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KIP Documentation Project

The Perception of Students towards Women and the Perception of Women Themselves about their Role and Status in Lebanese Rural Communities

Project Team

Nisreen Alwan, PhD

Dean of School of Health Sciences

Modern University for Business and Science (M.U.B.S)

Diana Maddah

Recruitment and Impact Measurement Manager,

Teach for Lebanon

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Olayan School of Business

American University of Beirut

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Executive Summary

Research done on gender inequity is extensive; however, little is known about the role and the status of the Lebanese woman in the rural areas. This paper explores the perception of students enrolled in Lebanese rural schools towards the role of women within their families and their communities and the perceptions of women themselves about their status (their potentials, their capabilities, and realistic situation) in these communities. It aims to provide an evidence-based overview concerning the challenges the Lebanese woman is facing in her community. This study will also open controversial questions and some changed perceptions about gender, mainly women in rural areas. Four field visits were conducted in the North, South, Bekaa, and Mount Lebanon to carry out the interviews with students and their mothers. Our study group was conducted with students (Age range between 11 and 14 years) and their mothers after receiving the consent forms from the mothers and that of their children in addition to the oral assent taken from the students themselves. Data were gathered using in-depth interviews conducted based on two interview guides. In total, 34 interviews were conducted with the mothers and 35 interviews with the students. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis method. Analysis of the findings showed that the majority of both students and mothers recognized the limited role of the Lebanese woman in the rural communities and the challenges she is facing (early marriage, restricted/no access to education, no access to social organizations, lack of work opportunities, cultural and religion constraints, etc.). Both students and mothers underestimate the crucial role that the woman can play in her society. No noticeable difference in the findings was remarkable among the different regions. According to the majority of the interviewees, women's



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empowerment requires an improvement in the educational and social skills and self-esteem of the woman in her rural society. The fact that students underestimate the role of their mothers in their communities is alarming. That is why adopting healthy childrearing practices at early age is crucial to ensure the presence of a generation who believes in the importance of the role that a woman might play in her society. Interventions that target parents and children's mindsets and skills and that focus on women's empowerment are needed.