



A programme of **education above all™**

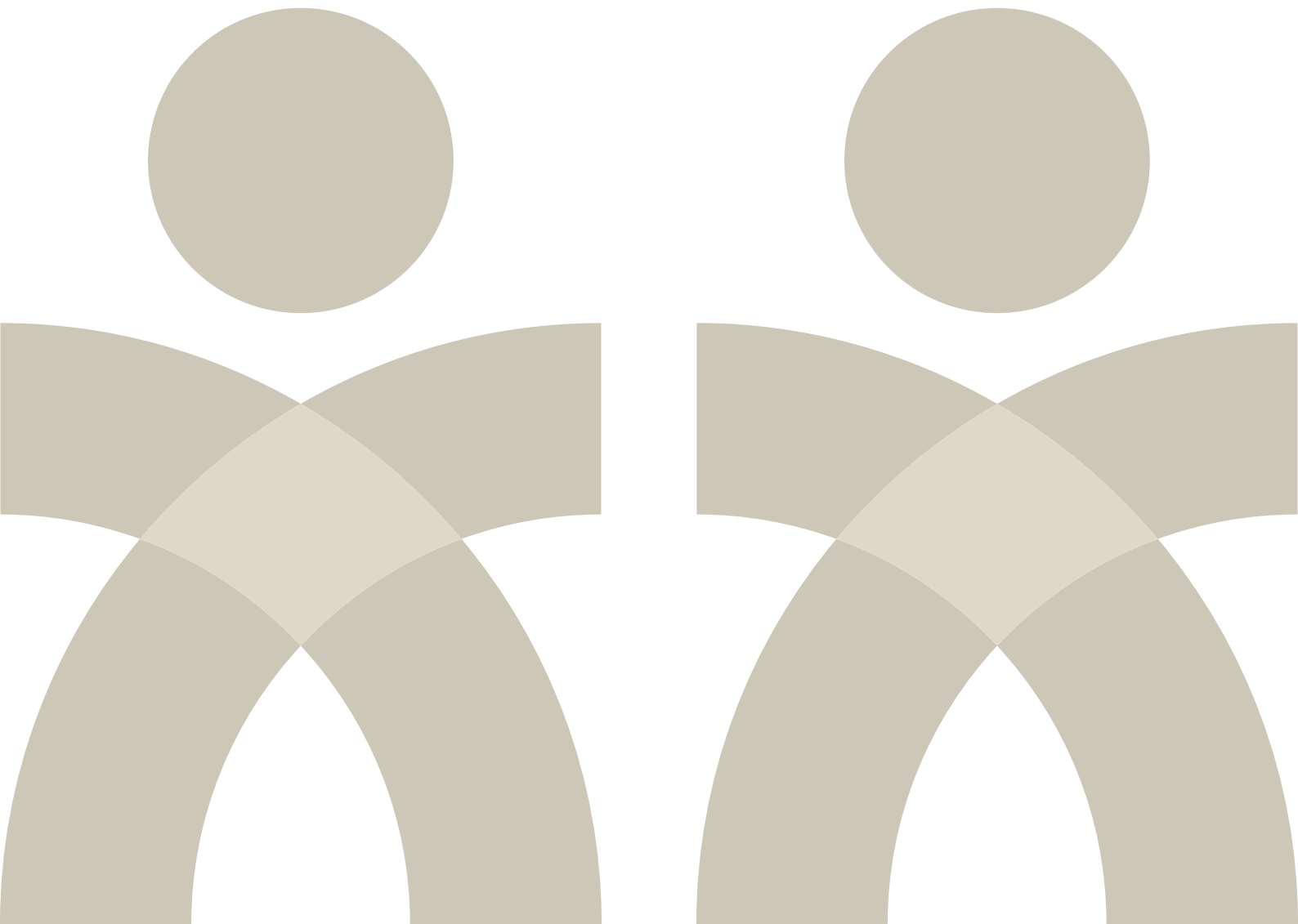


# PERSPECTIVES ON PRACTICE AND POLICY

Success in Increasing Access and  
Retention in Primary Education in

## LEBANON

By Dr. Hana Addam El-Ghali







## Purpose

The world is approaching the 2015 deadline for achieving universal primary education—a target identified by both UNESCO in the World Declaration for All (2000) and the United Nations in the Millennium Development Goals (2000). *Educate a Child* commissioned four scholars to look at the successes and challenges faced by their respective countries that are close to achieving the goal—Botswana, Brazil, Lebanon, Malaysia.

## About the Author

Hana Addam El-Ghali is the Senior Program Coordinator for the Research, Advocacy and Public Policy-making (RAPP) program at the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut (AUB). Dr. El-Ghali is also a consultant with the World Bank's Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI) looking at pressing issues in higher education policy in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). She serves as a consultant for several international agencies on education policy issues. In 2012, she received a Fulbright grant to the University of Georgia. She received her Ph.D. in Administrative and Policy Studies with a focus on Social and Comparative Analysis in Education from the University of Pittsburgh. Dr. El-Ghali also serves as the MENA region co-editor for the *Comparative and International Higher Education*, the journal for the Higher Education Special Interest Group of the Comparative and International Education Society. Prior to returning to Beirut, she was a co-instructor of comparative higher education at the University of Pittsburgh.



## Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Country Context</b>	<b>10</b>
Key Aspects of the Political Context	10
Key Aspects of Economic Context	12
Key Aspects of Education System History	14
<b>What Has Been Achieved?</b>	<b>18</b>
Overall Pattern of Primary School Access and Retention, 1970–2010	18
Equity of Access and Retention	20
Pattern of Quality of Education	22
<b>Drivers and Impediments of Change</b>	<b>25</b>
Policy, Program, and Project Initiatives	25
National and Local Organizations Involved	29
International Organizations Involved	30
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Quantitative and Qualitative Data Sources</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Appendix 2: Interview Framework</b>	<b>36</b>



## List of Abbreviations

<b>AFD</b>	Agence Française de Développement
<b>ALP</b>	Accelerated Learning Program
<b>CAS</b>	Center for Administrative Statistics
<b>CERD</b>	Center for Educational Research and Development
<b>CIA</b>	Central Intelligence Agency
<b>CHF</b>	Cooperative Housing Foundation
<b>CRC</b>	Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>ESDP</b>	Education Sector Development Plan
<b>ESDS</b>	Education Sector Development Secretariat
<b>ETF</b>	European Training Foundation
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Development Product
<b>GER</b>	Gross Enrollment Rate
<b>IDB</b>	Islamic Development Bank
<b>ISCED</b>	International Standard Classification of Education
<b>LEAD</b>	Lebanon Education Assistance Development
<b>MATVE</b>	Ministry of Technical and Vocational Education
<b>MENA</b>	Middle East and North Africa
<b>MEHE</b>	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
<b>MNEAFA</b>	Ministry of National Education and Fine Arts
<b>MOSA</b>	Ministry of Social Affairs
<b>MOYS</b>	Ministry of Youth and Sports
<b>NER</b>	Net Enrollment Rate
<b>NES</b>	National Education Strategy
<b>NSDS</b>	National Social Development Strategy
<b>RMF</b>	Renee Mouawwad Foundation



<b>SES</b>	Socioeconomic Status
<b>TEMPUS</b>	Trans-European Mobility Scheme for University Studies
<b>TIMSS</b>	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
<b>UIS</b>	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNRWA</b>	United Nations Relief Works Agency
<b>UPE</b>	Universal Primary Education
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development



## Executive Summary

Lebanon, a parliamentary democracy of 3.75 million people located in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, has a long history as a commercial hub as well as a locus of regional turmoil. From 1975 until the early 1990s Lebanon endured a civil war in which regional players used the country as a battleground for their own conflicts. Internally, sectarianism—18 religious groups are officially recognized—contributed to political instability and weakened the government's record in developing and implementing policies in education and other sectors.

Despite social, political, and economic instability over the past two decades, Lebanon managed to increase access and retention in primary education to nearly 95 percent in 2011. This is also remarkable because of very low public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP (1.75 percent) and as a percentage of total government expenditure. As a result, household commitment to and investment in education continues to make the critical difference.

Nearly three-fourths of pre-school-aged children (ages 3 to 5) are in school, stemming in large part from a move in the mid-1990s to include this level as part of the public education system (Gonzalez, 2008). However, certain groups of children and youth—from low socioeconomic status families, remote areas, or the suburbs—are more likely to be excluded from pre-school, not gain access or not complete the full course of primary and junior secondary schooling.

There are three types of schools in Lebanon: public, private-for-free (subsidized private), and private-not-for-free. Public schools (kindergarten through secondary) are managed and financed by the government. Private-for-free schools (grades 1 to 6 only) are usually run by not-for-profit organizations and subsidized by the state. Private-not-for-free schools (kindergarten through secondary) are completely financed by student fees.

That the net enrollment rate (NER) remains below 100 percent is mainly because children drop out of school. Dropout rates—or at least repetition rates—tend to be higher in public schools than the overall national average (CERD, 2011). This means that subsidized private schools and private-not-for-free schools tend to have lower repetition rates (and, likely, dropout rates) than do the public schools (Nahas, 2011).

Concerns have been raised about the quality of education provided in public and subsidized private schools (El Hassan, 2010; Interview 1 with MEHE). An absence of a coherent education policy and lack of quality monitoring systems has meant that problems related to initial access, dropout, and failures (manifested through low test scores) persist.

In 2010 Lebanon adopted a five-year Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP), which builds on the National Education Strategy (NES, 2007) and has been incorporated in the *National Social Development Strategy of Lebanon* (NSDS, 2011). The ESDP focuses on quality learning for individual human growth at the pre-school, general (primary, junior secondary, and upper secondary), and higher education levels. However, given the continuing political instability in the country, the Lebanese government and society face a challenge addressing issues of education sector development.



Lebanon has been able to provide access to about 95 percent of primary school-age children in the country and has overcome the gender gap in education. This has been achieved through government policy, programs, and funding, but an increasingly important role has been played by private, sectarian school systems. Time will tell whether the most recently issued Law No. 150 in 2011, along with actions by private educational institutions and local/national and international organizations will succeed in getting all children in school. This means facilitating access and retention of children from lower socioeconomic status families, children with disabilities, and refugee children.

The large role played by private schooling reflects sectarian divisions within Lebanese society. In addition to a history of violent conflict, these divisions have contributed to political instability and weakened the government's record in developing and implementing policies in education and other sectors. The divisions also encourage support of and preference for private schooling. This sectarian-based preference is reinforced by perceptions that public schools offer lower quality education. As a result, children who attend public schools are mainly from families who cannot afford the costs of private education.

These problems have not gone unnoticed. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) presented a five-year plan in 2010 that highlighted the right to education for all and the need to ensure equal opportunities and accessibility in Lebanese education. It laid out a strategy for improving the quality of education in Lebanon. As a result of this plan, a number of policies and implementation decrees have been drafted (Interview with MEHE, 2013). To address the problems, however, further actions by the government and other stakeholders will be required. A good place to start would be to find a politically agreeable way to collect data on the population overall as well as on key education indicators.





