhanced representation does not have an impact on the ground? How can we counteract the fact that increasing the median income of vulnerable women may create unequal income distributions in the household or an increase in unsustainable workloads and therefore a degradation in mental health and emotional well-being? What is the point in securing more employment opportunities for educated youth if this does not bring about active policy efforts to limit the impacts of ‘wasta’ and eliminate national origin discrimination? While the CA cannot answer all these questions, it does raise important discussions on how to reduce inequalities in an integrated way.

The pilot study has revealed how SDG 10, reducing inequalities within and between countries, can benefit from the CA approach that reflects people’s needs and aspirations, a fight that must go beyond what has already been considered a priority. This is important because inequality is not only related to income or access to resources but also comes in the form of emotional inequality, well-being inequality and inequality in access to specific commodities, etc. Syrian refugees in this study, for instance, feel a lot of fear and anxiety over the possibility of their deportation or the possibility of their adult sons may be recruited to join certain political groups during their study, something the group of persons with disabilities has not experienced. For educated youth, the ability to afford a home of their own can create a sense of security and empowerment, a capability that should be encouraged for their emotional well-being and increased equality of autonomy.

Using the CA as an applied research method has other advantages, i.e. it allows greater agency in the development process, enabling people to discern their own priorities and how they fit in within their wider communities. This agency can increase equality in autonomy, and, fundamentally, equality of opportunity and outcome. Furthermore, if development policies and practices are based on what people actually value, they are likely to be actively implemented by civil society itself. Given governments alone cannot bear the full responsibility of implementing the 2030 Agenda, society also has a collective responsibility to make this happen. This is likely if the 2030 Agenda is participatory-based, inclusive and reflective of what people value. It also relieves some of the pressure on governments by placing some of the responsibility in the hands of the people themselves.

B. OTHER MAJOR THEMES

In addition, ensuring a commitment to the SDG framework is merely incompatible with discriminatory laws, policies and practices, particularly for non-residents or non-citizens living in the country. The SDGs are for everyone, and this commitment needs to be reflected on non-Lebanese people too. For Lebanon in particular – currently hosting 1.5 million Syrian refugees, over 180,000 Palestinian refugees¹¹⁴ and 250,000 migrant domestic workers¹¹⁵ – dismissing these communities is simply impractical. This is true for all other countries in the Arab region whose laws, policies and practices are not favourable towards its non-citizens, non-residents or refugees.

¹¹⁴ Lebanon Humanitarian Fund (2018) *Annual Report 2018*, pg. 7. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Lebanon%20HF%20Annual%20Report%202018.pdf>. UNRWA states the number of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is 400,000, though this is based on an outdated portal entry made in 2014 that likely included Syrian Palestinians, dual Lebanese and Palestinians, etc in UNRWA (2014) *Lebanon: Facts and Figures*. Available at: <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon>. A recent estimate by the Government of Lebanon put the total number of Palestinian refugees in the country at 208,800, in UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon and Government of Lebanon (2019), *Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017-2020 (2019 update)*. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/67780.pdf>.

¹¹⁵ Human Rights Watch (2018) *Lebanon: Migrant Worker’s Abuse Account*. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/04/06/lebanon-migrant-workers-abuse-account>.

On nationality, in particular, the Arab region is the most unequal when it comes to passport indices, with Gulf countries taking top spots in the world (the Emirati passport is the most powerful in the globe) and the Levant and conflict-ridden countries ranking lowest in the world.¹¹⁶ In essence, what passport people hold determines the countries they can travel to, the available services and where they may migrate for work, further deepening the already persistent inequalities in the region. As such, nationality-based discrimination continues to be a common phenomenon that greatly affects inequality of opportunity. If we consider freedom of movement and freedom to choose decent employment as capabilities people have reason to value, then eliminating nationality-based discrimination is an important issue that needs to be further addressed in SDG 10.

Finally, there has been endless literature accounting for the fact that Syrian refugees in host countries like Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey do indeed want to return home; however, they also need to return to the basic conditions: safety and security, to be achieved through a stable political transition.¹¹⁷ Fears of military arrests, conscriptions and corruption have also created a well-documented climate of fear.¹¹⁸ In this environment, and until a viable political transition to be found, states must act upon their commitments to international law, so Syrian refugees are able to enjoy their basic human rights while working with relevant partners to mitigate the current situation and enable refugees to return home.

¹¹⁶ Passport Index (2019) *Global Passport Power Rank 2019*. Available at: <https://www.passportindex.org/byRank.php>.

