



TECHNIUM
SOCIAL SCIENCES JOURNAL

Vol. 79/2026
A New Decade for Social Changes



PLUS
COMMUNICATION P



International
Communication & PR

Family Protection in Lebanon: Between a Flawed Structure and a Needed Reform

Micheline Efrem

Holy Family University, Lebanon

srmicheline.frem@usf.edu.lb

Abstract. Social exclusion is today one of the major social issues of our societies, whether developed or developing. In Lebanon, family protection, regulated by a few scattered texts, have so far largely been the work of charitable associations and religious institutions, in the absence of a social plan adopted by the State in this domain. A reform project for family social protection could evolve as a “Social State” that recognizes and guarantees social rights for everyone and for all.

Keywords. social assistance, social action, state familialism, religious familialism, social unity, relative secularism, social injustice, fraternity, family allowance system.

Introduction

The family is regarded as “the oldest social fact of humanity, predating the formation of social groups and states”(1). Considered as “the smallest democracy at the heart of society”, the family has, over time, undergone transformations that have led to the development of public policies grounded in its constitutive principles (2).

Situated at the core of social life, the family is linked to a form of state familialism that requires a dual-level framework. The first pertains to the moral and social dimension, while the second relates to the political sphere and the values underpinning it (3). Through its virtues and its socializing function, the family serves as an inspiration for social order — a concept encapsulated by the notion of familialism.

According to J. Commaille, within this model that places the family at the center, such familialism constitutes an “exogenous imposition”(4). This imposition is characterized by the broad orientations determined by the state through the exercise of a tutelary mode of governance “from above.”

J. Minonzio, meanwhile, argues that this “political doctrine was forged at the intersection of a familialist concern — influenced by the Church’s social doctrine — and a natalist concern by a more rationalist and scientific rationale”(3).

State familialism, a term used by R. Lenoir(5), is founded upon four constitutive pillars(3):

First- The institutional unity of family assistance, linking the family branch of social security with the High Council for the Family;

Second- The universality of family allowances and the principle of horizontal solidarity;

Third- Support for the family: whereby the community provides assistance to parents to enable them to fulfill their educational functions;

Fourth- The natalist objective: state offers financial assistance to parents to help them carry out their educational responsibilities.

However, in contrast to this “state familialism”, many countries are witnessing the emergence of new values associated with “positive individualism,” which call for a redefinition of roles among the actors involved in family policy. As a result, means-tested family benefits have been promoted, and innovative forms of social action have been implemented.

J. Commaille observes that the tutelary model based on familialism contains the seeds of a “new model of the economy of values”(4). A profound transformation has thus taken place, as “new principles meant to guide relationships within the private sphere prevail in current debates, in the actual balance of power within society, and in the relationship to politics”(4). Transformations within the family institution itself have emerged, generating broader changes linked to the process of modernization.

Thus, within family policy, it is no longer the state or political power that determines the course of action; rather, it is the citizens themselves who demand a form of “democratization of private life”. This democratization should, in turn, correspond to political democracy. Indeed, “in the face of the emergence of a positive individualism that may be reciprocally related to the democratic order, the virtues of legal and political regulation are increasingly associated not with what is imposed in the name of a higher order of legitimation, but with practices of adjustment to the aspirations of individuals themselves”(4). This phenomenon is referred to by J. Commaille as the “endogenization of private values”. This individualism leads to a “liberalization of values”.

In the case of Lebanon, the evolution of family values has not been accompanied by a corresponding development in family policy. The latter remains rooted in religious familialism and is characterized by insufficient family allowances.

In order to prevent the family from becoming “a small sovereignty set in opposition to that of the state”(2), it is essential to implement a reform of family policy in Lebanon—one that would be grounded in a form of state familialism capable of recognizing for every family a renewed place within society.

From this perspective, the study will examine the realities and challenges of family protection under Lebanese law (I), while also proposing a project aimed at a reform that has become indispensable (II).

I- Family social protection in Lebanon: between reality and legislation

This section examines three key dimensions: the reality of family social policy within a “state of religious community” (A), the legislative framework governing family social policy (B), and the forms of ministerial social assistance that support its implementation (C).

A. The reality of family social policy in the “state of religious community”

The “religious community” solidarity is a fundamental element of social policy in Lebanon. It is based on two key factors: the patriarchal structure of the family (a) and political domination in the relationship between the helper and the helped (b). It is essential to understand the effects of sectarian solidarity (c).

a. The patriarchal structure of the family

In the realm of social policy, we find natural solidarity within the family resulting from the kinship system, just as “religious community” solidarity appears within a single religious family.

With regard to social assistance within the family according to the natural order, the head of the family exercises his parental authority as the primary provider for his wife and children (female children until marriage, and male children with their wives and children until his death). Nowadays, the family structure has undergone significant changes, and the marital family unit has

become limited, depending on location and tradition, to the father, mother, and their biological offspring, but natural solidarity remains of great importance.

In fact, family social assistance in Lebanon is considered a duty, according to spiritual and ethical principles. In this sense, it concerns assistance to family members residing in the country or abroad. According to the last results of the Central Administration of Statistics between 2004 and 2009 (6), 6.3% of Lebanese families report that at least one of their members lives abroad. 74% of them lived with their families before emigrating. 65% of emigrants state that the main reason for their emigration is work. The Lebanese diaspora is very large: “It is estimated that the total number of Lebanese living abroad is twice the number of those who remained in the country”(7).

Family relationships, in their natural solidarity dimension, are based on emotional ties that strengthen kinship bonds, but they are also based on economic needs that close the family in on itself. In this living context, they are considered the family, the smallest possible political organization, provides financial assistance to its members in need, and the state, which plays only a secondary role, relies on the family.

With regard to social assistance within each “religious community”, it should be noted that the legal system confessional has had an impact on the country's social system, particularly on the lebanese family. The lack of civil marriage legislation in Lebanon has forced every family to join one of the country's recognized “religious community”. This “religious community” family integration led to the almost complete exclusion of poor people belonging to other “religious community”. Each community cares only for its own members. This solidarity constitutes community isolation rather than community solidarity, as social assistance is partial and limited to members of the same “religious community” family.

