Arab Reform Initiative

ملتقى المنطقة العربية للحماية الاجتماعية
Arab Region Hub for Social Protection

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT
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The Future of Work and Social Protection in Lebanon: A Qualitative Research Synthesis

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Acknowledgments

This document presents raw/original qualitative research data that the Arab Reform Initiative (ARI) is using to inform several research papers. The material may also be used by researchers and other interested readers to inform their own work, provided it is cited as: *"Arab Reform Initiative [ARI], 2026"*, thereafter *"ARI, 2026"* and referenced as: *"Ahwach, D. The Future of Work and Social Protection in Lebanon: A Qualitative Research Synthesis." Arab Reform Initiative (ARI). 2026. URL: https://socialprotection.arabregionhub.net/the-future-of-work-and-social-protection-in-lebanon-a-qualitative-research-synthesis/"*

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Introduction

This report presents the qualitative findings of the FORWARD project, "Assessing the Future of Work for Forward-Looking Universal Social Protection: A Comparative Study of Lebanon and Egypt." FORWARD examines how two structural forces reshaping contemporary labor markets, the rapid spread of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence, and the transition to a low-carbon economy, are interacting with decades of neoliberal economic policy to transform work and to expose the limits of existing social protection systems. The project is committed to open and transparent research; in keeping with that commitment to making its data publicly available, this report is a synthesis – not an analysis – of the Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) conducted for the Lebanon component of the study, alongside a thorough literature review.

The interviews were conducted with a deliberately wide range of experts whose work, taken together, spans the full terrain the project sets out to map. They include specialists in labor law and labor activism; an authority on international labor standards; researchers focused on the gendered dimensions of the gig and platform economy; experts on the green and energy transition; economists and specialists in development financing; analysts of digitalization, digital security, and the platform economy; specialists in social protection policy; and advocates and researchers working with groups that are too often absent from labor-market analysis, including LGBTQI+ communities and older persons. This range was intentional: it allows the synthesis to read each transition not as an isolated technical shift but through the eyes of those who study its consequences for specific workers and communities.

Throughout the report, interviewees are identified by anonymized codes (e.g., KII-1, KII-2, and so on) rather than by name. The aim is to let the analytical weight of the interviews come through in the voices of the people who provided it, while organizing their insights into a coherent account. The report does not claim representativeness of findings; its value lies in the depth of information, in the convergence of independent experts on a shared diagnosis, in major differentiating inputs, and in the specificity with which they trace how broad transformations affect particular groups.

The shared diagnosis sets the tone for everything that follows. The report is organized around the three transitions and their intersection with social protection, before turning to the groups most affected and to the policy directions the interviews suggest. It opens from a single analytical premise on which the interviews converge, and which frames the chapters that follow.

The KIIs all converge on one key analytical statement: labor market transformations are taking place in Lebanon within a structurally informal labor market, governed by an outdated 1946 labor law that is unable to adapt as needed, and served by a weakened and impoverished National Social Security Fund (NSSF) that covers only a small percentage of the population. This means that these transformations are unfolding in an unshielded society, where vulnerability is a societal reality rather than a group or fractional categorization. As such, the transformations are part of a storm hitting an already shaky ship, characterized by pre-existing welfare gaps, fragmented and inefficient systems, and overwhelming vulnerability, which they are further reshaping.

Digitalization and Labor Market Transformations: Dismantling, Casualization, and Surveillance

The In Lebanon, the most pronounced effect of digitalization on labor is not, at this stage, mass unemployment; it is instead the accelerated dismantling of the legal employer-employee relationship. Work arrangements facilitated by digitalization include platform work, freelance work, remote hiring by foreign companies, and online self-employment, all of which directly detach work from the traditional workplace. The absence of a single workplace, an employer, and a clear legal tie is exposing the gaps in the Lebanese labor law and NSSF, since these are the basis upon which they were built.

> "
> The idea of these applications is that the worker can open and close the app whenever they want, regardless of their income or wage. But the relationship of subordination with the employer, in its legal sense, is no longer clear. The law has not been able to keep up. To whom does the worker make their demand, and against whom?
>
> **— KII-1 · Labor activist and lawyer**

> "Digitalization is allowing the breakdown of the standard employment relationship to happen at an even faster pace. You can hire somebody through a platform, pay them through PayPal, and contract them only for a specific task. This contributes to an overall deterioration in working conditions and labor rights globally."
>
> **— KII-4 · Senior labor expert**

> "
> The gig economy has shown that all kinds of labor are possible, but with no days off, no sick leave, no healthcare, no compensation, and no end-of-service benefits.
>
> **— KII-9 · Digital security and digitalization expert**

The most visible site of digital labor transformation in Lebanon has been identified as the platform and gig economy. Mostly dominated by delivery and ride-hailing platforms, workers bear the means of production and are responsible for all provisions that usually and traditionally fall under the responsibility of the employer. They pay for their own vehicles, insurance, fuel, and medical bills; they have no legal protection or support in case of accidents, so liability falls entirely on their shoulders; they rely for a large part of their livelihoods on customer tips, and they have no stable or fixed income. This form of labor is a continuation of years of labor casualization triggered by neoliberal policies. Its non-digital earlier form is the example of Spinneys' daily laborers who used to pay the company a fee to be able to fill customers' bags in exchange for tips[1]. Toters, for example, takes a portion of the delivery fee paid by customers and pay the other portion to drivers; since the company bears no obligation towards the worker, this can be seen as the delivery workers are effectively paying the company for their right to work. This has increasingly isolated workers, pitted them against each other, and dehumanized them in the eyes of consumers.

In addition, digitalization introduces new mechanisms of labor discipline through algorithmic management and surveillance. Platform workers operate under constant rating, login-frequency, and team surveillance, which often includes an added layer of nationality bias between Lebanese supervisors and Syrian/Palestinian workers (KII-3). Additionally, in more skilled labor, HR algorithmic filtering is affecting hiring and introducing bias into the recruitment stage that is not necessarily skills-focused (it could be nationality, residence, area of origin, sectarian profiling, gender, or age). Office workers are also monitored through employers' ability to track online hours, usage of email, WhatsApp, or other apps on company laptops.

> "In the gig economy, algorithmic bias appears through punishment, ratings, how often you enter the app, and whether your team lead, often Lebanese versus Syrian, likes or dislikes you. Workers are constantly surveilled and constantly afraid of punishment."
>
> **— KII-3 · Gender and gig-economy expert**

As for the skilled middle class, the effect of AI has been described as soil erosion rather than a tsunami, in the sense that it is driving gradual job-quality deterioration instead of sudden mass job loss (KII-4). Regional data, including data from Latin America, suggest that the formal, urban, and often women-employed office jobs that have been recognized for two centuries as the Global South's "good jobs" are now the most at risk.[2]

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[1] Hicham Safieddine, "Unionizing in Lebanon: The Struggle Is Elsewhere", *Jadaliyya*, 2012, available at https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/27198

[2] Paweł Gmyrek et al., *Buffer or Bottleneck? Employment Exposure to Generative AI and the Digital Divide in Latin America*, ILO Working Paper 121, International Labour Organization and World Bank, 31 July 2024,

"

Some people describe AI's effects as a tsunami. I think that is ridiculous. It is more like soil erosion, gradual, but it can still be very damaging.

— KII-4 · Senior labor expert

"For Latin America, occupations most at risk of automation were the ones where workers were already using computers at work. The jobs most at risk have a digital trace and are easier to automate."

— KII-4 · Senior labor expert

In Lebanon's specific macroeconomic context, AI's direct labor-market impact is still small because the economy itself is small and stagnant. The transformation is happening more in remote work done from Lebanon for foreign employers than in domestic-firm displacement (KII-1, KII-3, KII-4, KII-5, KII-9).

