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ENGENDERING THE CRISIS RESPONSE IN LEBANON, IRAQ, AND JORDAN



Engendering the Crisis Response in Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan

Brief

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About the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis, the EU Madad Fund

Since its establishment in December 2014, a significant share of the EU's non-humanitarian aid for Syria's neighbouring countries is provided through the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis, the EU 'Madad' Fund. The Trust Fund brings a more coherent and integrated EU aid response to the crisis and primarily addresses economic, educational, protection, social, and health needs of refugees from Syria in neighbouring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq, and supports overstretched local communities and their administrations.

For more information about the EU Trust Fund, please visit https://ec.europa.eu/trustfund-syria-region/content/home_en

Context

With the ongoing conflict in Syria since 2011, millions of Syrians have sought asylum in neighbouring countries. The following report seeks to assess the level of inclusion of gender perspective in the Syrian crisis response in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. In addition to this crisis, each country has existing political, social, economic, and legal constraints that have compounded the difficulties faced by refugee and vulnerable host populations, particularly women and girls. The situation of Syrian refugee women is impacted by local, regional and international policy frameworks and social contexts. Though the three countries have different approaches to address the refugee crisis, and in some instances contextual and legal variances, many challenges and circumstances are common.

Objectives of the report

The report combines cross country analysis with detailed reading of each specific national context. The study investigates if and how the main actors in the response to the Syrian refugee crisis (governmental institutions, UN agencies, national and international NGOs) are integrating a gender perspective in the design of their strategies and in the implementation of their programs, across the different sectors.

Methodology

In order to answer the questions addressed in the study, a thorough desk study was performed, seventy-two (72) key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with institutional actors, field experts and operational coordinators from various organizations, as well as a total of 1,149 surveys with Syrian, Lebanese, Jordanian and Iraqi women. However, a key factor that affected the data gathering process was Covid-19, which caused several delays due to shifting to online methods.

Structure of the following brief

Cross-Country Analysis Between Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq

The strategic approach to the Syrian Crisis approach of the three countries

Actors Coordination

Strategy Design and Implementation

Legal Framework

National Action Plan (NAP-1325) for each country.

Key Recommendations for the Region

Country Specific Analysis

Lebanon Crisis Response

- I. Gender Equality in Strategic Plans & Policies
- II. Implementation Challenges & Successes
- III. Legal Framework
- IV. Key Recommendations for Lebanon

Iraq Crisis Response

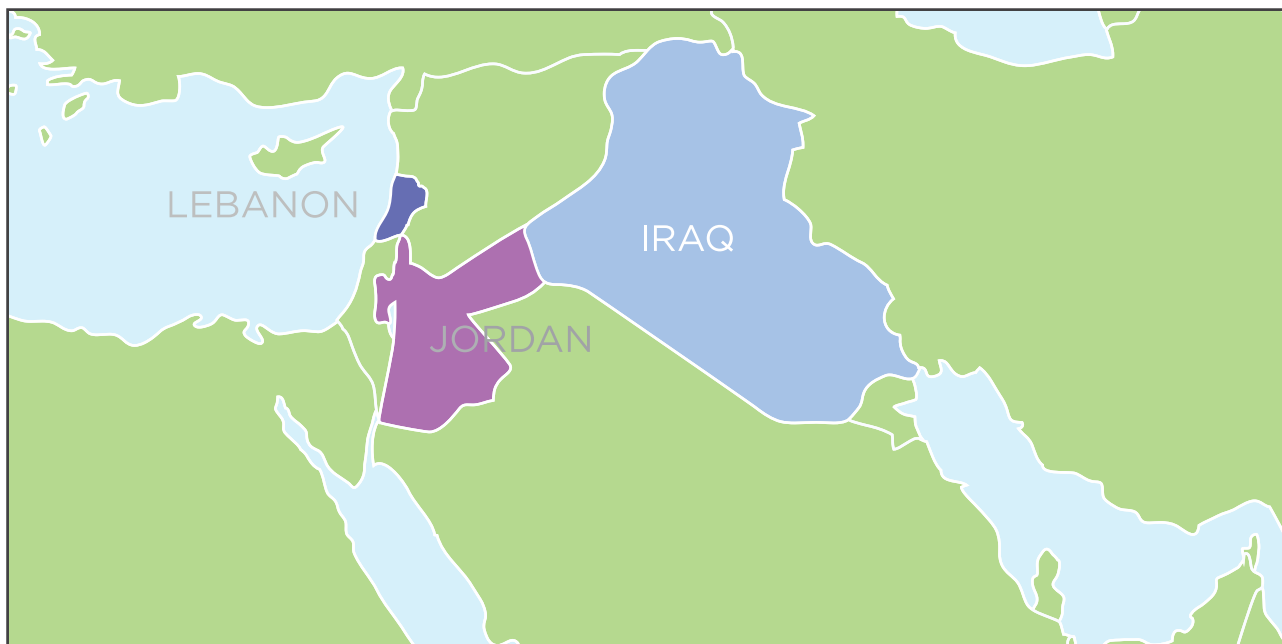
- V. Gender Equality in Strategic Plans & Policies
- VI. Implementation Challenges & Successes
- VII. Legal Framework
- VIII. Key Recommendations for Iraq

