



Roundtable Discussion

Combating Sexual Harassment at the Workplace and addressing the main loopholes in existing policies in Lebanon in times of war and crises

Thursday 31st of October 2024,

Time: 3:30pm

Zoom Platform to register | you need to click on this link and register to receive your personalized zoom link.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwuduGtpzMtGNzXNFqkJtFFnr0NLoVLbGCE>

The Lebanese League for Women in Business (LLWB) is a non-profit organization founded in 2006. It is a socio-economic, apolitical, non-religious association bringing together professional women and providing them with a platform that aims to support women in business and women in the workforce to “take the lead and succeed”. This is achieved through the design and implementation of development programs, mentorship, and access to funding programs for women entrepreneurs and business owners. LLWB also works in partnership with the private sector as well as with key decision makers in the public sector and partnership with several local and international organizations to achieve its mission. It conducts programs in Beirut, North Lebanon, and Beqaa, and has over 769 members in its network including business owners, employees, entrepreneurs, independent professionals, and students.

In addition, the association operates per four pillars: Transformational Learning and Development, Access to Business Networks, Community Engagement, and Advocacy and Social Change, which dictate the implementation of current and future activities. Through its pillar related to advocacy, and to bring social change, the Lebanese League for Women in Business (LLWB) has been working since 2021 on raising awareness on how to combat sexual harassment. LLWB led several interventions and initiatives on this issue.

Previous Engagement of LLWB in Combating Sexual Harassment at the Workplace:

In May 2021, LLWB partnered with CIBL from AUB and other partners by conducting an executive participatory workshop on the implementation of law number 205/2021: mainly by performing consultations with employers on how to combat Sexual Harassment in the Workplace.

These efforts continued in the framework of the SAWI “Support and Accelerate Women's Inclusion” project LLWB has been and is continuing to work on with its counterparts from AUB to date while working on women recruitment, retention, and promotion.

In October 2021, LLWB published the "Women in the Public Sector Report." It also tackles in one of its chapters the impact of violence, and harassment in the public sector. Moreover, to raise awareness about sexual exploitation and abuse, LLWB conducted training on sexual harassment for trainers from various organizations in addition to 726 beneficiaries under the QEWA project that LLWB led in partnership with UN Women. LLWB has also developed a Training manual on “Combating Sexual Harassment at the Workplace” under the Productive Sector Development Program (PSDP), in collaboration with Seeds for Legal initiatives to equip trainers of different organizations with the tools and knowledge to integrate the principles of combating Harassment in their modules.

In 2024, LLWB continues to work on the substantial challenges Lebanon is facing in achieving gender equality and ensuring human rights at work are implemented, mainly through its work on how to combat Sexual harassment in the workplace and through its work on ensuring gender mainstreaming, diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

In the current context, according to a study conducted by the CAS and the ILO in 2022¹, the female labor participation rate was 22.2 percent and the overall share of women in managerial positions was about 26.7 percent. Furthermore, as per the World Economic Forum's 2024 report [10], Lebanon has only 4.7% of Firms with female majority ownership and 5.9% of Firms with female top managers. While studies reveal that women face various systemic barriers in the workforce, including sexual harassment, implementing effective measures to address sexual harassment and ensure a safe work environment is essential. Such actions are crucial for overcoming these challenges and increasing women's participation in the workforce. In that regard, the Lebanese parliament has enacted law number 205 dated 21 December 2020 on the criminalization of sexual Harassment and rehabilitation of its victims which not only criminalizes sexual harassment but considers its occurrence within a subordination or a working relationship as aggravating circumstances and prohibits any retaliation measure against the victim or reporting actors. However, the provisions of the law do not secure sufficient protection against sexual harassment in the workplace. Indeed, the law does not provide for specific obligations for the employer to abide by to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace nor does it ensure proper remedies for the victims.

The law therefore still falls short of the international standards for combatting sexual harassment in the workplace and Lebanon has yet to ratify the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention No. 190 (2019).

In light of the pressing need for reform to efficiently combat violence and harassment at work and in collaboration with KAS (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung), LLWB will organize a roundtable discussion in October 2024. This initiative utilizes a participatory approach to address the impact of compounded crises mainly the current war on women's economic rights and women-led businesses in Lebanon. The program targets both formal and informal sectors, intending to propose inclusive and gender-aware amendments for policies and/or procedures.

This roundtable will be moderated by LLWB and led by an expert in public policies, who will later develop a policy brief based on the recommendations of the roundtable that LLWB could use when conducting its advocacy and lobbying mission.

Objectives

The objectives of the round table are the following:

- Discuss a shared reform vision with all relevant stakeholders to amend the public policy on economic violence, particularly sexual harassment, and develop practical tools to enable women's participation in the economic cycle considering law No.205 and the Convention on Violence.
- Emphasize the importance of creating parallel pathways for developing Law No. 205 on sexual harassment and victim support by advocating and calling on the government to ratify the ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment No. 190 and its accompanying Recommendation No. 206, contributing to an improved legislative environment for combating harassment and violence at work.

Targeted Audience

The round table will involve key sectors in Lebanon including the following:

- Government representatives
- Syndicates
- The private sector including women-led MSMEs
- Civil society organizations from various backgrounds, fields, and regions in Lebanon.
- Academic experts

Expected outcomes

The expected outcomes from the round table and discussions are:

- Enhance policy reforms that create a more supportive environment for women in the economic sector.
- Increase awareness and ongoing advocacy for policy reforms aimed at nurturing a gender-supportive environment for women-owned MSMEs.

- Advocate to combating sexual harassment in the workplace and ensure a workplace free of violence. Due to the current war, this concept note was amended, to include the impact of the war on the advocacy theme related to how to enhance the combat on PSEA during time of crises and war.

Topics

The round table will cover several key topics, including:

- The reality and challenges of Law No. 205 on sexual harassment and victim support;
- Interaction of existing laws with Law No. 205, such as the Labor Law and Penal Code;
- The importance of ratifying the ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment No. 190 and its accompanying Recommendation No. 206.

Date And location

The panel discussion will be held in Arabic online over Zoom at 3.30 PM on Thursday, October 31, 2024.

Agenda

15:30- 15:45 Welcoming and Introduction Presentation of the meeting and expected Outcomes.

(By LLWB and KAS)

15:45- 16: 15 Presentation of the reality of the 205 sexual harassment law and its implication on women, from a gender Lens, how to amend it, and how to advocate and lobby for Lebanon to ratify Convention 190 and its Recommendation 206.

16:30 – 17:00 Open discussion: Main recommendations from the participants on what to amend the labor law from a gender perspective and Practical steps that can support the formalization process of having a workplace free of violence and harassment mainly during time of war and crises

17:00- 17:30 Concluding remarks and way forward and Networking

**We look forward to your participation, please register on Zoom to receive the link directly from the platform.
Thank you**