## Introduction

Lebanon has been successful in increasing access and retention of children in school, as indicated by its primary school net enrollment rate of 94.9 percent in 2011. Policies such as free primary education and compulsory enrollment (at both the primary and junior secondary levels), which were introduced in 1959 and then again in 1998 and 2011, as well as consistent foreign language instruction (as a curriculum subject) are key contributors to this success (Gonzalez, 2008; UNDP, 2003). Lebanon was successful in maintaining some progress in increasing access and retention in primary education, despite civil war, regional wars, and political instability in the past two decades. A large number of these students attend private and religion-organized schools. In addition, nearly three-fourths of preschool-aged children (ages 3 to 5) are in school, stemming in large part from a mid-1990s move to include this level as part of the public education system (Gonzalez, 2008). Nevertheless, certain groups of children and youth—from lower socio-economic status, remote areas, and the suburbs—are more likely to be excluded from preschool as well as either not gain access or not complete the full course of primary and junior secondary schooling.

Furthermore, concerns have been raised about the quality of education provided in public and subsidized private schools (El Hassan, 2010; Interview 1 with MEHE). An absence of a coherent education policy and lack of quality monitoring systems has meant that problems related to initial access, dropout, and failures (manifested through low test scores) have persisted.

In 2010, Lebanon adopted a five-year Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP), which builds on the National Education Strategy (NES) (Lebanese Association for Educational Studies, 2006) and has been incorporated in the National Social Development Strategy of Lebanon (NSDS) (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2011). The ESDP focuses on quality learning for individual human growth at the preschool, general (primary, junior secondary, and upper secondary) and higher education levels. However, given the continuing political instability in the country, the Lebanese government and society have faced a challenge to address issues of education sector development.

The first section of this report highlights the political, economic, and educational dimensions of the country context. Next, the report presents an overview of the significant achievements within primary schooling in Lebanon between 1980 and 2010, highlighting the observed patterns of access, retention, and quality of primary education. The report also discusses the various drivers and impediments of change within the sector, particularly addressing policy, program, and project initiatives as well as the constraining contextual factors. Finally, the report concludes with key lessons learned from the overview of the primary education sector in Lebanon, noting the ongoing and future challenges in the sector.



## Country Context

Lebanon is a small country located in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), a region that has a long history of political turbulence. It has a population estimated at 3,759,100 in 2007, with 44.1 percent estimated to be ages 0 to 24 years (CIA, 2013). Its population includes diverse sects that influence its political system, yielding fluctuations in its economy as well. The present Lebanese Constitution officially acknowledges the following 18 religious groups: Maronite (Catholic), Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholics, Armenian Orthodox (Gregorian), Armenian Catholic, Syriac Orthodox (Jacobite), Syriac Catholic, Roman Catholic (Latins), Copts, Evangelical, Christian (including Protestant groups such as Baptists and Seventh-Day Adventists), Chaldean Catholics, Nestorian Assyrian, Muslim groups (including Twelver Shiite, Sunni, and Isma'ili), Druze, Alawite, and Jewish (Gonzalez, 2008). Public life in Lebanon is characterized by sectarianism, which plays a major role in determining political and economic decisions (World Bank, 2012). Arabic, French, Armenian, and English are the primary languages spoken in Lebanon, with Arabic being the official language.

### Key Aspects of the Political Context

Lebanon gained its independence on November 22, 1943. Prior to the country's independence, Lebanon was ruled by the Ottoman Empire (1517-1918) and then colonized by France (1920-1946). Under the Ottoman Empire, Lebanon was part of a bigger region or mainly a collection of chieftaincies, which included Syria, Lebanon, and the Palestinian Territories. During the rule of the Ottomans, Lebanon gained semi-autonomous status whereby chieftains governed under the rule of the Ottomans. They collected taxes for the Ottoman Sultan, and ran a feudal political system. It was during this time that Lebanon witnessed increasing class and religious antagonisms that remain today. Among the most violent conflicts during this period was between the Christians and the Druze. Tensions between the religious sects increased while being nurtured by outside powers. Direct Ottoman rule of Lebanon remained in effect until the end of World War I.

At the outbreak of World War I, the Ottomans abolished the semi-autonomous rule of Lebanon and appointed its minister of Navy as the commander-in-chief of the Turkish forces in Syria and Lebanon. In 1916, the governments of the United Kingdom and France signed the Sykes-Picot agreement that divided the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire (outside the Arabian Peninsula) into areas of British and French control. The treaty came into effect after the Ottoman Empire was defeated and the British moved into Palestine in 1918. The objective of the mandate of the French colonization was to assist Lebanon in establishing a modern state. In 1920, the French proclaimed the establishment of the State of Greater Lebanon, in an attempt to provide a safe haven for the Maronites in Mount Lebanon. The area also included other sects among which were Muslims. In 1926 the Lebanese Constitution was adopted, modeled after the French Constitution, providing for an elected parliament, an elected president, and a cabinet. Near the end of World War II, Lebanon gained its independence and formed its first democratic government, amending the constitution and ending the French mandate. Both Christian and Muslim leaders joined efforts to achieve the country's independence and force France to recognize Lebanon's complete independence in 1943.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> With respect to neighboring countries, after the end of the World War I, the British controlled Iraq, Jordan, and



After independence, the Lebanese state was established with a written agreement, the National Pact, between a Christian leader, Bechara El-Khoury, and a Muslim leader, Riad El-Solh. Although at this point the division between the different religious sects in the country was not an issue, each group maintained its presence in the governing structure of the country. The National Pact highlighted four main principles that secured the independence of the country, maintained its close relationship with the West and the Arab States, and emphasized the proportionality in the distribution of the public offices among the recognized religious groups in the country, primarily the Christians, Muslims, and Druze.

Lebanon now is considered to have the most stable democracy in the Arab World. Lebanon's democratic state leads a confessional system,<sup>2</sup> in which the political and administrative functions are handled by the dominating sects (Krayem, 2012). The four largest religious groups are currently the Christians, the Sunnis, the Shias, and the Druze. Each religious group is represented in parliament and holds a number of seats, which is determined by the historic census of 1932 (The Economist, 1996).

A number of internal conflicts associated with the Lebanese system and several regional developments led to the collapse of the government authority and the emergence of civil war in 1975 (Khalidi, 1979; Salibi, 1976; Petran, 1987). The civil war lasted for 15 years (1975–1990), during which the country witnessed large destruction of its infrastructure and a high proportion of civilian casualties. The civil war ended when political parties partaking in the Lebanese civil war reached the Taif Agreement in 1989 under the auspices of the Arab League Tripartite Committee. The Taif Agreement, a Document of National Understanding, ensured the end of the civil war and the return to political normalcy in Lebanon (Krayem, 2012). This agreement also aimed at promoting more participatory and representative governance in the country.

In 1992 parliamentary elections were held and a new government was installed. The country went through a reconstruction phase after the civil war, which reshaped its infrastructure but did not improve significantly the Lebanese economy. Subsequently, Lebanon experienced a state of political stability after the Taif agreement, despite the two heavy Israeli air attacks in retaliation for Hezbollah operations over the border in 1993 and 1996 (Picard & Ramsbotham, 2012).

---

<sup>2</sup> A confessional system is a form of government in which there is a distribution of political and institutional power that is proportional among the religious sects in the country.



Early in 2005, the Prime Minister Rafic El-Hariri was assassinated. His assassination divided the country into two partisan camps: a) pro-Western “14 March Coalition,” under the leadership of the predominantly Sunni Future Movement, and b) the opposition “8 March Coalition,” which was led by Hezbollah, a leading Shiite movement. Christians and Druze were divided among these two dominant groups. Shortly thereafter, in the summer of 2006, war broke out between Israel and Hezbollah which led to a hardening of the two opposing partisan camps.<sup>3</sup> The July 2006 war led to severe economic, social, and infrastructure devastation in some areas of the country, particularly the south as well as the suburbs of Beirut, having an impact on businesses, villages, houses, and schools, as well as injuring and killing thousands of civilians (World Bank, 2012). The country also passed through a political stalemate phase that lasted 18 months during 2007 and 2008 and paralyzed the country and its economy (UNDP, 2009). The resulting political division was further aggravated in May 2008 by sectarian clashes. This political division is still clearly manifest today, and the situation is further threatened by the Syrian conflict that has a multifaceted spillover effect on the country.

### Key Aspects of Economic Context

Prior to the civil war, particularly extending from the period after the country’s independence in 1948, Lebanon’s economy was one of the most dynamic in the MENA region. It was characterized by low inflation, high rates of economic growth, large balance of payment surpluses, small fiscal deficits, and a relatively stable local currency (Eken, 1998). In the 10 years prior to 1975, Lebanon played a vital role as the key economic intermediary between the West and the Middle East, particularly due to its stable macroeconomic environment and liberal economic policies and regulations (Eken, 1998). These provided Lebanon with an advantage over other countries of the region, and the country became one of the leading economies in the services sector, particularly in banking, tourism, and trade-related services. During this period, economic growth (in terms of *annual* increase in Gross Domestic Product or GDP) reached 5 percent from 1960–1970, and increased to 7 percent from 1970–1975.<sup>4</sup>

During the civil war (1975–1990), Lebanon’s economy was often unstable. The civil war damaged Lebanon’s economic infrastructure and industrial facilities, and the national output steadily fell. Moreover, the Lebanese pound started to erode, and the government’s ability to collect revenues weakened due to fragmentation in the country and the shift of authority to non-official parties. The government accumulated a growing budget deficit because of a lack of revenue and an increase in expenditure on public services. These negative aspects, alongside political instability, led to monetary expansion and inflation, which was consequently translated into dollarization of the economy and capital outflows (Ministry of Finance, 2011). There was also reduced economic investment in the country because of the civil unrest. The period was also marked with mass emigration, particularly of professional and entrepreneurial skilled workers. Furthermore, Lebanon’s banking system was extremely weakened during the civil war, although Lebanon continued to maintain an exchange and trade system that was almost entirely free of restrictions on payments and transfers (Eken, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> <http://mepei.com/in-focus/346-the-lebanese-political-party-system>.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.finance.gov.lb/en-US/finance/ReportsPublications/DocumentsAndReportsIssuedByMOF/Documents/Sovereign%20and%20Investment%20Reports/Country%20Profile/Lebanon%20Country%20Profile%202011.pdf>



The period after the end of the civil war was marked by relative stability and mostly reconstruction and debt management (Gaspard, 2004). Political stability after the end of the civil war helped improve the economy, particularly following the parliamentary elections in 1992 and the installation of a new government. The economy continued to improve, recording growth rates of 2 percent and 2.6 percent in 2001 and 2002, respectively. However, the inflation rate reached 10.8 percent in 2008, though it dropped to 1.2 percent in 2009. The public debt increased reaching US\$47.35 billion in the second quarter of 2009, reflecting an increase of US\$15.6 billion since 1997 (El-Ghali, 2011; UNDP, 2009). In addition, in 2009 Lebanon's fiscal deficit was 15.5 percent of GDP and its net public debt was 148 percent of GDP (World Bank, 2010). The financial situation led to high unemployment rates in the country, predominantly within the youth population (ages 15 to 24) and particularly among women (World Bank, 2012). More recently, in 2012, the fiscal deficit was recorded as 8.9 percent of GDP, due to an increase in expenditures from wages and salaries following a large cost-of-living adjustment.

