



**AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY
OF BEIRUT**

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The American University of Beirut and the Malala Fund hold policy forum and launch campaign for girl education

The Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship at the American University of Beirut (AUB), in partnership with the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at AUB and the Malala Fund, held a high-level policy forum to discuss an ongoing project for setting an inclusive framework for human security and social justice within the restructuring and reform plan of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Government of Lebanon. The discussion that took place this March, centered around education as an equalizer and enabler for social justice and human security and raised awareness on the importance of girl education.

Participants discussed the main findings of a research report that was conducted by the Asfari Institute. The report highlights the main challenges the education sector is facing; the gendered impact of these challenges on women, girls, and vulnerable communities; and offers policy recommendations that prioritize financing and reforming the education sector promoted as an essential pillar of social justice. The policy forum addressed the recommendations laid out in the report as well as the right mechanisms to implement them in the Lebanese context.

The policy forum was also the launching ground for a national social media campaign that emphasizes the right of girls to education as a fundamental factor for achieving social justice, human security, and gender equality.

The event gathered concerned stakeholders and decision-makers, representatives from the IMF, civil society organizations, and attendees from the different realms of advocacy.

American University of Beirut

PO Box 11-0236, Riad El Solh, Beirut 1107 2020, Lebanon
T +961 1 35 00 00 – Ext 2650 | communications@aub.edu.lb

aub.edu.lb

It engaged them discussions about the new social contract and the impact of restructuring programs on social sectors, and most particularly, on education. The event also invited all relevant stakeholders to adopt an inclusive, equitable, intersectional, and transformational approach while implementing national recovery programs.

More on the issue at hand

The burden of the economic crisis in Lebanon is being disproportionately carried by vulnerable groups, namely women and girls. In 2021, 82 percent of Lebanon's residents were living in multidimensional poverty, especially due to the government's measures on rolling back subsidies and social safety nets. With the multiple crises witnessed, adolescents and mainly girls, are facing major restrictions on their movement and access to public services such as education. Towards this end, the Lebanese government sought the financial and technical assistance of the IMF to regain the trust of the Lebanese people and bring back the confidence of the international community.

Even though IMF austerity may lead to adverse effects on financing the education sector, which could impact the overall quality of education, providing national budget fiscal space and gender budgeting are among the approaches that are usually taken by governments to target gender gaps through the alignment of resources for this objective. Any recovery plan that fails to promote education as a social equalizer and enabler might jeopardize long-term prospects of sustainable recovery and social peace, in addition to economic development. Policy recommendations in Lebanon should center on the principles of equity and intersectionality to cater to the needs of the most vulnerable groups, particularly women and girls.

ENDS

For more information please contact:

Simon Kachar, PhD

Interim Director of the Office of Communications
Director of News and Media Relations

T +961 1 37 43 74 - Ext: 2676 | **M** +961 3 42 70 24
sk158@aub.edu.lb

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Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 800 full-time faculty members and a student body of over 8000 students. AUB currently offers more than 120 programs leading to bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full-service 365-bed hospital.

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