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School for stability

Examining the role of education in fostering social stability in Lebanon



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About the author

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Abbreviations

ALP	Accelerated Learning Programme
BLN	Basic literacy and numeracy
CBO	Community-based organisation
ECE	Early childhood education
FGD	Focus group discussion
KII	Key informant interview
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
MEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NLG	No Lost Generation
PCG	Parent community group
RACE	Reaching All Children with Education
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNHCR	United Nations Refugee Agency
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency

Executive summary

This report explores education opportunities in Lebanon in light of the protracted Syria crisis, examining their potential in supporting social stability between host and refugee communities. It argues that education, both formal and non-formal, has strong potential to support social stability in Lebanon. The research has been produced as part of the 'Change in exile' project implemented by International Alert in Lebanon and Roskilde University in Denmark, which seeks to generate evidence on the role of education in supporting social stability in both countries. In Lebanon, the research involved 30 key informant interviews (KIIs) with government, the United Nations (UN) and representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), as well as 10 focus group discussions (FGDs) with Syrian and Lebanese children (aged 11–17), parents and educators in Tripoli and in the suburbs of Beirut. This research was conducted between October 2016 and January 2017. In Denmark, the research involved a similar methodology with KIIs and in-depth interviews with unaccompanied Syrian refugee minors.

Education is a clear indicator of life outcomes, including of positive perceptions and behaviours. It can promote diversity as well as increase people's wellbeing and decrease resorting to negative coping strategies.¹ Education can contribute to social stability, not least through building knowledge and skills to address tensions without violence and discrimination, especially when schools are among the few spaces where children can mingle and experience diversity in the country. Moreover, education can help to build the resilience of children by reducing the risk of resorting to negative coping strategies such as early marriage or child labour, therefore increasing the likelihood of positive wellbeing. This research examines four different elements of the intersection between education and social stability – namely, formal education, non-formal education, the role of parents and structural challenges, and the potential for collaboration between people and institutions.

The Lebanese government's inclusive education plan and assurance of opening schools to all school-aged Syrian children in the country reflects an unparalleled commitment by a national government. This research shows that, although formal education has strong potential to support positive social interactions, building on the government's plan, it is not currently seizing the existing opportunities. In addition, non-formal education has strong potential to support social stability, and efforts should be made to coordinate formal and non-formal education opportunities. The role of parents is also vital in ensuring children's positive educational performance, and the collaboration between municipalities, schools and parents is key to further stability. Ultimately, programmes geared towards the promotion of social stability strongly point towards the potential to reduce bullying, improve the learning environment and reduce drop-out rates. The following sections provide a summary of the key findings of this research.

Formal education

Having opened its doors to Syrian children, Lebanon's formal education system is struggling to meet the demand from both Syrian and Lebanese populations. Around 250,000 Syrian refugee children and youth remain out of school or have dropped out before completing any significant cycle of learning.² Retention is a concern for both Lebanese and Syrians, especially at secondary level, as attendance is affected by a number of factors, including economic vulnerability, cultural differences and language barriers.

1 Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), The wellbeing effect of education, July 2014, <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/news-events-and-publications/evidence-briefings/the-wellbeing-effect-of-education/>

2 In terms of education, almost 500,000 displaced Syrian children registered in Lebanon are of school age, aged between 3 and 17. Half of them – more than 250,000 children – remain out of school, along with 50,000 Lebanese of primary school age (6–14 years). Government of Lebanon and United Nations, Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) 2017–2020, January 2017, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=12698>

Currently, the formal education system is not reaching its full potential in supporting positive social interactions between children, teachers and parents. Research findings demonstrate that children in single nationality classes who do not engage in mixed nationality activities, such as those offered by organisations working on social stability, have more negative perceptions of their peers of other nationalities.³ Moreover, the lack of engagement from overburdened teachers, along with violence and impunity in the classroom, reinforce barriers to social stability. Organisations from the non-formal sector are filling the gap and have shown themselves to be effective in addressing the needs of children affected by conflict and of communities experiencing social conflict, despite facing structural challenges. Improving the connections and collaboration between the formal and non-formal education sectors can help to reduce social conflict by combining the skills and expertise of the non-formal sector with the capacity and scale of the formal sector.

