

# LEBANON

Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review  
Thirty-seventh session of the UPR Working Group of the  
Human Rights Council  
July 2020

This report is submitted by the following NGOs:

### **ALEF act for human rights (ALEF)**



**ALEF act for human rights (ALEF)** is a Lebanese non-governmental human rights organization operational since 1996 and officially registered in 2013. ALEF aims at monitoring, protecting and promoting human rights through education, training, advocacy and lobbying activities.

[www.alefliban.org](http://www.alefliban.org)

### **Nabaa- Developmental Action without Borders**



**Nabaa- Developmental Action without Borders** is a Lebanese organization working with Palestinian communities in the camps and gatherings in Lebanon, and with Lebanese communities with a particular focus on upholding rights of children and enabling children and young people to play a healthy and active role in their communities.

<https://www.nabaa-lb.org/>

### **Manara Network**



**Manara** is a voluntary reunion of different Arab civil institutions working in the Child Rights' field and having common interests. The Network always searches for the child's best interests and aims to increase and share experience and knowledge, observe Child rights in the Arab World and the degree of adaptation of the Arab Child rights legislations and international criteria of Child rights in the Arab world; especially the UN convention on the rights of the child, advocating Child rights. This is in order to build an Arab society worthy of children. The Network consist of 10 members in 8 Arab countries (Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Yemen, and Jordan).

<http://www.manaracrc.net/page3/en/>

This submission is presented for consideration as part of the Universal Periodic Review Stakeholder Report. It includes a summary of the human rights conditions in Lebanon along with recommendations on how the Lebanese government can improve these conditions and put an end to violations.

## A. Executive Summary

Lebanon was among the first that signed the Convention on the rights of the Child and ratified it on 14/5/1991 (without reservations) along with the Supplementary Protocol on child trafficking but did not ratify yet the Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.<sup>i</sup> Nevertheless, in the absence of the political will to promote the human rights situation particularly that of children, children in Lebanon are indeed suffering from many challenges that have increased since the review at its first session.

## B. Child Rights and access to education

1. A majority of students are enrolled in private schools in Lebanon.<sup>ii</sup> In 2018 – 2019, only 31% of students were enrolled in public schools.<sup>iii</sup>
2. The main reason for this is the quality of education provided by the public sector, which is characterized by relatively poor infrastructure, under-qualified teachers or simply teaching courses they are not trained for, overcrowded classrooms, and a lower success rate in intermediary exams.<sup>iv</sup>
3. This is the result of historic underinvestment in public schools from preprimary to secondary level. World Bank data from 2017 shows that Lebanon spends around 2% of GDP on public education, one of the lowest in the MENA region. When private spending from households and state subsidies to attend private schools are factored in, this reaches 4% of GDP.<sup>v</sup> In 2019, Lebanese spent approximately 5%<sup>vi</sup> of their household income on education.
4. This public/private sector divide has a deleterious effect on access to quality education for students attending public schools as these schools face a shortage of necessary resources. In addition, the Syrian conflict and ongoing economic crisis has further strained public schools. Over the past 2 years more students have transferred to public schools as the cost of private schools, with an average yearly fee of \$2600, has increased, partly due to Law 46 (2017) which mandated an increase in teachers' wages.<sup>vii</sup>
5. Access to quality education for all children has been hindered by the Syrian conflict and its ongoing effects. In 2018-2019, Lebanon enrolled 213,000 non-Lebanese students into public schools, which was accommodated through opening second shifts during the day.<sup>viii</sup>
6. Despite this development, refugee children continue to face significant hurdles in accessing education, with 46% of Syrian refugee children not enrolled in formal or informal education.<sup>ix</sup>
7. In order to address this, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) has begun implementing RACE II (2017 – 2021), which seeks to ensure access to informal and formal education for all children aged 3 – 18.<sup>x</sup>
8. To deliver this ambitious target and uphold Lebanon's obligations under Article 28 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, more investment must be directed toward increasing access to education for refugees. In addition, non-resource barriers must be removed, notably harassment and bullying of refugee children in schools, language barriers in teaching, and some schools unilaterally imposing

