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# Study on Governance Challenges for Education in Fragile Situations

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Lebanon Country  
Report

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## **Foreword and Acknowledgements**

The European Commission study management team, Brussels, consisted of representatives from the Social and Human Development and Migration Unit of DG, European Aid. The Study Reference Group consisted of representatives from the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, Education and Training Foundation, DFID, GTZ, CIDA, IIEP UNESCO, World Bank, Ulster University and the European Commission.

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It is hoped that this analysis will be a useful contribution to the development of education in Lebanon in the coming years. It is also hoped that the analysis accurately reflects the views and analysis of those consulted and relevant documentation. The lead author of this report is Mr. Michael A. Ratcliffe, study team leader, with initial distance consultation and insights from Mr. Mark Todd. The Study and consultancy team has been managed by Euro-Trends.

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## Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

Acronym/Term	English
EC	European Commission
ECDR	Educational Centre for Research and Development
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
FBO	Faith-based organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrolment Rates
ICG	International Crisis Group
LPDC	Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee
MEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MOF	Ministry of Finance
NER	Net Enrolment Rates
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
SCF	Save the Children Fund
SWAp	Sector Wide Approach
TA	Technical Assistance
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific, Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Education Fund
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
UNU-WIDER	United Nations University-World Institute for Development Economics Research
WB	World Bank



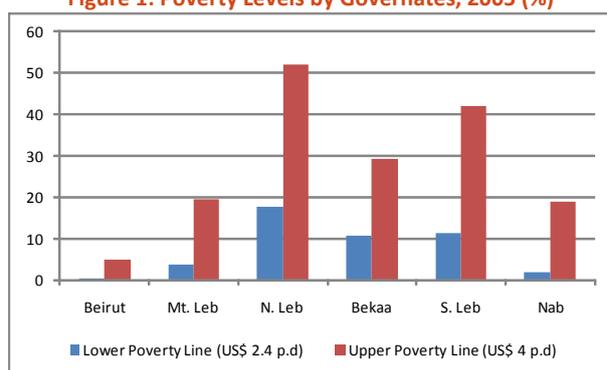
# 1. Historical Perspectives: Sector Performance and Resilience

## 1.1 Analysis of Long-Term Sector Performance and Resilience

Lebanon is located in Western Asia, on the East of the Mediterranean, bordered by Syria in the North and East; and Israel in the South. It covers an area of 10,452 km<sup>2</sup>, with an estimated population of around 4 million and a high population density of 440 people per km<sup>2</sup>. On independence in 1943, a community-based power sharing mechanism called confessionalism (which allocates political power according to ethnic/religious population shares) was established. There has been no official census since 1932, but one estimate suggests the current religious breakdown is 60% Muslim (30% Shi'ite; 30% Sunni), 30-35% Christian and 5% others, including 18 recognised small religious groupings.<sup>1</sup> There is a diaspora of an indicative 18 million, with Lebanese ancestry. There are an estimated 0.5 million refugees and asylum seekers mainly from Palestine, Iraq and Sudan.

Key events were the 1979/1990 civil war and the signing of the peace accord (the Taif Agreement) in 1989, a post-conflict recovery/reconstruction period over 1991/2006. Over this period, GDP grew quickly until the recession in 2000, with per capita incomes five times higher than pre-1975 levels. During the civil war, much of the school physical infrastructure was destroyed, alongside massive emigration of qualified personnel, including teachers. The Lebanese diaspora is estimated by the IMF in 2008 to send back remittances worth around 20% of GDP.

Figure 1: Poverty Levels by Governates, 2005 (%)



An important feature is the existence of 12 Palestinian refugee camps in North Lebanon, Bekaa, Central Lebanon, Saida and Tyre (in the South), under the auspices of the UNRWA. Security governance in the camps is largely self-regulated and perceived as a location and source of militancy and instability<sup>2</sup> and a political/security target during the 2006 hostilities. The Lebanese government makes very little, if any, social

service provision in these camps, which are dependent on international community assistance. The requirement that education in these camps follow Lebanese education curriculum policies is well-defined, but its implementation is uneven. UNRWA is effectively a 'shadow' authority within the camps and the main source of employment, although unemployment runs at an estimated 60%.

<sup>1</sup> CIA Fact book, 2009 (from Wikipedia)

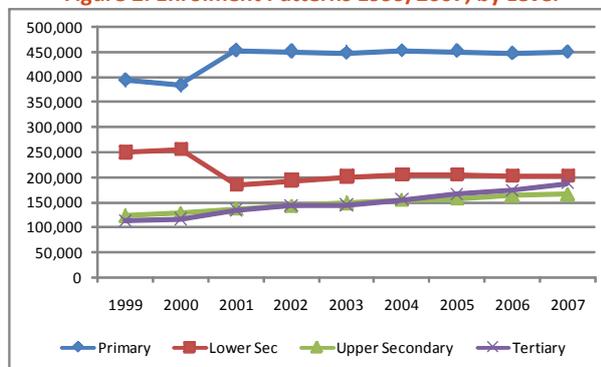
<sup>2</sup> International Crisis Group, 2009. Nurturing Instability : Lebanon's Palestinian Refugee Camps

The other key events were the Cedar revolution and further hostilities with Israel in 2005 and 2006 respectively and the subsequent post-conflict recovery/reconstruction over 2006/2009. During the hostilities, it is estimated that 30,000 jobs were lost, 100,000 houses destroyed and around 350 schools damaged. Estimated damage was around US\$ 730 million, with an output loss of around US\$ 1.3 billion and 3% rise in unemployment.<sup>3</sup> These economic factors are particularly critical, given the high incidents of private education provision in Lebanon. There are significant disparities in poverty levels across the six regions of Lebanon, estimated at 8% (US\$ 2.4 per day) and 29% (US\$ 4 per day) (See fig.1 above). Poverty gaps grew during the 2006 hostilities. The significant cash and investment transfers from the diaspora, contribute to maintaining a substantial fee paying education private sector.

The organisation of education consists of pre-school (2 years), primary (6 years), lower secondary (3 years), upper secondary (3 years) and tertiary (4 years). The lower secondary and upper secondary certification is the *Brevet* and *Baccalauréat Libanais*, complemented by international, French and US accreditation, especially in the extensive private system. Education policy and planning is managed through the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). The system is characterised by an extensive private and private subsidised system, which constitute between one-half and two-thirds of schools and enrolment. The legislative and regulatory framework for education is extensive, although in need of revision, and the system remains highly centralised, with limited financial or management delegation to the 6 regional authorities, 25 districts and numerous municipalities or schools.

Despite these sources of fragility, the Lebanese education system has avoided major deterioration, but recovery has been slow and mixed. Primary gross enrolment rates are stagnant at around 95%-100%; lower secondary GER has declined from 92% in 2005 to 87% in 2007; upper secondary GER has grown from 57% to 77% over a decade.<sup>4</sup> There are significant regional disparities, with primary net enrolments ranging from 97% in the better-off regions, to a reported 50% in North and South Lebanon and Bekaa. Repetition and dropout rates at all levels are significant, ranging between 10%-20% in primary/secondary grades. Dropout rates reach around 25% at the end of lower secondary grades.<sup>5</sup> Quality improvement has been disappointing, with international exam performance being no better than, or sometimes worse than, other MENA countries, although more recent studies suggest improvement.<sup>6</sup>

Figure 2: Enrolment Patterns 1999/2007, by Level



<sup>3</sup> World Bank, 2008. Country Brief : Lebanon

<sup>4</sup> MEHE/UNESCO, 2008. Lebanon Education Database.