Non-formal education

Regulated non-formal education programmes implemented by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) and NGOs support refugee children to enrol in the formal education system and are targeted towards children's different levels and heterogeneous needs. This research defines non-formal education broadly as any activity with an educational aim that is outside the formal curriculum and school system, including remedial education, extra-curricular activities and social stability activities for children. Non-formal education in its diversity has shown its effectiveness in promoting tolerance and respect for diversity. Programmes such as homework and language support groups are critical to supporting students in keeping up with the academic curriculum and can support positive social interactions between children. Social stability activities, aimed at providing spaces for social interaction, can be effective as a first step in creating trust and positive perceptions between Syrian and Lebanese children.

Non-formal education activities supporting social stability have successfully complemented formal schooling by offering recreational activities, which are not part of the formal programme in the afternoon shift, along with rights education and opportunities for positive social interactions between Lebanese and Syrian children. In difficult times, non-formal education activities can allow children to be themselves again while supporting their personal development, learning and social skills. Other types of non-formal education activities, such as those supported by religious institutions or scouts' groups, were not included in this research given its limited scope.

The role of parents

While parents play a vital role in children's education performance, many Syrian and Lebanese parents are not involved in their children's education due to limited time, capacities and opportunities, as well as language barriers. Syrian parents whose children attend afternoon shifts at Lebanese public schools face challenges in accessing school administration or in supporting their children with homework due to the use of foreign languages in Lebanese curricula. Moreover, due to social norms, parents sometimes resist sending their children to initiatives of mixed gender and mixed nationalities, which are aimed at improving their perceptions and levels of trust. Parents' support and involvement needs to be strengthened, therefore, for instance by: building on the existing parent community groups (PCGs); raising awareness of the importance of education; engaging parents in their children's education; and providing awareness sessions on topics such as peace education and positive communication with children.

3 For a more detailed study on the impact of the double shift system, see Z. Alba and M. Al-Masri, *Better together: The impact of the schooling system of Lebanese and Syrian displaced pupils on social stability*, London: International Alert, 2016, <http://www.international-alert.org/news/better-together>

Structural challenges and collaboration opportunities

Enhancing the role of education in promoting social stability requires bridging the response efforts of different institutions and organisations at national and local levels. However, these kinds of collaborative interventions are still rare. Moreover, in the case of education, such interventions need the buy-in, involvement and awareness of teachers, parents, children, municipalities and civil society. Ultimately, the foundations for constructive opportunities for convergence between the education and social stability sectors at national and local levels do exist and should be seized and built upon. Increasing coordination between municipalities, schools and communities can provide such opportunities, as can strengthening child protection systems and banning the use of corporal punishment in public schools, both of which can have a positive impact on children's wellbeing and social stability.

1. Introduction

With the conflict in Syria lasting over six years, Lebanon has become one of the largest recipient countries for Syrian refugees, together with Turkey and Jordan. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), as of December 2016, the number of registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon was 1,011,366.⁴ While this represents a slight decrease in numbers of registered Syrians from previous months, this is mainly due to the Lebanese government's decision to close its borders with Syria in late 2014, except for specific cases, and to stop new registrations with the UNHCR as of May 2015.⁵ As not all Syrian refugees are registered with the UNHCR, there is no clarity about exact numbers. Estimates suggest that more than one million Syrian individuals are being hosted in Lebanon, making it the country with the highest per capita concentration of refugees in the world.⁶

The recent arrival of a high number of refugees has put a massive strain on Lebanon's infrastructure and public system, which were already stretched before the humanitarian crisis. The need for services such as healthcare, water and electricity were already often higher than what could be provided. Increased demand on the limited services therefore created tensions and negative perceptions between refugees and host communities – as reflected, for instance, in the physical segregation in health clinics or curfews in the evenings.⁷ Moreover, as the socio-economic situation of many refugees and vulnerable Lebanese deteriorated, some families were forced to resort to negative coping strategies such as child labour and early marriage.⁸