The Green Transition: A New Terrain for Informal Labor

The crisis-induced boom in Lebanon's solar energy, triggered by the EDL collapse and the fuel crisis, is the most pronounced green-transition labor activity. Some even referred to this phenomenon as the solar power revolution.[3] Cumulative investments in the sector grew by 693% from 2020, reaching USD 1.1 billion by the end of 2022. In 2023, an additional USD 293 million was invested, raising total cumulative investments to approximately USD 1.4 billion.[4] The solar PV share in the energy generation mix in Lebanon reached 15% in 2023, which is considered a significant share.[5] But can this really be called a revolution? Lebanon occupies the end of the global green-energy value chain; the entire sector's activity consists of import, assembly, installation, and maintenance, with no production.

available at https://www.ilo.org/publications/buffer-or-bottleneck-employment-exposure-generative-ai-and-digital-divide

[3] Rodayna Raydan, "How Lebanon's Electricity Crisis Sparked a Solar Power Revolution", *The New Arab*, 30 September 2022, available at https://www.newarab.com/analysis/how-lebanons-crisis-sparked-solar-power-revolution

[4] Lebanese Center for Energy Conservation (LCEC), *The 2023 Solar PV Status Report for Lebanon*, April 2025, available at https://lcec.org.lb/sites/default/files/2025-10/Solar%20PV%20Status%20Report%202023_VF.pdf (LCEC, *2023 Solar PV Status Report*)

[5] LCEC, *2023 Solar PV Status Report*

> In the region we are not part of the full supply chain. We are very much at the end of the supply chain. We do not produce. At most, we assemble or install. This is because of intellectual property, patents, the absence of technology transfer from the Global North to the Global South, and the absence of local technology production.
>
> **— KII-8 · Green transition researcher and expert**

In addition to the sector being largely unproductive, it is also largely informal. It is mainly composed of Lebanese-owned small businesses, often selling and installing solar panels and batteries, without registering the companies and without issuing contracts for the workers they hire, and in effect without providing any insurance, labor protection, or NSSF affiliation.[6] As a result, many installed panels were second-hand, not properly maintained, and installations were unsafe. UNDP attempted to set up training and certification but failed to reach the whole market, and there is still no formalization of such requirements.[7]

This brings Electricite du Liban (EDL) to the center of the discussion. Law 462 (2002), long left dormant, is now being put into effect through the newly established Electricity Regulatory Authority. The law includes provisions for the corporatization and partial privatization of EDL. Distributed Service Providers (DSPs), introduced by Gibran Bassil in 2011, have already taken over part of EDL's billing, maintenance, and metering functions. Meanwhile, the Distributed Renewable Energy Law (Law 318/2023) creates a renewable-energy unit within EDL, but it does not offer protections for existing daily workers, who are unlikely to be retrained for the new positions.

> "The corporatization or privatization of EDL will be a big problem for workers. It is not clear what the new model will look like, how many employees will be retained, what the new employment arrangements will be, or whether workers will have a union."
>
> **— KII-8 · Green transition researcher and expert**

EDL's daily workers have long faced precarious conditions, including low pay, short-term contracts, exclusion from social security, pensions, insurance, and other labor benefits. In 2011, EDL outsourced their work to private subcontractors to avoid legal responsibility, prompting

[6] Yusra Bitar, *Lebanon's Solar Rollout: In What Ways Has It Been an Unjust Energy Transition?*, Arab Reform Initiative, 12 June 2024, available at https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/lebanons-solar-rollout-in-what-ways-has-it-been-an-unjust-energy-transition/

[7] Julia Choucair Vizoso and Yara El Murr, "Privatizing the Sun: The Dark Side of Lebanon's 'Solar Revolution'", *The Public Source*, 11 October 2022, available at https://thepublicsource.org/lebanon-solar-privatization

workers to organize through the Daily Workers' Committee and launch a historic 94-day strike in 2012 demanding full-time employment and benefits. Although political agreements promised partial solutions, they largely failed to secure meaningful formalization for all workers and instead deepened fragmentation through sectarian and political pressures. Further protests in 2014 followed EDL's decision to employ only part of the workforce, and while later agreements restricted exams to existing daily workers, many demands remain unmet, with workers continuing to call for integration into EDL's vacant positions and fulfillment of earlier promises.[8] However, these strikes and demands today are given very little attention both in terms of policy priorities and public interest. A future with a further corporatized, semi-privatized EDL, puts these workers into an even more unstable and insecure reality. In effect, workers who previously demanded formalization inside EDL now face a double displacement: their old functions are being fragmented through DSPs and restructuring, while new "green" roles may be created without absorbing or reskilling them. This means the energy transition may reproduce the same pattern seen in earlier outsourcing: modernization of the sector without a just transition for the workers who kept it running.

> "
> Even the EDL building itself is symbolic of the sector's collapse. Workers were protesting because they did not even have proper offices.
>
> **— KII-8 · Green transition researcher and expert**

A discussion of energy transition in Lebanon cannot be fully complete without tackling the issue of private diesel generators and their owners. Although diesel generators operate informally, their owners organized through the Association of Generator Owners in 2017 and have strong political influence and connections with the fuel-import cartel. Effectively, Lebanon does not fully integrate diesel generator owners into the electricity law as legitimate private utilities, but it acknowledges them through tariff-setting, metering requirements, and municipal/local regulation. More recently, generator owners are incorporating solar energy into their grids to improve efficiency, however, they are rarely passing savings to consumers. An invisible layer of precarious workers, including bill collectors and maintenance helpers, is also tied to this system, yet their fate is rarely discussed in transition plans.

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[8] Civil Society Knowledge Centre, "EDL Conflict (starting July 11, 2014)", last updated February 2016, available at https://civilsociety-centre.org/security-timeline/edl-conflict-starting-july-11-2014

There is skepticism on the promise of green job creation. In Lebanon, there is no comprehensive data on solar sector employment. Most companies are small-scale, operate at the village level, and are seasonal. Currently, big multinationals are positioning themselves for utility-scale solar farms under public-private partnerships, which would leave both small-scale businesses and informal sector workers at risk.

Lastly, the region is attracting growing attention when it comes to the green-hydrogen agenda. Although Lebanon is still largely not affected, this is considered a central regional just-transition question. European companies are pushing hydrogen-production projects in North Africa (Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia) that use regional renewable resources to produce hydrogen and export back to Europe, which is sometimes more polluting than fossil alternatives, for the producing country. This is considered a form of green colonialism, where countries of the Global South are depleted of their resources and exploited for cheap labour, leaving them to deal with the environmental consequences, and clean and green energy is exported to countries of the Global North.

Neoliberalism: A Force Shaping the Transitions

One cannot analyze the labor market transitions in Lebanon, without examining the effect of neoliberal policies on Lebanon's labor market, social protection systems, labor conditions, and economic model and choices. KII-1 describes neoliberalism as the force that explains how digitalization and the green transition are landing as they do. Additionally, neoliberalism in Lebanon is systematically rooted in the economic and political model through decades of political clientelism and crony capitalism; hence, the IMF and World Bank have local allies among the sectarian and economic elites who carry their ideological stance into the everyday political and economic practices and agendas.

The current moment is placed in a longer global trajectory characterized by the gradual breakdown, under neoliberalism and globalization, of the standard employment relationship. This casualization of labor is being massively accelerated by digitalization. The KIIs point out that this is a symptom of the Lebanese labor market well before the current transitions. KII-1 describes how women garment workers were fragmented out of factories into home-based production decades before platform work emerged, weakening their ability to organize and pushing them into more informal employment arrangements. Lebanon's Law 22 of May 2025 is a meaningful but structurally insufficient response to the labor market transformations. It modernizes the language of the labor law and extends formal protections to some non-traditional workers, which is considered a genuine improvement. But the most vulnerable workers identified in these KIIs, such as platform workers, domestic workers, agricultural seasonal workers, and most informally employed workers are left entirely outside its scope. The absence of implementing decrees further weakens its limited reach. This fits squarely within the "reform without redistribution" dynamic where legal modernization responds largely to the needs of higher-skilled, digitally connected workers while leaving the new precarious workers structurally unprotected.