Jordan Crisis Response

- IX. Gender Equality in Strategic Plans & Policies
- X. Implementation Challenges & Successes
- XI. Legal Framework
- XII. Key Recommendations for Jordan

Conclusion

Cross-country analysis



The strategic approach to the Syrian crisis response

Lebanon is in a situation of systemic uncertainty. Strategies are halfway between emergency response with service provision to women and development approaches considering long term holistic answers.

In **Iraq**, with the repercussions of armed conflict, the country faces a far-reaching complication with regards to GBV emergency requirements.

Jordan benefits from strong institutions and executive power, with a historical background in integrating refugees. The focus is more on economic empowerment concerns in terms of strategic positioning.

Actors coordination

- There have been numerous joint efforts to improve

and mainstream coordination through the use of different platforms, including meetings and working groups led by the UN agencies, ministries and donors.

- All three countries rely on the cluster/working group coordination mechanisms led or co-led by the UN agencies. However, the participation of actors in these meetings was described as more consistent at the upper levels of coordination, than on the field level.
- The political situation and repetitive ministry changes with different mandates limit the ability to organize a long-term response.

Strategy design and implementation

The three countries have showed successes and challenges whilst implementing their response strategies.

Actors in the three countries are attempting to develop

more holistic programs by combining a service-based approach with the strengthening of women's social and economic participation.

Women's rights CSOs, INGOs and donors have played a prominent role in advancing this trend favouring a combination between a needs-based and a rights-based approach. Linking work on the ground with policymaking is a key component of a holistic approach.

Identified Challenges in Adopting a Comprehensive Approach to Programming

Some of the identified challenges among the three countries include:

- Financial cycles which prevent organisations from planning long-term interventions.
- Limited focus in programming on socio-economic conditions faced by women (social norms, cultural barriers, workplace conditions, etc.) and affecting their participation.
- The focus in economic participation interventions on traditional roles for women in the workforce that do not promote gender equality nor lead to gender transformative approaches.

Successful Approaches and Actions

Some successful approaches adopted in the three countries include:

- Combining comprehensive emergency response with long-term development as with the establishment of the National Gender Observatory in Lebanon.
- Bringing the needs of most vulnerable to policy making, which is exemplified in the Iraqi National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325.
- Economic participation programs that also aim to change social norms and challenge stereotypes.
- Integrating more and more men as actors supporting women's rights and gender equality.

Legal framework

The study highlighted how the three countries' laws are influenced by conservative social norms. Parliaments have shown a resistance to change, and many laws addressing discrimination against women are not passed with the excuse that they contradict religious rulings. The personal status laws of all three countries do not protect women sufficiently and even have discriminatory clauses for issues related to divorce, alimony, child support and inheritance. Main progress was noted in the labour laws, encouraging women's economic participation and integration in the labour market. Yet, legal frameworks rarely enforce prevention and reporting mechanisms of harassment in the workplace.