Today, Lebanon's economy is service-oriented and emphasizes financial services, trade, and tourism. Agriculture, industry, and services make up 5.1 percent, 15.9 percent and 79 percent of the GDP, respectively (CIA, 2013). In addition, the banking sector plays a critical role in the Lebanese economy, amounting to almost 350 percent of GDP in 2009 (World Bank, 2012). Remittances also play a significant role in supporting the Lebanese economy, for example, equaling \$7.6 billion or 22 percent of GDP in 2009 (World Bank, 2011). Remittances continue to support basic expenses such as food, education, and health, in addition to major expenses such as real estate and business investments (World Bank, 2012).

The government favors the private sector in a liberal policy environment, therefore welcoming foreign investment. However, foreign investors have been discouraged in the recent years, because of the country's political instability and human security threats.

Poverty is still relatively high in Lebanon, with 28 percent of the Lebanese population considered poor, living on less than US\$4/day, and 8 percent considered extremely poor, living on less than US\$2.40/day (World Bank, 2012). Furthermore, there are major regional disparities, with poverty mostly concentrated in the northern and southern regions of the country (World Bank, 2010).



## Key Aspects of Education System History

Lebanon has been known in the MENA region for its notable universities and schools. As a center for commercial and religious activity, the country quickly became an intellectual center in the second half of the 19th century (World Bank, 2010). Article 10 of the 1926 Lebanese Constitution, under the French mandate, granted the sects the right to supervise their own confessional schools (Farha, 2012). It declares that “education is independent in Lebanon as long as it does not disturb the public order or morals, or ... [does not] disrespect any of the religions or sects.” Given the religious divisions that were deepened prior to independence as well as after, missionaries and foreign governments support was provided for establishing schools throughout the country. The first Christian missionary school in Lebanon dates back to 1535, which resulted from an agreement signed between the government of France and the Ottoman Sultan. One of the well-known examples of missionary expansions through education in Lebanon is the American University of Beirut, which was named the Syrian American Protestant College, and founded in 1866, followed by the French Saint Joseph University in 1875.

Both Arabic and foreign languages (French and English) and literature flourished in Lebanon during this period, which was marked by numerous publications. However, given the predominant role of the missionaries in establishing schools in the early 20th century, the Lebanese educational system has been dependent on various religious communities to fund and organize schools. For example, the Jesuits, Catholics, and Maronites were among the first religious groups to establish schools in Lebanon. Muslim schools also emerged in many mosques in big cities across the country, assisted by wealthy groups from Islamic-majority nations such as Saudi Arabia, which supported the Sunni-led Makkased Association starting 1878. Iran also began funding education initiatives for Shias at a later stage when Hezbollah activities started in Lebanon in the 1980s. The number of Shia schools increased 12.5 percent between 1920 and 1988, while the number of Sunni and Maronite institutions multiplied 7.2 and 6.8 times, respectively (Farha, 2012). These religious initiatives in schooling reinforced the divisions among the religious sects in the country. Therefore, education was initially only provided by private schools, most of which were founded by religious missionaries. Public education in Lebanon appeared during the second half of the 19th century (Nahas, 2009). For example, in 1863, a Lebanese scholar Butrus al-Bustani founded the first national secondary school in Lebanon known as “the patriotic” school of Beirut (Farha, 2012, p. 67).

The first Ministry of Education in Lebanon was established in 1955, 12 years after the country’s independence. It was founded for the purposes of establishing and regulating the Ministry’s central office, the Lebanese University, the directorate of elementary and intermediate education, the directorate of vocational education, the directorate of secondary education, the programs on teacher preparation, physical education and cultural activities, the national institute for music education, and the national publishing house. It was also responsible for regulating private schools, particularly in regard to the curriculum. This is because all students in Lebanon, whether enrolled in public or private institutions, are required to take the national exams, which were administered in the past at grade 5, grade 9, grade 11, and grade 12. When it was converted into the Ministry of National Education and Fine Arts (MNEAFA) in 2000, a number of new ministries were established: the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), the Ministry of Culture; the Ministry of Technical and Vocational Education (MATVE); and the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MOYS).



Soon after the first Ministry of Education was established in 1955, the government issued the first law on compulsory and free primary education in 1959 (Law No. 134), which was then reinstated in 1998 (Law No. 686) and most recently modified in 2011 (Law No. 150).

That education should be free and compulsory was also declared in the 1989 Document of National Accord (Taif Agreement), which ended the civil war (Frayha, 2012). Among the objectives identified in this document was that of “reviewing the curricula and their development in order to reinforce the sense of national unity among citizens, to foster spiritual and cultural openness and to standardize textbooks on history and national education” (Republic of Lebanon 1989, p. 15).

To support the achievement of this and other objectives, Lebanon introduced in 1993 its first Educational Development Plan, which focused on “strengthening the sense of national pride and unity among citizens, to foster spiritual and cultural openness” and ensure “appropriate... integration of education with the needs of the Lebanese and Arab labor markets” (Republic of Lebanon 1994, p. 4). The 1993 Plan mainly supported the reconstruction of schools, fulfilling most of its targets with over 1,200 schools completed in collaboration with the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD) (Frayha, 2012; Farha, 2012).

In addition, Lebanon’s education system underwent a structural change in 1997, when the Lebanese government passed Law No. 10227 introducing a new curriculum for the country. This new curriculum was also implemented in private schools, given that their students take national exams. Citizenship education was one of the fundamental core subjects within the new curriculum, reflecting a concern that the national identity had faded and became weak during the civil war (Frayha, 2012). In addition to the curriculum reform that resulted of the 1993 Plan, the structure and outputs of the education sector were reorganized, including the changes of the names of the educational stages<sup>5</sup> and secondary school certificate. The Law also reemphasized that education was free and compulsory for children 6 to 15 years of age. However, implementing decrees for the laws on compulsory and free education have not been approved, and, therefore, the laws have not taken effect (Hamdan, 2009).

There are three kinds of schools in Lebanon: public schools, free-private schools, and fee-based private schools. Public schools are managed by the government. Public schools run by the state provide education in all levels from kindergarten (available at some public schools but not all) to secondary school. Free-private schools are usually run by not-for-profit organizations and subsidized by the state. They offer education for the primary years (grades 1 to 6) only. On the other hand, parents are responsible for covering all expenses at fee-based private schools. These schools usually offer education from kindergarten through secondary classes.

<sup>5</sup> New educational stages were identified with the restructuring of the education system: six years of primary school (grades 1 to 6, from ages 6 to 12 years), three years of intermediate or preparatory school (grades 7 to 9, from ages 12 to 15 years), and three years of secondary school (grades 10 to 12, from ages 15 to 18 years).





Lebanon's public school system expanded during the first decade after independence, with the number of schools more than doubling in the first five years (Farha, 2012). However, the relative size of the public sector began to shrink in 1955, at least partly due to the rapid confessionalization of society. More recently, Lebanon had 2,786 schools in 2011–2012,<sup>6</sup> including 1,282 public schools, 358 free private schools, 1,077 fee-based private schools, and 69 private UNRWA schools.<sup>7</sup> It has a student population of 943,763 students, and a teaching force of 92,522 teachers (CERD, 2012). About 29 percent of students are enrolled in the public sector, which does not charge tuition fees, but rather a nominal fee classified as a “family fund” used to cover unexpected expenses, such as damages or unexpected wages (Hamdan, 2012). The dual system of education in Lebanon, combining both private and public, is a direct consequence of a historic heritage.

During the French mandate two kinds of schools were recognized: free schools that children of low socio-economic status attended and private (not-for-free) schools that children of affluent families attended. During the mandate period, the French government supported the private (particularly missionary) schools that were established prior to 1927 by giving each school 10 gold coins per year (Abou Rjeili, 1999). Public funding of private schools continued after the independence. In 1956, the Lebanese parliament passed a law that led to the categorizations of three kinds of schools in Lebanon: public schools, private-for-free schools (subsidized by the government), and private not-for-free schools (Abou Rjeili, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> Includes public schools, free private schools, private schools, and private UNRWA schools.

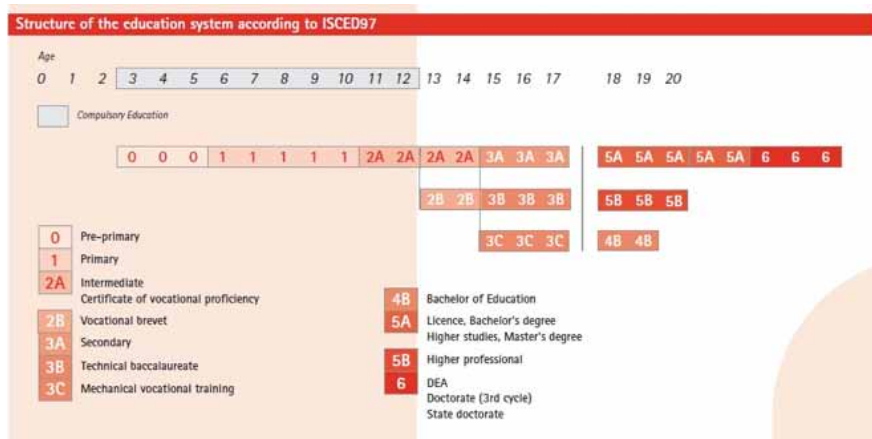
<sup>7</sup> The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) has operated a school system in Lebanon as the main provider of basic education to Palestinian refugee children since 1950. The UNRWA schools provide basic education to all registered refugee children free of charge up to around age 15. UNRWA schools in Lebanon follow the Lebanese curriculum, which provides their students the opportunity to pursue further education and other employment opportunities in the country. Recently, Palestinian refugees from Syria were also enrolled at the UNRWA schools. Syrian refugees have been granted the right to enroll in the Lebanese public schools.





As shown in Figure 1,<sup>8</sup> the Lebanese education system is characterized by six years of primary school that are compulsory for children aged six to 12. The intermediate education lasts three years, from ages 12 to 15. At the end of the intermediate school, students sit for the (academic or vocational) *Brevet* exam, which allows them to enter secondary school. Secondary education in Lebanon lasts three years (ages 15 to 18), and is divided into different tracks: academic, technical, and mechanical vocational. Toward the end of the secondary school, students take the Lebanese baccalaureate exams in their respective tracks. If successful, students are awarded the Lebanese Baccalaureate Certificate of Secondary Education or the Technical Baccalaureate (Sedgwick, 2006). This degree is required for admission into an institution of higher education.