> "Strong employment gains and labor rights after the Second World War were linked to countries investing in industrial policy. Since the 1980s, that has been dismantled, and I do not see it coming back."
>
> **— KII-4 · Senior labor expert**

> Employers' tendency to fragment labor contracts did not arrive with technology. Technology did not create the challenge from scratch, it accelerated it.
>
> **— KII-1 · Labor activist and lawyer**

Additionally, since 2018, employer organizations have refused to allow upward adjustments to wage brackets when the minimum wage is raised. The result is wage compression, with workers earning slightly above the minimum pushed closer to it, eroding wage hierarchies and increasing the share of the workforce near the poverty line.

> "Without income brackets, workers earning slightly more than the minimum wage are effectively pushed closer to it, eroding wage differentials and purchasing power. This wage compression increases vulnerability and pushes more workers closer to the poverty line, even when nominal wages rise."
>
> **— KII-1 · Labor activist and lawyer**

The selective logic of Lebanon's neoliberal restructuring is most apparent in what the state chose to sell and what it chose to keep. KII-1 remarks that through the Paris I–III conferences, IMF recommendations to shrink the public sector or privatize public institutions[9] converged with local

[9] Albert Kostanian, *Privatization of Lebanon's Public Assets: No Miracle Solution to the Crisis* (summary), Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, American University of Beirut, January 2021,

elite preferences in ways that were not neutral; for example, profitable state assets like telecommunications were the first put on the privatization agenda, while loss-making but politically essential ones like electricity remained firmly public. The pattern exposes a core contradiction in reform rhetoric that usually invokes "public-sector failure" as justification for privatization. KII-8's account of Law 462 and the ongoing corporatization of EDL confirms that this logic has not declined and is now being reactivated under a broader restructuring push. Compounding this is the abandonment of industrial policy and the deliberate withdrawal of the state from building productive sectors. Without it, there is no possible path to a credible post-crisis growth model for Lebanon or a meaningful green transition. Even globally, the green transition's promise of re-anchoring industrial policy at the national level has largely failed to materialize (KII-4). Consequently, Lebanon requires not just investment but a strategic vision for what its economy should become.

The institutional and ideological effects of neoliberalism are equally damaging. They weaken workers' collective voice while redefining people's value through productivity. Lebanon's tripartite social dialogue still exists formally but has largely lost its function. The General Confederation of Lebanese Workers is captured by political parties and can no longer act as an independent representative of workers, leaving them without a credible voice in policy negotiations. This weakness is linked to the Ministry of Labor's control over union licensing, which full implementation of ILO Convention 87 would remove, but which the state has refused to give up.

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available at https://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/Documents/publications/research_reports/2020-2021/20210125_Privatization_of_Lebanon_Public_Assets_Summary.pdf.pdf

Social Protection Systems Amid Digital, Green, and Neoliberal Transitions

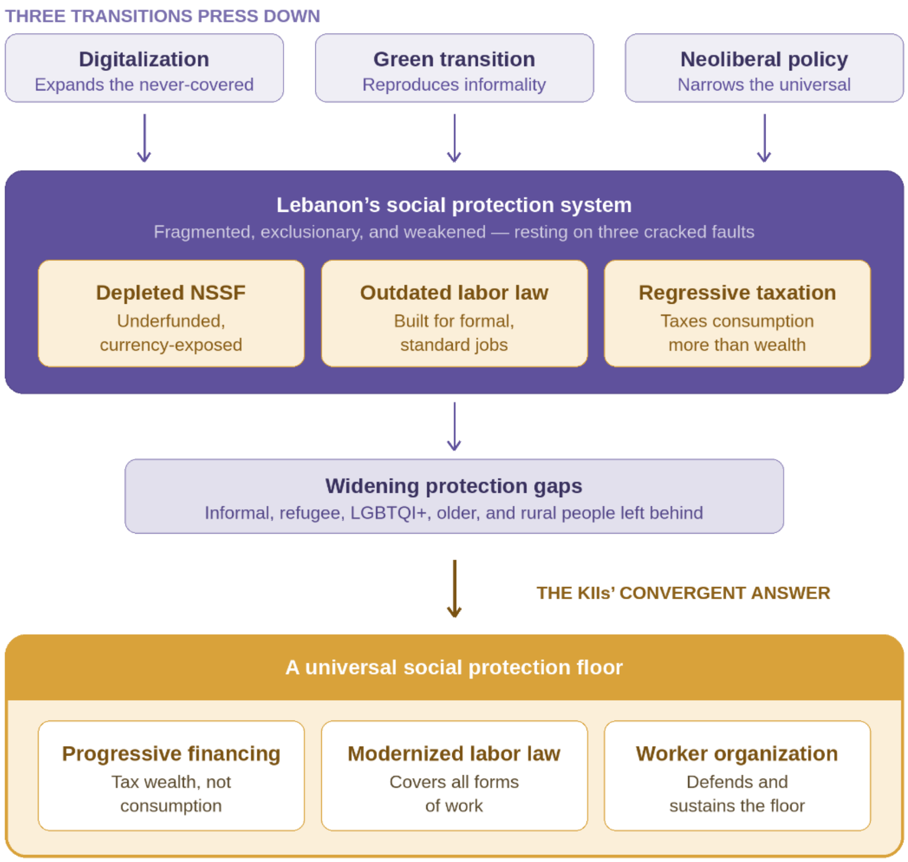

Figure 1 - Digitalization, the green transition, and neoliberal policy each press on Lebanon's already weakened social protection system, which rests on three structural faults, a depleted NSSF, an outdated labor law, and regressive taxation, producing widening gaps that leave informal, refugee, LGBTQI+, older, and rural people behind. Across the interviews, experts converge in a single direction: a universal social protection floor, built on progressive financing, a modernized labor law, and worker organization.

All KIIs converge on one key idea when it comes to social protection and labor market transformations triggered by digital, green, and neoliberal transitions: they are all taking place within already fragmented, exclusionary, and systemically weak social protection systems. The link between this systemic weakness and labor has been identified through three major influencing factors: a weakened and depleted National Social Security Fund (NSSF); an outdated labor law designed for standard, formal employment relationships, which has never covered the majority of Lebanon’s informal labor force and is not suited to accommodate the pace and nature of the current transitions; and a tax system that taxes consumption more than wealth. Each transition is deepening already existing protection gaps through distinct but connected mechanisms.

The most foundational damage to Lebanon's social-protection system was not caused by any single crisis event but by a sequence of deliberate political-economy decisions across two decades. A 2001 decision reduced employer NSSF contributions in the name of lowering investment costs, producing cascading deficits in the sickness and maternity branch. Repeated annual decrees from 2019 onward exempted employers from clearing NSSF debts. The Fund was compelled to hold its reserves in Lebanese lira, despite an internal decision to convert a substantial share to dollars and was thereby fully exposed to the currency collapse. Declining wages, rising informality, and rising unemployment simultaneously suppressed revenues. By the time the economic crisis hit, the NSSF was already technically bankrupt in key branches.

Digitalization is accelerating this erosion by expanding the share of the workforce that never enters the NSSF. Every new platform worker, freelancer, remote hire by a foreign company, or online self-employed person is, in practice, a worker outside contributory eligibility, not by accident but because the NSSF's eligibility logic was built on a standard employer-employee relationship that platform work and remote contracting are structured to ignore.

> "
> The system is capable of adapting to take a tax from freelancers — 7.5% — but not capable of adapting to give them anything in return.
>
> **— KII-1 · Labor activist and lawyer**

The green transition reproduces this pattern in a new sector. Lebanon's solar economy is overwhelmingly informal: small entrepreneurs entered solar as crisis-era side projects, hired workers without contracts or NSSF affiliation, and operated without registering as companies. The Distributed Renewable Energy Law (Law 318/2023) creates legal space for new energy business models but largely focuses on market opening, private investment, and breaking EDL's monopoly[10] and does not contain an NSSF contribution obligation or a labor-protection clause (KII-8).