additional enrollment requirements.<sup>xi</sup>

9. Further, the failure in increasing access to education for children must be seen in the context of the broader economic crisis and its effect on financial and non-financial barriers to education for children. Accessing education has been impacted by the cost of transport, with many families unable to afford the cost of transport to schools and school materials.
10. Children that have been unable to afford basic materials for school have forgone attendance or failed to pass to the next year. Almost 40,000 Syrian children registered in 2018/2019 did not continue to attend school in the following school year despite nearly 45% of them having successfully completed the school year.<sup>xii</sup>
11. Moreover, the Lebanese financial crisis that followed the protests which erupted on 17 October 2019, and the March 2020 lockdown to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic have had a dire impact on school attendance for Syrian refugees. The economic crisis has diverted family resources to rent and basic necessities and away from school related expenditure; the protests have resulted in sporadic school closures in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2019; roadblocks have prevented children accessing school; the lockdown has resulted in school closures from March 2020; and the majority of Syrian and Palestinian refugees have been unable to utilize remote learning technology (if schools offer remote learning at all).
12. The education of all children in Lebanon, from all nationalities, is at risk for the academic year 2020/2021. The current financial crisis has pushed families to spend more on basic necessities, meaning that it is very likely spending on education will be reduced and enrollment rates for children in 2020/2021 will fall if no measures are taken to protect access to education for children.
13. But it is not only children and families who suffer from the dire economic conditions, but also schools themselves. Hundreds of schools are at risk of closing their doors in the next two years. Approximately 80% of private schools are on the verge of shutting down<sup>xiii</sup>.
14. Further, children with disabilities continue to face significant resource and non-resource barriers in accessing quality education. Lebanon has not yet ratified the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and while domestic Law 220/2000 prohibits schools discriminating on the basis of disability, its definition is overly narrow, excluding disabilities not related to physicality.<sup>xiv</sup>
15. The most substantial barrier concerns the absence of a systematic policy of providing reasonable accommodation for children with disabilities, including accessible schools, inclusive curricula, and special educational needs qualified teachers.<sup>xv</sup>
16. An explanation for this is the dearth of statistics to inform policymaking on children with disabilities. Rights and Access, which is tasked with collecting statistics and registering children with disabilities, has only registered 8,558 children (aged 4 – 14) with a disability. Yet, the World Bank, UNICEF and WHO estimate that 5% of children (aged 4 – 14) have a disability, this means Lebanon should have registered at least 45,000 children with a disability.<sup>xvi</sup>
17. This hole in identification and data collection, and corresponding impact on policymaking, likely accounts for the fact that only ‘1% of children with disabilities are enrolled in mainstream public schools’ and, according to UNRWA, ‘29% of Palestinian children with disabilities are not enrolled in

any educational institutions'.<sup>xvii</sup> In relation to private schools, children with disabilities are frequently denied enrollment or required to pay discriminatory higher fees.<sup>xviii</sup>

18. Law 150/2011, which amended Article 49 of Legislative Decree No. 134 of 1959, provides for the compulsory and free education of all children in Lebanon until the foundational level (age 6 – 15).<sup>xix</sup>
19. However, the implementation of this law has been obstructed by a lack of inter-agency cooperation as a result of the failure to issue the necessary executive decrees establishing the mandates of the relevant Ministries.
20. There is currently no process to legally compel families to send their children to school during the required years.<sup>xx</sup> This partly explains why enrollment for primary school age children was 84% in 2016.<sup>xxi</sup> Still, it is welcome news that there has been a steady increase from 2016/17 to 2017/2018 in enrollment from kindergarten to G9, with 3% more Lebanese children and 13% more non-Lebanese children enrolled at these stages.<sup>xxii</sup>
21. In addition, more can be achieved in increasing access to education on the municipal level. Municipalities are often unaware of their powers in relation to overseeing educational affairs under Article 47 of the Municipal Law. This could be utilized to tackle some of the causes of non-attendance and drop-outs, including contributing to expenses for educational materials and providing free transportation to schools.

## C. Recommendations

To the Government of Lebanon (GoL)

1. Increase the share of the state budget allocated to public schools, at the very least to coincide with the rising demand for public school places.
2. Prioritize the implementation of RACE II with adequate funding, increased coordination among agencies responsible for implementing its components, and increased dialogue with non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
3. Conduct research studies and data collection exercises in order to collect accurate information to come up with statistics regarding children with disabilities, but also the impact of the various crises (financial and health) on vulnerable households (Lebanese and refugees).
4. As a matter of urgency, ensure that a national education strategy is developed to educate children with disabilities, focusing on adapting schools to educate children with disabilities, training more special educational needs teachers, and revising the curriculum to facilitate inclusive learning.
5. Amend Law 220/2000 to include disabilities that are not physical.
6. Issue the necessary decrees to provide for the implementation and enforcement of Law 150/2011 on compulsory and free education at the basic stage.

7. Municipalities must respond and contribute to transportation costs and educational materials costs.
8. Municipalities and schools must provide financial assistance to vulnerable families with children.
9. The GoL must increase cooperation between the Ministries of Interior, Labour, and Education, to identify solutions to reduce barriers to accessing education.

<sup>i</sup> Lebanon signed it on February 11, 2002.

