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AMERICAN UNIVERISTY OF BEIRUT

**Female Academic Role Model Empowerment, Equality and Sustainability at
Universities in Mediterranean Region: towards 2030 Agenda – FREE**

**Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education
598524-EPP-1-2018-1-ES-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP**



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1. Introduction

The significance of gender equality is that if 50 % of human beings are not contributing effectively to different social, economic, professional and political aspects of life, then this society is not fully or effectively employing or achieving its full potential.

According to the Global Gender Gap report published by the World Economic Forum, Western Europe has a gender gap of 25%, leaving North America behind with a gap of 28%, and Latin America and the Caribbean with a gap of 29.8%. The East Asia and the Pacific region has a record a gender gap of 31.7%, and 32.4 %; and South Asia with a gap of 34%. Most significantly for the purpose of this project the Middle East scores a continuing gap of slightly less than 40%. It is estimated that the overall gender gap can be closed in 157 years in the Middle East and North Africa (1).

Research indicates that economic gender equality would result in significant economic benefits. According to the global gender gap report index 2017, the economic participation and opportunity sub- index, 13 countries have closed more than 80% of the gender gap, while 18 counties have closed less than 50% of the gender gap in this sub index. Thirteen out these 18 countries are from the MENA region, with Lebanon ranking at 133 and closing 44% of its gender gap, Jordan ranks 138 closing less than 38% of its gender gap and Syria at the very bottom of the list ranking 144 out of 144 closing less than 28% of its gender gap (1).

Women's access to educational opportunities has been limited. Most organizations in the region are run by men and a strong bias against hiring females has not yet subsided. This is exacerbated by a weak legal structure that does not protect against prejudice either in terms of such laws being passed in the first place, or in terms of these being seriously implemented. Moreover, women have less control over financial and economic resources, in addition to technical know-how, which makes it difficult to advance in their career. Women's rights to work in the Arab world vary greatly from one country to another. Women are often punished indirectly for their reproductive role due to labour laws that do not accommodate potential and new mothers.

The exclusion of women from senior levels of management is not a sustainable practice for HEI nor beneficial to the education of students, specifically female ones. The lack of management development training programs makes it hard for both men and women to develop their career as institution leaders, however, it is specifically



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more difficult for female academics. In our FREE study, we aim to establish a Coordinating Board for Higher Education in Lebanon, Jordan and Syria through empowerment of women in Higher Education (HE). By improving the number of female representation at university boards, FREE aims to promote a culture of gender equality in line with UN vision and agenda of 2030 to achieve sustainable development goals focusing on the 5th goal that is gender equality.

This study is part of Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education - Call for Proposals EAC/A05/2017, 598524-EPP-1-2018-1-ES-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP. The project is entitled Female Academic Role Model Empowerment, Equality and Sustainability at Universities in Mediterranean Region: towards 2030 Agenda – the FREE study.

The project has a national, regional and international scope. Within the national scope the aim of the project is to investigate partnership with universities both public and private. Under this background the project investigates partnership with top national universities from both public and private sectors. Within the regional scope, the project is investigating partnership building with HEI in Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. The project takes into consideration the proximity, cultural resemblances and political background which is also comparable between Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan.

Additionally, the research study aims to develop strategies related to empowering female academics, by identifying training in related fields for project target groups. Research study which aims to investigate female gender equity in education, employment and representation in top levels management in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan.

The international scope of the project is represented with partnership and knowledge transfer of EU partners. The aim of this project is also partnership building with EU Higher Education institutions and research centers. The investigation of the European partners will capitalize on strengths and competitive advantage provided by European Higher Education institutions. The EU institutions provide a significantly competitive advantages to the project by playing major role through knowledge transfer, considerable experience in research and publication, proximity of economic development, training, quality control expertise and project management. Our EU partners include: Universidad Nacional De Educación A Distancia (UNED) and UNIVERSIDAD DE ALICANTE (UA), both in Spain; and Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (VGTU) in Lithuania.

AUB will take active participation with project implementation including preparation: and developing and contributing to research surveys and analysis, as they have substantial experience in tens of projects of relevance to this project. AUB



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will also take significant role in development and training and development for workshops, developing training list. Their expertise in this regard is extensive having worked with the Office of Regional External Programs at the American University of Beirut and the Executive Education Office at the school. AUB will also participate with project dissemination and exploitation in Lebanon, through holding seminars, meetings, conducting workshops, proposing new reform policies. AUB would be able to utilize its extensive network and reach to connect with audiences who would benefit this program or benefit from it.