[10] Christina Abi Haidar, "Laws Governing Electricity Production, Transmission, and Distribution, and the Importance of the Distributed Renewable Energy Law", Arab Reform Initiative, 20 November 2024, available at https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/laws-governing-electricity-production-transmission-and-distribution-and-the-importance-of-the-distributed-renewable-energy-law/

A major shift identified across most KIIs is the orientation toward moving from universal social protection into poverty-targeted safety nets for the most vulnerable. The language of "targeting," "means-testing," and "social registries," which is shaping every Lebanese recovery negotiation with the IMF and World Bank, progressively narrows the universal horizon of social protection. The Aman program embodies this model. It is financed by World Bank debt and administered through a digital targeting system that has shown many algorithmic biases and exclusion errors and is funded in part through consumption taxes that fall disproportionately on the poor.

> "Social protection must reach everyone. If we start distinguishing between a precarious worker and a non-precarious worker, we are no longer talking about social protection, we are talking about a residual safety net that provides support to a minimum number of people."
>
> **— KII-1 · Labor activist and lawyer**

> "These are loans. They are imposed on people through consumption taxes. We are creating a Ponzi-like model, not with banks this time, but through a program for the poorest."
>
> **— KII-1 · Labor activist and lawyer**

Hence, the argument running through all the KIIs is that the answer is a universal protection floor, financed through progressive taxation, rooted in a modernized labor law, and defended by rebuilt forms of worker organization.

Another pitfall of targeting is that it systematically fails to reach those most vulnerable, because LGBTQI+ and especially trans people (KII-2), refugees (KII-3), and older people (KII-6) have systematic barriers to entry. In that sense, digitalization is not only reshaping the labor market but the administration of social protection itself. On the exclusion side, government-led AI adoption in benefit-allocation systems produces systematic errors that are difficult to contest, excludes applicants who cannot navigate digital technologies, and disproportionately harms the most marginalized, those who most need protection and are least equipped to appeal algorithmic decisions.

> "
> We have been working a lot on targeting and algorithmic bias. The problem is more fundamental than biased data. It is about what objective the system is trying to reach, and whether the data being collected is even the right kind of data.
>
> **— KII-4 · Senior labor expert**

Digital divides also function as a protection barrier, with stark geographic disparities in connectivity is itself a barrier to accessing the information systems through which protection programs are increasingly announced and applied for.

> "How many people have internet access, and where do they live? The more you move toward the margins, the worse the connectivity becomes. The second issue is language, especially English, many digital tools and opportunities require it."
>
> **— KII-9 · Digital security and digitalization expert**

All these strains on social protection systems are compounded by a regressive structure of Lebanese taxation. The taxation system is built mostly on consumption taxes, which hit the poor disproportionately. Profits, wealth, and property remain untaxed, and more than 130 categories of tax exemptions remain, mostly benefiting those with wealth and political leverage[11]. This is one of the main constraints facing the expansion of the fiscal space for social spending. State revenue relies mostly on the poor and most vulnerable, whereas social spending is the first target of any austerity measures. Interviewees situate this within the global debt architecture as most Global South states lack the fiscal space for universal social protection or industrial policy because debt service consumes too large a share of public revenue (KII-4, KII-5). Lebanon's investment policy involves near-zero public investment and state spending approximately a quarter of the pre-crisis real budget. Additionally, Lebanon does not have unemployment insurance, public vocational-training infrastructure linked to industrial policy, or reskilling pathways for workers displaced by any of the three transitions.

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[11] Alain Bifani et al., *Which Tax Policies for Lebanon? Lessons from the Past for a Challenging Future*, Arab Reform Initiative, 28 May 2021, available at https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/which-tax-policies-for-lebanon-lessons-from-the-past-for-a-challenging-future/

Between Pre-existing Vulnerabilities and Newly Emerging Ones: Who is the Most Affected?

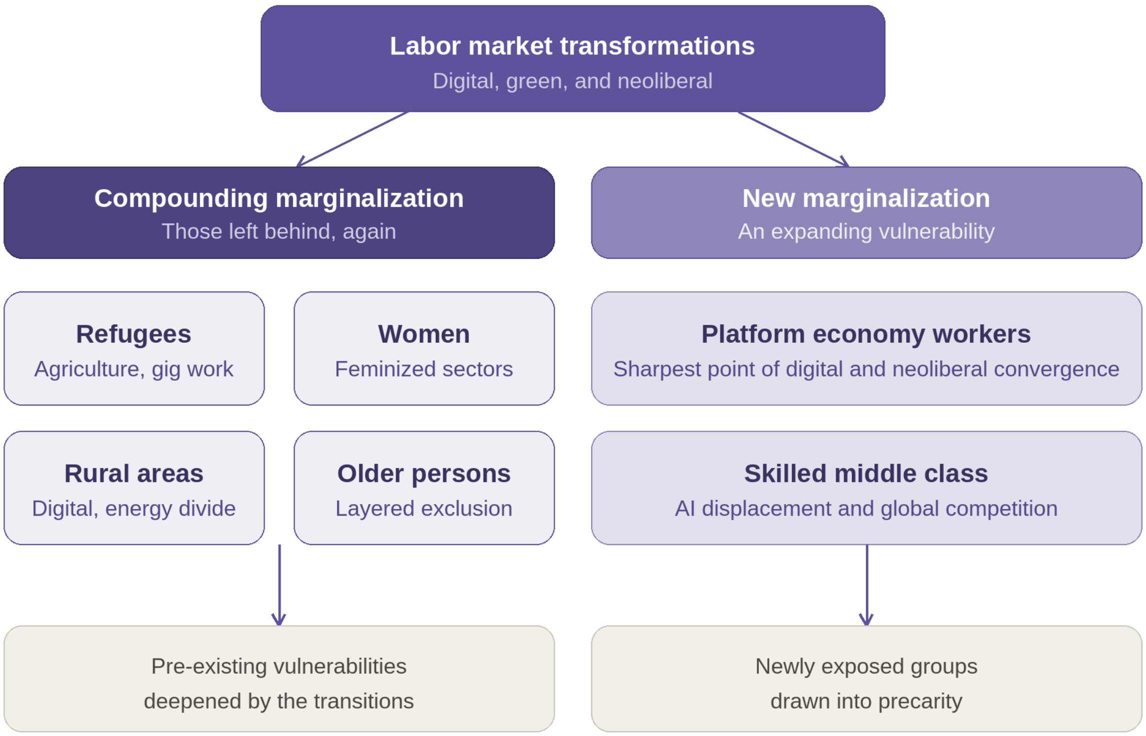

Figure 2 - Who is most affected: two logics of vulnerability. The labor market transformations produce two distinct patterns: compounding marginalization, which deepens the pre-existing vulnerabilities of refugees, women, rural populations, and older persons; and new marginalization, which draws platform economy workers and the skilled middle class into precarity for the first time.

Compounding Existing Marginalization: Those Left Behind, Again

- **Refugees,** especially Syrians and Palestinians. These already marginalized communities increasingly work in agriculture and the gig economy, experiencing the heaviest precarity and lowest pay. According to the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR), agriculture (16.71%), construction (12.61%) and other services, including hotels, restaurants, transport, and personal services (12.47%) were the three main income categories for refugees in terms of labor in 2025[12]. This indicates that two

[12] UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP, *2025 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR): Executive Summary*, 2025, available at https://ialebanon.unhcr.org/vasyr/files/vasyr_reports/vasyr-2025-executive-summary.pdf (UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP, *VASyR 2025*)

of the sectors most affected by the green and digital transitions, agriculture and other services, mainly restaurants and transport, respectively, constitute the main income categories for Syrian refugees, confirming their position at the center of these transitions (KII-3).

Gendered impact: This also has a gendered dimension. In addition to being a main income source for Syrian refugees, agriculture is a significant source of employment-related income for female-headed Syrian refugee households. According to Lebanon VASyR 2025, 11.5% of female-headed Syrian refugee households reported agriculture as their main source of income, making it the second-highest employment-related income source after other services, including hotels, restaurants, transport, and personal services, at 12%. This indicates that agriculture is an important livelihood source for female-headed refugee households[13]. These women often work under informal and precarious conditions, including low wages, long hours, lack of contracts, weak protection, and exposure to harassment and health hazards[14] (KII-3; KII-5).