**Figure 1: Structure of the Education System according to ISCED97**



<sup>8</sup> Figure 1 portrays the structure of the education system in Lebanon according to International Standard Classification of Education 1997 (ISCED97).

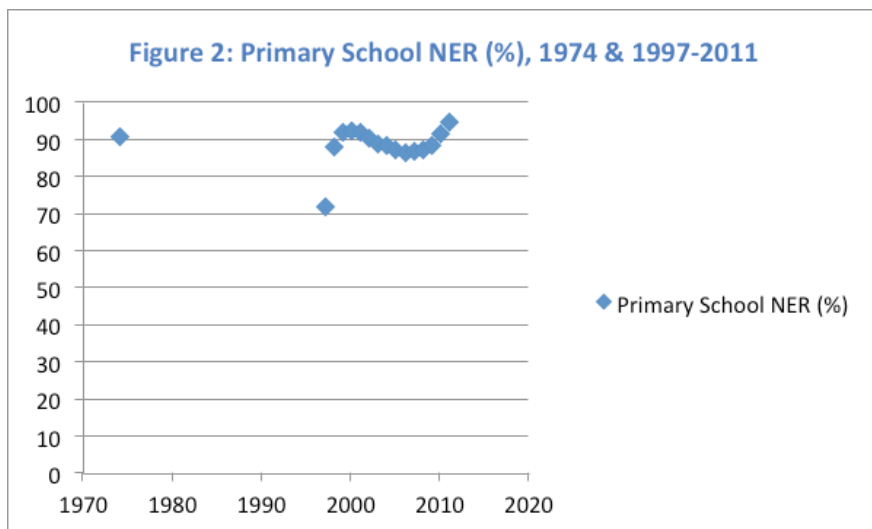


## What Has Been Achieved?

### Overall Pattern of Primary School Access and Retention, 1970–2010<sup>9</sup>

As noted above, Lebanon's Constitution of 1926 guaranteed the right to education. Lebanon is also a signatory of the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), and the World Declaration on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, all of which evidence commitments to providing education for all. The country was close to fulfilling the second Millennium Developmental Goal of universal primary education with net enrollment rate of 94.7 percent in 2011 (UNESCO, 2013).

As can be seen in Figure 2 Lebanon had achieved a primary school net enrollment rate (NER) of 91.0 in 1974. However, the NER apparently declined during the civil war period (1975–1990), and likely was moving upward in 1997 when it registered 71.1 percent.<sup>10</sup> By 1998 the NER had reached 88 percent and continued to climb until 2000, when it reached 92.7 percent, surpassing the NER achieved just before the civil war. After 2000 the NER dipped hitting a low point of 87.0 percent in 2007, likely reflecting the turmoil associated with the assassination of the prime minister in 2005 and the Hezbollah–Israeli war in 2006, before rising again to reach 94.9 percent in 2011.



It is important to note that the ratio of gross enrollment rate (GER) over NER declined from 1.46 to 1.14 during 1997–2011, indicating that the number of children who were outside the official primary school age range enrolled at the primary school decreased during this period (UIS, 2013). This may also be an indicator that most children were entering primary school at the right age and leaving the primary level also at the primary school age.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> It is critical to acknowledge that the data available in Lebanon are not consistent across the years that are included in this analysis (1980–2010). Furthermore, rates provided are based on UIS estimates. Given this situation, the MEHE is currently drafting an implementation decree that outlines that process of obtaining such data.

<sup>10</sup> According to one interviewee, the education system did not collapse during the war, and levels of enrollment did not decline as much as one might expect. People's homes got shattered, but families would flee one area to another in search of a good school for their children (Interview with scholar, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> Note the minor fluctuation between 2004 and 2007 (increased from 1.14 to 1.15), when the political and economic situations were relatively unstable in the country.



Although the primary school enrollment rate of 94.9 percent in 2011 is quite high, Lebanon does experience primary school dropout,<sup>12</sup> particularly in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. Looking in more detail at Table 1, which presents the dropout rates by grade level for 2001–2008, we note first of all that the dropout rate is generally higher for grade 1, compared to grades 2 and 3, but even higher for grades 4, 5, and especially 6. This likely reflects the fact that students are automatically promoted in grades 1 to 3, regardless of whether they pass or fail in any of the subjects, but if they fail in any of the subjects in grade 4, they have to repeat the class (Interview 2 with MEHE, 2013). Second, looking across the years, one does not detect dramatic changes, with the rates varying across grades from 0.5 to 4.0 in 2001–2002 and from 0.6 to 4.7 in 2007–2008. If anything, the dropout rates are slightly higher in the later time period. Nevertheless, if one examines gross primary school completion rates for 2008–2011, one sees a slight improvement during this period from 84.4 percent to 85.5 percent (UIS, 2013).

**Table 1: Primary Dropout Rates by Grade Level from 2001–2008 (CERD, 2011)**

Year	2001–2002	2002–2003	2003–2004	2004–2005	2005–2006	2006–2007	2007–2008
Grade	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
Grade 1	1.4	1.7	0.1	1.5	2.2	0.1	2.0
Grade 2	0.8	1.2	0.8	0.6	1.3	0.4	0.6
Grade 3	0.9	1.3	0.9	0.7	1.1	0.3	1.0
Grade 4	2.5	3.2	2.0	3.3	3.8	1.6	3.4
Grade 5	3.0	3.4	2.2	3.4	3.8	1.8	3.1
Grade 6	4.0	4.3	3.4	3.8	4.1	2.7	4.7

Table 2 shows the repetition rate across grade levels from 1997–2010.<sup>13</sup> One observes that the repetition rates were noticeably higher in 1997, and that between 1999 and 2010 they fluctuated a little, though no trend is apparent. When comparing across grade levels, one notes that, beginning in 2000, the highest repetition rate is in grade 4, and the rates for grades 5 and 6 also tended to be higher than for grades 1 to 3.

**Table 2: Repetition Rates for Grades 1 to 6, 1997–2010 (Source: UIS)**

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Grade 1	11.4	7.2	3.8	4.8	4.9	4.7	5.4	5.8	5.2	5.1	5.0	5.4	4.2	5.9
Grade 2	14.0	10.3	10.1	6.1	6.2	6.3	7.1	6.7	6.3	5.9	5.6	6.0	5.1	6.9
Grade 3	14.6	--	10.8	7.2	6.5	6.7	7.3	6.7	6.6	6.4	6.0	6.0	--	7.6
Grade 4	14.9	--	8.8	9.3	14.5	18.8	19.6	17.9	16.5	16.2	15.2	15.6	--	14.2
Grade 5	12.0	--	7.9	7.5	9.5	9.7	12.3	11.8	11.2	10.8	10.0	10.1	--	10.1
Grade 6	--	--	--	--	10.0	9.5	10.8	10.6	10.2	9.9	9.2	9.0	--	9.3

<sup>12</sup> The dropout rates discussed in this section are for all students accounted for in the education sector, both in public and private schools. It is important to note that there is some movement observed between private and public schools, which may result from changes in families having the resources to pay fees at private schools. The quality of education at private schools tends to be viewed as of a better caliber; therefore, parents' first choice has been to enroll their children at private schools. However, when there are not enough resources available for school fees, parents have enrolled their children in public schools.

<sup>13</sup> Out of 1,000 students who enter the first year of primary school, 75 ultimately earn their baccalaureate without repeating a year (Kaawar & Tzannatos, 2013).



## Equity of Access and Retention

### **Subsector Disparities<sup>14</sup>**

Since 1997, a few years after the end of the civil war, the percentage of out-of-school children has decreased and the net enrollment rate has increased. The dropout rates available, however, remained relatively constant since 2001, which indicates that despite the efforts being made toward improving access to school, there remains a problem with primary school retention in the country. Dropout rates,<sup>15</sup> or at least repetition rates, vary across types of schools. According to CERD (2011), repetition rates in public schools tend to be higher than the national average repetition rates, which in 2008 were reported to be 10 percent in grade 1, 15.1 percent in grade 4, and 17.9 percent in grade 6. This means that private-for-free schools and private-not-free schools tended to have lower repetition rates than the public schools (Nahas, 2011).

### **Regional Disparities**

In addition, dropout rates vary by region, with the highest rates evidenced in the northern region of Lebanon, with 5.8 percent in grade 4 and 7.4 percent in grade 6 (CERD, 2011). Northern Lebanon also has the highest concentration of students who complete primary education (grades 1-5) and then drop out of school (43.2 percent), that is, they do not enter secondary school. Some villages in the north have dropout rates across grade levels over 65 percent (ETF, 2011). Furthermore, repetition rates are higher in the northern region of Lebanon than the national average, particularly when comparing public schools (CERD, 2011). The highest repetition rate reported in 2003 was in grade 4, reaching 19.6 percent. In 2008, the repetition rate reached 8.4 percent in grade 4 in northern Lebanon. Regional disparities are further evident in the varying illiteracy rates that are highest in the Bekaa and southern Lebanon (CERD, 2011).

### **Socioeconomic Disparities**

Household socioeconomic status is a factor in access to schools across all grade levels. Poor households either cannot afford to send their children to schools, or do not have sufficient awareness of the importance of sending the children to school (CERD, 2011). Although public schools are free with reference to tuition fees, families have to cover costs such as supplies, transportation, and food. Also, some families need to have their children work to earn money for the household. This directly impacts the enrollment as well as dropout rates, since some children may drop out due to the same economic issues facing the family (CERD, 2011).

<sup>14</sup> Enrollment in different types of schools is related both to region of a family's residence and to the family's socioeconomic status. According to the UNDP (2009), 28.5 percent of the Lebanese population are poor, with the highest concentration in the northern region (53 percent), followed by the southern region (42 percent). In contrast, overall poverty in Beirut is approximately 6 percent (excluding the southern suburbs). Therefore, students in Beirut are the most likely to attend private schools (which are fee-based) at the primary level (69 percent), compared to only 35 percent of students in the northern region (Kaawar & Tzannatos, 2013). Furthermore, only 5 percent of the poor families in northern Lebanon attend private schools, while the share of non-poor students in private schools (60 percent) is almost as high as that in Beirut (ETF, 2011; [http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/ACFE28256ED4AC41C125788D00339BF2/\\$file/Torino%20Process%20-%20Lebanon.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/ACFE28256ED4AC41C125788D00339BF2/$file/Torino%20Process%20-%20Lebanon.pdf)).

<sup>15</sup> It is difficult to estimate the dropout rates among the different types of schools (that is, public, private-for-free, and private-not-for-free schools) due to the frequent movement of students across different types of schools during the primary school years.