Although poverty in Lebanon is considered a socio-economic phenomenon, the plan adopted by the state remains incomplete. Poverty is a particular problem for those who belong to a certain “religious community”. In fact, “we are not fighting poverty, but helping some of the poor” (7).

Here, the problem of political hegemony arises.

b. The political relationship between the helper and the helped

The poor in Lebanese society do not choose their political representatives according to their own free will, but according to “voting through bartering”(7). This means that they receive payment for their votes from the people they elect. This political relationship, which is often conditional and based on private interests, generates political patronage that runs counter to the concept of citizenship and reinforces “religious community” ties that lead to exclusion and social inequality.

In this case, social assistance is not free, as the relationship of dependency between the donor and the beneficiary of this donation. A grant is nothing more than an exchange between

the needy, who hopes to receive help and finds himself obliged to show gratitude towards the rich person who occupies a stronger position and, in turn, expects something in return.

c. The effects of “religious community” solidarity

In the absence of a specific law on social assistance in Lebanon, the poorest people turn to their natural or “religious community” families or to politically influential members of their “religious community”. This relationship, which arises as a result of economic need, strengthens confession’s identity.

These social ties, which are woven within the confession’s framework, contribute to strengthening confession affiliation, to reinforcing social hierarchy, and to the absence of social justice.

- With regard to confession affiliation, it has been observed that the greater the social misery, the greater the attachment to “religious community” and the stronger the family loyalties. This relationship adds to the blood bond a social affiliation based on confession identity. The relationship of exchange or dependency becomes self-evident.

- With regard to social hierarchy, it is rooted in the “barter relationship” because the relationship of dependency is not only one of identity, but also one of hierarchy. In other words, bartering is the means by which politicians gain access to power, as they give the poor financial or non-material assistance in exchange for popular support. The poor behave according to what is required of them by those who provide them with this assistance. What matters to the poor is survival. What matters to the powerful is maintaining their prestigious social status. This hierarchy, which contradicts the social concept of the state and widens the gap between the poor and the rich, remains an acceptable reality for “religious community”, given the financial and institutional incapacity of the state. In short, integration within the “religious community” based on private interests, leads to a state of social exclusion and exacerbates social inequalities.

- With regard to social injustice, it manifests on two levels: the first is inequality in form, and the second is inequality in reality.

In terms of inequality in form- based on Professor Borgetto's article entitled “The Principle of Equality in French Public Law” and after presenting the relationship of dependency that gives rise to social inequality in Lebanon, it is necessary to highlight the weaknesses in the application of the principle of equality in Lebanese society(8).

The first observation that strikes us is that social inequality is nothing more than a consequence of inequality in the law itself. In his aforementioned article, Mr. Borgetto pointed to three main forms of the principle of equality: equality before the law, equality in the law, and equality through the law.

It can be seen from the above that the fundamental cause of social inequality within communities is directly linked to the legal norm itself. Equality before the law, as enshrined in paragraph (c) of the preamble to the Lebanese Constitution, is not complemented by equality in or through the legal system. The problem arises in Article 95 of the Constitution, which regulates the principle of equality in public office according to a “religious community” quota system in the formation of public administrations, as well as in laws, specific to each confession, since the integration of laws that reduce, social inequality is closely linked to the application of confession rules that govern politics in the country. Social equality can only be achieved if it is comprehensive and national, guaranteed by the nation to all its members, in the context of genuine “social solidarity”.

In terms of inequality in reality- it is evident in the difference in treatment that arises in the area of public services between citizens, since sectarian discrimination leads to unequal

opportunities and income inequality, and these two types of inequality lead to an unequal distribution of economic, political, and cultural wealth, and thus to a lack of social justice.

In the face of this social inequality, both in form and in reality, a new concept should emerge: “state reform”, a political reform which requires constitutional reform and social sectors reform.

The history of the Lebanese Republic has witnessed two attempts at social reform: the first during the presidency of Fouad Chehab, between 1958 and 1963, and the second during the government of President Salim al-Hoss, between 1999 and 2000. In both cases, the attempts at reform were described as “failed reforms”, despite plans for economic and social reconstruction. This is because the reforms were limited to the social sectors without “daring” to touch the Constitution and confession laws that govern interpersonal relations. This led to “incomplete solidarity” and ongoing and worsening social injustice.

B. Family social policy legislation

In our time, social justice, which tends toward the separation of religion and state, presupposes the need to distinguish between civil laws issued by the state and religious laws specific to confessions.

In Lebanon, each community has its own laws governing the personal status of its followers. There remains an urgent need to unify legislation and judicial powers in a fair and equitable civil law.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the issue of family social assistance from a legal perspective, it is necessary to highlight the mosaic of laws that embody social justice in this area, divided into three parts: religious laws (a), family and educational allowances in social security law (b), and family allowances in public servants’ system (c).

a. Religious laws as diverse as the communities in Lebanon

Every religious community officially recognized by the state enjoys independent legal personality. Article 9 of the Lebanese Constitution enshrines the personal status system of religious communities. Resolution N°60 L.R. issued on March 13, 1936, also stipulates that the religious communities system has the force of law. Each religious confession is granted legal personality with all the legal effects that this entails, including independence in the cultural, educational, and charitable fields. It should be noted that the legislative independence of religious communities varies from one community to another; while Christian communities enjoy legislative independence that allows them to enact their own regulations concerning personal status, Muslim communities enjoy legislative independence that allows them to enact their own regulations concerning personal status(9).

The confessions courts are divided into three categories: the spiritual courts of the Christian confessions, the Sharia courts of the Sunni and Shiite, and the doctrinal courts of the Druze. The topics common to all laws include: marriage law, lineage, guardianship and trusteeship, and endowments.

Based on topics related to family social assistance, especially charitable works, we will limit this study to two topics: *waqf* (i) and guardianship and trusteeship (ii).

i. With regard to *waqf*

According to the legal meaning of the term, *waqf* refers to “the freezing of immovable property, preventing its transfer to any party, and allocating its proceeds to a specific charitable

or family purpose”(10). An endowment is considered a charitable and humanitarian institution. There are two types of endowments:

First - Family endowment: This is an endowment made by the endower for his family and anyone else he wishes to support.