Representing both a challenge and a solution to many challenges, education has been an important focus for international donors, the Lebanese government and civil society. Globally, education has become a clear indicator of positive life outcomes, such as employment and livelihood, and of positive attitudes and wellbeing. In fact, evidence shows that higher levels of education are associated with better health and social wellbeing, including higher social trust.⁹ It is not surprising, therefore, that a significant effort was made to provide education for the large number of out-of-school Syrian children in Lebanon, which was done within the framework of the No Lost Generation (NLG) initiative. The provision of decent quality education for all refugee children has been especially challenging, given the shortage of teachers, lack of material resources, difficult living conditions and coordination difficulties among aid agencies.

Given the protracted nature of the conflict in Syria at the time of writing, this report argues that education provision to Syrian children in the host country of Lebanon, as well as to all children in the country, has strong potential to contribute to social stability in Lebanon. In other words, the potential of education and the education sector to mitigate inter-community tensions and to contribute to the stabilisation of Lebanon in the short and medium term should be recognised and built upon.

From this perspective, the Lebanese government's commitment to opening schools to all school-aged Syrian children in the country represents a unique move globally and in the region, demonstrating an unparalleled commitment by a national government. It is also unique that Syrian children have the opportunity to receive the

4 UNHCR, Syria regional refugee response: Inter-agency information sharing portal, 2016, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122>

5 Ibid. "As of 6 May 2015, UNHCR Lebanon has temporarily suspended new registration as per Government of Lebanon's instructions. Accordingly, individuals awaiting to be registered are no longer included."

6 UN: Number of Syrian refugees passes five million, Al Jazeera, 30 March 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/03/number-syrian-refugees-passes-million-170330132040023.html>

7 See L. Khattab and H. Myrtilinen, Gender, security and SSR in Lebanon, International Alert, 2014, <http://www.international-alert.org/publications/gender-security-and-ssr-lebanon>; and L. Khattab, The impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on Lebanese host communities' security perceptions across the country – A gender angle, Presented at Women in War Conference, 2015, <http://womeninwar.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Beirut/3/1.pdf>

8 Human Rights Watch, 'Growing up without an education': Barriers to education for Syrian refugee children in Lebanon, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/07/19/growing-without-education/barriers-education-syrian-refugee-children-lebanon>

9 ESRC, Op. cit., July 2014



Photo: Dominic Chavez/World Bank (Creative Commons BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Lebanese and Syrian pupils line up for classes at a Lebanese public school in Beirut, 2014.

internationally recognised Lebanese Baccalaureate and the chance to use it anywhere in the world, as opposed to different types of baccalaureates certified by the Syrian opposition but not by Lebanon or other countries. Given the current international support to providing education for Syrian refugees in Lebanon through the national education system, it is vital to strengthen national capacities and ensure good-quality standards at a country level in Lebanon for all children alike.

This report draws from research conducted between October 2016 and January 2017 as part of the project 'Change in exile: Reinvigorating principles of reform and social stability among young Syrian refugees in Denmark and Lebanon', which is being implemented by Roskilde University and International Alert Lebanon.¹⁰ This report examines the current state of the education sector and education opportunities in Lebanon and explores the extent to which they currently promote social stability or have the potential to do so. More specifically, it explores the current circumstances of formal and non-formal education, the role parents play, as well as gaps and collaboration between institutions in promoting positive perceptions and social interactions between and within groups.

10 International Alert, Change in exile: Reinvigorating principles of reform and social stability among young Syrian refugees in Denmark and Lebanon, 2017, <http://www.international-alert.org/what-we-do/where-we-work/middle-east-and-north-africa/lebanon/projects/13997>

2. Research methodology

The research involved three methods – namely, key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs) and participant observations by the lead researcher. The main lines of inquiry analysed the level of understanding of certain concepts, perceptions towards certain issues and other groups of people, practices and behaviours, as well as willingness for social interaction. The qualitative research findings highlight trends and allow the researcher to probe deeper beyond initial responses to obtain richer insights into the issues at stake. However, it is worth mentioning that findings from the FGDs with Syrian and Lebanese children in Beirut and Tripoli indicated strong trends, with similar experiences and sometimes almost verbatim quotes.