<sup>5</sup> Lebanese Association for Educational Studies, 2006. National Education Strategy in Lebanon : Vision Document

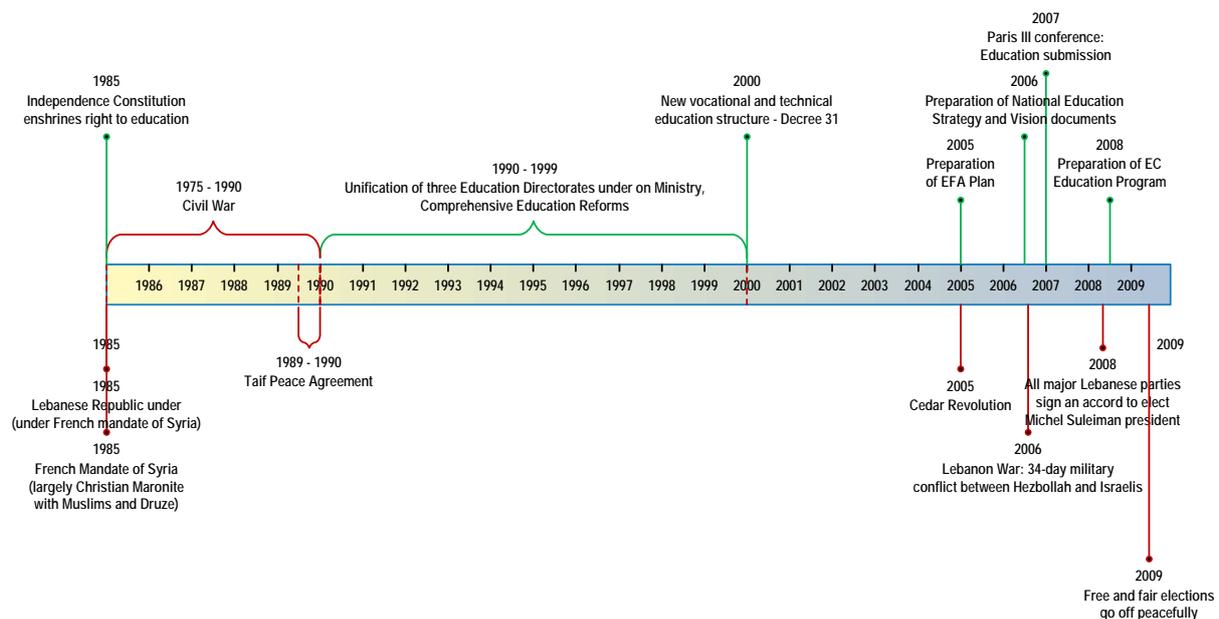
<sup>6</sup> World Bank, 2005. Public Expenditure Review suggests that Lebanon TIMSS scores are comparatively low and no better than neighbours such as Egypt and Jordan, with only half Lebanon's per capita income.

Enrolment volumes being restored does suggest a degree of resilience, with many destroyed schools in the 1975/1990 and 2006 hostilities being restored and teachers returning to school, primarily due to community, politically based and faith-based organisation efforts, supported in 2006 by extensive international and diaspora support. Nevertheless, it is reported that the recurring hostilities have contributed to the exodus of several thousand university teachers, potential under-graduates and senior and experienced planners, managers and entrepreneurs overseas. It is reported that these political and faith-based organisations were significant in the system recovery in the more conflict-affected regions of North and South Lebanon. However, it is reported<sup>7</sup> that primary education enrolment recovery since 2006 has been slower than for secondary education due to major primary school infrastructure damage in several areas.

## 1.2 Analysis of Factors Affecting Sector Resilience and Fragility

A chronology of key events related to security, political and economic/administrative governance is summarised in *figure 3 below*. For simplicity, these governance features are characterised over two main periods: i) a post-civil war recovery and reconstruction period, though still conflict-affected over 1975/2006; and ii) a second recovery and reconstruction period, over 2006/2009. In broad terms, though uneven, improvements in education sector performance have correlated with improvements in other governance features over these periods.

Figure 3: Chronology of Selected Key Events in Lebanon



**Key Governance Features: Post-Civil War Recovery and Reconstruction Period, 1990/2006.** The key security and political governance features over this period were i) the large influx of Palestinian refugees, including around 125,000 permanently in camps; ii) the signing of the Taif Peace

<sup>7</sup> EC, 2009. Education Programme Formulation Mission

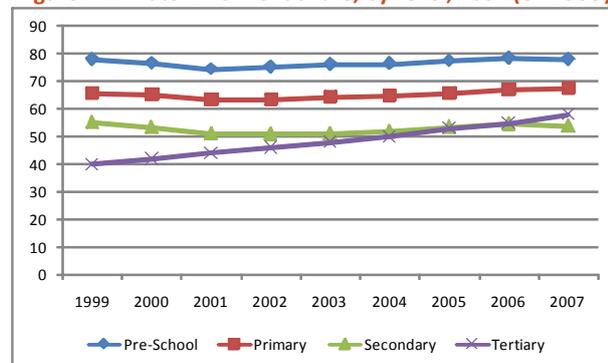
Agreement in 1989; and iii) the gradual restoration of political institutions, based on reaffirmed confessionalism, which allocated key political positions across religious groupings.<sup>8</sup>

Key economic/administrative features were i) a high degree of communal autonomy and its financing, although not formalised in terms of specific regional decentralisation policies and practice; ii) evidence of use of mutual community-based veto powers within parliamentary and the executive, making it difficult to enact legal and regulatory changes and annual passage of budgets; iii) limited transparency in civil service staff appointments, reportedly driven by political affiliation, rather than merit; iv) limited progress in social sector regulatory frameworks, with absence of clear education policy and regulatory frameworks, including related to public/private partnership; and v) continued out-migration of high level expertise and associated growth in remittances from the Lebanese diaspora.

During this period, the sources of education sector fragility included i) continued disruption to schooling as rebuilding school infrastructure and teaching service was comparatively slow; and ii) delays in public financing of education due to parliamentary/administrative delays. Another source of fragility was the comparatively limited state capacity to absorb external assistance for education, including for humanitarian relief.<sup>9</sup> Another source of fragility was the uneven implementation of civil service reforms, including staffing, reportedly due to particular sensitivities over confessionalism related education personnel management issues.

Emerging sources of resilience included i) better definition of the role of the state in education provision and financing, including the teaching service; ii) gradual consolidation of education policy and planning/monitoring functions within a single central education ministry, as opposed to previous sub-sectoral education administrations, particularly over 2000/2005;<sup>10</sup> iii) formulation of an initial Education for All (EFA) policy and plan and specific TVET legislation in 2005 and 2000 respectively; and iv) gradually putting in place administrative and staffing systems for running the education ministry. Overall, the main source of resilience was the continued willingness of communal groups to run and pay for schooling through a very extensive private and private/grant aided system. Private primary and junior secondary education enrolment share has been stable at around 65-70% and 55% over the past decade (see fig.4).