2. University Profile

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut (AUB), is a private, not-for-profit, coeducational, independent, non-sectarian institution of higher learning operating under a charter from the State of New York and accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. AUB is committed to the ideals of critical thinking, open debate, and diversity. The university's faculty serves over 8,665 students in more than 130 PhD, Master's, and Bachelor's degree programs in a variety of disciplines and fields including Engineering and Architecture; Agricultural and Food Sciences; Health Sciences; Medicine, and Business. The university's beautiful 60.9 acre campus overlooking the Mediterranean Sea contains 64 buildings, including a Medical Center (420 beds), four libraries, three museums, the Charles W. Hostler Student Center (athletics), two art galleries, seven dormitories, athletic fields, and numerous gardens. AUB has more than 64,000 alumni residing in more than 120 countries worldwide. Additional information is available at www.aub.edu.lb.

The University is governed by an autonomous Board of Trustees and since its founding, AUB has set standards in higher education worldwide. The University provides a rigorous curriculum in the American style liberal arts and the language of instruction is English. The University stresses high academic standards and is committed to the ideals of critical thinking, open debate, and diversity. AUB is a coeducational institution that is open to all qualified students without regards to race, religion, economic status, or political affiliation. The University places a high premium on developing a student's appreciation of, and responsibility to, his/her respective society and culture. The primary region served by the American University of Beirut is the Arabic-speaking world, although a fair number of international students usually enroll at the University.

The University currently employs 1,200 instructional faculty, 508 of which are women. It boasts a total of 9,408 students from 89 countries almost equally divided between



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males and females – 52% females. The AUB campus employs 1,200 individuals; 508 are women and the medical center employs 3,235 individuals of which 1,684 are women.

3. Description of Higher Education at Country level

Higher Education and employment in Lebanon, despite the social freedoms that are found, still suffers from great disparity between men and women in terms of labour participation and earned income. Yet problems in education touch both genders. A report by BankMed Education report (2014) shows that the spending on education in Lebanon is dismal at 1.6% (2). There are arguments to show that women suffer more than men in terms of educational attainment in Lebanon. Higher education institutions enrol more females than males (54% compared to 46%), yet this is not translated into opportunities in the workplace, whether in the public or the private sector. The Lebanese University has even higher rates, 65% for females versus 35% for males. There is a striking difference between the improvements in female access to education and their access to the job market.

AUB for example has never had a woman president or provost. It has had very few female deans over the years. It appointed its first female dean of arts & sciences in 2016 after 150 years. Yet AUB has been improving significantly in terms of hiring females for its academic and non-academic staff. The same cannot be said about other institutions.

4. Lives of women in academia

AUB, one of the largest employers in the country, is active in addressing gender inequality in the workplace through initiatives, policies and procedures. For example, “female faculty members are entitled to a one-semester maternity leave, and their promotion deadline is extended by one year for each child, unless the faculty member chooses to opt out of this benefit. However, challenges remain for women faculty at AUB, partly due to the compounded effect of societal expectations typical of the region¹”.

In fact, the university established the Taskforce on Lives and Careers of Women Faculty at AUB in 2015 addressing gender inequalities among faculty members and improving the lives of female academicians. AUB President communicated the strategic importance of the university supporting women’s careers and well-being on campus in a communication to the university community

AUB has already made genuine strides in instituting changes to improve gender equity among faculty. It has offered leadership positions to women, including one VP, three female Associate Provosts, two female academic

¹ https://www.aub.edu.lb/selfstudy/Documents/Self-Study_Report.pdf



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Deans, several female Unit Directors and Associate Deans, and many female Department Chairs. AUB has introduced a one semester maternity leave allowing women faculty to devote uninterrupted time for early infant care during their family building phase. AUB has recently established a faculty committee to study faculty compensations giving due attention to gender discrepancies. Yet, a lot remains unknown about the level and type of gender inequity and there are real differences between the aspirations and perceptions of women and men on AUB's campus. The key focus of this task force will be female faculty but this is only the initial phase, which will facilitate and pave the way for similar work on the status of female staff and students at AUB.

This Taskforce was transformed into a permanent standing committee for all Women at AUB in 2018. Its vision aims to “support and advance women at AUB by furthering the professional development and leadership capabilities of female faculty, staff, and students through concrete proposals and initiatives”.³ This is an example of efforts to enhance the work experience of female staff and faculty. The university has developed policies addressing sexual and other discriminatory harassment in order to promote a safe and ethical work and academic environment in which members of the AUB community, including students, faculty, staff, alumni, trainees, visitors, and patients, are free from discrimination and harassment of all kinds.⁴²

AUB's women empowering initiatives not only address female employees, but also empower women within the Lebanese society. AUB's Knowledge is Power project (KIP), established in 2015, created a platform for different stakeholders working on women issues. It has received great support from the Lebanese youth in various universities. KIP has also launched campaigns to raise awareness against harassment among them #notyourashta and the #meshbasita hashtags on social media. These campaigns witnessed positive responses and engagement of women worldwide, along with national and international media coverage.⁵ Furthermore, KIP is generating data to better understand the situation and to give evidence-based recommendations through producing research on women and harassment in the workplace.³

The report by the taskforce was submitted to the President in December 2016. Below are a few highlights.