Second - Charitable *waqf*: This is endowed for acts of charity and benevolence and for the benefit of the needy.

For Catholics, *waqf* refers only to charitable endowments, including “charitable institutions and properties belonging to the Church and its legal entities”. For Islamic communities, it refers to the “*habs*” *waqf*, which may be charitable or ancestral, and is subject exclusively to the jurisdiction of Islamic courts.

Charitable *waqf* is a permanent endowment, established with the aim of “meeting the needs of social welfare, hospitals, schools, the elderly, the poor, the sick, and the needy”(10).

From the above, we note that charitable endowments among Christians and Muslims are subject to the rulings of religious courts. If the concept of charitable endowments is accepted by Christians and Muslims with the aim of providing assistance to the poor and needy, then it is time to adopt a new approach that transcends confessions laws and unifies social welfare efforts under the supervision of the state.

ii. With regard to guardianship and trusteeship

Guardianship (in arabic *wilaya*) refers to parental authority, which is “the set of rights and duties that a father and mother have towards their minor children until they reach the age of majority”(10). In both Christian and Muslim communities, parental authority rests primarily with the father. Parental authority to the jurisdiction of the religious courts in all denominations.

Trusteeship (in arabic *wissaya*), is the exercise of parental authority, in whole or in part, by a person other than the father or mother. In some cases, the guardian is appointed by the religious court.

Child custody and child support are among the most important aspects of parental authority. Each confession has its own rules governing these rights before its religious courts. However, the father plays a fundamental role in bearing the consequences of parental authority over his children in all communities. The family remains primarily responsible for providing for the social needs of its members, reflecting the dominance of parental authority in Lebanese social structure.

From the above, we can conclude the following:

First- The necessity of separating religion from the state, and the state assuming responsibility for social and family protection;

Second- The need to adopt a unified law that protects the rights of the needy and poor in society, away from fragmented confessions laws;

Third- The need to move beyond the paternalistic system towards creating an integrated system that establishes the state's responsibility towards the poorest persons.

b. Family and educational allowances in Lebanese Social Security Law (LSSL)

The structure of the family social protection policy currently in place includes two fundamental dimensions: family allowances (i) and educational allowances (ii) recognized for employees.

i. Family allowances in LSSL

Chapter III of the Lebanese Social Security Law deals with “family and educational allowances” and is subject to the provisions of Articles 46, 47, and 48 of the Lebanese Social Security Law.

Article 46 of the Lebanese Social Security Law specifies the categories that benefit from family allowances, namely: the insured category and the beneficiary’s category (Art. 9 & 10 LSSL).

First: Insured persons

In addition to the membership requirement, the insured must be eligible and support a family, whether as a biological or adoptive father, or as a legal guardian of children. In the event of divorce, widowhood, adoption, or guardianship, the insured is entitled to receive family allowances provided that there are dependent children.

As for married women who are covered by social security and they have children, Lebanese case law underwent a fundamental change in 1995, recognizing women's right to receive family allowances for her children if her husband does not benefit from them, even in the absence of the aforementioned exceptional circumstances. This jurisprudence was enshrined in Law n° 483 of December 12, 2002, amending article 14 of the Lebanese Social Security Law, so that women now enjoy the same rights as men in this area, provided that there is no double benefit.

Second: Eligible persons (dependent beneficiaries)

The dependent beneficiary must meet three legal conditions to be eligible for family compensation:

First condition – kinship: Only a legal wife and legal children, adopted children, or children under legal guardianship are recognized.

Second condition – age, health status, or continuing education:

o The wife is entitled to compensation provided that she is not in paid employment and that her husband is affiliated to the family compensation branch.

o Male children benefit until they reach the age of 18, or until the age of 25 if they are pursuing their studies on a regular basis.

o Female children up to the age of 25 are eligible, provided that they are not married and unemployed.

o Disabled children who hold a personal disability card and are unable to earn a living due to a disability that prevents them from working.

Third condition – shared residence: The beneficiary must reside under the same roof as the guarantor and must not have separate accommodation.

Despite the social protection nature of these allowances, they remain subject to a number of legal and practical restrictions and conditions that sometimes limit their effectiveness(11) :

- If the father has two jobs (one primary and one secondary) that entitle him to family allowances,

only the employer of the main occupation is responsible for paying these allowances.

- If the father and mother meet the legal requirements for receiving family allowances, these are granted to the father alone.

- Family allowances are granted up to five children per head of household.

Based on the above, we have drawn up the following table illustrating how the family allowance system works under the Lebanese Social Security Law (LSSL).

Figure 1: Family allowance system in the Lebanese Social Security Law

	Kinship	Link Requirements	Number
Boy	Legitimate or adopted child	Age up to Eighteen years old and up to twenty-five years old due to studies or without a specific age in the case of physical or mental disability	Maximum five children
Girl	Legitimate or adopted child	Age up to eighteen years old and up to twenty-five years old due to studies, single or divorced, or no specific age in the case of physical or mental disability	Maximum five children
Wife	Legitimate	Not receiving a salary	One wife
Husband	Does not receive family allowances		

ii. Educational allowances in LSSL

The implementation of educational allowances by the National Social Security Fund continues to suffer from imbalances, due to the lack of an effective system for educational allowances. This legislative gap has been filled by decrees issued periodically by the Council of Ministers, which temporarily set the value of what is known as the “education grant”.

This type of allowance is paid for a maximum of three children, provided that the total grant does not exceed 12,000,000 LBP(12), and these expenses remain the responsibility of the employer.

To be eligible for these educational grants, the following conditions must be met:

- The student must be between three and twenty-five years old.
- The student must be enrolled in an educational institution officially recognized by the state.
- If the applicant is a woman, she is eligible for educational grants if she is the legal guardian of the child or if her husband is employed and does not receive educational grants.