Figure 4: Private Enrolment Share, by Level, 2007 (UNESCO)



<sup>8</sup> President, as a Maronite Christian; Prime Minister, as a Sunni Muslim; and Parliamentary Speaker, as Shia Muslim, with Parliamentary representation assigned as 50:50 ratio between Christians and Muslims after Taif Agreement.

<sup>9</sup> For example, World Bank only provided one education loan for general education valued at US\$ 71 million (US\$ 56 million from Bank sources), over the period 1998/2005, which was only completed in late 2008.

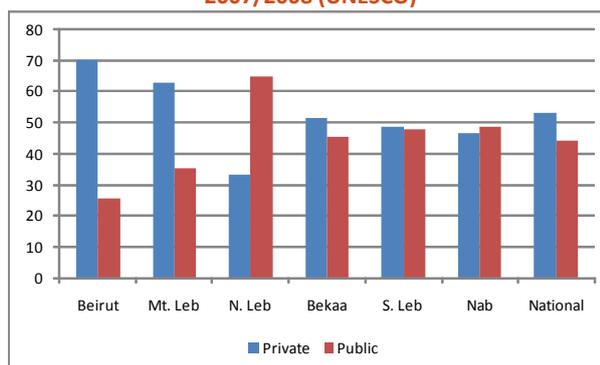
<sup>10</sup> World Bank, 2000. General Education Loan reports i) inter-ministerial education commission in 1993; ii) Educational Centre for Research and Development (ECDR) driven Plan for Education Reform in 1994; iii) first National Conference on Education in 1995; iv) education support from UNDP/UNESCO in 1997, alongside first request for Bank assistance; and v) parallel initiation of civil service reform under the leadership of Ministry for Administrative Reform.

**Key Governance Features: Second Recovery and Reconstruction Period, 2006/2009.** Key features that potentially made the education system more fragile included i) the military conflict between Hezbollah and Israel, leading to the disruption of schooling, extensive damage to school buildings and internal displacement of students and teachers in 2006; ii) disruption to the economy and income generating opportunities, especially sensitive in a predominantly fee-paying environment; iii) particular targeting of poorer regions/districts (e.g. South and Bekaa) during the conflict; and v) return of temporary security instability due to Hezbollah/Amal resistance.

During this period, key features that have helped maintain a degree of education sector resilience since 2006 have included i) maintenance of public and private systems in education, with education expenditures estimated at around 8-9% of GDP (around 2.5%-2.6% from public expenditure); ii) the continued willingness of households and the diaspora to devote household resources for education; iii) greater integration of education reforms into broader public administration and civil service policy/planning and financing reforms; iv) some progress in education policy and strategy formulation (e.g. national education vision and strategy documents in 2006), although stakeholder participation has been limited;<sup>11</sup> and v) improved coordination of external assistance for education, including sector reform implementation.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, significant disparities in the share of public provision and reach for education across regions/governates remain (see fig.5). A key feature is that the poorer northern and southern areas of Lebanon rely more heavily on public schooling in contrast to a better-off Beirut, where the private provision constitutes an indicative 70% of enrolment. As a result, public education provision in what are the more security and economically fragile regions is a source of maintaining a degree of resilience in education provision and performance.

**Figure 5: Public/Private Enrolment Share, by Governate 2007/2008 (UNESCO)**



<sup>11</sup> Led by a broad-based Lebanese Association for Educational Studies.

<sup>12</sup> For example, the Lebanese government education submission at the Paris III Conference, aided donor harmonisation and contributed to mobilisation of EC and other donor education support development.



## 2. Education Sector Fragility Assessment: Status and Outlook

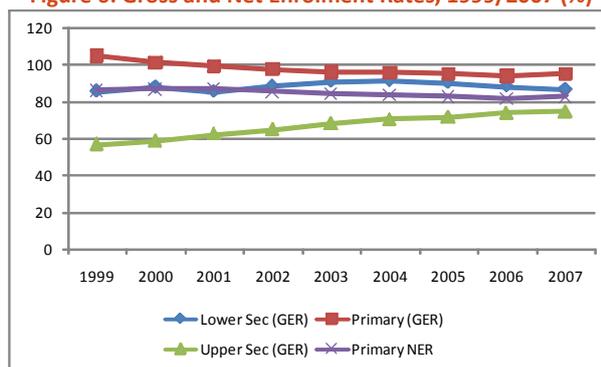
### 2.1 Key Features of Sector Resilience and Fragility

A number of features suggest that the prospects for sector resilience and sustainability are mixed. Despite the recent conflict in 2006, participation rates have been reasonably robust, although there has been a slight decline in gross enrolment rates (*see fig.6*). Positive features helping the sector development have been the better planned reform effort, led by Government through the Paris process, alongside a strong response from the international community. For example, the EC and its member states committed around Euros 310 million (EC, Euros 200 million; member states, Euros 110 million<sup>13</sup>). Another positive feature has been the sustained willingness of Lebanese households to help cover education costs, devoting significant amounts of their own and remittance money.

Another positive feature has been the sense of volunteerism and community commitment, demonstrated by communities and students and teachers, in returning to school, reinforced by the values of the various faith-based organisations running schools and in some cases, the political and social networks under various organisational auspices. For the medium to long term, the growing focus on sector reform planning and budgeting, although strengthening local ownership and government leadership constitutes a challenge. The specific emphasis on sector governance development (e.g. results based EMIS, addressing small school issues, reviews of teacher remuneration and pension policy) are encouraging features for sector resilience.<sup>14</sup>

The existence of a education vision and strategy framework represents a start in improved education donor coordination, well targeted advisory services and forms a basis for better alignment/harmonisation of education donor support, including that planned from the EC.<sup>15</sup> The increased donor attention being accorded to Palestinian camp education issues, both institutional (e.g. access to labour market, local higher education opportunities) and primary/secondary

Figure 6: Gross and Net Enrolment Rates, 1999/2007 (%)



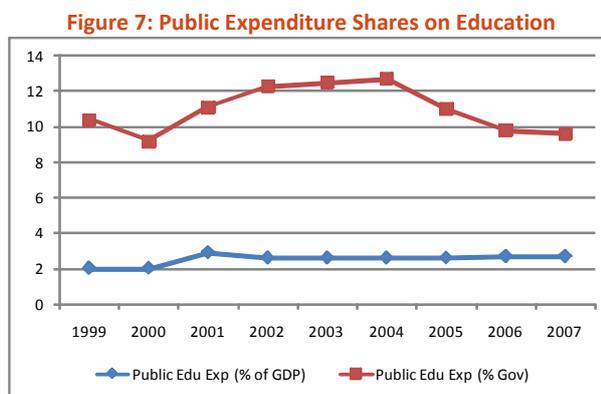
<sup>13</sup> EC, 2007. Country Strategy Paper 2007/2013 and National Indicative Programme (NIP) 2007/2010.

<sup>14</sup> As outlined in a number of EC policy presentations on education financing shared with the study team in 2009, alongside the current education development work plan, 2009.