Digitalization and technologically advanced processes are increasingly being promoted and adopted in parts of Lebanon's agri-food sector, especially export-oriented, higher-value, and industrial/MSME segments[15]. The Lebanon National Agriculture Strategy 2020–2025 promotes the agri-food sector as a potential driver of economic recovery and transformation. As a result, this digitalization and potential growth are producing a new layer of inequality; as the industrial side of agriculture is receiving increasing funding and capital and new machinery is entering the sector, while the agricultural side, consisting of the more "unskilled" part of this labor, such as fruit and vegetable picking, remains very difficult for workers. There is a stark contrast. The part that is becoming digitalized is also becoming more professionalized and more profit oriented. But within the supply chain, those still working in the traditional sense, in picking and agriculture, are not benefiting from this transformation.

Platform work: Available evidence suggests that refugees' participation in Lebanon's platform economy is most clearly documented in app-based delivery work. Syrian refugees are specifically documented as working for Toters in Beirut, where platform

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[13] UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP, *VASyR 2025*

[14] Nur Turkmani and Kanj Hamade, *Dynamics of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon's Agriculture Sector*, Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, American University of Beirut, January 2020, available at https://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/Documents/publications/research_reports/2019-2020/20200215_dynamics_of_syrian_refugees_in_lebanon_agriculture_sector.pdf

[15] Rachel A. Bahn et al., *Digital Revitalization of the Agri-food Sector in Mashreq: Focus on Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon*, World Bank, 2021, available at https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/810711621219470465/pdf/Digital-Revitalization-of-the-Agri-food-Sector-in-Mashreq-Focus-on-Iraq-Jordan-and-Lebanon.pdf

work offers flexible income opportunities but also exposes workers to algorithmic surveillance, automation, weak labour protections, and platform control[16] (KII-3; KII-9). Broader reporting on delivery platforms in Lebanon also notes that many delivery drivers are Syrian and that their legal status increases their vulnerability to exploitative conditions[17]. In general, workers in Lebanon's platform economy are, as a category, presented as a newly exposed group facing additional precarity (KII-1, KII-3, KII-9), within the already precarious and vulnerable informal-workers category. Specifically, for refugees, both Syrian and Palestinian, who face severe structural and legal restrictions on entering the formal labor market, digital platforms have become a critical yet extremely exploitative alternative for survival. There is evidence that platforms like Toters apply different incentive structures based on nationality, favoring Lebanese workers[18]. Additionally, platform work puts refugee workers on the move; they accordingly face more security concerns, as they face regular security checks from state authorities, putting undocumented refugee workers at high risk with zero measures to ensure formalization, documentation, or legal support by employers.

- **Women**

The gendered impact of green, digital, and neoliberal transitions in Lebanon is determined by more than the mere discussion around whether women gain or lose jobs, it is also and more significantly about where women are concentrated in the labor market, whether these sectors are protected by labor laws and social security, and whether women have equal access to the new skills and technologies that are forming the future of work. The KIIs and further review of the literature suggest that the risks are especially pronounced for three groups: women in agriculture, with a compounded impact on refugee women as mentioned before; migrant domestic workers; and workers in feminized sectors such as nursing and education.

1. **Female agricultural workers**

Agriculture as a sector stands at the intersection of these three transitions and their pronounced effect on labor conditions (KII-3, KII-5, KII-8). In a predominantly informal sector (an ILO report in 2018 estimates that 96.3% of agricultural workers are informal with reported volatile

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[16] Blake Atwood, "Between Autonomy and Automation: Mapping Practices among Syrian Delivery Drivers in Beirut", *Human-Machine Communication*, Vol. 9, 2024, pp. 125–142, available at https://stars.library.ucf.edu/hmc/vol9/iss1/8

[17] Wassim Maktabi, Oğuz Alyanak and Mark Graham, *Platform Work in Times of Crisis: Fairwork Lebanon Ratings 2023*, The Policy Initiative and Fairwork, 30 November 2023, available at https://www.thepolicyinitiative.org/article/details/329/platform-work-in-times-of-crisis-fairwork-lebanon-ratings-2023 (Maktabi, Alyanak and Graham, *Platform Work in Times of Crisis*)

[18] Maktabi, Alyanak and Graham, *Platform Work in Times of Crisis*

conditions and low earnings)[19], women make up 43% of this labor force, especially in smallholder and family farming households[20]. Despite this high share of the agricultural labor force, their labor has been categorized as low-visibility, meaning that it is financially and socially unrecognized, and often categorized as unpaid family labor[21]. Even when this labor is compensated, women face a severe wage gap as it has been reported that they are routinely paid one-half to two-thirds of the wages earned by men for the exact same number of working hours[22]. They have unequal access to land ownership, finance, and credit services and carry the double burden of care and household work. All these factors put women at a structural disadvantage in facing the new realities imposed by recent transformations (KII-3). Today, women in agriculture are facing both the burden of climate change and the exclusion from the benefits of technological advancement in the agri-food sector. Lebanon is highly susceptible to the impacts of climate change, especially in rural areas. A study by the WFP and AUB-IFI indicates that resilience is particularly low and, as a result, the negative impact is mostly apparent in the North, Akkar, and parts of the Bekaa. These are also areas with a high refugee presence and where agricultural livelihoods are the most concentrated[23]. In parallel, while Lebanon's official agriculture strategy emphasizes agri-food transformation through a focus on productivity, competitiveness, innovation, digitalization, and compliance with international standards[24], all of which are extremely important for sector modernization, the absence of labor protections, gender-responsive policies that improve access to finance, social security inclusion, and training and reskilling/upskilling risks creating a segmented agricultural economy. Better-capitalized producers and export-oriented firms are more likely to benefit from digital tools and green investment, while informal women workers remain concentrated in low-paid manual work without access to land, finance, extension services, technology, or social protection.

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[19] International Labour Organization, *Extending Social Protection Coverage to Workers in the Agricultural Sector and Their Families: Lessons from International Experience*, ILO Social Protection Spotlight Brief Series, April 2026, available at https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/Media.action?id=21936

[20] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Country Gender Assessment of the Agriculture and Rural Sector – Lebanon*, Beirut, 2021, available at https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/2ff0c12c-50e2-47f8-b5d2-bd43dbf22eaa (FAO, *Country Gender Assessment – Lebanon*)

[21] FAO, *Country Gender Assessment – Lebanon*

[22] FAO, *Country Gender Assessment – Lebanon*

[23] Nadim Farajalla et al., *Climate Change, Agriculture, and Livelihoods in Lebanon: Consolidated Livelihoods Exercise for Analyzing Resilience*, Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, American University of Beirut, and World Food Programme, 26 April 2022, available at https://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/Documents/programs/climate_change_and_environment/publications/20220426_lebanon_clear_study_climate_change_and_livelihoods.pdf

[24] Ministry of Agriculture (Lebanon), *Lebanon National Agriculture Strategy (NAS) 2020–2025*, July 2020, available at https://www.agriculture.gov.lb/getattachment/Ministry/Ministry-Strategy/strategy-2020-2025/NAS-web-Eng-7Sep2020.pdf

2. Migrant domestic workers under Kafala and platformization: a double-layered exploitation

Lebanon is estimated to host over 250,000 migrant domestic workers, the vast majority of whom are women[25]. Migrant domestic workers' legal status is governed through the Kafala system, and they are excluded from the Lebanese labor law. Their Kafala status ties their residency to the employer and hence restricts the workers' ability to leave the country or change employer without permission. Abuses documented by human rights organizations include extreme working hours, lack of rest days, restrictions on movement and communication, food deprivation, poor accommodation and living conditions, psychological and physical abuse, forced labor, among others. In this regard, digitalization adds a new layer of risk. Even though research on Lebanon-specific trends is still limited, global trends have started to be observed, and interviewees mentioned the signs of emergence in Lebanon. The rise of online home cleaning, beauty, and massage services, among others, provided through platforms, can repackage domestic and care-labor as an on-demand service. According to the ILO: "Care and domestic platforms create new opportunities but also restructure the organization of care and domestic work in ways that weaken labour rights and social protections. By informalizing employment relationships through casualizing work and shifting risks onto workers through platform technologies aimed at matching clients with workers, these platforms fail to align with the protections outlined in the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189)"[26]. A sign that makes this relevant for the Lebanese context is that Toters, for example, already started offering house cleaning services through the app, and the platform development trajectory points to a trend in moving towards service provision beyond the delivery of goods. This is particularly dangerous for migrant domestic workers in Lebanon because platform work does not replace Kafala; it sits on top of it. A migrant worker may remain dependent on a sponsor for residency while also being subject to app-based labour conditions. These conditions include ratings, client surveillance, algorithmic matching, and racist profiling. In practical terms, this can increase mobility restrictions, surveillance, and exposure to multiple private households without creating a clear employer responsible for occupational safety, wage guarantees, complaint mechanisms, or health coverage. Additionally, surveillance is an issue also faced by live-in domestic help. This category is the most isolated from outside support, while digital advancements may initially have presented opportunities for better communication with family and friends and possible support channels,