In addition to the family and educational allowances recognized for private sector employees by the National Social Security Fund, it is useful to mention the family and educational allowances for public servants.

c. Family and educational allowances in Lebanese Public Servants’ System (LPSS)

According to Decree N° 3950 of April 27, 1960, concerning the system of allowances and assistance granted to public servants, amended by Decree N° 10110 of March 22, 2013, public servants are entitled to family allowances (i) and grants (ii).

i. Family allowances in LPSS

They are a right:

- To the husband or wife;
- To male children under the age of 18;

- To male children who have reached the age of eighteen in the following two cases:
 - o If the child has an illness or disability that renders him unable to work and requires support;
 - o If the child is pursuing his studies until he reaches the age of 25;
 - Unmarried girls, as well as widows and divorcees who are not entitled to alimony;
- The monthly family allowance for male or female public servants is determined as follows:
- o For the husband or wife: 20% of the minimum wage in the public sector.
 - o For each dependent child: 11% of the minimum wage mentioned above, provided that the amount of allowance for children does not exceed 55% thereof.

ii. Family grants in LPSS

With regard to assistance, it is payable in two cases:

- In the event of the death of a public servant, assistance is payable to his family:
If the death is the result of a work-related accident, the assistance is calculated on the basis of the monthly salary at the date of death multiplied by twelve months;
If the death was due to illness, the assistance is calculated based on the monthly salary at the date of death multiplied by nine months;
 - In the event of the death of the spouse, one of the children, or one of the parents who was dependent on him, the public servant is entitled to assistance from the state. This assistance is calculated on the basis of the monthly salary on the date of death multiplied by two months;
- There are three types of grants:
- Grant for first marriage, equal to twice ($\times 2$) the monthly salary;
 - Grant for the birth of a son or daughter, equal to half ($\frac{1}{2}$) of the monthly salary;
 - School allowance granted for five children only.

Figure 2: Family allowances and grants in the social security system and in the public servant system

		Social security system	Public servant system
Family allowances (monthly)	Wife	1,200,000 LBP	20% of the minimum wage
	Child	660,000 LBP (maximum 5 children)	11% of the minimum wage, provided that the amount of compensation does not exceed 55% thereof.
	Total	4,500,000 LBP	75% = 13,500,000 LBP
Assistance and grants (monthly)	Educational grants	12,000,000 LBP = private schools or universities (the grant value does not exceed 36 millions LBP for workers with three children)	Between 59 million and 119 million LBP = Public schools Between 119 million and 200 million pounds = private schools (not free for kindergarten and elementary school)
	Total	Maximum 3 Children	Maximum limit 5 Children
	Other grants	-	Birth = one month $\times \frac{1}{2}$ Marriage = one month $\times 2$

	Assistance	-	<p>Death of a public servant: Work accident = one month × 12 Illness = one month × 9</p> <p>Death of a family member: = one month × 2</p>
--	------------	---	---

From the comparison shown in the table above, we can conclude the following:

The first observation concerns the difference between the monthly value of family allowances received by insured persons, in the National Social Security Fund, and those granted to public servants. Fund beneficiaries only receive a fixed amount, while public servants receive a percentage of the official minimum wage.

The second observation concerns the nature of grants and assistance, as those insured by the National Social Security Fund only receive a modest education grant, while public servants receive various types of assistance and grants.

Third observation – In 2025, the number of social security beneficiaries was estimated at 1.2 million out of a population of approximately 6 million. Consequently, family allowances coverage was estimated at approximately 19.4%, with an average of more than two beneficiaries per contributor.

As for beneficiaries of the state servants Cooperative, the number of participating servants currently stands at approximately 87,000. The number of beneficiaries has reached more than 400,000 family compensation coverage was estimated at 6.7% of the population.

This confirms that only 26.1% of Lebanese benefit from family allowances between social security and the public service system. As for 73.9% of the Lebanese people, they resort to private insurance or live without insurance.

C. Ministerial social assistance

The Family Affairs Department is part of the Social Services Directorate at the Ministry of Social Affairs and is divided into two divisions: the Family Affairs Division, which developed the *Aman* program to support the poorest families (a), and the Women's Affairs Division, which works to combat discrimination against women (b).

a. The *Aman* Program – Social Safety Net

The *Aman* program is the result of merging the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) program and the Targeting the Poorest Households (NPTP) program. This program is a fundamental step toward a permanent and equitable national social protection system led by the state.

The program is implemented by the Ministry of Social Affairs in coordination with the Central Administration Unit of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, with technical support from the World Bank and the World Food Program (WFP).

In the multiple crises Lebanon is experiencing, including economic collapse, 80% of the population living below the poverty line. The Ministry and the Presidency of the Government, with the support of international partners, took the initiative to integrate previous programs and launch “*Aman*” as the first unified national social safety, in line with the National Social Protection Strategy launched in 2024.

The program's objectives include:

- Provide direct cash support to the poorest and most vulnerable Lebanese families.
- Strengthen, modernize, and digitize social protection systems.

- Ensure transparency in targeting and adopt data-driven approaches.
- Support economic empowerment through gradual integration and poverty exit programs.
With regard to supporting the poorest families, emergency cash transfers have benefited more than 160,000 families per month since 2022.
The assistance is based on grants of \$20 per person + \$25 per family, up to 6 members (an average of \$105 per family per month).

With regard to education support (Top-Up), the assistance covers 87,000 students aged 13-18 from beneficiary families. It aims to reduce school dropout rates. This amount is disbursed as an additional amount attached to the monthly transfers to families.

With regard to strengthening systems and institutional reform, the approved plan focuses on strengthening the capacities of the ministry and the central administration unit in managing the program, in addition to developing digital records and targeting and complaint mechanisms. The *Aman* program is funded by a combination of international loans and donor support, along with efforts to integrate it into the state budget:

- World Bank loans: \$246 million (2021–2024), \$300 million (2024), \$200 million (2026).
- European Union grant: \$50 million (2026).
- The inclusion of *Aman* program in the 2026 draft budget is a fundamental step towards its local financing and ensuring its national sustainability.

b. Programs to support Lebanese women

Action plans have been adopted by various ministries with the aim of eliminating all forms of discrimination against women. The Ministry of Social Affairs, through its Department of Women's Affairs, cooperates with women's organizations and prepares awareness programs aimed at Promoting a culture that rejects discrimination against women.