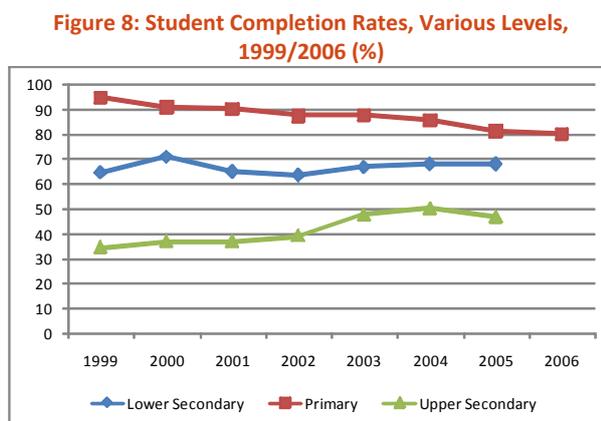
<sup>15</sup> EC, 2009. Education Support Action Fiche, an Indicative Euros 14 million devoted to project activities and TA for institutional and organizational development, including budgeting and PFM.

school/TVET level access and quality issues (e.g. building new secondary schools in the camps, examination support) should also help address potential dissatisfaction of young people and help ameliorate possible political and security governance instability.<sup>16</sup> The education sector support from EC is now better positioned within the overall European Neighbourhood and Partnership (ENP) policy framework, allowing better alignment between EC support and integrated security, political and economic/social governance development.

Predictable and sustainable expenditure for education, including pro-poor targeting of public resources is a key positive feature of sector resilience. The overall picture is somewhat mixed. For example, as evidenced by public expenditure shares for education and political commitment appears somewhat stagnant, with shares of GDP flat around 2.6%-2.7%. Shares of public expenditure for education have declined from a high of 12.7% in 2003 to 9.6% in 2007 (see fig. 7). This appears to be based on a judgement that as the economy is restored, household load bearing of education costs is increasing, which may be uncertain in the current global recession.



There are also a number of long standing institutional and financial governance issues that unless addressed, will be a source of intrinsic systemic in fragility, especially i) uncertain political and managerial leadership within the education ministry in a confessional context; ii) comparatively high rates of repetition and dropout, resulting in higher overall costs to government and parents (see fig.8); iii) lack of alignment between financing strategies and organisational provider account-ability, through limited fund channelling directly to schools; iv) an insufficiently robust regulatory framework for quality assurance of both public and private schools/universities/TVET; v) built-in inefficiencies of staff/facilities usage because of small schools; and vi) high teacher pension responsibilities due to overstaffing.<sup>17</sup>



In particular, the reported disparities between the quality of private and public school provision, especially shown in lower public school pass rates in Grade 9 Brevet and Grade 12 BAC, could result in more limited access to higher education and paid employment for the poorer families who use

<sup>16</sup> EC are providing around Euros 15 million for Palestinian camp education and Euros 3 million for overseas university scholarships, channeled through UNRWA.

<sup>17</sup> These issues are highlighted in the World Bank (2005), Public Expenditure Review; and the subsequent World Bank (2007), Social Economic Assessment.

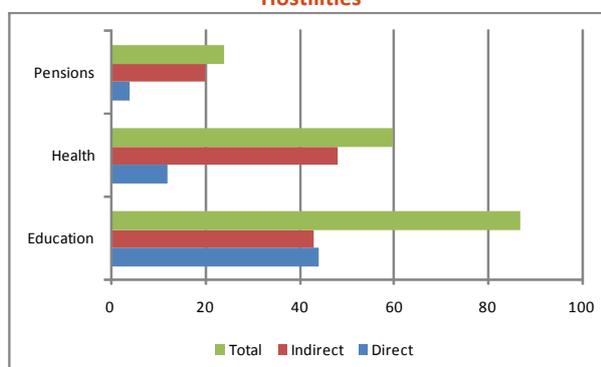
public schools more frequently. Many of these under-performing public schools are located in the North and South. Ensuring greater parity in the quality and public satisfaction with education services constitutes an opportunity for improved social cohesion.

## 2.2 Overall Education Fragility Status Assessment

The overall assessment is that the current security and political environment are conducive to more systemic and predictable education reform planning. Similarly, the stabilising economic and fiscal environment is more conducive to education reform, supported by gradual completion of the recovery programme. It is reported that a significant amount of the direct and indirect costs of the 2006 conflict have, or are being addressed (*see fig. 9*).<sup>18</sup>

Overall, the assessment would be one of entering the early stages of education sector reconstruction, with an underlying risk of arrested development, due to mainly systemic governance issues, which are resulting in continued inequities in access to high quality basic education and post-basic education in the poorer, often Muslim areas. Stubbornly high repetition rates and dropout rates appear to be related as much to historical/cultural factors (e.g. repetition is more frequent in francophone countries) and poverty factors as to more conflict related factors. Accelerating transition into the later stages of sector reconstruction and more sustainable development will require addressing these arresting factors, alongside better sector governance.

Figure 9: Estimated Cost of Direct/Indirect Costs: 2006 Hostilities



In order to accelerate these sector development transitions, sector fragility reduction strategies need to adopt a combination of those strategies relevant to overcoming arrested development, including local initiatives (e.g. promotion of inclusive dialogue with civil society and other stakeholders) and development partner initiatives (e.g. supporting key reformers to help address constraints to system turnaround). In parallel, sector reconstruction needs to be accelerated through i) stimulating government leadership of a credible reform strategy; and ii) a greater focus on sector performance results and better alignment of financing and monitoring systems. There are positive signs that the latter are happening, less so for addressing arrestation issues.

## 2.3 Sectoral Fragility and Resilience Outlook, Opportunities and Risks

Previous opportunities to set education sector development in the mid-nineties on a more resilient path appear to have been undermined by continuing political/security governance concerns and a government-led approach when the authority and legitimacy of the government and an embryonic education ministry was fragmented by confessionalism related matters. These constraints appear to have been prolonged throughout the period 2000/2005, despite efforts by education civil society

<sup>18</sup> World Bank, 2007. Economic and Social Assessment : Lebanon

coalitions and development partners to initiate robust sector policy debate, formulation and implementation (e.g. the early years of World Bank support for education). The absence of a visible and well articulated long-term perspective on education sector development and support from the donors over the period 1990/2005 appears to have been another constraint on well grounded government/donor partnership in the sector.

The overall environment over 2007/2009 appears to be somewhat more conducive. The security environment appears more promising, with the Party Accord in 2008 electing the President and the comparatively free and fair elections in 2009. The joint promotion and formulation of the education vision and strategy by the education ministry and an independent civil society group (the Lebanese Association for Education Studies) has helped broaden stakeholder ownership of the reforms. The increased focus on linking sector reform with broader governance reforms (e.g. for public financial management, civil service reform), incorporating policy dialogue and technical support from development partners, is also a sign for optimism.

There also appears to be a greater focus on results oriented approach to sector planning, financing and monitoring, led and supported by the MEHE and key faith-based education organisations.<sup>19</sup> There are also opportunities, through the embryonic education strategy framework, to address fundamental sector financing issues (e.g. move towards school operational block grants) and personnel management issues (e.g. consolidating schools, right-sizing the teaching service, delinking teacher appointments with school grants for students). The improving and more results oriented education management information system also provides a basis for region/district/municipality disaggregated performance data, which could provide a platform for results based conditional block grants to regions/districts.