[25] Amnesty International, "End Kafala: Justice for Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon", 24 April 2019, available at https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2019/04/lebanon-migrant-domestic-workers-their-house-is-our-prison/

[26] Valeria Pulignano, "ILO Yellow Report 'Realizing Decent Work in the Platform Economy' – Focus on Care and Domestic Platforms", International Trade Union Confederation, 1 April 2025, available at https://www.ituc-csi.org/ilo-yellow-report-platform-economy

today they can be used by employers as methods of surveillance, tracking, and privacy infringement.

3. Feminized sectors: risks of automation, austerity and casualization

When discussing digital and green transitions, nursing and education are not usually highlighted as "at risk" sectors, but in Lebanon, they are highly relevant to a gendered analysis of these transitions, in addition to other feminized sectors such as clerical, administrative and service occupations where tasks are more prone to be transformed or automated (KII-3, KII-4). These sectors are feminized, socially essential, and increasingly exposed to budget cuts, migration pressures, digital restructuring, and casualization.

In nursing, 79.52% of nurses associated with the Order of Nurses are women, and the highest proportion of nurses (23.23%) is aged between 31 and 35 years, making the sector predominantly feminized and relatively young. The COVID-19 pandemic and the 2019 economic crisis impacted nurses significantly, especially as they occurred in parallel, placing nurses at the forefront of the response while exposing them to intensified health and financial pressures. Even though this sector is better formalized, the impact of the crisis was substantial. Hospitals reportedly closed units, dismissed a number of nurses, reduced the salaries of others by half, and altered their working hours. In addition, the value of their NSSF contributions and end-of-service declined, eliminating one of the major incentives for working in this sector. As a result, a significant number of nurses have accepted and pursued jobs abroad, affecting the sector as a whole[27] (KII-3, KII-7).

The impact of the crisis and the feminized nature of the sector are similar in both education and nursing. World Bank data show that women made up around 90% of primary school teachers in Lebanon in 2024[28]. Teachers in both the private and public sectors have faced intense deterioration in labour conditions, mainly triggered by the economic crisis[29]. The value of their wages deteriorated, their NSSF benefits and services also deteriorated, and the value of their end-of-service indemnity was lost[30]. They are also facing risks of job loss and casualization driven by

[27] Arab Institute for Women, Lebanese American University, *The Unsung Heroes and Heroines of Lebanon's Healthcare System*, Policy Brief No. 1, 2020, available at https://aiw.lau.edu.lb/images/Policy%20Brief%201.pdf

[28] World Bank, "Primary Education, Teachers (% Female)", World Development Indicators, sourced from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, data published February 2026, available at https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.TCHR.FE.ZS

[29] Education International, *Teacher Remuneration During Emergencies: Just Wages for Public School Teachers in Lebanon*, 20 March 2026, available at https://www.ei-ie.org/en/item/32239:teacher-remuneration-during-emergencies-just-wages-for-public-school-teachers-in-lebanon

[30] Youmna Makhlouf and Nizar Hariri, "Evaporating Protection: Lebanon's End-of-Service Indemnity Crisis", Legal Agenda, 30 January 2026, available at https://english.legal-agenda.com/evaporating-protection-lebanons-end-of-service-indemnity-crisis/

IFI-influenced fiscal consolidation and restructuring reform proposals, which also encourage greater reliance on non-civil servant or contractual teachers who lack formal protections, as civil servants retire[31].

The gendered risk here is that reforms framed as efficiency, digitalization, or fiscal consolidation may disproportionately affect women because women are concentrated in these sectors. In education, this may take the form of contract reduction, reduced paid hours, unpaid administrative digital tasks, online teaching burdens, and pressure on contractual teachers who already lack stable benefits. In nursing, digital health systems, automation of administrative tasks, and AI-assisted workflows may not eliminate nurses' jobs, but they can decrease demand, intensify work, and require new skills without compensation.

For feminized sectors, the central risk is not simply automation-driven unemployment. It is the combination of automation, austerity, and labor casualization: digital tools may be introduced as "efficiency" measures while wages, contracts, staffing levels, and public budgets deteriorate.

This creates a structural mismatch. Women may be concentrated in sectors facing climate stress, care deficits, fiscal cuts, and digital restructuring, while new jobs in agri-tech, ICT, renewable energy, logistics, data, and platform management may require skills, networks, capital, and mobility that women, especially poor, refugee, migrant, and older women, are less likely to possess (KII-3, KII-6, KII-8). Without active policy intervention, transition can therefore produce a gendered redistribution of risk: women absorb the losses and deteriorating conditions, while men are better positioned to capture the new opportunities.

- **Rural and peripheral populations: Digital divide, energy poverty and low political influence**

Rural and peripheral populations in Lebanon are disproportionately exposed to the effects of digital and green transitions because these transitions are unfolding on top of long-standing regional inequalities. Areas such as Akkar, Baalbek-Hermel, the North, parts of the Bekaa, and other peripheral regions have historically suffered from weaker public infrastructure, higher poverty, weaker access to services, and lower political leverage over national investment priorities[32].

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[31] Ministry of Education and Higher Education (Lebanon) and World Bank, *Lebanon Teacher Utilization Analysis*, June 2024, available at https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099062424112041528

[32] Mercy Corps, WeWorld and LOST, *Voices of Vulnerability: A Needs Assessment in Lebanon's Akkar, Bekaa, and Southern Regions*, 8 April 2025, available at https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/voices-vulnerability-needs-assessment-lebanons-akkar-bekaa-and-southern-regions

The digital transition in Lebanon is taking place in a context where, beyond weak digital infrastructure across the country, there are unequal connectivity and disparities in the quality of this infrastructure. While recent national indicators suggest high internet penetration, access remains unreliable, expensive, and weakened by poor investment, telecom-sector governance problems, service disruptions, and uneven infrastructure[33]. While digitalization can in some sectors create new opportunities, these remain more accessible to urban, educated and better-connected groups. As a result, rural youth, women, small farmers, refugees, and low-income households in peripheral areas may be asked to adapt to a digitizing labor market without the basic infrastructure needed to participate in it. Digital public services may also become exclusionary if they replace in-person access without ensuring affordable connectivity, digital literacy, and local service points.

The green and digital transitions are both unfolding in Lebanon in the midst of a nationwide electricity crisis. Following the 2019 economic collapse, public electricity provision nearly collapsed. In 2023, the government was providing an average of one to three hours of electricity per day, with unequal regional distribution. This has pushed households to rely either on private diesel generators where they can afford it, or, for higher-income households, private solar panels. In 2023, the average household spent 44% of their monthly income on generator bills, with huge disparities between income levels. The generator bill percentage of income reached 88% for those in the bottom quintile with access to generators, compared to 21% for the top quintile.[34] This is important for the analysis of rural disparities because energy poverty is not experienced equally.

Energy poverty in Lebanon is experienced in divergent ways across its localities, primarily along a Beirut/Mount Lebanon core versus peripheral regions, a divide that the post-2019 electricity collapse and the privatized solar boom have deepened rather than bridged. In Akkar, in parts of the north, and in Baalbek, we witness conditions of "extreme energy precarity" (KII-8) with as little as two hours of EDL electricity per day and near-total reliance on UPS batteries, while communities in Mount Lebanon and parts of Greater Beirut have benefited from diaspora-funded solar networks and more consistent generator access.