National action plans for UNSCR 1325: opportunities for the future

Lebanon

Lebanon succeeded in adopting the NAP 1325 in 2019. The Lebanese 1325 NAP (2019-2022) aims at:

- Increasing women's access to decision-making at all levels;
- Preventing and containing conflict;
- Preventing and protecting women and girls from GBV risks;
- Improving women's participation in relief and recovery efforts;
- Combating gender discrimination and ensuring equal opportunities for women and men.

Iraq

Iraq was the first country in the Middle East and North Africa to adopt a NAP 1325 (2014-2018) and is now developing the second NAP 1325 in the frame of a National Policy for Empowerment of Iraqi Women

(2021-2024). The Iraqi NAP 1325:

- Promotes the protection of women;
- Promotes their social, economic and political participation and;
- Links these issues to the need for legal reform.

Jordan

Jordan adopted a NAP 1325 in 2017. The Jordanian government is also taking steps to achieve gender equality within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development with the objectives of:

- Reforming the legal framework;
- Improving access to judicial services;
- Supporting women economically, socially, culturally and politically;
- Empowering the the Jordanian National Commission for Women.

Key regional recommendations

- 1. Strengthen the focus on gender in the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan framework.**
- 2. Strengthen women's participation in decision-making and in the elaboration of national strategies.**
- 3. Systematize the question of access to services as an overarching pillar in national strategies and programs theories of change.**
- 4. Involve men and youth in advocating for gender equality and women's rights.**
- 5. Improve women's economic participation and work on the enabling factors for women in the workforce.**
- 6. Support coordination among different actors (State, civil society, academics) to favour a gender-friendly legal framework and social environment.**
- 7. Consider long term programming relying on partnerships between local and international actors.**

Engendering the crisis response in Lebanon

I. Gender equality in strategies and policies

Lebanon is home to the largest refugee population per capita. Women refugees make up 52% of the total Syrian refugees living in Lebanon. In order to address the refugee crisis and the specific vulnerabilities of women associated with it, Lebanon has 3 main actors: The Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), The Government, and national and international NGOs.

Structure of the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan

The LCRP aims to ensure that the humanitarian response to the Syrian crisis tangibly benefits Lebanon and helps to stabilize the country during this challenging period.

What key gender-sensitive elements does the LCRP entail?

- The food security and agriculture sector makes sure gender equality is promoted and integrates GBV interventions in humanitarian action.
- The health sector offers a special focus on GBV. Hospital care as well as mental-health care are provided for free for gender-based violence survivors.
- In the education sector, the LCRP recommends gender sensitivity in school enrolment, training teachers on GBV and safe referral mechanisms. It also promotes gender diversity among teachers and staff.
- The livelihood sector aims at facilitating access to income and employment for vulnerable groups, taking into consideration gender and survivors of GBV.

The Governmental strategy

The government's role has shifted from taking a passive stance to becoming a leading actor in the crisis. The government was keen to show its commitment to women's rights which manifested in the launching of the National Gender Observatory under the patronage of the Prime Minister. Roundtables with high-level representatives were organised by the Ministry of Information to tackle gender related issues. However, recurrent reorganisations and ministry changes limit the ability to provide an organised long-term response and thus many laws that negatively affect women are not dealt with. At the level of economic participation, no national census is available to provide information on the labour force participation with the needed disaggregation. Nonetheless, it is good to note that UNICEF has been working with different ministries on strengthening internal systems, coordination, and laws.

NGO strategies

Both local and international implementers have been actively working on gender issues in the response to the Syrian Crisis, with a strong emphasis on GBV protection services and legal consultations and representation. SGBV is the main aspect covered under gender projects in the frame of the response plan. However, the amounts of funding dedicated to the emergency response itself, and to the gender component specifically, are insufficient. Recently, organizations commenced shifting towards more comprehensive programming, covering interventions such as economic participation.

Moreover, few actors are tentatively pivoting from women focused activities towards holistic gender approaches. Also, the role of local implementers is changing with aid localization and stronger involvement of the government.