Regionally and public/private sector disaggregated data could also provide a vehicle for engaging with, or establishing local oversight and watchdog bodies (e.g. municipal councils, local NGO education alliances).<sup>20</sup> Another opportunity is to better implement the citizenship education programme, as part of national identity building amongst young people. This Programme was enshrined in the 1946 legislation and incorporated curriculum reform in 1997, covering public, private and refugee camp schooling. Programme effectiveness (in terms of allegiance to state institutions, allegiance to neighbouring countries, willingness to support national identity) is reportedly uneven, due in part, to the fact that education provision and student representation in schools is broadly along socioeconomic and ethnic/religious groupings.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, significant potential risks can be identified. Firstly, momentum for education reform may be undermined by the 'hung' parliament resulting from the recent elections, with representation along confessional lines.<sup>22</sup> A related risk is uncertain leadership capacity in the

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<sup>19</sup> MEHE, 2008. Final Report on the Organisational Restructuring and Staff Development (supported under World Bank Education Development Project)

<sup>20</sup> Many of these opportunities are articulated, at least in part in the current education strategic framework.

<sup>21</sup> UNDP, 2008. Evaluation of Education and Citizenship Programme, suggests that northern and southern Lebanon students, predominantly Muslim and from public schools have greater confidence in the role of the state and more allegiance to neighbouring Arab countries compared to students from other areas, which have more Christian schools and private provision.

<sup>22</sup> Herald Tribune, June 2007, suggests that the new Parliament may be denied a majority mandate

education ministry, given the potentially fragile political context. Secondly, there is a risk is that continued poverty related inequities in access to quality secondary and post-secondary education and consequent job/income opportunities may undermine confidence in any policy reforms. Thirdly, another risk is that the high proportion of spending on routine expenditures (e.g. 85% on salaries), as opposed to development, may undermine reform momentum.

Fourthly, there is a further risk that the currently high cost education system, fuelled by remittances for private education provision, may not be sustainable without both, rapid Lebanese economic recovery and sustained diaspora remittances. Finally, a potential risk is a reported uncertainty in the willingness of government to lead aid harmonisation and aid effectiveness groups in the education sector, despite recent efforts by the EC and other donors to promote such an initiative.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Reported by key informants during Study consultations and communications.



## 3. Education Sector Governance Assessment: Status and Outlook

### 3.1 Summary of Overall Macro and Sectoral Governance Environment

**Broad Political and Macroeconomic Features.** The political governance in Lebanon is highly centralised through a national Parliament, with specific ministerial portfolios, linked to a series of ministries, run by appointed civil servants. The education vision and strategy documents constitute a potential start for a new phase of education reform, although its status and traction within the education system, through education ministry promotion and stakeholder ownership, remains a challenge. A report presented by government at the Paris III Conference in 2007 directly relates to many of the policy and programme reforms presented in the education vision/strategy document and constitute alignment opportunities. These challenges are encapsulated in Box 1 below.

#### Box 1: Proposed Organisational Restructuring within MEHE

A recent organisational review has proposed that the MEHE be restructured to consist of the following units : i) for policy, planning and autonomous institutions through Council for Higher Education, National Education Council, Council of Forecasting and Coordination, Centre for Educational Research and Development, Lebanese University, Lebanese University Teachers Fund; and ii) for implementation through General Directorate of Higher Education, General Directorate of General Education, General Directorate of TVET and Directorate of Administration and Financial Support Services.

At the end of the exercise, in December 2008, the consultants supporting the restructuring highlighted a number of success conditions consisting of:

- "Any institutional change requires social adoption of from its personnel and in particular its core staff and from the stakeholders from outside the institution. Although the participative approach adopted by the former Prime Minister for the elaboration of the functional, then the organisational structure, ensured a large adoption of the proposals inside the Ministry, the concerned stakeholders from outside the Ministry are not aware of the existence of this structure, no whatever their allegiances and it is difficult in such case to protect the structure from critics, discontent and rejection."
- "Indeed the stakeholders are many, some closer than others. The closest ones are numerous and varied. The employees of the Ministry outside the central administration, the private education sector in all its types, technical and vocational education, the teachers' associations, the control agencies, the decision authorities in the Council of Ministers and the Parliament, etc. As for the less close ones, they are also diverse : stakeholders in the sectors of production and services, the media, the professional politicians even if they do not hold a position of authority, etc."
- "A process of change such as the one in which the Ministry has entered undoubtedly requires strong arguments and leaders who are willing to defend them firmly, in order to reach unanimity or quasi-unanimity of the different stakeholders and to avoid sterile discussions. This requires among others the elaboration of an effective communication plan and its execution, both with determination and flexibility."

**Source:** Final Consultant's Report, 2008, as part of Government/World Bank Education Development Project.

Despite being mooted, there is an unclear commitment to decentralisation to regional/district education offices or schools and similarly for any fiscal decentralisation measures. It is reported that traditional parliamentary select committees for education, acting as watchdogs, are at best embryonic. Similarly, civil society watchdogs (e.g. NGO education coalitions) are limited. The dominant stakeholders are parliament, government ministries, the private education sector and civil service associations (see box 1). More positively, there does appear to be a growing commitment to improving the public transparency and accountability of the budget process, particularly through elected parliamentarians, rather than civil society stakeholders.

Financial governance systems do exist, although further strengthening is a priority. Internal and external financial controls and audit are in place and are reported to have extensive coverage, but also need strengthening of results orientation.<sup>24</sup> In particular, the alignment between education sector reform plans and targets and budget provision is not well developed, making transparency and accountability problematic. Nevertheless, the current education Strategic framework, if strongly adopted and well communicated amongst key stakeholders constitutes a useful start. To advance the framework as a more results oriented approach, advancing sector medium term expenditure frameworks (MTEF), particularly capturing all public, private and external sources of education finance will be critical.<sup>25</sup>

Various assessments indicate that implementing education PFM reforms in Lebanon will be a challenge, not only because of a limited legislative and regulatory framework, but also due to uneven technical and financial management/planning capacity in MEHE directorates. Nevertheless, there is extensive education PFM capacities within the various private education organisations and to some degree, within schools where principals and school committees have extensive experience of budget planning and management. At both the organisation and school level, it is unclear the extent to which there is open transparency and accountability of the use of private and public sources of funding. As suggested in a recent analysis, improved school governance could be enabled through introduction of school operational budgets from public funds, channelled directly to schools.<sup>26</sup>

**National Education Governance Context.** The recent education policy and strategic frameworks represent a useful start for improved sector governance, enabled by reasonably predictable education finance flows to public and private providers. In order to be effective, any more results oriented programme budgeting will need to be underpinned by robust legislation and regulation related to both education outcomes and use of funds. A particular challenge will be to adopt and implement regulatory reforms related to quality assurance<sup>27</sup> and the use of public/private funds in private, grant-aided and public schools. It is recognised that the traditional confessionalism, in effect delegated authority with ill-defined accountability to communal organisations running schools, constitutes a significant accountability constraint.

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<sup>24</sup> UNDP, 2007. Country Assessment, reports that external audit covers 80-90% of central government public expenditure and are published.

<sup>25</sup> As proposed in the World Bank supported Economic and Social Assessment, 2007.

<sup>26</sup> As proposed under a component for performance-based budgeting in the Lebanon education strategic framework.

<sup>27</sup> B. Kaissi/S. Abou Chahine/A. Jammal, 2009. Towards a New Higher Education Quality Assurance System for Lebanon

The integration of sector reform targets, with broader civil service policy reforms and salary budget planning, is also reportedly in its infancy. To some extent, merit-driven and transparent staff appointments and promotions at all levels, including schools, is constrained by the need to satisfy various political, religious and ethnic groupings, which are embedded in the public and private school organisational arrangements. At the school level, it is reported that school/teacher performance monitoring is at best in its infancy, making it difficult for parents and education ministries to ensure managerial or teaching staff accountability.