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[33] Association for Progressive Communications and Social Media Exchange (SMEX), *Human Rights in the Digital Context in Lebanon*, joint stakeholder submission to the 51st session of the Universal Periodic Review, UN Human Rights Council, 26 September 2025, available at https://www.apc.org/en/pubs/human-rights-digital-context-lebanon

[34] Human Rights Watch, *"Cut Off From Life Itself": Lebanon's Failure on the Right to Electricity*, 9 March 2023, available at https://www.hrw.org/report/2023/03/09/cut-life-itself/lebanons-failure-right-electricity

> "Those who can buy solar panels have electricity, and those who cannot have no electricity."
>
> **— KII-8 · Green transition researcher and expert**

Solar deployment in Lebanon has followed wealth and diaspora connections.[35] USAID donor funding was the primary external driver of renewable energy before the 2025 aid cut and was distributed in selected municipalities and localities.

Compounding the inequality is what was identified as a double dispossession in areas like Akkar: not only do residents endure the worst electricity access, but utility-scale solar farms are increasingly being sited on their land, without generating local employment or energy benefits (KII-8).[36]

In conclusion, rural populations face the worst energy outcomes on every dimension: supply, cost, quality, and access to the renewable alternative. Access to energy and connectivity during the green and digital transitions means access to the economy: lack of access reduces the ability of households to study, work remotely, refrigerate food and medicine, access online services, operate small businesses, among other things. For small farmers, rural MSMEs, cooperatives, and informal workers, unreliable electricity raises production costs and reduces competitiveness, thereby significantly affecting economic opportunities. Low-income households' experience with energy poverty forces them to make trade-offs between electricity, food, medicine, transport, and/or education.

- **Older Persons: Layered and systemic exclusion**

Older persons experience layered exclusion rooted in structural ageism (KII-6): they are deemed unproductive economically and pushed out of formal employment as a result.

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[35] Nicolas Farhat, "Unlocking Solar Energy Access in Lebanon through Innovative Finance and Blended Models", Arab Reform Initiative, 10 October 2025, available at https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/unlocking-solar-energy-access-in-lebanon-through-innovative-finance-and-blended-models/

[36] Leonora Monson, *Crude and Green: Energy Giants Scoop Up Lebanon's Oil, Wind and Solar*, Badil, August 2023, available at https://thebadil.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/20230808_SIC-Layout_Final-1.pdf

> Ageism is the central structural barrier. It produces structural violence. For policymakers, service providers, and the community, older people are not a priority. Their value becomes tied to how much they produce, how much tax they pay.
>
> — KII-6 · Expert in older persons research

This layered exclusion is in reality a trap between being pushed out of formal employment as they are seen as costly and unproductive (even before retirement age) yet kept in informal labor because decent pensions are not guaranteed. Before the current reform, Lebanon was one of only two Arab countries without a contributory pension scheme.[37] Even before the crisis, only around 10% of older Lebanese people had access to retirement benefits[38], and even those have since lost the real value of their end-of-service indemnity.

> "In reality, no one has a meaningful retirement income in Lebanon today."
>
> — KII-6 · Expert in older persons research

The new 2023 Pension and Social Security Law introduces a Notional Defined Contribution scheme, but there is still concern around implementation and universality: implementing decrees remain blocked (thirteen pending as of 2024), the informal majority is excluded from mandatory coverage, and NSSF recapitalization remains unresolved (the issue of NSSF central bank deposits is central to any possible solution on this front).

The exclusion compounds further at the intersection of age and refugee status: humanitarian programs tend to systematically cut older persons out at age 60, and sometimes even 50, from

[37] International Labor Organization, "Lebanon Adopts Landmark Social Security Reforms and a New Pension System for Private Sector Workers", 15 December 2023, available at https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/lebanon-adopts-landmark-social-security-reforms-and-new-pension-system

[38] Independent Oversight Board of the Reform, Recovery, and Reconstruction Framework of Lebanon (3RF), *National Social Protection Strategy for Lebanon: An Overdue Exigency*, Policy Brief, November 2023, available at https://www.lebanon3rf.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/National%20social%20protection%20staretgy%20IOB%20November%202023%20.pdf

vocational training, cash assistance, and even survey samples, while globally only around 1% of humanitarian funding is directed to older-persons programming.[39]

Also, Lebanon's constitution does not name age as a prohibited ground of discrimination. There is no global convention on the rights of older persons, and older persons remain largely unorganized, partly due to internalized ageism, leaving this population without the legal ground, the advocacy infrastructure, or the political voice to push for inclusion in any of the three transitions now reshaping the country's labor market.

New Marginalizations: An Expanding Vulnerability

- **Workers in Lebanon's platform economy**

KIIs stressed the nuance that Lebanon's platform workers should not be classified as a new vulnerable group; it is instead the sharpest point of convergence of digitalization and neoliberal policy. Platform work is not a technological novelty; it is the manifestation of how rapid advances in digital technologies are accelerating a more than decade-long dismantling of the standard employment relationship.

> The relationship with the employer, in its legal sense, is no longer clear. The law has not been able to keep up. To whom does the worker make their demand, and against whom?
>
> — KII-1 · Labor activist and lawyer

The Fairwork Lebanon ratings for 2023 implemented in partnership with TPI offer the most tangible evidence on the exploitative nature of jobs in Lebanon's platform economy. It assessed the working conditions in six platforms operating in Lebanon across two sectors, ride-hailing, and food delivery. The assessed platforms are Uber, Bolt, inDrive, mTaxiF, Toters, and Gozilla. What's striking is that none of the six platforms scored a single point on any of the five Fairwork principles: Fair pay, Fair Conditions, Fair Contracts, Fair Management, and Fair Representation. This constituted the worst collective result recorded to that date in any country in the Fairwork network.

[39] Sinead McGrath and Hester Clark, *Funding for Older People in Humanitarian Crises: Reversing Continued Neglect*, HelpAge International, October 2025, available at https://www.helpage.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Funding-for-Older-People-in-Humanitarian-Crises.pdf

Workers in these platforms bear the full means of production, vehicles, fuel, insurance, accident liability, while the platform extracts value: *"they have to cover their own means of production. They pay for insurance. If they have an accident, they deal with the consequences themselves. They effectively pay the company for the right to work." – KII-3*

There is also the "juggling-jobs economy": many gig workers are simultaneously army conscripts or have other day jobs. Algorithmically, platform workers are also subject to rating systems, login-frequency monitoring, producing an *"atomization of the labor force"* in which workers are *"constantly surveilled and constantly afraid of punishment."* The dehumanization is systemic: *"imagine looking at your phone and seeing an icon moving, that icon is a person. We dehumanize gig-economy workers. We see them as channels or services. The whole person is reduced to the title or function they perform for you"* – KII-3.

- **The skilled middle class**

The skilled Lebanese middle class, which includes clerical workers, translators, journalists, designers, research assistants, web developers, graphic designers, and junior lawyers, is identified throughout the KIIs as the only major group newly drawn into precarity by the current transitions. These workers had what were considered “good jobs”, which were more likely to be formal, urban, covered by the NSSF, and provided a degree of employment and income stability.

These groups of workers are being pulled into vulnerability by two forces: the first is AI augmentation and displacement.

> “AI affects knowledge production — journalists, designers, researchers, anyone working with information and content. Two skilled employees using AI can do the work that previously required four people. When the need for labor decreases, injustice within the system increases.”
>
> **— KII-9 · Digital security and digitalization expert**

The second force is global labor-market competition enabled by digital infrastructure.

> Earlier waves of globalization sent manufacturing jobs to the Global South. Now with digital technologies, an assistant can be based in the Philippines, or workers can be hired from anywhere. The problem is whether they have any labor rights or social-protection rights.
>
> **— KII-4 · Senior labor expert**

"Earlier waves of globalization sent manufacturing jobs to the Global South. Now with digital technologies, an assistant can be based in the Philippines, or workers can be hired from anywhere. The problem is whether they have any labor rights or social-protection rights" – KII-4

The effect of this dispersal on the potential for collective action and labor organizing is severe.