¹¹⁷ Carnegie Middle East Center (2018) *Unheard voices: what Syrian refugees need to return home*, Brief, pg. 1. Available at: https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Yahya_Unheard_Voices_Brief_Final.pdf.

¹¹⁸ Cornish, Chloe and Khattab, Asser (July 2019) “Climate of Fear deters Syrian refugees from returning home” in *Financial Times*. Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/630b11f8-9d9a-11e9-b8ce-8b459ed04726>.

VI. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

A. GROUP-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT

Persons with disabilities

1. Ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol.
2. Implement Law 2000/20 in its complete and full totality.
3. Set up an institutional body charged with tracking the implementation of the Law.
4. Allocate a budget dedicated to implementing projects proposed by civil society groups to include persons with disabilities in daily social life and decrease exclusion.
5. Promote awareness-raising campaigns to educate people on disabilities, by supporting civil society activities, including educating on disabilities in public school curricula, and building the capacities of persons with disabilities during the implementation of such laws and policy efforts.

Educated youth

1. Lower the voting age from 21 to 18. If this is not politically feasible, create lasting relationships with youth groups such as the AUB Secular Club to establish continued dialogue and ensure young people's voices are heard.
2. Foster youth capacity-building outside of academic settings, by engaging them in political processes and inviting them to voice their concerns with key members of parliament, including through 'Youth Days', where youth are invited to speak about the most pressing issues of the day and promote involvement in international platforms such as the UN Youth Delegate Programme.
3. Ensure greater transparency in government bodies and institutions, mainly through the Right of Information Act, and implement policies to eliminate corruption and nepotism.
4. Reform welfare policies to provide citizens and non-citizens with what they need to lead a dignified life. In particular, eliminating gender inequalities that are embedded in the law.
5. Reform the current tax system in favour of progressive taxation that is able to benefit the most excluded communities in Lebanon.

Vulnerable women from Syria, Lebanon and Iraq

1. Clarify the procedures by which to secure residence allowance, and, in the interim, implement policies that allow Syrian refugees to enjoy their basic human rights.
2. Reform socio-economic policies to create job opportunities for vulnerable women, including refugees, as per established national laws.
3. Implement awareness campaigns aimed at promoting gender equality (both within and outside the household) and at reducing gender-based violence, assault and exploitation.
4. Eliminate discriminatory policies forcing unwarranted searches and seizures as well as violations of the concept of non-refoulement.

5. Commit to working with NGOs and other civil society actors that actively address the needs and concerns of vulnerable women through capacity-building partnerships and the provision of institutional and financial support. Such organizations are very well placed to understand local communities and therefore provide a meeting point by which government policies can be turned into practice.

B. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL ESCWA MEMBER STATES

ESCWA member states seeking to implement the SDG agenda should look to narrow the gap between people's achieved functionings and their desired capabilities. While the SDGs aim to bring people's capabilities to a value of "4", we must first start by reducing the largest capability failures. To this end, it is recommended that ESCWA member states:

1. Get regular statistical updates on poverty rates, vulnerability based on gender, disability prevalence and youth unemployment. This may involve reinvigorating the institutions and bodies tasked with collecting, managing and classifying population data.
2. Conduct regular large-scale surveys with some of the most excluded social groups in the country to measure gaps between desired capabilities and achieved functionings. These can be based on Professor Martha Nussbaum's capabilities list, the SDGs themselves and other human rights principles as enshrined in the UN Declaration of Human Rights.
3. Identify areas requiring more attention and track progress based on such surveys. These groups include but are not limited to: persons with disabilities, youth in general (whether educated or not), vulnerable women, migrant domestic workers, people living in rural and often time poorer and neglected areas, older people and victims of war and conflict, including internally displaced persons, refugees and asylum seekers.
4. Hold regular consultations with leading NGOs and civil society actors working directly with these communities, to identify those states of doing and being that are of value to them and address the best ways to achieve such needs, particularly at a legislative level.
5. Create participatory partnerships with civil society to activate social involvement and implement the Sustainable Agenda.
6. Design and execute capacity building programmes and platforms to work with civil groups and other institutions, in an effort to enable the empowerment and agency of the most disadvantaged communities while governments identify the greatest capability gaps in their countries.
7. Eliminate discriminatory policies and practices that seriously disadvantage the economic, political and social inclusion of these vulnerable groups, particularly nationality-based discriminatory policies. This also requires the formulation of new human rights-based laws that are inclusive of all in the country.
8. Raise awareness of the needs and priorities of such communities in the rest of society, so that the fight for such inclusive laws and policy actions not only come from the most marginalized communities but also are the desire of other, less vulnerable groups. This will also have the effect of increasing collective responsibility in securing sustainable development outcomes.