Perception of the impact of work, based on nationality and activity status			
Nationality		Lebanese	Syrian
Personally empowers me	Work	87%	83%
	No work	91%	79%
Financially empowers me	Work	80%	90%
	No work	92%	81%
Empowers me inside the household	Work	66%	90%
	No work	66%	81%
Complicates the situation in the household	Work	14%	7%
	No work	9%	12%
Complicates the situation in public spaces	Work	5%	3%
	No work	3%	5%

II. Implementation challenges and successes

Identified Challenges:

The instability of the economic and political situation in the country has inflicted many challenges on implementation. Most fall within these three categories:

1. Effectively translating above described approaches into operations;
2. Access to services. This was a key issue due to lack of resources, lack of trust, increase of reported cases etc.
3. Uncertainty of the role and mandate of national machineries for gender equality.

Identified Successes:

The formation of GBV clusters and the trainings and capacity building sessions that were done at the strategic level showed positive results.

1. Trainings provided to civil society actors improved gender mainstreaming of programs.
2. The government showed stronger commitment in dealing with GBV, which positively impacted the projects implemented in the country.

III. Legal framework

General context and state of the current legislation

Women in Lebanon, both Lebanese and Syrian, face discrimination at many levels, linked to legal discrimination, social conservatism and inadequate public policies. Also, the religious courts and the political corps have a large impact on the legal framework. This is particularly true at the level of labour and personal status laws

Best practices for legal amendments and advocacy

The most successful example is the adoption of the NAP 1325. Even though implementation in some areas might be complex, its design itself was a positive step because it acknowledges the role of women in peace and security and sets an implementation plan.

Key recommendations for Lebanon

- **Advocating for a legal and policy framework that provides women with a safer environment**

Ex: Advocate for the reform of existing personal status laws and for the set-up of optional civil marriage code

- **Providing comprehensive services and enhancing access**

Ex: Review follow-up mechanisms to adequately cover users' needs.

- **Increase and diversify awareness-raising activities**

Ex: Social media should be broadly used for reaching part of the host community.

- **Strengthening economic participation program design**

Ex: Economic empowerment programs should consider diversifying their offer to include work opportunities that challenge stereotypes. This type of approach is key to: (a) encourage women to go for non-traditional jobs and (b) contribute to more global changes in perceptions and existing social norms.

- **Enhancing coordination between women's rights CSOs and other actors of the response**

Ex: Capitalise on existing partnerships with organisations that have gender expertise to ensure that programs are designed with a holistic gender approach.

Engendering the crisis response in Iraq

I. Gender equality in strategies and policies

In terms of the response frameworks, the Iraqi case is extremely complex due to the successive conflicts, invasion, and resulting instability. In this context, Iraq relies on two different frameworks:

1. The regional 3RP to answer the Syrian crisis that further spread to Iraq.
2. The Humanitarian Response Plan for Iraq, a strong humanitarian independent framework tailored to answer the national context. The first two strategic objectives of the response address “Critical problems related to physical and mental well-being” and “Critical problems related to protection”. Priorities under these objectives are directly focusing on preventing and dealing with GBV in and outside camps, granting adequate access to services, and promoting gender equality.

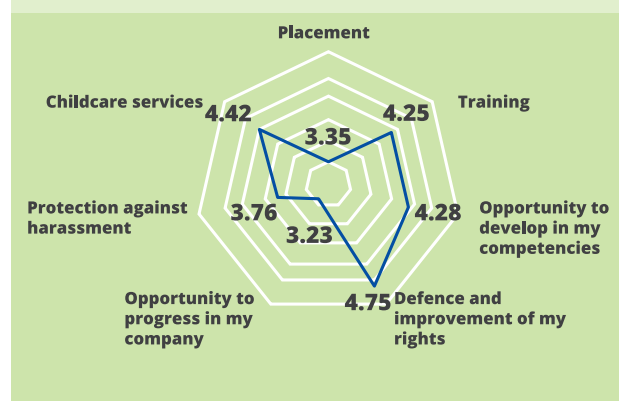
However, gender mainstreaming in the strategic design of the crisis response in Iraq faces two key challenges that affect the interventions of all actors:

1. Firstly, programming in Iraq is widely focused on provision of GBV services, leaving little room for developmental questions.
2. Secondly, the response to GBV issues itself and the possibility to develop a comprehensive gender approach in general are limited by many factors, including social norms, security concerns and the political context.

