

Report of the Civil Society National Consultation on Social protection in Lebanon



Beirut

February 02, 2024



Background

Since before its independence, Lebanon has adopted a “political sectarianism” system. From an economic standpoint, a capitalist (neoliberal) market economy was adopted, and the state’s economic role has been limited compared to other Arab countries. With regards to social protection, the relevant state institutions and related laws were introduced in the 1960s (for example, the National Social Security Fund and cooperatives). There have been no fundamental changes in the social protection system in Lebanon since the end of the civil war up to the present time. Today, the system is characterized by a high degree of fragmentation and weak coordination and integration.

Historically, Lebanon’s social protection system has been based on the following components and functions:

- 1.** Contribution-based social insurance is the primary form of social protection in Lebanon, which includes the public sector and the formal private sector, with disparity in benefits in terms of components (for example, the retirement system is limited to the public sector only) and in terms of the size of benefits. Public and private social insurance institutions also play an important role, along with private insurance companies and mutual funds for some social groups.
- 2.** The political regime's philosophy is based on a limited role for the state. As such, the state’s role in social protection has been limited to social assistance interventions for specific poor or vulnerable groups through the Ministry of Social Affairs and a partial contribution to health coverage for the uninsured, financed through taxes, budget allocations, and loans from international organizations. No significant programs have been funded or managed by the state or public institutions.
- 3.** Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) have played a crucial role in social protection over the past decades. They provide services through funding from the Ministry of Social Affairs budget rather than the Ministry itself providing these services, with their role expanding during the civil war due to the weakness of the state. Their role in social protection has continued after the war and they have been significantly active in times of emergency response (for example, during Israeli attacks on Lebanon), the port explosion, the crisis that erupted in 2019. In addition, there is a preference among donors to rely on NGOs instead of government authorities due to lack of trust in government institutions.
- 4.** International organizations have intervened successively and widely, such as UNRWA's support to Palestinian refugees since the 1950s, the World Bank's introduction of safety nets for the poor since 2011, and the various UN agencies since the beginning of the Syrian crisis. This has led to the introduction of a targeting system, humanitarian aid, and different mechanisms of social protection, such as cash transfers, ration cards, and other methods used by international organizations.

This historical context has led to a social protection system composed of multiple layers and aligned programs that operate almost independently of one another. These programs are fragmented, lack coordination and integration, and are characterized by several problems: partial coverage despite the diversity, the impact of clientelism on interventions and programs, as is common in all other sectors, and corruption. In addition, the system lacks a rights-based approach.

For decades, this system has covered about half of the population with social insurance (as described above), while the rest of the population remained deprived of it, especially traditionally disadvantaged groups such as informal workers, agricultural workers, domestic workers, self-employed workers, refugees, and foreign workers.¹ In addition, there is no unemployment compensation or retirement pensions except for in the public sector. The attempt to activate insurance for work accidents and occupational diseases has failed. The absence of these components is not due to a lack of resources (the average per capita share of GDP is higher than in most non-oil Arab countries). Instead, it is due to a political decision linked to the nature of the state and the failure to implement the law establishing the National Social Security Fund since its establishment in the 1960s.

The onset of the economic and financial crisis in 2019 caused a significant disruption in state institutions and agencies' work and a significant increase in reliance on international organizations for financing and managing social protection related interventions. The crisis also led to a dramatic collapse in the provision of essential services (electricity and water) and in the depreciation of the exchange rate of the Lebanese pound against the dollar (with the lira losing more than 95% of its purchasing value),² leading to a significant erosion in the actual value of benefits provided by the various components of the social protection system. While relevant institutions still provide benefits to participants and those covered, the actual value of these benefits has become very low.