² <https://ifiaub.wordpress.com/2019/05/10/lebanese-women-from-university-to-the-work-place/>

³ <https://ifiaub.wordpress.com/2019/05/10/lebanese-women-from-university-to-the-work-place/>



5. Report on women faculty at AUB

Representation

Women constitute between 21% and 32% of all professorial track members with lower proportions for full professors and higher for assistant and associate professors.

	Full time	Part-time	Total
Instructional faculty	914	286	1,200
Female faculty	367	141	508
Male faculty	547	145	692

Leadership

Women comprise about 20% of leadership positions at AUB. Yet “Women’s leadership participation rate exceeds (or is relatively comparable to) that of their percentage representation in fulltime professorial ranks in four faculties, and is less in three faculties.

Work satisfaction:

34% of female assistant professors were highly satisfied in their jobs compared 17% of male assistant professors.

54% of female assistant professors were satisfied to some extent in their jobs compared 65% of male assistant professors.

35% of female associate professors were highly satisfied in their jobs compared 13% of male associate professors.

50% of female associate professors were satisfied to some extent in their jobs compared 72% of male associate professors.

50% of female full professors were highly satisfied in their jobs compared 61% of male full professors.

28% of female assistant professors were satisfied to some extent in their jobs compared 28% of male full professors.



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Childcare responsibilities

More than 45% of women have primary or co-primary child-care responsibilities compared to about 32% for men.

Work-Life balance

68% of women reported having to miss family responsibilities due to work obligations compared to 64% of men.

22% of women reported having to miss work obligations due to family responsibilities compared to 23% of men.

Work Environment

40% of women reported that they strongly agree that women have equal opportunity to express their voice compared to 68% of men.

Well-being

53% of women reported often feeling stressed compared to 38% of men.

Harassment

While percentages were very low for both sexes, a higher percentage of women experienced verbal comments, professional exclusion, unwanted physical contact, and sexual misconduct. A higher percentage for males experienced written comments.

According to the taskforce report “majority of faculty members (80% men and 74% women) were aware of the existence of AUB policies on harassment and discrimination.”

AUB encourages a diverse student body and workforce, and is committed to the principle of equal opportunity in education and employment. Consistent with this commitment and with Lebanese, U.S., and other applicable laws, it is the policy of AUB not to tolerate any kind of discrimination, discriminatory harassment, or sexual harassment misconduct (as described in the policies) and to provide those who feel they are victims of any kind of discriminatory harassment (including sexual harassment) with mechanisms for seeking redress, as described in the procedures.

Consistent with Title IX of the US Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits sex discrimination in education and interprets sex discrimination as including sexual harassment and sexual violence, AUB maintains an Equity/Title IX Coordinator in the Office of the President. The office is also supported by a network of faculty and staff members including an Advisory Council, Title IX Deputies, and qualified Panel



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Members for formal investigations. Members of the network are certified by the Association of Title IX Administrators (ATIXA).

According to the self-study report “the 2014-15 COS, the majority of students were satisfied with freedom from harassment on campus. Furthermore, a high proportion of the students who responded to the survey agreed to a great extent that the faculty/school in which they studied was equally supportive of women and men.”⁴

Maternity Leave

According to the taskforce report, the maternity leave policy at AUB is progressive, ranking in the top 11, when compared to other 21 American Institutions benchmarked in the Tufts’ 2012 Taskforce on Work/Life Balance. AUB has an “opt-out” policy whereby women faculty members are automatically given promotion extensions of one year.

Other

AUB strives to support women’s well-being whether faculty, staff or students. On interesting area is its promotion of women in sports after it initiated women’s rugby and, more recently, a league in women’s handball that other universities are now joining. Thirty varsity teams with 513 AUB student athletes for both men and women (313 men and 200 women) compete in league and championship tournaments throughout the year, locally as well as internationally⁵.

⁴ https://www.aub.edu.lb/selfstudy/Documents/Self-Study_Report.pdf

⁵ https://www.aub.edu.lb/selfstudy/Documents/Self-Study_Report.pdf