Over 30 KIIs were conducted between mid-October 2016 and March 2017 in Beirut and Tripoli. They included interviews with representatives from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) and the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), representatives of UN agencies, international, Lebanese and Syrian organisations (NGOs), researchers, academics, as well as education staff in a free private confessional school and a public school, both in Bourj Hammoud. The fieldwork for this research was conducted between mid-November and late December 2016 in two locations – in Beirut suburbs (Bourj Hammoud and Sed el Boushriyi) and in Tripoli, North Lebanon. The two locations were chosen based on access possibilities, availability of education institutions and centres, their location in urban areas, and their different confessional and social composition.

Ten FGDs were held in total with Lebanese boys and girls who attend public school, Syrian children who attend second shifts in public schools, children in a mixed class in a semi-private school, and Lebanese and Syrian children who also attend non-formal education activities provided by NGOs. The target age group for the research was between 11 and 17 years, but most of the children interviewed were aged between 11 and 14. One FGD was also held with Syrian parents. In total, the FGDs included 30 Syrian children, 34 Lebanese children and 14 Syrian parents (13 mothers and one father). Moreover, interviews with educators of non-formal activities took place in Tripoli and with teachers at a semi-private school in Beirut.

The FGDs were organised with the voluntary help of four Lebanese and international organisations, indicating the importance attributed to the research from the perspective of implementers. The FGDs adhered to child protection guidelines endorsed by these four organisations facilitating the field research. All FGDs were held in Arabic and therefore without a translator. Participant observation was carried out by the Lead Researcher and the reflections fed into the analysis of the research findings. This research had some limitations, which means that the study findings are only indicative and not representative. Due to time and access constraints, few school staff and no municipality representatives or Lebanese parents were spoken to. This meant that it was not possible to go into greater depth in terms of directly analysing the institutional interconnections and gaps at the local level, for instance between schools and municipalities.

Field research overview

BEIRUT SUBURBS

Focus group discussions



x10 Syrian children (boys and girls)

- Afternoon shift
- Not attending social stability activities

x12 Lebanese and Syrian children (boys and girls)

- Semi-private school
- Attending social stability activities

x14 Syrian parents (13 female and 1 male)

- Of children in afternoon shift

Key informant interviews



x2 Lebanese teachers (female)

- Semi-private school

x2 Lebanese school director (male) and teacher (female)

- Public school

x30 Lebanese government, UN agencies and NGO representatives and researchers (male and female)

TRIPOLI

Focus group discussions



x8 Lebanese children (girls)

- Morning shift
- Not attending social stability activities

x4 Lebanese children (boys)

- Morning shift
- Not attending social stability activities

x11 Lebanese children (boys)

- Morning shift
- Attending social stability activities (sports)

x10 Syrian children (girls)

- Afternoon shift
- Attending social stability activities (sports)

x8 Syrian children (boys)

- Afternoon shift and drop-outs
- Attending social stability activities (sports)

Key informant interviews



x2 Lebanese children (boys)

- Morning shift and drop-out
- Attending social stability activities (music/arts)

x5 Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian educators (male and female)

- Running social stability activities

3. Terminology matters: Defining education and social stability

3.1 National developments in education and social stability sectors

At the beginning of the humanitarian crisis in 2011, NGOs rushed to support Syrian refugees through humanitarian and relief interventions. By 2012, many were implementing emergency education such as language support, recreational activities, and basic literacy and numeracy (BLN) programmes for Syrian children around the country. With fast-rising numbers of refugees inside Lebanon borders and no clear end in sight of the conflict in Syria, the Lebanese government developed the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) together with UN agencies, with the focus on delivering humanitarian protection and assistance to Syrians and the poorest Lebanese, as well as support to Lebanon's capacities and stability.¹¹