Due to this absence of proper social policies and inefficient social spending in Lebanon, most of the population has been left without any protection amidst Lebanon's multiple crises: the Beirut port blast, COVID-19 pandemic, and economic and financial crisis. Most households are now living below the poverty line, unable to cover the cost of basic needs and are left vulnerable in the face of unexpected spending such as health.³ Vulnerable households face food insecurity, are forced to forgo healthcare or remove their children from schools, or to work under dire or exploitative conditions to make ends meet. Furthermore, the situation has forced people to resort to unconventional methods to cover their most basic needs.⁴ A recent study found that approximately 40% of participants did not benefit from any type of coverage while only 29.3% of participants benefited from at least one type of social protection coverage.⁵ What protection has been provided by the government has been through two social safety net programs: an emergency social safety net, and basic cash transfers to a limited number of eligible households. With the cost of living increasing significantly, families have also had to rely on other types of "safety nets," most notably migrant remittances and NGO aid.

¹United Nations. (2022). Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier De Schutter

²Human Rights Watch. (2023). Lebanon Events of 2022. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/lebanon>

³ESCWA. 2021. "Multidimensional poverty in Lebanon (2019-2021) Painful reality and uncertain prospects."

⁴ESCWA. 2021. "Multidimensional poverty in Lebanon (2019-2021) Painful reality and uncertain prospects."

⁵Hariri, N. (2023). "Unprotected: Survey report on the challenges of the current social protection system in Lebanon amidst the crisis." Beirut: Center for Social Sciences Research and Action.

In January 2022, and upon the request of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Social Policy, and led by the Ministry of Social Affairs, a National Social Protection Strategy for Lebanon was co-developed by Beyond Group, with technical support from UNICEF, and the ILO, and funding from the European Union and the Government of the Netherlands. The strategy was developed through a consultative process including national civil society and other relevant stakeholders. The plan was launched in February of 2024, with some amendments, including amending the language to cover only citizens. The strategy uses rights-based language and covers five main pillars: 1) social assistance, 2) social insurance, 3) social welfare, 4) employment opportunities for the most vulnerable, and 5) financial support for access to education and health, towards universal social protection. The strategy also includes mechanisms to address some of the main problems in Lebanon's current social protection system, including ensuring that the approach to development is coordinated and involves all relevant stakeholders, including non-governmental stakeholders.⁶

Despite the urgency of the situation, implementation of the recently proposed National Social Protection Strategy has been slow. Most recent developments in this direction include the amendment of the communities covered by the proposed strategy; while the parliament has passed social security reforms which include a law that establishes a comprehensive pension system for private sector workers,⁷ far from the plan's aim to secure universal social protection.

Against this background, ANND has been engaged with Oxfam in a project titled "Regional CSO Initiative for Equitable Financing in MENA" with the objective to influence the decision-making process toward more equitable international financing for economic recovery in the MENA region through sustainable joint civil society action on debt, austerity, and inequality in general. More specifically, this project aims at developing a social protection monitor for the following seven countries: Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Iraq, Yemen, and Jordan with the objective to have in place a comparative tool for civil society organizations (CSOs) in the MENA region allowing them to engage in an informed and inclusive dialogue around social protection.

In line with this work on social protection, ANND has also been engaged in a project titled "Garnering support for Lebanon's National Social Protection Strategy," with the support of the MENASP-CP project at Bath University, aiming to identify the steps and reforms needed to implement efficient social protection policies, and strengthen support for Lebanon's National Social Protection Strategy to alleviate the repercussions of the country's multiple crises and to prevent instability.

Within the framework of these projects, the Arab NGO Network for Development convened a national consultation among relevant stakeholders and colleagues to:

- Present and discuss ANND's social protection monitor, its associated index and engage in a discussion around Lebanon's Social Protection policy paper with the objective to incorporate recommendations and feedback from relevant CSO actors.

⁶International Labor Organization. (2024). The Government of Lebanon Launches its first National Social Protection Strategy.

⁷United Nations. (2023). "Lebanon adopts landmark social security reforms and a new pension system for private sector workers."

