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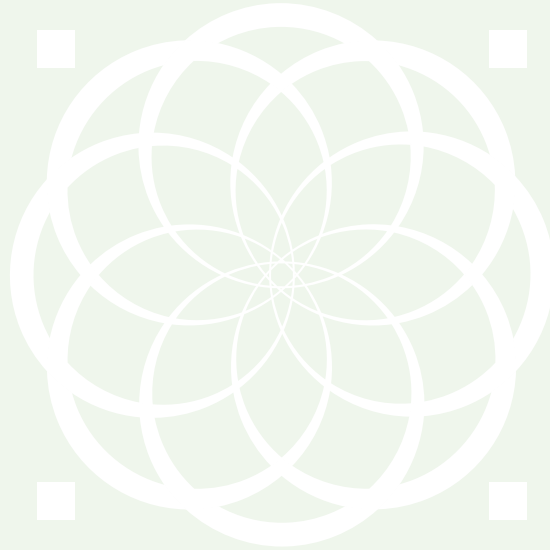
Focus Group Discussions Outcome Report

Climate Justice in Lebanon

October 2026

Strengthening Inclusive Civil
Society Action in the Arab Region
Towards Achieving Climate Justice





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Project:
**Strengthening inclusive civil society action in the Arab Region
towards achieving Climate Justice**

September 2026

Introduction

Under the project UDF-23-996-RAS, the Arab NGO Network for Development brought together civil society representatives, particularly youth and women representatives, and organized a Focus Group Discussion that mainly aimed to:

- Collect in-depth feedback from civil society representatives who are underrepresented in policy discussions at the national, regional and international levels, and in advocacy spaces on climate justice- related issues;
- Enable facilitated information exchange on civil society perceptions, local indicators of climate change and its impacts including civil society groups whose work (e.g. research, projects, community engagement etc) covers groups who face direct impacts from climate injustices;
- Identify top priorities and key considerations for achieving climate justice;
- Initiate a Community of Practice on climate justice that will provide the space for a collaborative learning process of “thinking together” on climate justice issues at the national level, engaging youth and women’s groups.

Bringing together 26 participants on 26 August 2026 in Beirut, Lebanon, the FGD adopted a semi-structured, open discussion format based on a guidance document that included a set of key themes and questions (annexed), while also allowing participants to raise other issues and experiences they deemed important. The discussion was not limited to direct answers to questions, but also facilitated the exchange of experiences and feedback on participants’ contributions. This allowed for the emergence of topics and discussion points not necessarily explicitly addressed in the guide. The discussion was treated as a space to explore the diverse perceptions and experiences of the participants, rather than as a questionnaire to elicit predetermined answers. Therefore, the analysis focuses on the recurring ideas and issues within the discussion, as well as the experiences and examples that helped explain the participants’ positions on the issues raised.

The concept of climate justice

The discussion began by recognizing the climate crises affecting the region, including Lebanon, while stressing that addressing their impacts requires more than adaptation and emergency responses. It highlighted the need to confront the structural drivers of the climate crisis, particularly unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, as well as prevailing models of transportation, urban development, and investment.

Climate justice was elaborated through a broader examination of the relationship between development, prosperity, consumption, markets, investment, wealth, and the use of natural resources. The discussion emphasized that **the climate crisis cannot be understood simply as a failure of development or as a problem of prosperity itself, but rather as a consequence of the ways in which these concepts are defined and pursued.** In this regard when development becomes synonymous with perpetual growth in consumption, competition gives rise to monopoly and unequal control over resources, investment leads to resource depletion, and wealth translates into unequal capacity to appropriate resources, generate waste and emissions, and offload the costs of environmental damage onto others, the climate issue becomes a matter of justice. The discussion also highlighted the strong connection between environmental pollution and public health. In many cases, the factors that contribute to environmental degradation are the same factors that negatively affect public health. This makes it essential to connect climate, environmental and health policies rather than addressing them separately. During the discussion, participants also confirmed that **climate justice is neither a standalone issue nor the concern of any single nation; it is a matter of a global ecological and economic system, the consequences of which no country can survive in isolation.**