By 2014, the Lebanese government had taken a strong lead in the Syria crisis response and made education one of its priority areas. The MEHE developed a national strategy entitled 'Reaching All Children with Education' (RACE), with the aim of strengthening the public education system and increasing enrolment of school-aged children affected by the Syria crisis in the formal system.¹² In an unprecedented move, authorities allowed refugees to enrol in Lebanese public schools without providing proof of legal residency, waiving school enrolment fees and opening afternoon shift classes in 238 public schools around Lebanon for Syrians only.¹³ Critically, the education services that could be provided to all children on Lebanese soil were identified and formalised by the government.

While regulating and systematising education services to ensure equal access and opportunities for all children represented a positive move, the complex needs and diverse levels of children in the country meant that implementation was not as straightforward. NGOs that had been operating in the education sector before RACE came into effect were catering for the heterogeneous education needs of Syrian children, leading the MEHE to work towards regularising non-formal education, with the sole aim to support enrolment into formal education.

Social stability represents a key sector as it is cross-cutting. Its overall objective is to mitigate inter-community tensions so that, by 2020, peaceful co-existence will have prevailed and mechanisms will be in place to prevent the escalation and deleterious consequences of violence and conflict.¹⁴ A strong focus is placed on establishing and empowering local and national mechanisms to address and mitigate drivers of conflict to prevent or alleviate conflict incidences within host communities.¹⁵ The sector's output 4, namely to increase youth participation and empowerment to enable their positive engagement in their communities and prevent their marginalisation, is directly linked to education.

In the context of the Syria crisis response, education and social stability are considered two separate sectors with different objectives and targets. Education services and activities are not directly thought of in the frame of social stability. However, the linkages between education and stability are strong. In the LCRP II, one formal inter-sector linkage is established between the social stability and education sectors, namely the area of peace

11 Government of Lebanon and United Nations, Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2015–2016, 2015, <http://www.un.org.lb/library/assets/engbrochfullversion-065158.pdf>; and M. Janmyr, Precarity in exile: The legal status of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 35:58–78, 2016, <http://rsq.oxfordjournals.org/content/35/4/58.full.pdf>

12 Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), Reaching all children with education in Lebanon, RACE, 2014, <http://www.mehe.gov.lb/uploads/file/2015/Feb2015/Projects/RACEfinalEnglish2.pdf>; and Z. Alba and M. Al-Masri, Op. cit., 2016

13 Ibid.

14 LCRP, Op. cit., 2017, p.149

15 Ibid.



Photo: Adam Patterson/Panos/DFID (Creative Commons BY 2.0)

A mixed class of Lebanese and Syrian students in Bekaa, 2016.

education.¹⁶ However, this research argues that inter-sector linkages stretch from formal education, through to non-formal education supporting the formal system, and to activities seeking to improve perceptions and relationships.

3.2 Overview of Lebanese education system

There is considerable effort by government, UN agencies and NGOs to systematise and make available accredited MEHE education services, adapting them to the context of the Syria crisis in Lebanon. The education sector outcomes of the LCRP II for 2017–2020 therefore focus on enhancing access to equitable formal education or regulated non-formal education, as well as enhancing the quality of education services and learning environments for children. The total target number of children to enrol into formal schooling and non-formal education programmes is 543,616, with the highest target number being 280,910 Syrian children.¹⁷ It is important to mention that both the LCRP 2017–2020 and RACE 2017–2021 are aligned with each other, providing consistency at the national level.