- Identify ongoing efforts and discuss the enablers and necessary steps to strengthen support for Lebanon's National Social Protection Strategy among relevant stakeholders.

The national consultation was held in Beirut on Friday, February 2, 2024. The agenda for the workshop can be found in Annex 1. The consultation was attended by over 30 participants representing international and local organizations and was joined by members of the parliament, representatives of civil society organizations (including local non-governmental organizations, trade unions, and the private sector), and representatives of international organizations.

Opening Session

Ziad Abdel Samad, Executive Director of the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), began his opening remarks by welcoming the attendees and shared the objectives of the consultation, focusing on social protection as a social justice issue and its relation to public policies. He then stressed the consultative nature of the meeting, underscoring the importance of holding a dialogue on such a critical topic in the country.

Abdel Samad highlighted that the country's overall condition points to the deterioration of the social situation and further collapse. All reports indicate high rates of poverty, deprivation, unemployment, and a massive concentration of wealth in the hands of a small group. He pointed out the fundamental imbalances in the social protection system, particularly its fragmentation and divergence from the human rights perspective, which diminishes social justice and deepens inequalities. He noted that these problems must be addressed by adopting a solution which encompasses all social groups.

Nevertheless, despite the efforts of multiple stakeholders, a significant number of whom were civil society organizations, to develop a universal, national social protection strategy (NSPS), Lebanon's national strategy for social protection was approved by the Council of Ministers in April 2022, with some fundamental reservations. A ministerial committee was appointed to incorporate observations.⁸ The amended national strategy was approved in December 2023 and officially launched on February 13, 2024, in preparation for its implementation.

Parallel initiatives have also been initiated in Parliament. Historically, the Social Security Law was approved in 1963 by decree of the Presidency of the Republic. However, there was no intention to adopt it, and some branches were neglected (retirement, work accidents, occupational diseases). About a month ago, in December 2023, the House of Representatives approved the replacement of the end-of-service compensation system with the retirement system. Noteworthy that although the Parliament took an important step, this does not mean that this change will be implemented. The matter requires executive decrees, in addition to the challenges of the country's political complexities. Furthermore, universal health coverage (a branch of social security) is also being discussed in Parliament.

⁸Among the committee's reservations was an amendment to cover only Lebanese nationals and a limited group of migrants.

This landscape highlights the confusion caused by the stifling crisis and the lack of public policies that respond to the social situation. ANND is part of a coalition of civil society organizations trying to propose alternatives to social policies. As part of these efforts, ANND proposed developing a monitor to evaluate social protection, including social spending. This effort was initiated because state spending (for most countries in the region) on social policies is lower than international standards. The impact of this spending is also not clear. The monitor developed by ANND not only analyzes spending and its effectiveness but also goes beyond that to evaluate various aspects of the design and performance of social protection systems and the extent of their commitment to a human rights perspective. It is a regional monitor that covers seven countries at this inception stage, including Lebanon. One of the aims of the current workshop is to present the monitor's scientific and technical aspects, indicators, and how they were developed and measured. Our goal is to facilitate work on social protection for all stakeholders. The workshop will also serve as a consultation on the role of civil society in activating the recent changes in Lebanon related to social policy that have been approved.

Session One: Presenting the Social Protection Monitor

The session was presented and moderated by Adib Nehme, ANND's policy advisor, who discussed the social protection monitor developed by ANND for evaluating social protection systems broadly, and spending on social protection.

Nehme kicked off his presentation by highlighting two underlying issues which serve as a starting point for the monitoring of social protection systems:

- Firstly, despite social protection being part of the economic and social policy system, it continues to be treated as a technical issue. On this point, while several stakeholders work on social protection related issues, addressing these issues continues to be undertaken in isolation from other issues,
- Secondly, social protection is a human right for all, and it is of utmost importance to use human rights approach as an underlying system for its assessment. As civil society organizations, our assessment of social protection systems should have high standards.