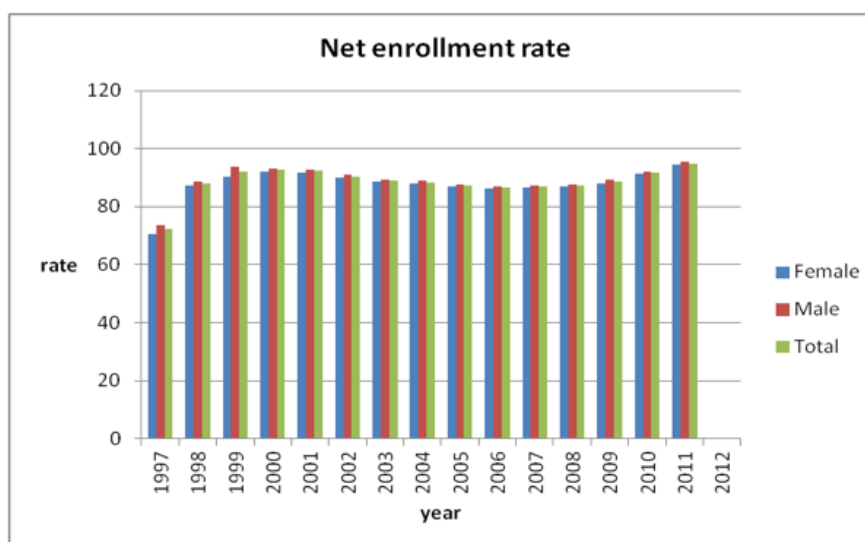


Although public and non-fee-based private schooling only has modest direct costs for families,<sup>16</sup> the indirect costs (for example, forgone income) are not insignificant. Furthermore, the deteriorated economic situation, resulting from the persisting political instability in the country, increases unemployment and poverty, and, thus, the need for children in some families to work and perhaps not go to school. For example, in 2000, it was reported that 13.1 percent of youth between the ages of 10 and 18 were employed outside the home (Higher Council for Childhood, MOSA, 2004).

### **Gender Disparities**

In the past, prior to Lebanon's independence and particularly during Ottoman rule, there were disparities between girls' and boys' enrollment at school. Even after the French mandate began, the Lebanese government continued to limit the enrollment of girls by not building single-sex schools for them. For example, in 1924, there were 414 boys' and 79 girls' public primary schools in Syria and Lebanon. By the 1930's, girls represented 33 percent of all students in school in Lebanon (61,000 students) (Thompson, 2000). In more recent years, gender disparities have been reduced. As shown in Figure 3, there are only small differences between the NERs for females and males for the years 1997–2001, though males have slightly higher enrollment rates.

**Figure 3: Net Enrollment Rate - Disaggregated by Gender (Source: UIS)**



Dropout rates are slightly higher for males than for females particularly for the years of late 1990s (CERD, 2011). Moreover, repetition rates observed for males have been consistently higher than those for females across the grade levels and the years for which data are available (CERD, 2011).

<sup>16</sup> Certainly, the cost of tuition for students to attend certain private schools in comparison with the minimum wage limits significantly the choice of attending private schools for the children of the parents with low and limited income.

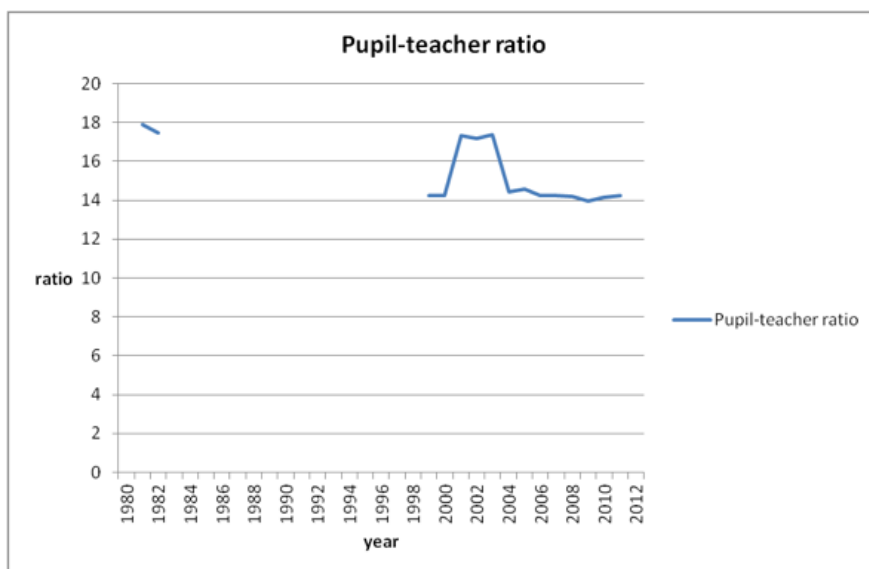


## Pattern of Quality of Education

The quality of education is evidenced by input factors, such as teacher qualifications and pupil-teacher ratio, as well as outcome measures, such as students' examination performance. With respect to teacher qualifications, Lebanese schools are saturated with under-qualified teaching staff<sup>17</sup> (Alameddine & Ellis-Petersen, 2011; World Bank, 2006). More than 80 percent of teachers in many primary schools in Lebanon are unqualified in the main teaching subjects, including math, sciences, and languages (World Bank, 2006), and only 42 percent of public primary school teachers have a specialized degree and less than half hold a university level degree (Alameddine & Ellis-Petersen, 2011).

Another indicator of quality of education is the pupil-teacher ratio, which is displayed in Figure 4. Although data are unavailable for earlier years and for the period 1982–1997, we can see that the pupil-teacher ratio in public and private primary schools was 17.9 in 1981, and remained at relatively favorable levels, between 14 and 18 for the post-civil war period, 1998–2011. A low pupil-teacher ratio is generally a positive indicator signaling that the learning environment allows the teacher to give sufficient attention to students (Nahas, 2009). However, when coupled with under-qualified teaching staff, this relatively low ratio signals the highly politicized practice of teacher recruitment and deployment, whereby politicians interfere to appoint teachers and principals through personal connections (Alameddine & Ellis-Petersen, 2011; The World Bank, 2006). This ratio also indicates a focus on quantity rather than quality. Thus, although the number of teachers in Lebanon has more than doubled in the past three decades (Alameddine & Ellis-Petersen, 2011), around 21 percent of employed teachers are “surplus to requirements,” according to an assessment conducted by the MEHE (TEMPUS, 2012; World Bank, 2010). This surplus to requirements of teachers refers to the tenured teachers.

**Figure 4: Primary School Pupil-Teacher Ratio (Source: UIS)<sup>18</sup>**



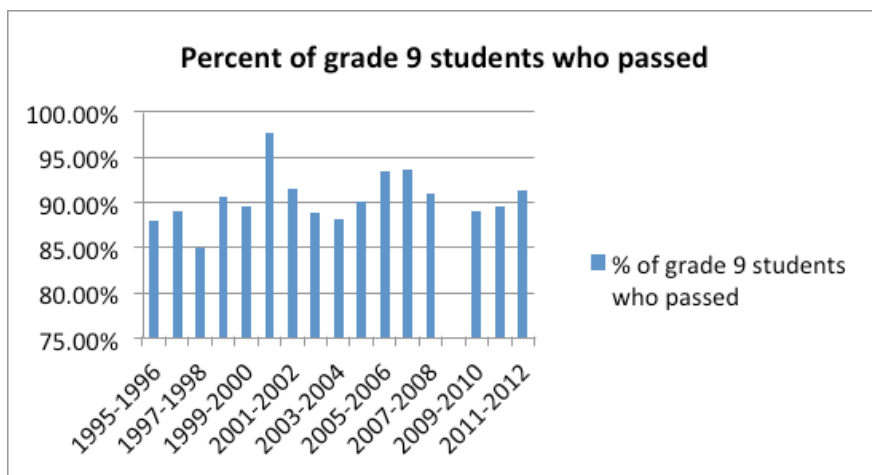
<sup>17</sup> Under-qualified teaching staff are those who have less than the minimum formal education attainment and, thus, may lack sufficient knowledge of the content matter and/or lack sufficient knowledge of transmitting the content matter.

<sup>18</sup> Note that the ratio increased somewhat during 2001–2003 to a little above 17.



Another indicator of education quality are the results of the annual national exams administered at grade 9, which is considered the end of the second stage of “compulsory” education in Lebanon. The rate of passing this exam, which is known as the *Brevet* exam, has increased particularly after introducing the new curriculum in 1997. As can be seen in Figure 5, which shows the percentages of students who passed the grade 9 exam for the 1995–2012 period, the pass rate was quite high, ranging from 85.0 percent in 1997 to 97.7 percent to 97.6 percent in 2000, with the pass rate in most years being close to 90 percent.<sup>19</sup>

**Figure 5: Grade 9 Exam Pass Rates (Source: UIS)**



One should note, however, that the pass rates tend to be higher in private schools compared to public schools and among female students compared to their male peers (Parliament of Lebanon, 2013). Furthermore, pass rates tend to be lower in schools that have fewer than 50 students, which the MEHE identifies as “troubled schools” (Interview 1 with MEHE, 2013). These schools are mostly found in the southern region of Lebanon, in Keserwan, and in Koura, where there is a low population.<sup>20</sup>

Another indicator of education quality is student performance on international examinations. According to the results of Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in 2003 eighth-grade school children in Lebanon performed below the international average in mathematics and science, and their performance only improved slightly by 2007 (Gonzales, 2003; Martin et al., 2008; Mullis et al., 2004; Mullis et al., 2008). As shown in Table 3, the average scores of Lebanese students in 2003 were 433 in math and 393 in science, while the international averages were 467 and 474, respectively. In addition, in math and science, respectively, 32 percent and 52 percent of Lebanese students scored in the “lowest” level on the test, and almost no students achieved a score in the “highest” levels (Mahdawi, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> The relatively low pass rate in 1997 may be attributed to the fact that this was the year that a new curriculum was introduced.

<sup>20</sup> One of the initiatives that the MEHE announced that it was undertaking between 2007 and 2010 was to close down 83 schools. However, the MEHE did not actually close down these schools, but rather identified them as “merged schools” (Interview 1 with MEHE, 2013).