In terms of nationality, Lebanon has maintained its reservation on the second paragraph of Article 9 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), relating to the right of men and women to grant their nationality to their children; in Lebanon, this right is granted only to the father.

From the above, it is clear that despite efforts at the national level to strengthen the position of women in Lebanese society legally and socially, reforming personal status laws, mindsets, and the education system to recognize the fundamental role of women and men remains necessary for the adoption of an effective family social policy in Lebanon.

Given the inadequate structure of family allowances in Lebanon and the lack of social work by the Ministry of Social Affairs Socially, reform remains necessary to recognize the family as a central component of a new family policy.

II - Proposal for a reform project for family social protection in Lebanon

A. Social unity in a “unified state”

In the contemporary sense, secularism means that religion should not be exploited by political authorities, nor should politics be exploited by religious authorities. But in a country like Lebanon, how can we overcome “confessions” and move toward a secular society that allows for social justice? Thinker J. Maïla considers that the transition from a “confessions state” to a “secular state” requires a necessary stage, namely that of a “unified state”(13).

Therefore, the following two questions must be answered: What is the most appropriate model for living together in Lebanon? How can we promote social unity and weaken sectarianism?

Many thinkers have opposed sectarian society and attempted to propose reform projects, such as historian and sociologist A. Beydoun, who proposed a program for the abolition of sectarianism, focusing on the need to develop unified education programs without regard to sectarian affiliations (14).

However, in the Lebanese context, the project of achieving a secular state seems difficult because the main reason is the Lebanese mentality rooted in a sectarian political system that suits each confession(15).

Despite the many obstacles preventing the establishment of a secular state, if we look back at our history, namely the periods when relations between Christians and Muslims were based on pluralism, we discover that this coexistence was a precursor to the secular project in Lebanon.

A. Kanafani Zahra described this relationship as “relative secularism” emphasizing that coexistence between Christians and Muslims has deep roots in Lebanese villages(16). This coexistence is fundamentally based on a structural compromise between different confessions, creating a space for communication away from the political framework of power sharing.

“Relative secularism” is based on the fact that Christians and Muslims belong to the same civilization, even if their religions and cultures are diverse. But the question is: How can we put this “relative secularism” into practice? How can we develop the concept of solidarity and reduce sectarian tensions?

In order to achieve a secular state in Lebanon, a transitional phase - “relative secularism”- is necessary, which requires two things:

First- Replacing personal status laws with a unified civil law with the aim of achieving a free democracy that is broader and more inclusive than sectarianism.

Second- Education on social distance as a right and duty of every citizen: In Lebanon, social rights remain incomplete. Most non-governmental organizations are sectarian.

The “relative secularism” that we have experienced in certain historical periods of Lebanese society is today overshadowed by specific sectarian interests. This necessitates the achievement of social justice. Many Lebanese intellectuals have realized that a social assistance law in Lebanon needs reforming the authorities in two stages:

- a. From the exclusive authority to the authority of social fraternity
- b. From the authority of social fraternity to social solidarity

- a. From the strongest, most exclusive authority to the authority of social fraternity

In a study conducted by Professor A. Messara entitled “Managing Change in the Lebanese Political System” (17), he asks the following question: “Is it the state that decides matters or the one that seeks compromise?”. In Lebanon, authority is exercised as “hegemony”, whose primary source is the sectarian system.

After his experience in restructuring Lebanese society, President Fouad Chehab stated: “I am convinced that the country is not yet ready to accept these radical solutions, which I can only imagine within the framework of respect for legitimacy and fundamental freedoms”(18).

In reality, the understanding within Lebanon's political structure is not national, but rather based on sectarian quotas in which there is no single center of decision-making. The maneuvering among politicians, which leads to vetoes on ministerial decisions, and external interference in favor of a particular confession, weaken the authority of the state and reinforce the dictatorship of the elite.

It cannot be denied that a new generation is now trying to defend the sovereignty and independence of the state, but this remains insufficient. Talking about a social state in Lebanon requires first moving from a single authority to one based on social fraternity.

In a study on the concept of social fraternity, Professor Borgetto explained the meaning of social fraternity, saying: “Everyone is brothers because, by belonging to a homeland, they are all free and equal, and by forming a nation, they are all an integral part of sovereign power; a power which, although not limited to them, they must only consider that, as representatives of past, present, and future generations, they necessarily include them”(8). He also affirms that “they are all brothers, since they are - by assumption - united and unified within and through the nation, and they are all, by virtue of this right and within its framework, citizens”(8).

Based on this concept of social fraternity, we can conclude:

First- All citizens of the homeland are brothers and together form one nation; social fraternity is a fundamental element in the formation of the nation.

Second- Based on freedom and equality, which are the two fundamental pillars of every nation, all citizens participate in the exercise of sovereign power.

Comparing this with the social reality in Lebanon, we can observe the following:

In order for the exclusive authority in Lebanon to become a sovereign authority, two transitional stages must be completed:

The first stage is the transition from distinct religious groups to a social group that forms a single nation, the Lebanese nation, based on social fraternity rather than “sectarian solidarity”. The second stage, branching off from the first, is the transition from power exercised by the political class itself, based on subordination, to sovereign power in which all members of society participate, as free and equal before the law, and form an integral part of the exercise of that power.

However, social fraternity has an emotional and sentimental dimension, which is a necessary social dimension but is not sufficient, requiring social solidarity to complement it.

b. From the authority of social fraternity to social solidarity

French politician Leon Bourgeois believes that the concept of “fraternity” expresses only a feeling and does not represent a legal organization(19).

In this sense, fraternity is similar to charity and remains insufficient to establish a legal system imposed by the state on the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in society. Therefore, social fraternity, in itself, remains insufficient.

Social solidarity is a set of “mutual ties that exist between all human beings”. The approach here does not start from the isolated individual, but from the principle of mutual interdependence, which is the fundamental basis of solidarity. Auguste Comte acknowledges that solidarity is based on the convergence of a network of solidarities.

In this context, we can start with two basic ideas to move from the concept of “sectarian solidarity” in the plural to the concept of unified social solidarity.