For a functional purpose, the Social Protection Monitor adopts the following definition of social protection: "a right and a package of policies and programs" aimed at protecting all groups, since certain stakeholders treat social protection as only a tool for the poor.

The monitor identifies four functions of social protection, as follows:

- **Protective function:** alleviating deprivation (social assistance system and social safety nets);

- **Preventive function:** preventing deprivation and enhancing resilience and the ability to withstand shocks (social insurance system);
- **Motivational function:** increasing economic opportunities (empowerment and employment programs);
- **Transformative function:** social justice, inclusion, empowerment, and rights.

Nehme explained that the pilot phase of the monitor included seven countries: Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, and Jordan. In providing an overview of its development, he stressed that from its onset, the monitor was not developed as a statistical exercise but rather as a political and methodological exercise. The monitor is meant to be easy to use and covers the fundamental aspects of the design and performance of the social protection system in each country. Its development was guided by the available evidence (particularly the Commitment to Reducing Inequality Index (CRI) prepared by Oxfam). Moreover, the monitor is meant to be one of several tools for monitoring social protection at the national level.

In developing the index, ANND was interested in assessing several aspects of the social protection system, including equality, aid effectiveness, coverage rates, coverage areas, emergency response flexibility, and others. Three areas and three levels were identified to evaluate the public social protection system: general characteristics of the system, social spending, and coverage are each assessed at the policy, implementation, and results levels, corresponding to nine indicators to be calculated, and aiding in evaluating the system's approach as a whole.

Based on an assessment of the above indicators for Lebanon, the following conclusions can be made:

- At the policy level, the system in Lebanon is fragmented, non-integrated, non-transparent, and not based on a human rights approach.
- There is stagnation at the level of legislation, especially since the constitution is old, plans are nonexistent, and most of the legislation is dated.
- Implementation mechanisms are slightly better due to an institutionalized social insurance system and the improvement of collective safety nets with support from the World Bank compared to the traditional dispersed social assistance system.
- Contribution-based social insurance is the crux of the system in both the public and formal private sectors.
- A large discrepancy exists in terms of benefits and their size (the retirement system is limited to the government sector).

- The private sector plays a vital role for the middle and affluent classes through private insurance companies.
- The regime's philosophy is based on a limited role of the state.
- No significant programs are funded or managed by the state or semi-official institutions.
- NGOs play an essential role in multiple forms. During the civil war, they provided services through the budgets of the Ministry of Social Affairs, replacing state institutions. Their role continued in emergencies, for example, after the port explosion, and during the financial and economic crisis that erupted in 2019 due to donors' preference to rely on NGOs instead of governmental authorities.
- International bodies have an expanding role: UNRWA for Palestinian refugees, the World Bank, and UN organizations, especially UNHCR and UNICEF.

In addition to the above, the financial and economic crisis has greatly affected Lebanon's social protection system in terms of a significant disruption in the work of state institutions and agencies, the collapse of essential services such as electricity and water, the collapse of the Lebanese pound exchange rate (devaluation), and a significant increase in reliance on international organizations. The crisis has led to a very high cost of living and a substantial erosion in the actual value of the benefits provided by the social protection system. The state's measures to address this situation have been improvised and partial, forcing families to rely on other "safety nets," most notably migrant remittances and aid from NGOs.

Based on the findings of the monitor, the key to improving social protection in Lebanon is to curb the "external" factors related to the general crisis in the country so that interventions are not without tangible benefits. This includes:

1. Restraining the collapse of the Lebanese pound and restoring the purchasing power of the Lebanese.
2. Restoring the provision of electricity and water services by the state at prices commensurate with income levels.
3. Restoring the effectiveness and quality of government health services and education.
4. Supporting the state administration and its agencies to return to their regular work.
5. Focusing on immediate intervention to absorb the crisis and its repercussions, since 2019 by expanding the current temporary financial aid system to compensate for the deterioration of income for all groups, unifying the aid mechanism and its size while respecting transparency and good management.