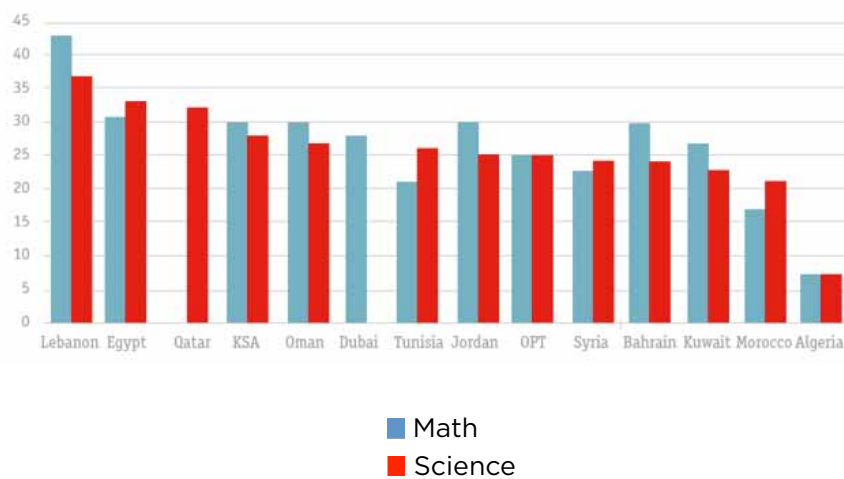
**Table 3: Average Score Scale on TIMSS<sup>21</sup>**  
 (Source: Gonzales, 2003; Martin et al., 2008; Mullis et al., 2004; Mullis et al., 2008)

Year	Lebanon		International	
	Math	Science	Math	Science
2003	433	393	467	474
2007	449	414	451	N.A

Scale average=500

Lebanon evidenced relatively high differences in scores in math and science on TIMSS 2007, when comparing children from families in the top 20 percent of the income distribution and those from the bottom 20 percent (see Figure 6). Of all Arab countries participating in TIMSS 2007, Lebanon had the largest socioeconomic status-related (SES) gap in math and the second largest SES-related gap in science (Salehi-Isfahani et al., 2012; Kaawar and Tzannatos, 2013).

**Figure 6: TIMSS 2007 Scores of Students from Lowest and Highest Income Quintiles (Source: Saleh-Isfahani et al., 2012)**



<sup>21</sup> To avoid misinterpretations based on movement of the international average between cycles, TIMSS 2007 adopted the fixed average approach by using the scale average as the point of reference.





## Drivers and Impediments of Change

Here we discuss some of the factors that contributed to the above-discussed historical patterns of access, retention, and quality in Lebanon, overall and for various subgroups. First, we focus on policy, program, and project initiatives, and then discuss the roles of key national and local organizations as well as international organizations in these efforts.

### Policy, Program, and Project Initiatives

The political will of governing officials should be mentioned first. For example, in 1869, a law was passed that mandated compulsory free education for all Ottoman citizens, which had a modest impact on the territory that is now Lebanon, which was under the rule of the Ottomans until the early 19th century. The French also demonstrated a level of commitment to education during the mandate period by including Article 10 in the Lebanese Constitution in 1926, which granted sects the right to organize confessional schools (Farha, 2012). After independence Lebanese government officials showed their political will to increase access and retention in primary education in Lebanon by passing the law on compulsory and free primary education, initially in 1959 and then restated (with some modifications) in 1998 and in 2011.<sup>22</sup> That primary education should be free and compulsory was also declared in the 1989 Document of National Accord (Taif Agreement), which ended the 1975–1990 civil war (Frayha, 2012).

Nevertheless, the political will of governing officials was not unlimited. Importantly, although at various times they adopted laws stating that education should be free and compulsory, the officials did not issue implementing decrees or legislation for these laws, either in 1959, 1998, or 2011. According to Nahas (2009), the absence of such implementing decrees has contributed to students dropping out.

The limitations in political will seem to be associated with the political divisions in the country. The 15-year civil war (1975–1990), political assassinations, and wars with Israel (1993, 1996, and 2006) are important examples of these divisions. The wars with Israel had an impact on enrollment as many schools were demolished during the attacks, as well as hundreds of families displaced. Schools were also used to shelter many of these displaced families. The 15-year civil war had a greater impact, as its duration was longer, and families fled high risk areas to other regions of the country where it was perceived to be “safe.” Where possible, parents then invested in the private schools in these areas where they moved seeking not only human security, but also a “good” education for their children (Interview with education specialist).<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> In addition, Lebanon has recognized the right to education for each person with a disability under the Law no. 220 enacted in 2000.

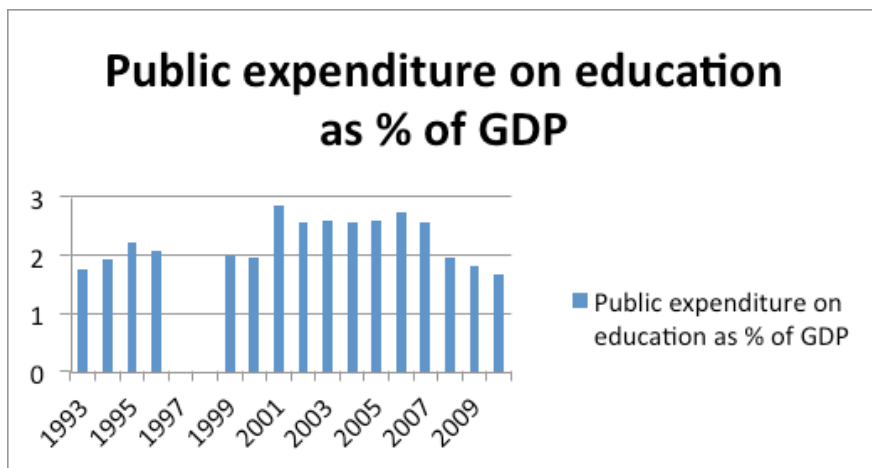
<sup>23</sup> The quality of education in primary schools in Lebanon has been affected by the 15 years of civil war and the subsequent rebuilding efforts. For example, the teachers’ training center that was run by the Lebanese University was closed down after the civil war and replaced by in-service training programs. This change lowered the quality (knowledge and skills) of the teachers who joined the teaching force, particularly at public schools (Interview 1 with MEHE, 2013).



Many critical decisions, such as passing implementation decrees and strategies, have been stalled due to legislative impasse and political unrest the country faced at various times. For example, since 2005, there have been political tensions between the pro-Western 14 March Coalition, led by the predominantly Sunni Future Movement, and the opposition 8 March Coalition, led by Hezbollah. These tensions may not be manifested consistently in civil strife, but they led to delays in government decisions and government inaction.

Beyond legislative action and policy declarations, the degree of political will is signaled by actions to fund education provision. In Lebanon, public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP indicates a relatively low level of commitment.<sup>24</sup> As presented in Figure 7, this statistic ranged from 1.76 percent in 1993 to 2.80 percent in 2001 (see Figure 7),<sup>25</sup> which is well below the average public expenditure on education in the Arab States (5.5 percent since 1999). Moreover, in 2004, Lebanon ranked 110 out of 150 nations in terms of percentage of GDP spent on education (Farha, 2012).

**Figure 7: Public Expenditure on Education as Percentage of GDP 1993–2010 (Source: UIS)**



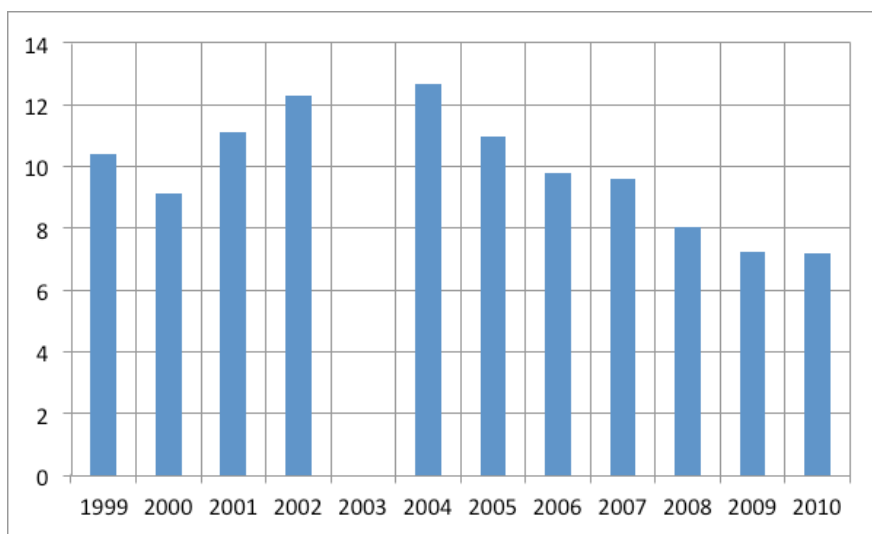
<sup>24</sup> Other available indicators of financially-related political will are that Lebanon spent 9.3 percent of its GDP per capita on education in 1997 and spent 7.88 percent of GDP per capita on primary education in 2005 (UIS).

<sup>25</sup> During the 1993–2010 period, the cross-year fluctuations in this statistic may have more to do with changes in Lebanon's GDP than in the amounts of government expenditure.



Another indicator of financially related political will is the level of public expenditure on education as percentage of total government expenditure. Historically, this figure increased from 7.7 percent in 1943 (at independence) to 12.8 percent in 1956 and 15 percent in 1959. It decreased slightly in the early 1960s, but then increased to 17 percent in 1969 and to 22 percent in 1974, just prior to the civil war. In 1980 the education share of the government's budget registered at a lower figure of 13.2 percent, and it decreased further to 7.9 percent in 1991 and 5.7 percent in 1995 (Abou Rjaili, 1999). In the more recent period, this statistic increased from 10.2 percent to 12.1 percent between 1999 and 2004, and then decreased for this point at least until 2010, when it registered 7.1 percent (see Figure 8).<sup>26</sup>

**Figure 8: Public Expenditure on Education as Percent of Total Government Expenditure**



However, it is noteworthy that although government expenditure has been relatively modest, household expenditure on education has increased. Overall education expenditures (government plus households) in Lebanon rose from 8.6 percent of GDP in 1973 to 11.4 percent in 2001, of which the state contributed 4.4 percent and households 7.0 percent (Nahas, 2009). In addition, the government share of education expenditure increased from 29 percent in 1973 to 39 percent in 2001 (Nahas, 2009). Nevertheless, in 2001 households allocated 13 percent of their total expenditures to education, an increase from the 8 percent they spent in 1966.

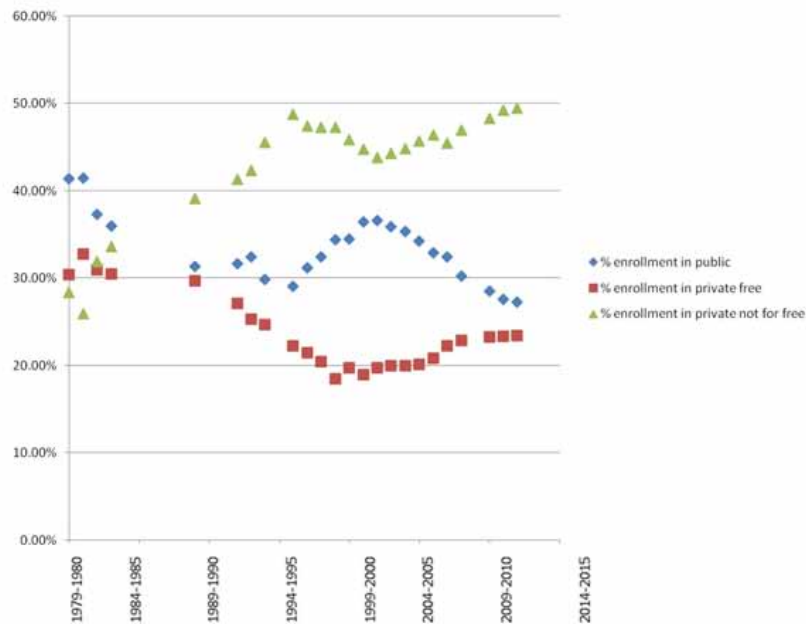
Further evidence of families' financial commitment to education, which may be both a consequence as well as a cause of the relatively low commitment by political elites, can be seen in Figure 9. One observes that from 1979–1980 to 2011–2012 the percentage of primary school enrollment in private-not-for-free institutions increased substantially from 28.3 percent to 49.4 percent, while the percentage in the public institutions decreased from 41.3 percent to 27.2 percent and the percentage in private-for-free institutions decreased from 30.4 percent to 23.4 percent (CERD, 2012). In particular, between 1999–2000 and 2009–2010, the percentage of private-not-for-free school enrollment grew while the percentage of public school enrollment declined.