The first idea relates to solidarity based on mutual interdependence, as even today, in Lebanon, most forms of solidarity are sectarian, confined within a closed and private circle, due to fear of those who are different. This raises several questions: Can these different forms of sectarian solidarity come together? To what extent can society be considered a meeting point between diverse religious groups? Does the state have a role to play in encouraging this convergence? The concept of convergence is closely linked to the concept of transcendence: transcending private interests, transcending the concept of political subordination, and transcending the

traditional concept of authority. It is transcending sectarian groups toward a social group, and transcending the ego in order to converge with the other within a social state.

The second idea stems from the first and is based on the mutual interdependence of all members of society. It is no longer a question about allegiance to a president or leader, but rather about social interdependence, i.e., a relationship that connects each individual to all members of their nation without distinction.

According to politician Leon Bourgeois, the concept of solidarity constitutes a mutual debt between generations; this debt is the link, the social bond that connects individuals to each other and to society. In this case, the state is not seen as a “guardian power” but rather as the authority that ratifies agreements between individuals and ensures that commitments are respected.

The reform of authority therefore requires a social dimension based on fraternity and social solidarity. The latter is a scientific principle that justifies the intervention of the administrative authority. Hence the importance and necessity of enshrining the principle of social solidarity.

B. Family policy in a family-oriented state

The family is considered the basic unit of society and is imprinted with the social structure that, in Lebanon, gives religion a fundamental place.

Thus, the small family finds itself belonging to a larger family of a confession nature, facing other confessions families, all coexisting within a single state and together forming a single nation.

This reality embodies what could be called “religious familism” whereby each confession takes it upon itself to address the social and economic shortcomings suffered by families belonging to it, thus transforming confession affiliation into a substitute for social welfare provided by the state.

As for the Lebanese state, it limits itself in this area to performing a limited “social” role through a family compensation system that remains inadequate and does not cover all citizens.

The problem today is evident in the individualism that has begun to seep into Lebanese families, changing their traditional social structure.

Single-parent families have begun to increase, and women have come to occupy a fundamental position in professional life, leading to a fundamental shift in the distribution of roles within the family and in the nature of relationships between its members(20).

As a result, the traditional patriarchal structure that characterized Lebanese families has been threatened or gradually replaced by what could be described as “unrestrained liberalism” a phase characterized by weak family ties and a decline in the guiding role of the state(17). The Lebanese state remains absent from the field of social development and from keeping pace with societal changes through appropriate legislation, which leaves the social reality subject to “spontaneous” interactions that are not regulated by a modern legal framework or comprehensive family policy.

It is clear to us that between sectarianism and individualism, which are opposites in the field of family policy, it is necessary to find a balance based on what can be called “the family orientation of the state” where the state becomes an active member in shaping family policy that meets the needs of the family in its contemporary form and its social and economic development(21).

This family-oriented approach by the state should be based on fundamental conditions, including those related to the nature of the social system and the state's responsibility to achieve social justice and ensure the cohesion of the Lebanese family.

This family-oriented approach by the state must be based on the following points:

First – Giving childhood a central place in family policy: Family allowance funds should provide assistance to parents to enable them to fulfill their educational responsibilities, and the value of family allowances should be linked to the number of children so that it increases as the number of children increases.

Second- A uniform family allowance system should be established, without any discrimination between men and women or between private sector employees and public servants’ system.

These family allowances must be based on fair social conditions based on the logic of legal social assistance directed at all families, supplemented by individual and collective social action that automatically adopts new measures to protect the family and ensure its stability.

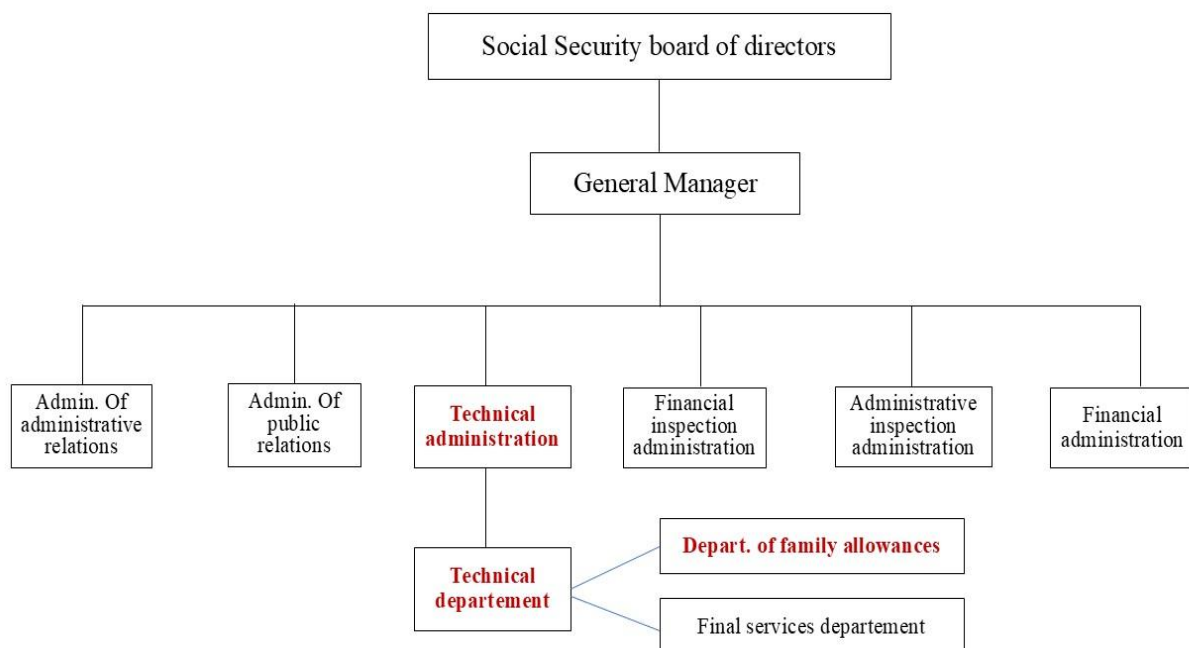
Third – Adopting the principle of horizontal solidarity, and thus extending the family allowance system to cover all categories. On this basis, the principle of the family quotient becomes a tool that allows for a reduction in income tax according to the number of children in the family, thereby promoting social justice and economic equality among Lebanese families.