Furthermore, it is necessary to work on shifting to a comprehensive rights-based social protection system, starting from two principles:

1. Firstly, comprehensive coverage is a current necessity since close to 75% of the population needs some form of direct support due to the impact of the current crisis.
2. Secondly, the transition to a comprehensive rights-based coverage system is the natural and future outcome of developing the social protection system.

In addition, chronic issues in Lebanon's social protection system must be addressed, including extending coverage to previously excluded categories (such as informal workers, self-employed workers, agricultural workers, and people with disabilities). The various components of a comprehensive social protection system must also be considered, especially the retirement system and unemployment insurance, and benefiting from international proposals to establish a social protection floor as an entry point to universal coverage.

It is necessary to formulate a national strategy to address the social protection needs of Syrian and Palestinian refugees and foreign (migrant) workers as a complementary part of any national social protection system.

It is also important to emphasize that civil society plays an effective role in social protection in Lebanon, and to work towards establishing an institutionalized social dialogue in which civil society and representatives of other social groups have an influential role as an alternative to the state of political exclusivity in decision-making.

Discussion

Following the presentation, attendees shared their feedback and insights, addressing three main issues: the approach on which the monitor was based (the human rights and comprehensive sectoral and categorical approach), the methodology adopted for its development, and the indicators that comprise the monitor.

The discussion reached the following conclusions:

- The system must be evaluated as a whole, distinguishing between social protection as a system provided by the state through its official institutions and the social protection provided to individuals through insurance, NGO support, and poverty-targeting programs. It is important to consider the many intersections in this type of monitor and focus on results and the system's impact on people's lives.
- Legislation supporting any work and effort on social protection is needed. For example, Article 7 of the Labor Law still excludes several categories of workers, and laws that protect the most vulnerable groups from discrimination are absent.

- Informal work is expanding significantly, meaning many workers and individuals are not covered by any protection systems. The world of work is also witnessing many changes (for example, delivery workers).
- The social protection system must be considered from the perspective of economic and political reform. The country is vulnerable as an entity and a system. It requires a vision in politics when considering the role of civil society.
- A comprehensive and human rights approach is critical. Support and protection must be adapted to the distinct needs and characteristics of different social groups.
- Several cash assistance programs have been developed over the years of implementation, and there is an agreement to continue emergency support programs. Today's trend is to establish protection programs according to what was approved within the strategy. Any improvement to these programs will consider new data on the rise in poverty and fragility indicators. In-kind contributions from the World Bank should be stopped and linked to other pillars, such as reform of the retirement and social security systems.
- The evidence gathered through the monitor meets a basic need, and indicators for monitoring and evaluation are essential. The indicators were indeed divided into policy, implementation, and results levels, but there should be indicators that help determine whether spending (actually) goes to those covered.
- The monitor's conceptual framework should focus more on the state's responsibility for government spending, specifically on social protection, from a rights-based perspective that considers the obligation of social protection to be on the state, not the private sector and NGOs.
- Though public support for goods and services is not included in the monitor's calculation of spending on social protection, it must be considered in the evaluation, especially if it impacts the poor.

Nehme explained the monitor was established as a regional network of national monitors, not only to produce evidence, but to serve as a standard guide, and as one of the tools to evaluate social protection development in countries across the region, allowing comparison between them. It was developed to address the need for civil society to play a role in the available tools of the World Bank, ILO, and ESCWA. As such, this tool or simple guide was developed as an advocacy tool that could be used at the national level. Nehme added that the monitor is still in the development stages and there is a need for an honest, in-depth discussion on fundamental, unresolved issues such as data and statistical aspects, the comprehensiveness of the evaluation, contributions from the private sector and NGOs, and other points, stressing the importance of national sources and their verification during development of the monitor.