> "It is much harder to push back when workers are dispersed across the world, working online, and competing with one another, labor rights were historically established through collective pushback."
>
> **— KII-4 · Senior labor expert**

ICT and STEM workers paid in dollars: within this category of workers, those paid in USD present a specific sub-category whose position is particularly unstable. They are formal workers who stayed in Lebanon during and after the crisis, earning hard currency while based in Beirut, working remotely for foreign employers. This category has indeed benefitted from the digital transition; however, they face double precarity at the same time. On one hand, they are competing in a global labor market; on the other hand, even the dollar income that protects these workers from Lebanon's lira collapse is not guaranteed to be stable as global remote-work competition suppresses rates and as AI augmentation affects demand within the very occupations ICT and STEM workers fill.

> "What skills will they need to compete with other workers globally, including Indian workers? India may be much more advanced than us in some areas. The same applies to some West African countries, where internet and technology are booming."
>
> **— KII-3 · Gender and gig-economy expert**

Policy Recommendations

One The recommendations section reflects the policy recommendations suggested by the key informants. The final report will include a consolidated recommendations section that incorporates the authors' input, ARI's technical expertise, and findings from both the qualitative and the quantitative data.

I. Labor Law Reform

The most consistent demand across the KIIs is a comprehensive overhaul of the 1946 Labour Code, which is characterized as structurally incompatible with contemporary forms of work.

- Comprehensively overhaul the 1946 Labor Code to cover platform, freelance, remote, part-time, and temporary work (KII-1, KII-3, KII-9).
- Integrate all dispersed labor statutes into a single unified Labor and Social Security Code covering wages, contracts, working conditions, social insurance, maternity, disability, child labor, migrant work, pensions, and health coverage (KII-1).
- Explicitly recognize platform and gig work as work, with a legally defined employer responsibility, contributory arrangements, accident liability, and collective-bargaining standing (KII-1, KII-3, KII-9); KII-7 proposes voluntary contributions and monotax instruments as a transitional mechanism for this group.
- Update labor law to address surveillance, algorithmic management, and platform accountability, in line with European-style digital regulation (KII-9).
- Embed anti-discrimination protections for women, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, and other marginalized groups directly into labour legislation (KII-1, KII-3).
- Explicitly prohibit age discrimination in both the Lebanese constitution and labour law, as age is currently not a named protected ground (KII-6).
- Recognize ILO Convention 87 on trade-union freedom and enforce it in law and practice (KII-1).

II. Social Protection Landscape

- Implement the December 2023 Pension and Social Security Law without further delay, and extend it progressively to informal workers, the self-employed, and small-business owners through voluntary contributions or monotax-style instruments; Morocco's recent reforms are cited as a regional benchmark (KII-7).
- Establish unemployment insurance coupled with active reskilling, upskilling, and reintegration components; Lebanon currently has no such instrument (KII-3, KII-4, KII-7).
- Build toward universal health coverage as a strategic horizon, with immediate priority given to extending coverage to informal, freelance, and platform workers currently outside the NSSF (KII-1, KII-7).
- Recover and protect NSSF depositor funds; end repeated employer-arrears amnesties; restore full employer contribution rates; recapitalize the Fund, whose real value was destroyed by forced lira-denominated investments (KII-1).
- Recognize and integrate into the protection envelope new occupational health risks specific to gig, feminized, and remote work: SGBV, repetitive strain injury, back pain, and rheumatism (KII-3).
- Ensure social-protection eligibility criteria explicitly include older persons, LGBTQI+ individuals, and undocumented refugees, who are systematically missed by current targeting instruments (KII-2, KII-6).

III. Fiscal and Tax Reform

- Introduce progressive tax reform: increase taxes on profits and wealth, reduce regressive consumption taxes that disproportionately burden the poor, and systematically review and remove the more than 130 categories of tax exemptions that benefit politically connected groups (KII-1, KII-7).
- Build a diversified financing strategy combining domestic progressive taxation, international climate financing, targeted international support, and sovereign-debt restructuring, the latter being a global precondition for any Global South country to create the fiscal space needed (KII-4, KII-7).
- Pursue sovereign-debt restructuring as a prerequisite, not an afterthought, of any reform agenda (KII-4).
-

IV. Digital Regulation and Platform Governance

- Regulate digital platforms through inter-ministerial cooperation (Labour, Economy, and other ministries) to update labour law for the gig economy (KII-9).
- Enact platform regulation that limits extractive digital practices; KII-9 specifically references Barcelona's restrictions on Uber and Airbnb as a model.
- Explore cooperative alternatives to extractive global platforms: KII-9 proposes a Lebanese taxi-driver-and-technologist cooperative to compete with Uber, retaining value domestically.
- Build digital sovereignty: develop Arab and Lebanese platforms, applications, and data systems that retain local value rather than feeding extractive flows to US-based owners (KII-4, KII-5, KII-9).
- Address surveillance and algorithmic management in labour relations through legally binding algorithmic transparency and accountability requirements (KII-3, KII-9).

V. Energy Transition and Just Transition Governance

- Amend Lebanon's three core energy laws, the Distributed Renewable Energy Law (Law 318/2023), the Energy Conservation Law, and Law 462/2002, to include: definitions and tariff protections for vulnerable consumers; geographic-equity safeguards preventing peripheral regions from bearing the costs of a transition from which they do not benefit; and explicit worker-protection requirements (KII-8).
- Integrate green-transition access and energy poverty explicitly into social-registry eligibility criteria: energy access is a social-protection issue and must be treated as such (KII-8).
- Develop a national strategy for the energy transition that explicitly addresses the EDL workforce, the generator-economy workers, and the geographic inequality of solar deployment (KII-1, KII-8).
- Protect EDL formal and informal workers from displacement without recourse in any restructuring or privatization process (KII-8).
- Resist green-colonialism agendas: any energy export arrangements must include technology transfer and local benefit conditions (KII-8).
- Regulate the generator-economy cartel as a transitional actor in the just-transition process, while recognizing its political power and the risk of it *"partially hijacking"* the agenda, rather than treating it as either victim or partner without scrutiny (KII-8).

VI. Industrial Policy and Economic Vision

- Invest in physical and digital connectivity: submarine cables, public-school IT infrastructure, and technology parks (KII-1, KII-5, KII-9).
- Invest in environmental conservation, public housing, public health, and public education as direct job-creating sectors in their own right, not merely as social expenditure (KII-4, KII-5).
- Introduce anti-monopoly and anti-cronyism reforms with rule-based industrial-policy institutions to prevent political connection from determining which firms and sectors receive public investment (KII-5).

VII. Collective Organizing and Social Dialogue

- Strengthen trade-union freedom through ratification and enforcement of ILO Convention 87 (KII-1, KII-3).
- Activate tripartite social dialogue and build functional sectoral platforms, particularly in sectors where the General Confederation of Labor is captured by political parties and therefore dysfunctional (KII-3).
- Build new organizing forms that reach platform, freelance, refugee, LGBTQI+, older, and migrant workers, including identity-based unions (KII-3 cites Sri Lanka's transgender workers' union as a model), professional collectives, and mutual-aid networks (KII-1, KII-2, KII-3, KII-9).
- Anchor reforms in workers' organization: civil society organizations cannot substitute for trade unions in social dialogue (KII-1).
- Build digital and AI literacy among union leaders, with intentional inclusion of younger workers and women, so that worker representatives can engage technically with the transitions reshaping their sectors (KII-4).
- Develop cooperative alternatives to extractive platforms as an organizing model: a worker-owned transport cooperative is one example (KII-9).

VIII. Data Infrastructure and Research

- Build a consolidated national data infrastructure covering social spending, sectoral employment, vulnerable groups, and international resource flows, without which policy cannot be designed (KII-7).
- Produce disaggregated data by age (including persons over 60, currently invisible in most datasets), gender, nationality, sexuality, and geography (KII-2, KII-3, KII-6).

- Commission public-interest research on digital labour in Lebanon, a field currently under-documented relative to its social weight (KII-9).