In the policy response to the Syria crisis, formal schooling refers to **Lebanese public schools**. Most refugees in Lebanon rely on Lebanon's public education system, which was already weak before the Syria crisis, with only 30% of Lebanese children enrolled in public schools.¹⁸ Given the high numbers of Syrian children who needed to be enrolled in school, a double shift system has been introduced at schools and is being further extended.¹⁹ Most public schools are in the 250 most vulnerable localities of Lebanon, spread across the eight governorates. Currently, there are 67,000 non-Lebanese enrolled in the morning shift and 133,000 non-Lebanese enrolled in the second shift.²⁰ Registration fees are covered for all, Lebanese and non-Lebanese, and a US\$60 parents' council fund fee is also provided, along with a \$40 contribution for the school fund and textbooks.²¹ Most public schools are located in socially deprived and economically disadvantaged areas, further exacerbating social tensions.

16 LCRP, Op. cit., 2017, p.154

17 Ibid.

18 Human Rights Watch, Op. cit., 2016

19 Ibid.

20 KII with MEHE, Beirut, February 2017

21 Ibid.

Three other official types of schools exist in Lebanon. **Free private confessional schools** are generally free or charge a small fee. They are generally supported by religiously affiliated organisations or religious institutions such as churches, and some of them are partially subsidised by the state. These schools teach the Lebanese curriculum, but monitoring systems by the MEHE to regulate teaching are weak. **Private schools** are common in Lebanon; they generally request high fees, are provided by for-profit organisations and teach different curriculums, usually with little monitoring by the MEHE. In 2012, the number of private and free private schools was 1,442 compared with 1,365 public schools. **UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) schools** mainly cater for Palestinian children at the primary level, are free and teach the Lebanese curriculum. Because of the scarcity of available public secondary schools, UNRWA has also recently started providing secondary education.²²

At the time of writing, the **Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP)** is the only regularised non-formal education programme, and offers children the chance to complete several years of education in a shorter period. ALPs are usually designed for children older than 10 years, whose primary school years were interrupted. **BLN** and **early childhood education (ECE)** have been implemented for several years by NGOs, and are in the process of being regulated by the MEHE, requiring NGOs to adhere to an MEHE-approved curriculum when offering the programme to beneficiary children and youth.

Aside from the above-stated education services in Lebanon, others exist that are “not systematic and not regularised”, implemented by NGOs or private individuals, with no existing common standards.²³ The quality of these alternative education services is therefore diverse, with some NGOs developing their own curricula and others not going by structure. Critically, there is a myriad of education programmes and activities implemented and offered to Syrian, Palestinian and Lebanese children.

This research defines non-formal education broadly as any activity outside of the formal curriculum and school system, including remedial education, extra-curricular activities and social stability activities for children.

This research defines non-formal education broadly as any activity outside of the formal curriculum and school system, including remedial education, extra-curricular activities and social stability activities for children. This concept is broader than the non-formal education programmes regulated by the MEHE and supported through the RACE Strategy, which include only programmes facilitating access to the formal education system (ALP, BLN and ECE). For the purpose of this research, the most relevant non-formal education activities are **social stability activities** with an educational objective and geared towards improving trust and positive perceptions between groups and communities, often targeting children or youth. These activities encompass arts and music activities, sports programmes and life skills with structured curricula and exercises.

Other services include **non-accredited education services** such as NGO-operated schools, often by Syrian organisations, or foreign-funded schools such as by Gulf countries, offering the Lebanese curriculum or adapted versions of the Syrian curriculum. These schools mostly