Session Two: Role of Civil Society

The session aimed to discuss Lebanon's national social protection strategy through a set of questions posed by ANND's executive director:

- How can civil society actors in Lebanon strengthen political support for implementing the National Social Protection Strategy?
- What steps can civil society actors take to ensure timely and effective strategy implementation to prevent instability and improve social cohesion in Lebanon?
- What are the enabling factors for mobilizing support from policymakers and other relevant stakeholders to implement the National Social Protection Strategy?
- What obstacles and challenges prevent mobilizing the political will and resources needed for a national social protection strategy?

Abdel Samad stressed the importance of civil society engaging with the current practical and implementation paths for social protection and the proposed strategy and not being satisfied with strategic and theoretical directions only. This includes the work being undertaken by the House of Representatives (the retirement system that was approved), the universal health care system that is being discussed, the programs of the Ministry of Social Affairs, the work of Representative Inaya Ezz El-Din on the care economy, and all relevant initiatives coming from all concerned parties.

The discussion addressed several issues, including:

- The need to think about social protection as an introduction to the economic system as it is, precisely the tax system. The question of social protection relates to the issue of the country's political and economic project, that is, the vision of social protection through redistribution systems. Therefore, any approach to social protection without talking about the tax system and redistribution through the tax system brings us into a technical debate. To this end, civil society must discuss social protection as a political project, not just a policy project. This requires rethinking the structure and discussing support programs.
- The importance of considering the role of civil society in social protection in its broader framework, including unions, professional associations, and social movements, and do not limit it to the narrow concept of NGOs only.
- There is a relationship between the social protection system and the social contract. In Arab countries, historically, the social contract was that the state provided services, and the people remained calm. In Lebanon, the historical reality is different. The state does not offer social services, which in turn, has become the responsibility of civil society. This situation has its advantages and disadvantages.

- It is essential to discuss the international community's role in social protection. This includes dependency on foreign funding and the design of national social protection systems that follow prevailing global prescriptions based on targeting or that are not appropriate to the characteristics of our countries and societies.
- Civil society has a role in pushing the state to produce and make data available. Some successful examples include the recent cooperation between the Central Statistics Administration (CAS) and the International Labor Organization (ILO) in the last two labor force surveys and between the Central Statistics Administration, the Ministry of Social Affairs, UNDP, and others in the 1990s.
- Civil society has a role in evaluating approaches, especially for direct financial support (cash transfer), in terms of assessing the impact (at the outcomes level), the level of waste and effectiveness in the work of these programs, and the social assistance system through the programs and interests of the Ministries of Social Affairs, Health, and Education.
- Social protection is not a technical matter. It is highly political and the pillar of the social contract. The role of civil society is to think about this social contract. Therefore, civil society must emerge from the service provision system in which it has been immersed and reposition itself in an oversight role (holding the government accountable) of ensuring rights and implementing strategies.
- In the current period, civil society must focus on placing pressure on the government to redistribute incomes and reform public finances, especially the tax system.
- Adopting the national social protection strategy is only the first step on the path towards universal social protection, mainly because the strategy proposes options for governance and the involvement of civil society organizations. The strategy requires civil society to know the necessary forms of social protection.
- Cooperation, coordination, and setting priorities are critical. The strategy includes five integrated pillars and covers many sectors. Here lies the role (and opportunity) of civil society in working on many initiatives. Therefore, it is necessary to develop an action plan for civil society.
- Civil society must develop a national advocacy plan in which everyone participates. There are platforms where work can be undertaken with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the UN Commission, and it is also possible to work at the national and local levels. This entails developing a written advocacy strategy that defines priorities and tasks and distributes work in an integrated manner between organizations.
- The role of civil society is essential given that international institutions do not trust the government, and this should be taken into consideration. However, it requires agreement on the best governance model and optimal support approaches that ensure universal coverage.