<sup>26</sup> Note the decline may be related to developments associated with the political division sparked by the assassination of the past Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005.



One of the reasons for this shift is due to the perceived deterioration of the quality of education in the public schools. “Parents in Lebanon have always sought private schooling for their children, but during the war years, they increasingly lost their trust in the government institutions, and naturally began to seek private schooling” (Interview with education specialist).

**Figure 9: Percentage of Primary School Enrollment by Sector (Source: UIS)**



Other government policies also likely have affected school retention and dropout rates. Notable in this regard is the policy, adopted in 2001, requiring that students who are late in enrolling in school or who repeat grades be released from school. For example, once a student repeats a grade level twice, then the student is automatically forced to leave school, and may not return unless she or he receives a letter of forgiveness from the Minister of Education and Higher Education. Similarly, students who withdraw from school for a year, because of illness, family instability, economic problems, or other reasons, may not return unless they receive permission from the minister.

In addition, the new curricula drafted in 1997 may have served as an impediment to access and retention, although it was an update to the curriculum and teaching materials issued between 1968 and 1971. It placed the learner at the center of the education process, but a number of implementation factors hindered its success (Interview with scholar, 2013). The curriculum introduced many new objectives and, thus, increased the number of subjects, making it more challenging for teachers to deliver and students to learn (Frayha, 2012). These inherent problems were compounded by the lack of professional development to enable teachers to teach the content using student-centered methods (Frayha, 2012; Interview with scholar, 2013).<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Two years after the new curriculum was introduced, an in-service teacher development program was organized along with the implementation of an assessment system that would be appropriate for the curriculum goals and teaching strategies.



## National and Local Organizations Involved

There are a number of national and key local organizations that are active in addressing issues in primary education in Lebanon. Most of these organizations have focused efforts on students who are at risk of dropping out of school or children who have already dropped out of school.

The *National Union of Parents and Institutional Associations for Intellectual Disability*<sup>28</sup> has been working directly with children with disabilities since 1965. Between 1984 and 2000, the organization attempted integrating students with special education needs into the local private primary schools in the country. The initiative created financial burdens as well as social complications that led to lawsuits by individual parents in participating private schools. More recently, the organization sought to influence government policy to mainstream children with disabilities in regular classrooms. As a result, in 2011–2012, the government selected 10 public primary schools across the country to introduce this model of mainstreaming children with disabilities in regular classes.

The *Renee Muawwad Foundation* (RMF) is a leading local nongovernmental organization that works on education initiatives. One of its projects, Support to Rural Families Affected by War, was funded by the Italian Cooperation ROSS Program (Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and co-implemented by RMF and other local and international partners. It involved 10 schools in northern Lebanon, promoting cultural, life skills, and other educational activities for students and dropouts who suffered from psychological post-conflict traumas. In addition, the Foundation undertook the Lebanon Education Assistance Development Project I and II (LEAD), which were funded by USAID in partnership with the Cooperative Housing Foundation (CHF). The project was implemented in two phases: 1) in 70 public schools in the northern Lebanon and Mount Lebanon Governorates (2007–2009) and 2) in 15 schools in northern Lebanon, Beirut, southern Lebanon, Mount Lebanon, and the Bekaa (2009–2010). It sought to improve physical spaces and basic infrastructure and create science and technology laboratories as well as involve students in clubs, outings, and other extra-curricular activities.<sup>29</sup>

*Iqraa Association*<sup>30</sup> is a non-profit, non-sectarian association that has been working since 1994 on promoting reading in public schools across Lebanon. The association has worked to establish a network of over 80 public schools all over Lebanon in which reading in both Arabic and English is encouraged among Lebanese children, particularly those of primary school age. For example, the association supplied books for classroom libraries, organized reading sessions for students, and encouraged teachers to read to students. Other activities involved training grade 5 students to read to those in grades 1 and 2 during recess time, as well as encouraging students to participate in in-school creative writing workshops.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Information provided through an interview with an organization representative.

<sup>29</sup> The Renee Muawwad Foundation has continued its efforts in recent years. For instance, it implemented the Child-to-Child Project Phases I and II, which was funded by Save the Children USA and implemented in northern Lebanon in five public schools during 2010. The project included capacity building for teachers, providing equipment to school clubs, and organizing interschool activities. The second phase, implemented during 2011, targeted three public schools, helping to establish school-based student and parent councils and introducing community-based service.

<sup>30</sup> “Iqraa” is the Arabic word for “Read.”

<sup>31</sup> Iqraa Association has continued its work in recent years. For instance, in 2012 it began providing summer camps that offer safe and free education for marginalized Lebanese children, and in 2013 it initiated some additional in-service teacher training programs focused on teaching reading and writing at the primary school. Between March and August 2013, about 5,500 children participated in the various programs.



The *Amel Association*, a non-profit organization, focuses on promoting social, economic, civil and cultural rights—including education—for the underprivileged in Lebanon. One of its projects, Lebanese Children and Youth Empowerment through Non-formal Education and Psychosocial Activities, provided counseling and psychological support as well as organized remedial classes for about 150 children in the southern suburbs of Beirut in 2010. This project also included accelerated learning programs (ALPs) in Arabic, English and computers, particularly targeting dropouts and working children, as well as running workshops for 100 teachers on issues such as child protection, inclusive and active learning, and so on.

## International Organizations Involved

Similar to other developing countries, Lebanon has received funding in the education sector from international organizations (such as, Agence Française de Développement, European Union [EU], Islamic Development Bank [IDB], UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, USAID, and the World Bank), particularly after the end of the civil war in 1990. International organizations work closely in coordination with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and with local organizations and institutions to improve access and retention in schools, enhance student achievement by improving educational facilities and equipment, and providing capacity building for teachers, and increasing stakeholder engagement in public schools.

In recent years, the MEHE established the Education Sector Development Secretariat (ESDS), which is responsible for coordinating with the international and local donors, ensuring the provision of required funds for projects and programs, following up on the implementation of the projects, and monitoring/evaluating and ensuring quality and efficient implementation process. The projects coordinated at the ESDS address issues that have been identified by the ESDP, which in turn respond to priorities identified in the NES, both of which were endorsed by the Council of Ministers in April 22, 2010.<sup>32</sup> Three of the projects relevant to increasing access, retention, and quality of education are briefly discussed below.

One project, which was funded by UNICEF, USAID, and the World Bank, focused on increasing the percentage of children between ages 3 and 5 enrolled in public preschools, particularly those in disadvantaged areas of the country, to increase their readiness for primary education. So far, 123 public schools have been rehabilitated to include kindergarten classes, and 13 public schools have received new learning materials.

Another project, supported by the European Union and UNICEF, aims at reducing repetition, improving retention, and raising achievement. The project developed remedial kits for grades 1 to 3 in Arabic, English, French, and math; trained teachers on remedial learning; provided academic, psychological, and social support programs for at-risk children; and introduced mechanisms for cyclical review of student achievement.

A third project, funded by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), sought to increase equitable access to quality education for the poorest people. This project supported the construction and equipping schools in the northern Lebanon, Bekaa, and Mount Lebanon; training teachers in new teaching methods; and developing capacity of MEHE and CER administrative staff to manage, audit, and evaluate continuous training programs.

<sup>32</sup> Although the NES was adopted in 2010, work and preparations for this took place starting in 2004.



## Conclusion

Lebanon has been able to provide access to about 95 percent of primary school-aged children in the country and has overcome the gender gap in education. This has been achieved through government policy, programs, and funding, but an increasingly important role has been played by private, sectarian school systems. Time will tell whether the most recently issued Law No. 150 in 2011, along with actions by private educational institutions and local/national and international organizations will succeed in getting all children in school. This means facilitating access and retention of children from lower socioeconomic status families, children with disabilities, and refugee children.

The large role played by private schooling reflects sectarian divisions within Lebanese society. In addition to a history of violent conflict, these divisions have contributed to political instability and weakened the government's record in developing and implementing policies in education and other sectors. The divisions also encourage support of and preference for private schooling. This sectarian-based preference is reinforced by perceptions that public schools offer lower quality education. As a result, children who attend public schools are mainly from families who cannot afford the costs of private education.

These problems have not gone unnoticed. The MEHE presented a five-year plan in 2010 that highlighted the right to education for all and the need to ensure equal opportunities and accessibility in Lebanese education. It laid out a strategy for improving the quality of education in Lebanon. As a result of this plan, a number of policies and implementation decrees have been drafted (Interview with MEHE, 2013). However, to address the problems further actions by the government and other stakeholders will be required. A good place to start would be to find a politically agreeable way to collect data on the population overall as well as on key education indicators.