There are formal national education standards at junior secondary, senior secondary and post-secondary levels, monitored through a range of national school examinations at grades 9 and 12 and various forms of local and international accreditation of TVET and university programmes. Nevertheless, it is recognised that using these standards (e.g. exam pass rates, graduate placement rates) as part of organisational performance monitoring and regulation is under developed. Despite reasonably well defined standards, public dissemination of comparative national, district and school performance results is at best embryonic. Nevertheless, much of this data (e.g. enrolments, enrolment rates, exam results) is readily available and could be consolidated if education management information systems were accorded priority in education ministry development plans, building on extensive World Bank and UNESCO support.

### **3.2 Analysis of Stakeholder Participation and Interests**

Government's development planning processes and reform agenda are reasonably well developed, being enabled by the Paris process. The extent of national stakeholder consultation across the business sector employers, all arms of government and civil society stakeholders is uneven. The growing involvement of parliamentary groups in the national budget process, including education sector, is positive. It is also reported that private sector education stakeholders are also consulted extensively as part of education budget preparation. However, a challenge is to enable greater participation of regional/district education offices and school/parent committees in sector development and governance planning and implementation.

Governance arrangements for resource planning and management are insufficiently transparent, especially between central education authorities and organisational providers, both public and private. It is reported that transparency is greater between school principals and parents' committees. Governance arrangements for sector performance monitoring are embryonic, including across government, other national stakeholders and the donors. A challenge, if the more results oriented reform process takes off, will be to ensure the engagement of parents and school committees who pay for around three-fifths of education financing. Any mobilisation of regular sector performance review processes could usefully include better disaggregated regional/ district data as a vehicle for stakeholder involvement at this level. Annual sector performance reviews could also act as a vehicle for strengthening government/donor aid effectiveness groupings and mobilising independent watchdog groups (e.g. use of the Lebanese Association for Educational Studies).

More broadly, formal organisational arrangements for other potential interest groups to participate in sector reform planning and monitoring are under-developed. For example, although teachers' associations, other professional associations and school/parent committees exist, mechanisms for

their involvement in sector reform planning and monitoring appears under developed. On the other hand, private education providers (often seen as insiders, *see box 1 above*) appear to have a significant voice. Overall, the organisational arrangements for sector governance are best characterised as internally client-oriented (i.e. within government) as opposed to externally client-oriented (i.e. beneficiaries, independent watchdogs).

### 3.3 Education Sector Governance Outlook, Opportunities and Risks

The initiation of a government-led education sector strategy framework, which focuses on i) developing core policy and financing functions of MEHE; ii) strengthening sector planning and monitoring processes, including improved information systems; iii) improving the efficiency/ineffectiveness of the teaching service; and iv) broader capacity development at central and school levels, constitutes an early opportunity for more systematic governance development.

Nevertheless, it is critical that any such reform is strategically linked to broader public administration reforms, especially for MTEF and PBB development, civil service reform and PFM/audit system development. In particular, any such education implementation will need to focus on specific and phased sector governance targets, especially for robust regulation of what is an extensive public/private partnership. In addition, stakeholder consultation for sector planning would benefit from a more outward looking view, involving any appropriate parliamentary groups (e.g. for education budget), civil society and broad-based private education sector representation.

Another opportunity is to build on current efforts to translate education statistics into more focused performance results indicators, including for finance/budget, personnel and information coverage/dissemination. Another opportunity is to consolidate and extend ongoing efforts to strengthen public examinations, as a means of not only standards/quality monitoring, but also as a basis for policy/strategy debate. In the medium term, as outlined earlier, a further opportunity is to make greater use of disaggregated regional, district/municipality and school performance information, as a means of reviewing options for more equity-based capacity development and financing strategies.

These measures could help strengthen governance in a number of ways, especially i) moving towards equalisation and performance based school block grants to help reduce current performance inequities; ii) use of such information as a vehicle for greater consultation within regional/district/municipality administrations, civil society groups and school committees (e.g. in relation to the proposed small school consolidation);<sup>28</sup> and iii) promoting the role of local parliamentarians and establishment of other independent watchdogs (e.g. for consultation on small school consolidation, teacher pay reform). There is a risk that without these governance arrangements, current planning/monitoring efforts may become routine. Some of these targets could be made explicit in upcoming donor programme support designs (e.g. as in the EC 2009 education programme) in order to mitigate any risk that sometime difficult governance reform will be marginalised during sector reform debates.

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<sup>28</sup> EC, 2009. Education in a Macroeconomic Context : Issues and Observations, highlights the number of small schools, especially in Mt. Lebanon and the North. In Mt. Lebanon, 40 primary schools have less than 70 students (STR under 10). In the North, 75 primary schools have an enrolment of under 70.



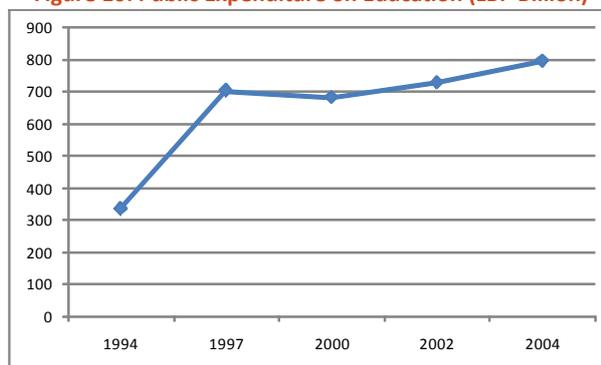
## 4. Main Findings: Scope and Diversity of Local and Donor Supported Initiatives

### 4.1 Summary of Findings: Local Initiatives

Over the period 1991/2005, after the end of the civil war, the local post-conflict recovery and reconstruction effort focused on a number of activities, consisting of i) restoring primary and secondary schools, as part of access expansion, through mainly community-based efforts; ii) restoring the teaching service, through not only publicly paid teacher salaries, but education grants to teachers for their children; and iii) beginning to reorganise the education

ministry, including rationalising previously sub-sectoral arrangements and incorporating school level and higher education. As part of these initiatives, the education budget rose from LBP 338 billion in 1994 to almost LBP 800 billion by 2004, rising from around 9% of public expenditure to almost 13%.

Figure 10: Public Expenditure on Education (LBP Billion)



For school access expansion, there are a number of key findings, including i) the enrolment growth was comparatively successful, although high repetition and dropout remain persistent; ii) the expanded remote area provision resulted in a proliferation of small schools, though participation rates increased; iii) the public/private partnership was largely unregulated due to limited capacity within the central education ministry and little delegated authority to regional, district and municipality education offices; and iv) grant arrangements channelled through various organisations resulted in a proliferation of small programmes, which are difficult to coordinate.