Focus of the Response on Gender Based Violence

The majority of services focus on GBV and include prevention, mitigation and protection activities, as well as engaging both women and men to change social norms. However, there are still needs to expand the offer of comprehensive services to victims/survivors of violence. Activities that contribute to women’s financial independence, which is a crucial element of development, remain limited. Among the respondents, both Iraqi and Syrian women stated that an income-generating activity within the household reduces tension at home (74%), and that an activity outside the household empowers them (72%).

Expected needs of respondents related to work and livelihood



II. Implementation successes and challenges

Despite the presence of some obstacles, significant progress was achieved over the last years in terms of capacity building in Iraq. Key successes and challenges faced during implementation are mentioned below.

Identified Successes

- Effective service delivery in the camps.
- Vocational trainings and job placement.
- Involving men and collaborating with religious leaders.

Identified Challenges

- The extent of financial needs in Iraq in terms of humanitarian and development interventions are above funding capacities.
- The difficulty to shift from emergency to development approach. This is due to the fact that actors of the response may lack the data and ability to understand the extent of the issues at the macro level, notably with the so-called ISIS women and with the population that lived under ISIS rule in general, and that fact that communities have different ways of dealing with certain social issues.
- Difficulties in going beyond current needs to develop women's economic participation projects.

III. Legal framework

Notable Improvements

The study showed that Iraq portrayed notable improvements in its legal framework, a few of which include:

- The introduction of a 25% women participation quota in the Iraqi parliament in 2004, and 30% in Kurdistan Region in Iraq (KRI).
- The adoption of laws against human trafficking and sexual violence for both the host and refugee communities in 2021.
- The criminalization of Female Genital Mutilation in Article 6 of the Domestic Violence Law of KRI.

Despite this progress, there are still many steps that should be taken in order to contribute to a gender-sensitive legal framework. These include:

- Amending the Personal Status Law No. 188 (1959) which results in unequal rights and treatment for women, namely in terms of marriage, divorce and inheritance.
- Extending the law on domestic violence in KRI to cover Syrian refugees, Internally displaced populations (IDPs) and, so-called ISIS women.
- Amending Law No. 111 which still exonerates the rapists if they marry their victim.

Key recommendations for Iraq

• Advocating for legal reform

Ex: Advocate for the harmonization of law at the national level to benefit all women in Iraq/KRI.

• Supporting women's participation in decision making

Ex: Raise the quota for women's participation in the government to 50%.

• Enhancing coordination with women's rights CSOs

Ex: Support the coordination of CSOs in their efforts to advocate and engage State actors on improving laws and changing social norms and practices.

• Favouring an inclusive national gender strategy

Ex: Advocate for supporting and/or creating solid national machineries for gender equality with clear and detailed mandates for policy design and implementation.

• Strengthening women's economic participation

Ex: Men should be included in the awareness sessions in order to guarantee the safe and credible pathways for women economic empowerment

• Promoting women's leadership and engaging men as actors of change

Ex: Capitalize on success stories mobilizing men at the household level, as well as local leaders to mainstream the approach in areas with limited outreach.

Engendering the crisis response in Jordan

I. Gender equality in strategies and policies

In Jordan, the government plays an active role in the crisis response. The Jordan Response Plan (JRP) is led by the Jordanian government and so are other initiatives that aim at achieving gender equality.

The Jordanian Crisis Response Plan

Led by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, the JRP constitutes the strategic partnership mechanism for the development of a comprehensive refugee, resilience-strengthening and development response to the impact of the Syria crisis on Jordan.

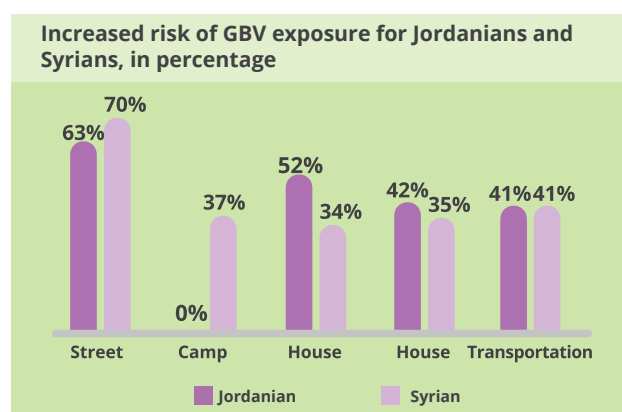
The JRP sets four steps to mainstream gender across the response:

1. Formulating indicators and results for gender equality within results-based frameworks;
 2. Setting a gender-responsive budget per sector;
 3. Integrating the Gender Marker self-assessment of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) in the JORISS system;
 4. Monitoring and evaluating gender mainstreaming.
- However, the above-mentioned steps were not successfully translated into a comprehensive gender sensitive and equitable response, particularly when it came to shifting from strategy to implementation.