The family orientation of the state is considered one of the founding pillars of family policy, which requires the creation of a new administrative structure to organize this policy and oversee its implementation in an integrated and effective manner.

C. Towards a new administrative structure for the Family Social Security Branch

The Lebanese Social Security Code clearly provides for the establishment of a family allowance scheme directly administered by the National Social Security Fund. However, it should be noted that, within its centralized structure, the social security system has created a Department for Family Allowances, headed by a Technical Department, which reports directly to the Director General of Social Security.

Chart N°1: The place of family allowances in the structure of the National Social Security Fund



In our study, we propose a new structure for the Department of Family Allowances (a), the creation of local family allowance funds (b) and new means-tested legal benefits (c).

a. Towards a new structure for the Department of Family Allowances

The Family Allowances Department should be transformed into an independent fund in the form of a “national public administrative institution”. It should have legal personality and financial autonomy. It should be supervised by the competent authorities.

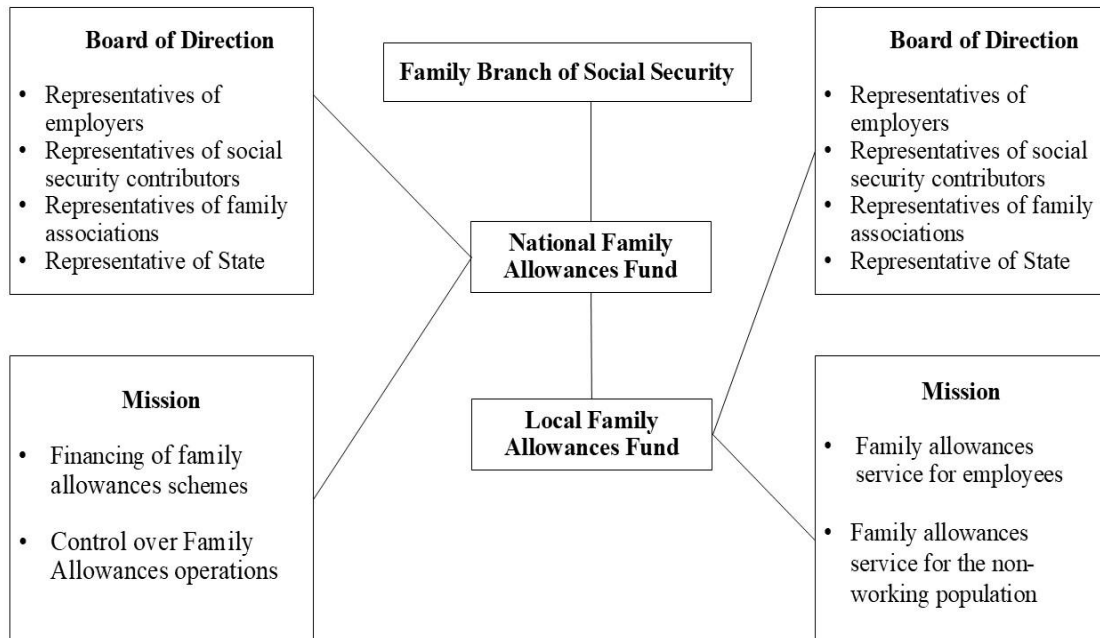
This National Family Allowances Fund would be administered by a Board of Directors which should include members representing insured persons appointed by trade unions, members representing employers and self-employed workers, members representing family associations, and persons qualified in the field of family allowance funds appointed by the state authority.

The mission of this National Family Allowance Fund should be to ensure the financing of all family benefit schemes and to exercise control over the operations and management of family allowance funds. This new structure of the social security family branch fund should be complemented by the creation of local family allowance funds.

b. Towards the creation of local family allowance funds

We propose the creation of local family allowance funds at the *caza* level. These local funds will be responsible for “providing family benefits to employees in all professions, employers, and self-employed workers.” They will be administered by a board of directors comprising representatives of employers and self-employed workers, representatives of social security contributors appointed by employee trade unions, representatives of family associations, and individuals qualified in the field of family allowance funds appointed by the state authorities. The new structure of the family branch will be as shown in chart n° 2 below:

Chart N°2: The new structure of the family branch of social security



Through the new structure of the National Fund and the creation of local family allowance funds, new means-tested statutory benefits are to be introduced.

c. Towards new means-tested legal benefits

Following the creation of local family allowance funds, we believe it is necessary to introduce various family allowances, which we classify into two categories according to their importance. The first category consists of a basic allowance and a family supplement (i). The second category consists of a free choice supplement and family support allowance (ii).

i. First category- Basic allowance and family supplement

The basic benefit should consist of a birth or adoption bonus and a basic allowance. In both cases, benefits will be means-tested.

The birth grant is subject to certain conditions relating to the mother (declaration of pregnancy, prenatal examinations) and the unborn child. As for the adoption bonus, conditions relating to the adopted child (age, authorization to enter Lebanon) and the adopter (persons applying to adopt a child) must be taken into consideration. The birth or adoption bonus would be cumulative with other family benefits.

The basic allowance requires postnatal examinations of the child and will be paid monthly during the child's first three years. In the case of adoption, the basic allowance is paid for three years from the child's arrival in the home.

This basic allowance cannot be combined with the family supplement but could be combined with the family support allowance.

The family supplement is a "supplementary income" granted to households with three or more dependent children over the age of three, provided that the income ceiling is not exceeded. This family supplement can be combined with the birth grant but not with the free choice of activity supplement.

ii. Second category- The free choice supplement and family support allowance

The first is the free choice of activity supplement, which is awarded to parents who take a break from work to raise their children. It is limited to three years when both parents stop working and to two and a half years if only one parent stops working. The amount of the allowance differs depending on whether the parent stops working full-time or part-time. It cannot be combined with the family supplement.

The second is the childcare supplement. This allows working parents to receive an allowance to pay for childcare. Certain conditions apply: the child must be under three years of age, the parents' income must be above a minimum threshold, and the child must not be related to the person providing childcare. The remuneration must not exceed “a maximum hourly wage set by decree.”