<sup>ii</sup> Tzannatos Z, "Providing a Social Safety Net and Education: Prerequisites to Building a Modern State" (LCPS January 2017) <https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/featuredArticle.php?id=104> [Accessed February 9, 2020]

<sup>iii</sup> Astih P, "Lebanon: Thousands of Students Enroll in Public Schools over Dire Economic Situation" (Ashraq Al – Awsat September 14, 2019) <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1901886/lebanon-thousands-students-enroll-public-schools-over-dire-economic-situation> [Accessed February 9, 2020]

<sup>iv</sup> Blominvest Bank, "Public Schooling in Lebanon: Difficult Conditions but the Reality Can Still Be Changed" (Blominvest Bank October 13, 2016) <https://blog.blominvestbank.com/18796/public-schooling-lebanon-difficult-conditions-reality-can-still-changed/> [Accessed February 9, 2020]

<sup>v</sup> Abdul-Hamid, H. (2017). Lebanon: Education Public Expenditure Review. The World Bank, p.26. Available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/513651529680033141/pdf/127517-REVISED-Public-Expenditure-Review-Lebanon-2017-publish.pdf> [Accessed 10 Feb. 2020].

<sup>vi</sup> BLOM Invest Bank: <https://blog.blominvestbank.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Patterns-in-Lebanon%E2%80%99s-Consumer-Spending-2019-2023.pdf>

<sup>vii</sup> Astih P, "Lebanon: Thousands of Students Enroll in Public Schools over Dire Economic Situation" (Ashraq Al-Awsat, September 14, 2019)

<sup>viii</sup> El-Kogali SET, "Expectations and Aspirations: A New Framework for Education in the Middle East and North Africa" (The World Bank, November 2018) <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/527931542039352771/pdf/Overview.pdf> [Accessed February 9, 2020]

<sup>ix</sup> El-Kogali SET, "Expectations and Aspirations: A New Framework for Education in the Middle East and North Africa" (The World Bank, November 2018)

<sup>x</sup> "Race II" (Reaching All Children with Education) <http://racepmlebanon.com/index.php/features-mainmenu-47/race2-article> [Accessed February 9, 2020]

<sup>xi</sup> Khawaja B, "Growing Up Without an Education': Barriers to Education for Syrian Refugee Children in Lebanon" (Human Rights Watch June 6, 2017) <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/07/19/growing-without-education/barriers-education-syrian-refugee-children-lebanon> [Accessed February 9, 2020]

<sup>xii</sup> Independent Monitor's Report: Lebanon Commitments from the London and Brussels Conferences (May 2020). p. 12. <https://agulhas.co.uk/our-work/independent-monitors-report-on-the-lebanon-commitments-from-the-london-and-brussels-conferences/> (accessed 02.06.2020).

<sup>xiii</sup> Arab News: "1,600 schools in Lebanon face closure in economic meltdown", <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1682376/middle-east>.

<sup>xiv</sup> Combaz E, "Situation of persons with disabilities in Lebanon" (DFID, July 15, 2018) [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5b584da340f0b633af812655/Disability\\_in\\_Lebanon.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5b584da340f0b633af812655/Disability_in_Lebanon.pdf) [Accessed 9 February 2020]

<sup>xv</sup> Koplewicz S, "I Would Like to Go to School': Barriers to Education for Children with Disabilities in Lebanon" (Human Rights Watch April 2, 2018) <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/03/22/i-would-go-school/barriers-education-children-disabilities-lebanon> [Accessed February 9, 2020]

<sup>xvi</sup> Koplewicz S, "I Would Like to Go to School': Barriers to Education for Children with Disabilities in Lebanon" (Human Rights Watch, April 2, 2018)

<sup>xvii</sup> Combaz E, "Situation of persons with disabilities in Lebanon" (DFID, July 15, 2018)

<sup>xviii</sup> Koplewicz S, "I Would Like to Go to School': Barriers to Education for Children with Disabilities in Lebanon" (Human Rights Watch, April 2, 2018)

<sup>xix</sup> Saliba I, "Constitutional Right to an Education: Lebanon" (Library of Congress, May 1, 2016) <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/constitutional-right-to-an-education/lebanon.php> [Accessed February 10, 2020]

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<sup>xx</sup> El-Ghali, H., Ghalayini, N. and Ismail, G. (2016). Responding to Crisis: Syrian Refugee Education in Lebanon. [ebook] Beirut: American University of Beirut, p.3. Available at: [https://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/Documents/publications/policy\\_briefs/2015-2016/20160406\\_responding\\_to\\_crisis.pdf](https://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/Documents/publications/policy_briefs/2015-2016/20160406_responding_to_crisis.pdf) [Accessed 10 Feb. 2020].

<sup>xxi</sup> Ceicdata.com. (2020). Lebanon Education Statistics. [online] Available at: <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/lebanon/education-statistics> [Accessed 10 Feb. 2020].

<sup>xxii</sup> Reaching All Children with Education. (2020). RACE II. [online] Available at: <http://racepmulebanon.com/images/fact-sheet-March-2018.pdf> [Accessed 10 Feb. 2020].