Focus of the Response on Economic Empowerment

In terms of the sectoral focus, the strategies of the Jordanian government have focused on economic empowerment interventions. The Jordan Compact

agreement of 2016 entailed providing working permits for refugees in certain economic sectors against trade deals for the country. However, only 4% of those benefitting from the permits were women, which puts into question the gender considerations taken while developing and implementing the compact. Despite the importance of economic participation, respondents to this study have highlighted that addressing GBV remains a key issue.



National Strategies on Gender Equality and Women's Participation

Among other plans, the Jordanian government also expressed its commitment to achieving gender equality within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with the following specific objectives:

- (a) Reformation of the legal framework.
- (b) Improved access to judicial services.
- (c) Supporting women economically, socially, culturally and politically.
- (d) Empowering the JNCW.

Despite the Jordanian government's overall policy and strong framework, its focus was mainly on addressing

“objective barriers” to women’s empowerment and participation, while overlooking the social, cultural and legal barriers that hamper access to economic participation.

Jordan also created an inter-ministerial committee for women’s empowerment led by the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs. The aim of this committee is to provide leadership, coordination and accountability for action across the government on achieving commitments related to women’s human rights.

II. Implementation successes and challenges

The identified successes and challenges in the Jordanian response plans are as follows:

Identified Successes

- Local actors’ interventions shift from skills building towards comprehensive support.
- Localization of services, collaboration and knowledge sharing.
- Many initiatives adopted a holistic approach to gender programming by advocating for gender-sensitive regulations, providing comprehensive packages for women, and upholding gender considerations throughout the project, regardless of sector.

Identified Challenges

- Economic participation programs face difficulties in addressing barriers experienced by women to join the labour market.
- State capacities to answer the needs and improve access to services.
- Differing socio-economic situations require tailored interventions, which is not taken into account in most programs.
- Patriarchal dominant mentalities persist throughout all areas and communities.

III. Legal framework

Current Situation and Legislation Progress

Personal status laws are most in need of improvement to allow women’s meaningful participation. Several articles were amended in the labour law to support women’s integration and protection in the labour market. They include the maternity leave, the paternity leave, and the abolishment of the gender pay gap.

Conclusion

Key recommendations for Jordan

- **Enhancing coordination between actors to ensure better outcomes**

Ex: Consider participatory and joint approaches in program design, leveraging collaboration between local actors.

- **Enhancing women's participation in decision-making**

Ex: Advocate for quotas to ensure women participation in decision making and in responding to crises. This would contribute to reinforcing gender equality and the actual involvement of women in decision-making positions.

- **Improving outreach & beneficiary access to services**

Ex: Awareness raising sessions volume should be maintained but with diversified scope and contents in order to reach women, men, and children with diverse profiles in terms of vulnerability and nationality.

- **Advocating for a change in national policies and strategies to ensure that implemented interventions are gender transformative**

Ex: Advocating with donors and relevant coordination teams and implementers to fund a gender mainstreaming exercise in the 3RP appeal for the year 2021.

- **Working on enablers and barriers to women's participation in the workforce**

Ex: Facilitating engagement of the entire household in the beneficiary activities and generalising awareness raising sessions for men.

In conclusion, the following report sought to assess the level of inclusion of gender perspective in the Syrian crisis response in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. After thoroughly studying each country's response plans and strategies, implementation outcomes, and legal framework, accomplishments and gaps became more visible. The three countries showed some progress in engendering the Syrian crisis response and promoting gender equality. Nonetheless, a lot of work still needs to be done. The three countries showed differences and similarities, hence the report offers recommendations for each country in specific and recommendations for the region as a whole.