- Civil society must discuss the issue and approaches to financing the strategy within a clear vision.
- Civil society should play a role in the structural/political change of the socio-economic model as an input to the required social protection plan and in the discussion of the adopted political economy.

Conclusions

Considering the significant role that civil society has played in providing social protection in Lebanon, it was agreed by those present at the meeting that there should be a joint effort to advocate for comprehensive social protection reforms and a rights-based approach to social protection in the country. The latter can be achieved through joint advocacy campaigns, awareness-raising activities, as well as media outreach, public events, and community engagement to mobilize public support for the national social protection strategy. Awareness raising activities must highlight that social protection is a right for all. In line with these activities, civil society can (and have already done so in the past) contribute to data collection, analysis, and research on social protection issues.

Though the NSPS is a step in the right direction, it must be accompanied by proper legislation that addresses current gaps in social protection mechanisms and coverage. As the strategy lays out, social protection must be extended to previously excluded groups, including informal workers, self-employed individuals, agricultural workers, people with disabilities, and others, and must be extended beyond contributory programs. This requires coordination and collaboration among relevant government entities, such as through inter-agency task forces comprising representatives from government entities responsible for social protection, labor, finance, health, education, and other relevant sectors, to ensure the development of integrated policies. In addition to advocating for the development of these task forces, civil society can participate in these coordination meetings through regular consultations. In addition to sharing our experience and providing support, our role is also to ensure transparency and inclusivity, through ensuring that all stakeholders are represented.

As civil society, our efforts must complement those of the government. As such, there is a need to collaborate with relevant government institutions and other stakeholders, such as the international community, to ensure that social protection programs are comprehensive and inclusive. Civil society must actively organize, facilitate, and participate in policy discussions related to social protection, to promote cross-sectoral collaboration and maintain the momentum of our joint advocacy efforts.

Furthermore, civil society also has a role in holding the government accountable with regards to implementation of any social protection strategy and must assess the efficiency, effectiveness, and impact of social protection programs to ensure that they are meeting their outlined goals and objectives. This can be achieved through independent monitoring mechanisms.

It is also of utmost importance to implement measures aiming to stabilize the economy, including addressing currency devaluation, restoring basic services such as electricity and water, and providing temporary financial aid to mitigate the impact of the economic crisis on vulnerable populations.

Annex 1. National Consultation Agenda

9:30 am – 10:00 am	Registration and coffee break
10:00 am – 10:15am	<p>Opening remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About the projects (SPM & MENASP-CP) • Overview of the agenda and objectives of the consultation meeting <p>Ziad Abdelsamad, <i>Executive Director of the Arab NGO Network for Development</i></p>
10:15 am – 10:45 am	<p>Development of a Social Protection Monitor (SPM)</p> <p>This session will include an overview of the Social Protection Monitor and indicators, developed by ANND, as well as the main findings of the SPM for Lebanon. The monitor captures several dimensions of social spending, including public financing (including SDRs) and public spending.</p> <p>Presenter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adib Nehme, <i>Senior Policy Advisory at the Arab NGO Network for Development</i>
10:45 am – 11:15 am	<p>Open discussion on the SPM findings</p> <p>Open discussion and question & answer session regarding the SPM findings.</p> <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adib Nehme
11:15 am – 12:15 pm	<p>Facilitated group discussion on Lebanon’s National Social Protection Strategy</p> <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ziad Abdel Samad <p>Guiding questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can civil society actors in Lebanon strengthen political support for implementing the National Social Protection Strategy? • What steps can civil society actors take to ensure timely and effective implementation of the strategy as a means of preventing instability and improving social cohesion in Lebanon? • What are the enablers to mobilize support by policymakers and other relevant stakeholders for implementing the National Social Protection Strategy? • What are the obstacles and challenges to mobilizing political will and resources for the National Social Protection Strategy?
12:15 pm – 12:30 pm	Closing & wrap-up
12:30 pm – 1:30 pm	Coffee break