The allowance for the free choice of childcare supplement cannot be combined with the full rate free choice of activity supplement.

The family support allowance would be granted to “the father or mother who is solely responsible for the actual and permanent care of the child.” For orphans, the amount would be set at a specific rate. For fathers or mothers who pay child support, the family support allowance will correspond to the difference between the child support owed and the amount actually paid by the parent who owes it.

Conclusion

The current debate on the family is increasingly focusing on a fundamental question: is the family still a resource for individuals and society? In Lebanon, great value is still attached to family ties between ascendants and descendants, in contrast to Western societies where individualism is growing at the expense of stable family relationships. However, family solidarity is not complemented by adequate family policy governed by the state.

In fact, it is at the heart of the family sphere that the fundamentals of a society are integrated, whether they relate to religion, lifestyles, or even the place of children or women. It is at the heart of this family sphere that the Lebanese state should intervene, based on a “state familialism” that goes beyond the “religious familialism” promoted by the confessional statutes. From this perspective, the family is placed at the center, receiving guidance and benefiting from a state-regulated family policy.

Even if the family protection system recognizes new values that promote a form of individualism described as “positive”, we can based on “state familialism” to establish a reform in Lebanese law that allows us to “consider the Family, with a capital F,” at the center of a state described as a social state.

References

1. M B, D O, BERTHIER M. Les familles monoparentales : plus nombreuses et plus pauvres, elles sont le reflet d’une politique familiale. *Rev FRANCAISE Aff Soc.* 1998;(Vol. 52, N°4):169–186.
2. Chauvière M. Les apories de la solidarité familiale Contribution à la sociologie des configurations de justice entre les familles et l’État, dans le cas français. *Sociol Trav.* 2003 Jul 1;45(3):327–342.
3. (PDF) Les spécificités des politiques familiales françaises [Internet]. 2025 [cited 2025 Dec 4]. Available from: https://www.academia.edu/13258568/Les_sp%C3%A9cificit%C3%A9s_des_politiques_familiales_fran%C3%A7aises

4. Commaille J. La famille, l'état, le politique : une nouvelle économie des valeurs: Entre tensions et contradictions. *Inf Soc.* 2006 Dec 1;n° 136(8):100–111.
5. Rémi Lenoir *Généalogie de la morale familiale* Paris, Seuil, 2003 - Persée [Internet]. 2025 [cited 2025 Dec 4]. Available from: https://www.persee.fr/doc/revss_1623-6572_2005_num_33_1_2794_t1_0178_0000_5
6. Central Administration of Statistics - Home [Internet]. [cited 2025 Dec 8]. Available from: <http://cas.gov.lb/index.php/79-english>
7. Kochuyt T. La misère du Liban : une population appauvrie, peu d'État et plusieurs solidarités souterraines. 2004 [cited 2025 Dec 4]; Available from: https://www.persee.fr/doc/tiers_1293-8882_2004_num_45_179_5508
8. M. Borgetto, La notion de fraternité en droit public français. Le passé, le présent et l'avenir de la solidarité - Persée [Internet]. 2025 [cited 2025 Dec 4]. Available from: https://www.persee.fr/doc/ridc_0035-3337_1996_num_48_1_5232
9. Chiha M. POLITIQUE INTERIEURE.
10. de Halleux A. Basile Basile, Statut personnel et compétence judiciaire des communautés confessionnelles au Liban , 1993. 1994 [cited 2025 Dec 4]; Available from: https://www.persee.fr/doc/thlou_0080-2654_1994_num_25_3_2712_t1_0401_0000_3
11. Social security Law (SSL) | Article 47 paragraph 1-a - NCLW [Internet]. [cited 2025 Dec 8]. Available from: <https://nclw.gov.lb/en/portfolio/social-security-law-ssl-article-47-paragraph-1-a/>
12. [daherandpartners.com/en/announcements/tax-alert-decree-13225-dated-5-april-2024-increasing-schooling-allowances-84](https://www.daherandpartners.com/en/announcements/tax-alert-decree-13225-dated-5-april-2024-increasing-schooling-allowances-84) [Internet]. [cited 2025 Dec 8]. Available from: <https://www.daherandpartners.com/en/announcements/tax-alert-decree-13225-dated-5-april-2024-increasing-schooling-allowances-84>
13. Joseph MAÏLA - L'Orient-Le Jour [Internet]. [cited 2025 Dec 8]. Available from: <https://www.lorientlejour.com/author/9998-joseph-maila>
14. La Réforme Orpheline ou La Dégénérescence du Liban | Actes Sud [Internet]. 2025 [cited 2025 Dec 4]. Available from: <https://actes-sud.fr/la-reforme-orpheline-ou-la-degenerescence-du-liban>
15. Catalog Record: La condition libanaise : des communautés, du... | HathiTrust Digital Library [Internet]. [cited 2025 Dec 8]. Available from: <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/003441014>
16. Kanafani-Zahar Aïda, Liban : le vivre ensemble. Hsoun 1994-2000, Paris, Geuthner, 2004, 204 p (préface de Jean-Paul Willaime). [Internet]. 2025 [cited 2025 Dec 4]. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/30458268_Kanafani-Zahar_Aida_Liban_le_vivre_ensemble_Hsoun_1994-2000_Paris_Geuthner_2004_204_p_preface_de_Jean-Paul_Willaime
17. L'Orient-Le Jour [Internet]. [cited 2025 Dec 8]. MESSARA ANTOINE. Available from: <https://www.lorientlejour.com/author/664-messara-antoine>
18. Publications [Internet]. Fouad Chehab Foundation. [cited 2025 Dec 8]. Available from: <https://springgreen-kingfisher-509974.hostingersite.com/publications/>
19. Bourgeois L. Essai d'une philosophie de la solidarité: conférences et discussions professées à l'École des Hautes-Études sociales. F. Alcan; 1902. 344 p.
20. Repenser la solidarité [Internet]. [cited 2025 Dec 8]. Available from: <https://shs.cairn.info/repenser-la-solidarite--9782130544272>
21. Nasnas R. Le Liban de demain- Vers un développement économique et social.