## References

- AbouRjaili, K. (1999). State expenditure on education in Lebanon. In M. Bashshur (Ed.), *The state and education in Lebanon—yearbook 1* (pp. 185-242). Beirut: Lebanese Association for Educational Studies.
- Alameddine, Y., & Ellis-Petersen, H. (2011, September 8). High school teachers, quality vs. quantity. *Daily Star*. Retrieved September 16, 2013 from <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2011/Sep-07/148058-high-school-teachers-quality-vs-quantity.ashx#axzz2f2HAg3KZ>
- Central Intelligence Agency. The world fact book: Lebanon. Retrieved July 5, 2013 from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/le.html>
- Eken, S., & Helbling, T. (1998). *Back to the future postwar reconstruction and stabilization in Lebanon*. Occasional Paper No. 176. International Monetary Fund.
- El-Ghali, H. A. (2011). *The role of higher education institutions in addressing youth unemployment in Lebanon*. (Unpublished PhD). University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh.
- European Training Foundation. (2011). *Torino process 2010: Lebanon*. Retrieved September 16, 2013, from [http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/ACFE28256ED4AC41C125788D00339BF2/\\$file/Torino%20Process%20-%20Lebanon.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/ACFE28256ED4AC41C125788D00339BF2/$file/Torino%20Process%20-%20Lebanon.pdf)
- Farha, M. (2012). The historical legacy and political implications of state and sectarian schools in Lebanon. In M. Shuayb (Ed.), *Rethinking education for social cohesion: International case studies* (pp. 65-85). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Frayha, N. (2012). Education as a means of building social cohesion in Lebanon: An unfinished task. In M. Shuayb (Ed.), *Rethinking education for social cohesion: International case studies* (pp. 103-113). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gaspard, T. K. (2004). *A political economy of Lebanon, 1948–2002: The limits of laissez-faire*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV.
- Gonzales, P., Guzmán, J. C., Partelow, L., Pahlke, E., Jocelyn, L., Kastberg, D., & Williams, T. (2004). *Highlights from the trends in international mathematics and science study (TIMSS) 2003*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office: National State Department of Education. Retrieved September 16, 2013, from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2005/2005005.pdf>
- Gonzalez, G., Karoly, L. A., Constant, L., Salem, H., & Goldman, C. A. (2008). *Facing human capital challenges of the 21st century: Education and labor market initiatives in Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation.
- Hamdan, H. (2009). *Education in Lebanon*. War Child Holland. Retrieved September 16, 2013, from [http://www.google.com.lb/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=books&cd=1&ved=0CDkQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fdata.unhcr.org%2Fsyrianrefugees%2Fdownload.php%3Fid%3D2023&ei=vs7PUqyBE6bC7Abb9YGcW&usq=AFQjCNEbADDT8s3RGe4fXPep9pePztTyQ\\_Q&sig2=SVGUYeH\\_IE4CVMX6hWSizQ&bvm=bv.59026428.d.ZGU](http://www.google.com.lb/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=books&cd=1&ved=0CDkQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fdata.unhcr.org%2Fsyrianrefugees%2Fdownload.php%3Fid%3D2023&ei=vs7PUqyBE6bC7Abb9YGcW&usq=AFQjCNEbADDT8s3RGe4fXPep9pePztTyQ_Q&sig2=SVGUYeH_IE4CVMX6hWSizQ&bvm=bv.59026428.d.ZGU)





Higher Council for Childhood (Lebanon). (2004). *Situation of children in Lebanon: The third national report 1998–2003*. Beirut: Ministry of Social Affairs.

Kawar , K., & Tzannatos, Z. (2013). *Private sector does not demand enough skilled labor*. Lebanese Center for Policy Studies. Retrieved May 15, 2013, from [http://www.lcps-lebanon.org/publications/1355234616-policy\\_brief4.pdf](http://www.lcps-lebanon.org/publications/1355234616-policy_brief4.pdf)

Krayem, H. (2012). *The Lebanese civil war and the Taif Agreement*. American University of Beirut. Retrieved July 5, 2013 from <http://ddc.aub.edu.lb/projects/pspa/conflict-resolution.html>

Landry, S. H. (2005). *Effective early childhood programs: Turning knowledge into action*. Houston: The University of Texas. Retrieved September 16, 2013, from [http://www.childrenslearninginstitute.org/library/publications/documents/Effective-Early\\_Childhood-Programs.pdf](http://www.childrenslearninginstitute.org/library/publications/documents/Effective-Early_Childhood-Programs.pdf)

Lebanese Association for Educational Studies. (2006). *National education strategy in Lebanon: Vision document*. Beirut: Lebanese Association for Educational Studies. Retrieved July 5, 2013, from [http://www.opentech.me/-laes/upload/editor\\_upload/file/Vision%20Document%20%20English.pdf](http://www.opentech.me/-laes/upload/editor_upload/file/Vision%20Document%20%20English.pdf)

Mahdawi, D. (2008, December 12). Lebanese students lag behind in math, science—study. *Daily Star*. Retrieved July 5, 2013 from <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2008/Dec-12/56822-lebanese-students-lag-behind-in-math-science-study.ashx#axzz2r1gkmla2>

Martin, M. O., Mullis, I. V. S., & Foy, P. (2008). *TIMSS 2007 international science report: Findings from IEA's trends in international mathematics and science study at fourth and eighth grades*. Boston: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, Lynch School of Education, Boston College.

Ministry of Education and Higher Education. (2011). *Achievements 2010*. Beirut: Ministry of Education and Higher Education. Retrieved May 15, 2013, from [http://www.mehe.gov.lb/uploads/file/Reports/2011/Progress\\_Report\\_of\\_Ministry\\_of\\_Education\\_18\\_5\\_2011\\_\(Repaired\).pdf](http://www.mehe.gov.lb/uploads/file/Reports/2011/Progress_Report_of_Ministry_of_Education_18_5_2011_(Repaired).pdf)

Ministry of Finance. (2011). Lebanon country profile 2011 (based on the base prospectus published 12 may 2011)., July 5, 2013, from <http://www.finance.gov.lb/en-US/finance/ReportsPublications/DocumentsAndReportsIssuedByMOF/Documents/Sovereign%20and%20Invensment%20Reports/Country%20Profile/Lebanon%20Country%20Profile%202011.pdf>

Ministry of Social Affairs. (2011). *The national social development strategy of Lebanon*. Beirut: Ministry of Social Affairs. Retrieved July 5, 2013, from <http://www.socialaffairs.gov.lb/docs%5CNationalSocialDevelopmentStrategy.pdf>

Mullis, I. V. S., Martin, M. O., & Foy, P. (2008). *TIMSS 2007 international mathematics report: Findings from IEA's trends in international mathematics and science study at fourth and eighth grades*. (). Boston: TIMSS and PIRLS International Study Center, Lynch School of Education, Boston College.

Mullis, I. V. S., Martin, M. O., Gonzalez, E. J., & Chrostowski, S. J. (2004). *TIMSS 2003 international mathematics report: Findings from IEA's trends in international mathematics and science study at the fourth and eighth grades*. TIMSS and PIRLS International Study Center, Lynch School of Education, Boston College.



Nahas, C. (2009). *Education: Development program 2006–2009*. Economics Research Forum. Retrieved May 15, 2013, from [http://www.charbelnahas.org/textes/Documents\\_presentes\\_PIP/Documents\\_Programme\\_Fr\\_et\\_En/Volume\\_2/Education\\_eng.pdf](http://www.charbelnahas.org/textes/Documents_presentes_PIP/Documents_Programme_Fr_et_En/Volume_2/Education_eng.pdf)

Petran, T. (1987). *The struggle over Lebanon*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Picard, E., & Ramsbotham, A. (2012). Reconciliation, reform and resilience: Positive peace for Lebanon. *Accord*, (24).

Salehi-Isfahani, D., Hassine, N. B., & Assaad, R. (2012). Equality of opportunity in education in the Middle East and North Africa. *Paper Presented at the Economic Research Forum*, Cairo.

Salibi, K. (1976). *Crossroads to civil war: Lebanon 1958–1976*. Michigan: Caravan Books.

Sedgwick, R. (2006). Education in Lebanon today. *EWorld Education News and Reviews*, 13 (1). Retrieved May 5, 2013, from <http://www.wes.org/ewenr/00jan/practical.htm>

Thompson, E. (2000). *Colonial citizens: Republican rights, paternal privilege, and gender in French Syria and Lebanon*. New York: Columbia University Press.

UNESCO Institute for Statistics. Data Centre: Country and regional profiles - Lebanon. Retrieved July 5, 2013, from <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=198>

United Nations Development Programme. (2009). *Human development report 2009*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

United Nations Development Programme. (2013). The millennium development goals eight goals for 2015: Lebanon. Retrieved May 15, 2013, from <http://www.lb.undp.org/content/lebanon/en/home/mdgoverview/>

World Bank. (2006). *Lebanon quarterly update*. The World Bank Group.

World Bank. (2010). *Lebanon—education reform for quality schools project*. (No. AB5303). World Bank.

World Bank. (2011). *Lebanon—education reform for quality schools project*. (No. 53010). World Bank.

World Bank. (2012). *The World Bank Group and Lebanon: A country case study*. Bank Information Center.



## Appendix 1: Quantitative and Qualitative Data Sources

The data sources used for informing this study have been as follows:

Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD) Annual Report on Education (1980–2012)

Center for Administrative Statistics (CAS) Household surveys 2004 and 2007

UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) data bank available online

Interviews with key government officials and local and international organization representatives, as well as public school staff representatives and Lebanese university professors

The key government officials who were interviewed for this study included Former Minister of Education and Higher Education and the Head of the Education Parliamentary Committee, the Director General of Basic (Early Childhood and Elementary Education), the Director of the Education Sector Development Secretariat, the Acting Director of Guidance and Counseling at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and the Director of the Center for Educational Research and Development.

Other key participants: public school principals, public school teachers, directors of local organizations, staff of some international organizations, Lebanese university professors, and the Head of the Private Schools Teachers Association



## Appendix 2: Interview Framework

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

ORGANIZATION: \_\_\_\_\_

POSITION: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Given the civil war and the political instability in the country, how did Lebanon address issues of primary education (such as policies, initiatives, and projects)?
  - a. *Before and during the civil war (1980–1990)*
  - b. *After the civil war (1990–2010)*
2. What was the biggest achievement in primary education in Lebanon?
3. What were the constraints and challenges in increasing the [net] enrollment rate in primary education in Lebanon?
4. What efforts were made to improve retention and achievement (*through making learning available on the basis of equal opportunity*)?
5. What roles did various organizations and groups (e.g., local and national government, international agencies, international and local NGOs, religious organizations, international and local businesses, local communities, parents, educators) play at different points in time to increase access to and retention in primary schooling?
6. What are the effects of decreasing school fees on access, quality, and participation in primary education [public schools only] in the Country?
  - a. *Does the abundance of private schools that charge tuition fees and their popularity within the Lebanese society impact access, retention, and participation in primary education? How?*
7. Did making education compulsory until the age of 15 have any [direct or indirect] impact on primary education?
8. What was the main purpose of expanding the primary education to six years instead of five years? And what was the impact of this change?
9. What are some of the interventions made to reach the most vulnerable populations in the country (*such as females, rural, poor, nomads, special needs populations, particular regions of the country, etc.*)?
  - a. *How does Lebanon address the geographic distribution of schools in relation to demographics?*
10. What, if any, data were collected to monitor and evaluate efforts to achieve the goals of increasing access and retention and how, if at all, were the data used to inform decision-making by various organizations and groups?
11. Does the security situation in Lebanon threaten its ability to strategically plan for achieving universal primary education by 2015 and beyond? If yes, how and why?



- 
- 12. What are the gaps that exist for Lebanon to achieve universal primary education by 2015 (such as *technical, financial, etc.*)?
  - 13. Are you aware of any current/recent projects/policies/initiatives related to primary education in Lebanon?
  - 14. What are the key success factors for achieving near universal primary education in Lebanon?
  - 15. What are the lessons learned since 1980 to present in addressing key issues in primary education in Lebanon?