Elaborating climate not as a technical issue as one directly linked to people's rights and well-being participants underlined the importance of policy choices prevailing production and consumption patterns we live in and their relation to climate injustices. It was noted that traditional ways of living, were often characterized by greater self-sufficiency, resource efficiency, and a stronger notion of sufficiency and contentment, with lower levels of consumption and fewer material aspirations. However, **today, increased production, industrialization and the expansion of consumption patterns have gradually pushed societies towards greater consumption of resources and energy. This has created a vicious cycle, in which increased consumption leads to higher emissions and rising temperatures, which in turn increases the need for adaptation.** As the impacts of climate change intensify, adaptation becomes more costly and often requires additional energy consumption, which reinforces demand for fossil fuels and consequently generates further emissions. Societies therefore become trapped in a cycle of consumption, emissions, climate change and increasing adaptation costs. In this context, access to adaptation measures and capacities has increasingly become a privilege available to certain groups, while large segments of society are unable to access the resources, services and infrastructure required to adapt. War and displacement further expose this injustice: households that lose homes, land, income, mobility, or access to public services also lose many of the basic conditions that make adaptation possible. This raises a **central question of climate justice: who has the capacity to adapt, and who bears the greatest costs of climate change?** It is therefore important to identify the main sources of emissions, particularly in the energy and transport sectors, and to question whether current energy production and transport policies contribute to climate justice or instead deepen existing inequalities.

The situation in Lebanon and key issues of concern

For Lebanon, the central climate justice question is not necessarily the country's contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions and its position compared to other industrialized countries. **The more pressing issue is the country's capacity to adapt to climate change, and, critically, who has access to that capacity. Adaptive capacity has been severely weakened by the compounding effects of economic crisis and war, including the destruction of homes, agricultural lands, forests, infrastructure and livelihoods, particularly in South Lebanon.** Conflict-related displacement also means that many families are forced to adapt under conditions of uncertainty, temporary shelter, disrupted income and weakened access to water, energy, health care, education and municipal services. These impacts are not separate from climate injustice; they deepen the unequal distribution of vulnerability and reduce the ability of affected communities to recover from climate and environmental shocks. Greater attention should therefore be given to the equitable distribution of the costs of adaptation, ensuring fair access to energy, water, technology, infrastructure and essential services, while strengthening the responsibility of the state to guarantee these rights and services.

In this context, when key issues were elaborated, participants noted that climate related issues should move beyond mere technical discussions and become relevant to people's everyday lives, such as rising energy costs, water security, health issues and expenses, transportation challenges and overall access to basic services. As participants noted, this in turn ensures people's direct comprehension of climate injustices and secures engagement and mobilization towards advocacy and change.

At the same time, when discussing climate justice related issues, participants noted the importance of adopting a comprehensive approach, because climate justice requires moving beyond a narrow focus on emissions calculated solely at the national level. The ecological footprints associated with patterns of consumption and lifestyles are critical to consider. The fact that a country has a relatively small share of global emissions should therefore not be used to dismiss the relevance of climate responsibility. A climate-justice approach needs to consider both differentiated national responsibilities and the unequal ecological footprints of individuals, communities and economic actors. This also helps shift the discussion away from a simple distinction between "high-emitting" and "low-emitting" countries and towards a broader examination of who consumes resources, who benefits from that consumption, who bears its environmental costs, and who has the power and resources to adapt. At the same time, focusing on individual ecological footprints should not mean placing responsibility for climate change on individuals alone. Individual choices are strongly shaped by the economic structure, energy and transport policies, the availability of alternatives and the quality of public services. Addressing ecological footprints therefore requires both changes in individual consumption patterns and reforms to the policies and systems that shape those patterns and determine the choices available to people.

Considering various aspects, participants raised the following points:

The cost of adapting to climate and environmental crises is increasingly on households' shoulders, particularly as the role of the state has weakened or, in some areas, been absent. This burden has been further intensified by war, which has damaged homes, agricultural assets, public infrastructure and local economies, leaving affected households to absorb both recovery costs and adaptation costs at the same time. A household that purchases a solar energy system, secures water through private means, or invests in cooling and heating solutions is directly paying for responses to crises that should, in principle, be addressed through public policies and the provision of basic services.

