



Reaching All Children with Education in Lebanon Support Project

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Background

In 2018, Lebanon was host to 1.5 million Syrian refugees, the highest number of refugees per capita in the world.¹ Hosting nearly an additional one quarter of its population has put a great strain on Lebanon's already stressed services, including its infrastructure, water, electricity, and social services such as education and health.

The World Bank has initiated several efforts to support countries hosting refugees and to address the refugee crisis from the development side by supporting these countries to increase the capacity of their infrastructure and services in order to cope with the larger number of users. These efforts include the creation in 2016 of the Global Concessional Financing Facility or GCFF, a global donor-financed trust fund that provides access to concessional finance for middle income countries hosting refugees, as well as a new IDA sub window for financing lower income

countries hosting refugees. Lebanon and Jordan have been among the first middle income countries to benefit from the World Bank's mobilization of concessional rate financing for projects that aim to support both refugees and their host communities.

Description of project

In 2016, the World Bank provided a \$100 million loan to the Government of Lebanon to support the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE)'s program entitled [Reaching All Children with Education \(RACE II\)](#). The loan was provided at concessional terms via an exceptional loan from IDA to Lebanon, in the early stages of the Bank's efforts to support middle income countries hosting refugees. The Syrian Crisis Trust Fund and the Results in Education for All Children Trust Fund provided additional financing in the amount of \$124 million USD. The program is funded through the program for results (P4R) instrument, meaning that the funds are disbursed only after the agreed upon results have been achieved.

The program focuses on supporting the Lebanese education system around three pillars: equitable access, enhanced quality, and strengthened systems.

¹ Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017-2020, 2019 Update
<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/67780.pdf>

Process and findings

In late 2018 through early 2019, the Lebanese Union for Persons with Physical Disabilities (LUPD), in coordination with the Bank Information Center (BIC), conducted a series of interviews with World Bank project staff, Ministry officials, other donor organizations involved in the project, and civil society organizations (CSOs) involved in the project. In February and March, 2019, LUPD facilitated a series of focus groups with parents of refugee students with disabilities in Lebanon.

LACK OF TRANSPARENCY AND DATA AVAILABILITY

The strengthening systems pillar of the program aims to support the Ministry in improving school monitoring systems as well as in creating a comprehensive education information management system, with the goal of supporting informed policy making with accurate and accessible data. However, data on enrollment disaggregated by nationality, school type status has been delayed in its public release despite the goal that data for each academic year enrollment would be available before the end of the same academic year.

Accurate and reliable data is critical to policy decision making and resource allocation. The program's technical assessment concluded that supporting the development of and incentivizing the completion of a comprehensive data management system for education in Lebanon could be the Bank's greatest contribution to the RACE program. The Bank should work with MEHE to ensure that this education management system is completed and that it is effective, accurate, transparent, and includes enrollment data disaggregated by gender, refugee status/nationality, and disability.

A FOCUS ON INCLUSION?

Although a primary focus of the program is on increasing ease of enrollment to reach students not currently included in the education system, it does not set disaggregated targets for the enrollment of specific groups with low formal education enrollment such as refugees and children with disabilities.

In addition, the program includes the rehabilitation and modernization of existing school buildings and the construction of new, modern school facilities to help meet Lebanon's needs. These modernized

school facilities are meant to be developed up to the quality standards set by the Government of Lebanon. However, Ministry and World Bank officials were not able to provide a clear definition of how these modernized schools would be made accessible to students with physical disabilities, or what resources would be provided for students with different learning needs.

Parents of children with disabilities who participated in LUPD focus groups expressed their concern about the lack of accessibility and inclusion standards in components of the RACE II program. They expressed the crucial need of these standards, as well as the need for the essential awareness raising among teachers about disability. They emphasized their demand towards donors, such as the World Bank, UNICEF, and UNHCR to support the inclusion of their children in mainstream schools.

The World Bank has committed that all of its education programs and projects will be disability inclusive by 2025. The Bank should play a role in supporting Lebanon through providing technical expertise and building capacity within the Ministry to realize the commitments to accessibility and inclusion in the project. Following LUPD's presentation of this concern to Bank officials, the Bank provided an update that 170 of the schools being rehabilitated will be made accessible for students with disabilities. In addition, the Ministry will be updating the legal framework for specifications for schools to include accessibility of persons with disabilities. These updates represent positive progress, and LUPD will continue to monitor how these commitments are implemented.

A NEED FOR GREATER TECHNICAL SUPPORT FROM THE WORLD BANK

LUPD's research indicates that the program's implementation suffers from a lack of coordination between the Ministry and donors, funding gaps that are preventing implementation of all elements of the program commitments, and a need for greater technical support from the World Bank to the Ministry, particularly on issues of accessibility of the education system to children with disabilities and the development of a comprehensive education information management system.

ENGAGEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Parents of Syrian refugee children who participated in focus groups commended the work of the program's

community liaisons in working with refugee communities to ensure that they were informed of opportunities to participate in the education system. The focus group participants found it very helpful to be involved in initiatives such as the representatives' committees. This involvement allowed them to participate in second shift school programs. This opportunity offered them the chance to express their concerns and share the ideas for avoiding any problems and challenges that face their children. They found such initiatives, as well as in the community liaison program, to be a good strategy to mitigate any bullying or psycho social pressure that their children may face as well.

Recommendations

The World Bank must support the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in ensuring that physical education infrastructure and curricula meet the needs of children with a broad range of physical disabilities and different learning needs.

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framework for specifications for schools to include accessibility of persons with disabilities. LUPD will continue to engage with the Ministry and the Bank teams to follow progress on these commitments and provide input.

The World Bank must support MEHE in creating a functional and transparent data management system.

Accurate and reliable data is critical to policy decision making and resource allocation. The program's technical assessment concluded that supporting the development of and incentivizing the completion of a comprehensive data management system for education in Lebanon could be the Bank's greatest contribution to the RACE program. The Bank should work with MEHE to ensure that this education management system is completed and that it is effective, accurate, transparent, and includes desegregated data on gender, refugee status/nationality, and disability.

The Bank and Ministry must continue to engage with project stakeholders, particularly refugees and persons with disabilities, and to continue to partner with civil society organizations and disabled people's organizations to inform the program's implementation.

LUPD and its partners will continue to engage with the Ministry and Bank around this project in the interest of its implementation in an inclusive and accessible manner.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE ISSUES RAISED IN THIS REPORT, PLEASE CONTACT BANK INFORMATION CENTER AT:

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