For teaching service restoration, there are a number of key findings, including i) there was a high proportion of public expenditure devoted to teacher salaries that remains today (indicative 85% of public spending); ii) the civil servants education grant schemes blurred distinctions between education and social protection financing policy, including allowing public school teachers to predominantly send their own children to private schools; and iii) little progress was made on systematic teacher recruitment/selection policy and transparent teacher performance monitoring due to a combination of selection along confessional lines and limited ministry capacity to design/implement such a programme. A final finding is that the earlier efforts to implement a credible sector reform programme from the mid-nineties were undermined by the uneven political commitment to reform, an ill-defined balance between access improvement and quality assurance

and the delay in putting in place a comprehensive legislative and regulatory framework to underpin sector policy and targets, which emerged in the nineties.

## **4.2 Summary of Findings: Donor Supported Initiatives**

Over the period 1990/1999, external assistance focused mainly on a wide range of small education projects, best characterised as emergency relief and early recovery initiatives. There was limited support provided (or reportedly requested) for sector reform planning, apart from UN initiatives in the mid-nineties to assist with an initial education reform action plan. While these efforts helped accelerate the recovery phase, the absence of a strategic framework resulted in some fragmentation of effort and putting strains on coordination capacity within what was then two ministries for general and higher education. This in itself made overall policy coordination problematic. These embryonic education sector plans paid limited attention to sector governance development (e.g. regulating and quality assurance of a growing private sector), leaving legacies into the next decade.<sup>29</sup>

The period 2000/2007, particularly supported by the ongoing World Bank support since 2000, has increasingly focused on institutional and management reforms, covering i) MEHE organisational restructuring and information systems development; ii) measures to improve teacher distribution and utilisation; and iii) a focus on quality oriented reforms through inspection systems, exam systems and evaluation systems development. The overall outcome of this process has been an embryonic results oriented education strategic framework in 2008/2009, building on the education vision/strategy formulated in 2006/2007, although ministry ownership and leadership remains a challenge.

These donor activities have included i) the formulation of a national education strategy and three-year action plan; ii) appointment of advisers to assist with MEHE organisational restructuring and staff development; iii) policy analysis of options for financing general and vocational education streams, including specific audits and financial planning tools in 2007/2008; iv) engagement in broader MTEF development, with MEHE as a pilot ministry, through an inter-ministerial committee; and v) various other analyses and action plans related to school mapping, school leadership development and examinations reform, including efforts to begin to consolidate smaller schools.<sup>30</sup>

External assistance has grown extensively since the mid-decade, through a combination of 2006 post-conflict recovery/reconstruction support and more systemic support interventions. An indicative ongoing and pipeline for education aid is around US\$ 200-250 million.<sup>31</sup> More than half of the current education projects are focusing on TVET or higher education, with less emphasis on school developments. There is a growing focus on better harmonisation for strategic advisory services between the various agencies.

Another important feature in which the European Commission is a key player is a growing focus on addressing pre-school, primary, secondary and post-secondary education opportunities.

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<sup>29</sup> World Bank, 2000. General Education Project : Appraisal Document, valued at US\$ 71 million, co-financed by French Cooperation.

<sup>30</sup> These activities were highlighted by government at the Paris III Conference in mid-2007.

<sup>31</sup> Derived from tables in the World Bank Country Assistance Strategy, 2005.

Nevertheless, an overall finding is that the alignment between the various forms of project support and sector priorities is uneven and the various aid modalities provide only limited incentives to embark on often difficult sector governance, management and financing reforms.



## 5. Main Findings: Lessons Learned and Good Practice

### 5.1 Analysis of Local Initiative Good Practice: Lessons Learned

**Leading Sector Planning/Monitoring Processes.** Since the mid-nineties and more recently, with the education vision/strategy over 2006/2009, there have been some encouraging sector planning processes, although little progress has been made in putting in place an education ministry organisation to lead such processes (e.g. an MEHE policy and planning unit). Nevertheless, the extent to which the recommendations are fully owned by all stakeholders (e.g. Ministry of Finance, private sector, development partners) is reportedly uneven.

Key lessons learned and success conditions include i) willingness of sector ministers, finance ministry officials, senior MEHE staff, to lead such a process is critical for ensuring ownership and support; ii) to be successful, the results orientation of these sector plans need to be fully aligned with results oriented budgeting (e.g. PBB); iii) incorporating a clear communication strategy in these action plans is critical, which is insufficiently well-defined in current sector strategy; iv) the current sector strategies would benefit from a better defined sector performance review process, not just simply setting targets; v) strong endorsement from the finance ministry is critical if confidence in these processes is to be sustained, while currently education spending share appears to be in decline; and vi) systematic technical advisory support (e.g. for sector financing strategy, as provided by donors in 2007/2009, is critical for enabling and supporting these processes. Overall, the current strategy would appear to benefit from better definition of the anticipated sector legislation and regulatory framework, including compliance capacity building.

**Community Mobilisation of Primary and Secondary Education Provision.** With community support, primary and secondary schools and enrolment in Lebanon were restored comparatively quickly during the 1990 and 2006 post-conflict period, alongside continuation of extensive private provision. Nevertheless, the provision between urban and rural/remote areas remains inequitable (e.g. in North and South Lebanon).

Key lessons learned and success conditions include i) even in difficult circumstances, primary and secondary education is accorded high value; ii) committed leadership through school principals and faith/community based organisations is a key success condition; iii) the urgency of restoring access can result in insufficient attention for quality and governance reforms; iv) demand side issues need to be addressed if enrolment growth is to be sustained (i.e. scholarships for the poor, reducing dropout rates); and vi) accelerated learning programmes and insufficient standards monitoring can leave a negative legacy of high repetition rates. In particular, the recovery phase can leave a

negative legacy of a proliferation of non-viable small schools, which for political/confessional reasons, may be difficult to rationalise/consolidate.

**Under-Regulated Public / Private Partnership.** In Lebanon, the private sector has been traditionally pivotal in helping primary and secondary education provision to be comparatively resilient, due to a willingness of parents to pay fees, use remittances for this purpose and engage with committed faith-based and community organisations. MEHE has played an enabling role through a provision of grants to selected private schools serving disadvantaged children, resulting in a strong 'short route accountability' between providers and clients.

Key lessons learned and success conditions include i) willingness to pay fees has helped primary and secondary education sector resilience, less so for post-secondary, where higher fees may be prohibitive for equitable access; ii) if public provision increases, robust legislation and regulation and quality assurance of public/private partnership, including an enabling role for government in private post-secondary (e.g. scholarships to attend private TVET/universities) will be critical; and iii) transparency in public/private sector performance and results is critical if MEHE is to reassure the public and finance ministry of the value for money of the various organisational block grants. A potential negative legacy of the war period is that schools/students are distributed on religious/ethnic/socioeconomic lines, potentially undermining education role in social cohesion and citizenship building.

**More Performance-Oriented Teaching Service.** The high priority accorded to teaching service restoration, through high public expenditures on salaries and education grants, helped restore the national teaching service quickly after periods of conflict. At the same time, it has left a legacy of high salary budgets and limited operational budgets, alongside insufficient clarity between education grants for children as part of public education policy (i.e. ensuring pro-poor access) and a social safety net. Key lessons learned and success conditions include i) ensuring that any teaching service remuneration policy is sustainable; ii) need to delineate between teachers and students as beneficiaries, with distinct financing policies for each; and iii) the current education grant model is not pro-poor since teachers are not categorised in the least well-off groups and model could be replaced by means tested scholarships.