There is no comprehensive climate policy in Lebanon, which makes it necessary to work through sectoral policies while also understanding the links between different sectors. The key questions are what is missing and who is responsible. In the water sector, for example, climate change is mainly addressed through increasing water storage capacity, rather than through a broader approach based on sustainability and long-term water management. A climate justice lens should also ask how emergency response, reconstruction and recovery after conflict can be aligned with long-term climate adaptation instead of reproducing the same inequalities and infrastructure gaps.

Conservation and protected areas as solutions remain limited. The discussion also raised concerns about the way areas are classified as protected areas. Such classifications are not always equitable and can be influenced by political considerations, including political intervention to allow quarries and crushers to operate. This highlights the need to better understand the interconnections between sectors and the political and economic interests that shape environmental policies. Protected areas should not necessarily be considered the solution, particularly when conservation models can result in people being excluded from their own environment and livelihoods. In Lebanon, there are also concerns that some protected areas are promoted by water companies as a way of protecting sources of mineral water. The experience of protected areas during periods of war also raises questions about the effectiveness and resilience of this model. War-related fires, contamination and destruction of forests, agricultural lands and biodiversity areas in South Lebanon, show that conservation cannot be separated from questions of protection, accountability, land rights and the ability of local communities to return to and restore their environments. More broadly, there is a need for a comprehensive environmental strategy or sustainable development strategy rather than relying on isolated conservation measures.

The discussion also referred to the **degrowth movement**, which calls for reducing harmful or unnecessary production while strengthening forms of production that are socially

and environmentally beneficial. This perspective also requires questioning the role of advertising and other mechanisms that encourage increased consumption. Discussions on the ecological footprint of individuals raised the issue of **carbon taxes**. Carbon taxes and waste taxes could contribute to changing consumption and production behaviors, but they need to be designed fairly and proportionately according to levels of production and consumption. Such taxation can potentially become a tool for encouraging behavioral change while also supporting broader environmental objectives.

Climate injustice is particularly visible in the unequal ability of households to access solar energy. Before the financial crisis, instalment payment mechanisms allowed families, particularly middle-class households, to gradually invest in solar energy systems. Following the financial crisis, access to instalment payments and financing declined, making access to solar energy increasingly dependent on households' financial capacity. Adaptation to the energy crisis therefore became a privilege that was not equally available to everyone.

Similar inequalities exist in access to water. There are significant differences between regions and social groups in their ability to secure water and access reliable services. The impacts of climate and environmental crises are therefore not distributed equally, and people and communities have very different capacities to adapt.

The discussion covered **transport policies, the conflict of interests that influence them, and profits made at the expense of rights**. Transport policies are developed by ministers and advisers whose interests may sometimes conflict with those of transport companies and international corporations. Questions therefore need to be raised about who shapes transport policies and whose interests are reflected in them. The example was raised that many of the buses arriving in Lebanon are effectively discarded or obsolete European buses, raising broader questions about the quality of public transport, environmental justice and the transfer of environmental burdens from wealthier countries to countries such as Lebanon.

While the lack of climate policies and the need for mapping the responsibility of all actors and their accountability were tackled, the lack of information and statistics on environmental issues was also highlighted. For instance, there is also a lack of policies and reliable statistics related to fires, which makes it difficult to properly understand their causes and impacts. This gap is particularly serious in the context of war-related environmental harm, where independent monitoring of fires, contamination, damage to forests and agricultural lands, and impacts on livelihoods is essential for recovery, accountability and future climate planning.

The role of civil society

Participants noted the importance of connecting local discussions with international climate negotiations. The realities on the ground and high-level discussions around climate issues should be linked, rather than having abstract discussions take place in close-door meetings while people on the ground face the negative consequences of the policies implemented. In Lebanon, this also means carrying the experiences of war-affected and displaced communities into climate justice debates, since these communities are experiencing climate, environmental, economic and security vulnerabilities at the same time. This raises the question of how civil society can become more influential internationally. Yet, alongside civil society, a number of actors were listed as having an important role to play, including the state and its institutions, companies and owners of quarries and crushers, institutions, municipalities, the media and donors. Their respective roles and responsibilities need to be clarified. **The participants noted the need to identify and monitor the role of each as accountable actors in addressing climate issues in Lebanon.**

For civil society, the importance of adopting an evidence-based perspective and an inclusive and participatory approach was promoted by the participants. **Civil society should help create spaces for dialogue between different actors, including marginalized communities, businesses, public institutions and international actors. Its role is also to ensure that the voices of those who are most affected or traditionally excluded from decision-making are heard.**

Furthermore, considering that there are several climate - focused projects, the participants noted the need to move beyond isolated projects towards more coherent, integrated and accountable climate and environmental governance in Lebanon. The experience of the international Green movement was discussed as an example: it initially emerged around concerns over nuclear energy and the risks of nuclear disasters, then developed into broader movements and eventually political parties that gained electoral representation. Its approach was captured by the slogan “Think globally, act locally.” In the Lebanese context, there is a need to work simultaneously at the local, regional and global levels. In addition, **an important role for civil society with regard to climate and environmental plans implemented in Lebanon is ensuring accountability.** This is particularly related to the governance of climate projects, as there are conflicts of interest, unclear responsibilities and insufficient accountability. There is also a need to ask whether the priorities are clearly defined and whether it is clear exactly which issues are to be addressed. The challenge is therefore not only implementation, but also how governance can be improved and how stronger cooperation and accountability can be established between civil society and public institutions. In post-conflict and war-affected contexts, this also requires ensuring that reconstruction, compensation, environmental restoration and adaptation finance are transparent, rights-based and responsive to the priorities of affected communities.

Other key concerns raised in relation to enhancing accountability, both for the role of civil society and for Lebanon more broadly, were limited financing and difficulties in accessing information.. There is a clear need to define who is responsible for doing what. At the same time, Lebanon's dependence on international funding and externally driven agendas can mean that priorities do not always reflect local needs. Overlapping mandates and conflicts of authority further complicate implementation. The absence of a Ministry of Planning or a similar institution capable of coordinating different roles is an important institutional gap. Ministries often do not cooperate because of political considerations, while political divisions can make it difficult to bring together all relevant stakeholders.

Conclusion

Based on the interventions of the participants and the main issues elaborated in the discussion, an initial set of recommendations is as follows:

- 1.** A coherent and integrated climate and environmental policy framework is needed in Lebanon, moving beyond isolated, sectorial and project - based short-term interventions addressing climate issues. This policy framework should engage energy, water, transport, health, environmental protection and climate adaptation all together, with clear responsibilities and accountability mechanisms established for all development actors. It should also integrate conflict recovery, displacement response, reconstruction and environmental restoration into climate adaptation planning, particularly in areas affected by war.
- 2.** Climate justice discussions should not be technical discussions, but rather focused on justice, putting equal access, affordability and availability of all services at the very center with a rights- based approach. Accordingly, public policy should address the growing transfer of adaptation costs to households and ensure that access to solutions such as renewable energy and reliable water is not determined primarily by income or purchasing power. Special attention should be given to households and communities whose adaptive capacity has been reduced by displacement, loss of housing, loss of land or livelihoods, and damage to local infrastructure.
- 3.** Accountability, transparency and evidence-based climate governance are critical and can be ensured through participatory and inclusive mechanisms established to engage all relevant actors, including civil society. A clear mapping of the roles and responsibilities of state institutions, municipalities, companies, donors, international actors and other relevant stakeholders should be developed. Particular attention should be given to potential conflicts of interest and the influence of political and economic interests on environmental governance.

4. Civil society participation should extend beyond consultation, awareness raising and project implementation to include independent monitoring, evidence generation, advocacy and accountability. Particular efforts should be made to create sustained spaces for the participation of youth, women, marginalized communities and groups directly affected by climate and environmental injustices. Their experiences and knowledge should inform national policies as well as regional and international climate processes.

5. Lebanese civil society should strengthen the connection between the realities and evidence from communities, on one hand, and national and regional discussions and international climate negotiations on the other hand. Adopting an approach of “Think globally, Act locally” can help strengthen coherence between community action, national advocacy and international climate justice efforts.



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