## 5.2 Analysis of Donor Supported Initiatives: Lessons Learned and Good Practice

**Harmonised Support for Post-Fragility Macroeconomic and Governance Planning.** One example of good practice has been the harmonised donor support for analytical work related to the reconstruction and development programme in Lebanon since 2006. Key features included i) inclusive consultation with political and community stakeholders and government, as part of the Paris I, II, III organisation for post-conflict relief programming; ii) extensive stakeholder consultation between Lebanese stakeholders and development partners, as part of the 2007 economic and social impact assessment, which recognises the importance of making an early start on transition from reconstruction to more sustainable development; and iii) according high priority to social sector reforms and locating them within broader macroeconomic, social protection, civil service, governance and PFM reforms. This shared analytical work is an example of good practice, in line with Paris Declaration agreements.

***Increasingly Harmonised Approach to Education Sector Planning and Monitoring.*** Key features of good practice have included i) multi-donor support for facilitating education sector policy analysis and engagement with government; ii) multi-donor support for education sector financial analysis and policy development, with strong engagement with finance/education ministries; and iii) joint EC/UNRWA coordination on Palestinian refugee camps support for education, including dialogue with government on Palestinian labour market rights. A key lesson learned is that unless Palestinian right to work issues are addressed, the potential benefits of the EC education support would be undermined.

***Insufficient Attention to Nationwide Systematic Governance / Capacity Assessment.*** Previously, insufficient attention has been paid to sector governance assessments and action planning, especially related to central education legislation/regulation formulation and capacity development to implement new regulations at school and other organisational levels. In addition, only limited attention has been paid to locating sector governance and financing within broader PFM reforms and examining ways of increasing school level accountability/transparency through block grants, channelled direct to schools, rather than through network organisations. A good example of the way forward appears to be the new EC overall and education programme which provides a range of grants and technical support to i) strengthen finance/sector ministry MTEF development and performance monitoring, ii) address dropout, repetition and citizenship education issues; and iii) for sector PFM capacity development, as a precursor to potential sector/general budget support.



## 6. Country Report: Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

### 6.1 Conclusions and Key Issues

A key conclusion is that Lebanon EFA indicators appear to be stagnating or even worsening as a result of critical institutional constraints, including comparatively high repetition and dropout rates, insufficiently pro-poor education financing strategies and an over supply and misallocation of teachers that result in limited funds for school operations, especially in the public schools in the poorer areas of Lebanon. The historical positive legacy of high private financing of schools carries the risk of becoming a negative legacy for accelerating equitable access policies.

A related conclusion is that Lebanese education sector reform planning needs to adopt a longer time horizon, alongside moving out of an emergency relief and service restoration perspective to one of a better balance between sustainable system development and improved service delivery. A positive conclusion is that more recently, greater attention is being paid to macroeconomic, PFM and civil service reform issues within sector reforms.

Another conclusion is that the political commitment to education reform appears uneven. It is critical that the high levels of private financing and growing external assistance do not result in substitution for public expenditure, especially for the poor. Greater transparency in sector MTEFs of all these funding sources is critical, alongside specific strategies that are both, pro-poor (e.g. scholarships for the needy students) and pro-governance (e.g. operational block grants direct to schools).

A further conclusion is that there are significant disparities in urban/rural/remote primary and secondary education performance indicators and an uncertain pathway for transition to TVET and higher education. A key factor is the heavy reliance on fee paying at all levels, which undermines access for the less well-off. Consideration should be given to introduction of free basic education, linked to school operational grants for both, public and private schools, in order to offset revenue losses. A related conclusion is that the significant remittances from the Lebanese origin diaspora constitute a mixed blessing. On the one hand, this financial support assists the resilience of the sector through support for mainly private and private subsidised schooling.

A related conclusion is the need for greater focus on demand-side interventions, linked to targeted subsidies for the poorest, is needed to accelerate access expansion and better regulate public/private partnerships in sector financing. A related factor is the absence of a financing strategy that helps address regional/district performance inequities.

Another conclusion is that education sector reforms are becoming increasingly located within broader macroeconomic public financial management and civil service reforms. A priority is to review the civil service education subsidies (within a broader teacher compensation review process) since the current arrangement supports cash transfers to private schools rather than target poorer students. As part of teaching service review, there is a need for a greater performance orientation.

A final conclusion is that the current nature of external assistance, which is mainly projects, may provide only limited incentive to address fundamental education system reforms, which are mainly governance related. A priority will be to ensure robust monitoring of sector governance indicators and progress made with current governance capacity development (e.g. from the EC), as a basis for enhancing eligibility for other more policy led aid modalities (e.g. sector/general budget support).

## 6.2 Key Recommendations: Improved Education Programme Planning / Design

Specific recommendations to the Lebanese authorities would be:

**i)** To use the emerging education strategy framework and targets, as part of an annual progress review process, focusing on a) the extent to which sector targets are being met and the need for a better balance of supply/ demand side initiatives; b) setting more specific sector governance and financing strategies and targets, aligned with better defined sector PFM, sector civil service and teaching service and decentralisation/deconcentration reforms; and c) consider the introduction of publicly financed school/institution operational block grants, with differential financing formulas for better-off and less well-off schools.

**ii)** As part of (i), to give priority to the following : a) design specific measures to reduce and better regulate student repetition and dropout rates, linked to robust education standards setting and monitoring; b) conduct a comprehensive review of civil service education subsidies, with a view to directing extra resources towards more needy students, especially for post-secondary TVET and higher education provision; and c) address the over-supply and inefficient distribution of the teaching service, linked to consolidation of smaller schools.

**iii)** Building on current and anticipated donor support, to complete a comprehensive regional/district and school level education organisation capacity assessment and formulate forward action plan, especially for a) upgrading regional/district strategic and financial planning, results oriented information and monitoring systems; b) upgrading school management, school supervision and school governance capabilities; and c) increasing the operational support on regional/district budgets for these key functions.

**iv)** To initiate a more extensive dialogue with the international community on short/medium and long-term donor support modalities, with a medium-term view for a) moving to a mix of project, sector and general budget support, linked to targeted capacity development technical assistance; b) consider setting up an annual sector performance review process, based on joint government/donor monitoring of the strategic plan framework targets; and c) examine mechanisms for engaging the Lebanese diaspora, who constitute a key stakeholder in education.

### **6.3 Key Recommendations: Enabling Aid Effectiveness and Sector Governance**

Specific recommendations to the international education donor community in Lebanon would be :

- i)** To provide harmonised technical assistance to support the proposed sector reviews and joint performance reviews, including taking measures to build up Lebanese education stakeholder group capacity to engage in these processes and act as independent watchdogs.
- ii)** To continue to provide specific technical assistance from one or a number of donors, to help implement recommendations 6.2 (ii), 6.2 (iii) and 6.2 (iv) specified above. As part of this process, to monitor the extent to which policy recommendations emerging from this technical assistance are incorporated into iterative strategic and operational planning processes.
- iii)** In the medium term, to rebalance and reorganise the priorities of current external assistance, including a) use more results focused sector strategies and targets to rationalise current and future assistance within a restricted number of programme-based approaches; and b) give priority to sector PFM and sector governance reforms, linked to later consideration of a possible sector budget support.
- iv)** As a further priority, to facilitate more effective engagement of Lebanon in the EFA FTI process and help set a time horizon for consideration of EFA FTI eligibility and possible EFA FTI support modalities, alongside strengthening the education aid effectiveness arrangements.

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