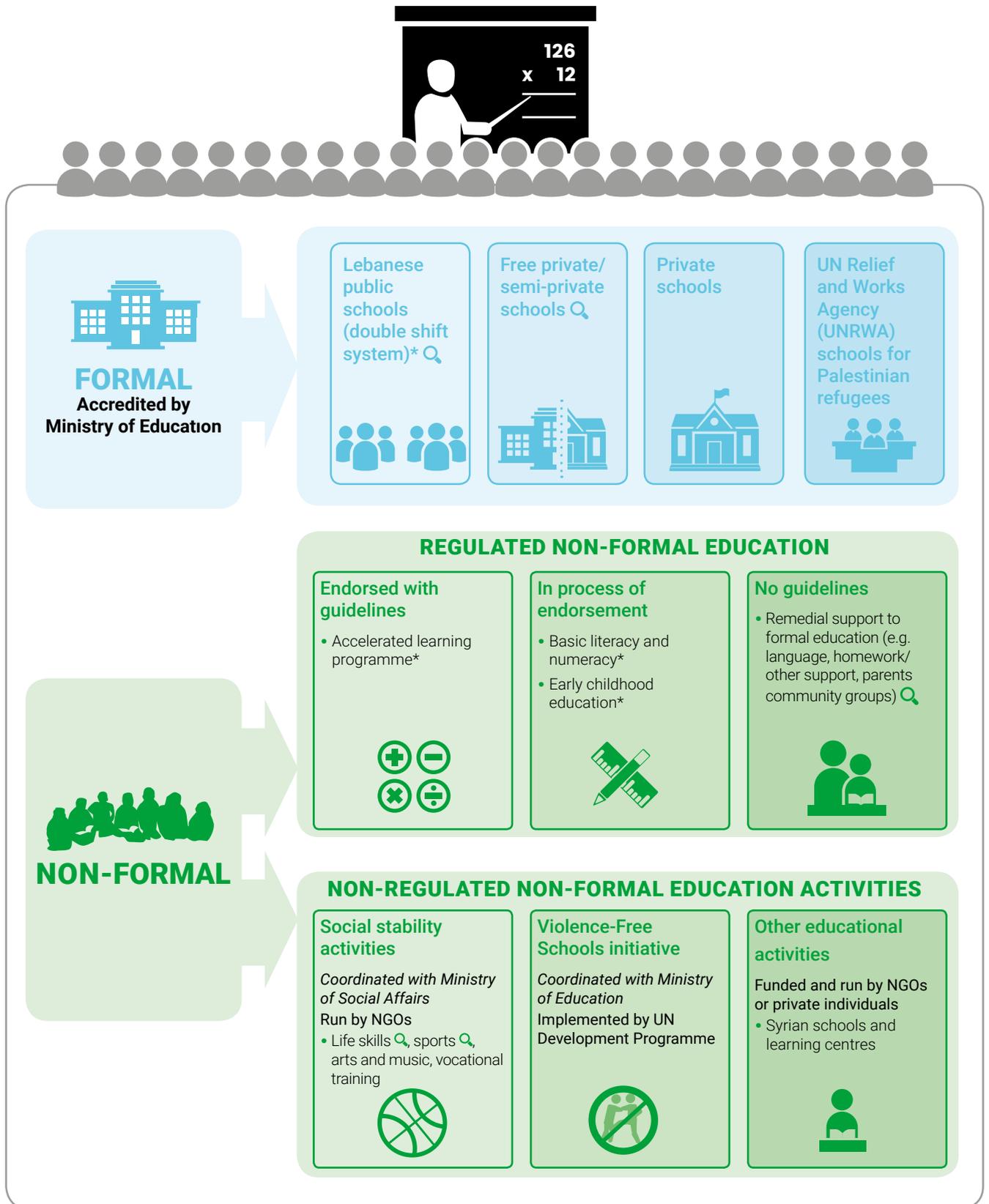
employ Syrian educators and teachers, and certification is recognised by the Syrian opposition in Syria, but not by Lebanon or other countries.

The different types of education covered means that we can explore the intersections with social stability at various levels and recommend actions for different actors.

²² Paragraph based on RACE

²³ KII with UN representative, Beirut, November 2016

Overview of educational activities and programmes in Lebanon



3.3 Framing social stability, cohesion and education

In the LCRP II, social stability is defined as “a state of intergroup relations at the community level, where sources of tension between groups are addressed and managed through formal institutions or systems”. The focus is on supporting formal structures of the Lebanese state, such as municipalities, local institutions and other conflict-resolution actors within all communities, with the aim of preventing social tensions from resulting in conflict between host communities and displaced Syrians. The social stability sector’s overarching aim is to ensure that the impact of the crisis and the tensions generated at the local level do not result in violence.

While social stability emphasises the ability of institutions to manage tensions between different groups, some practitioners and activists argue that it justifies the status quo of minimal contact between host communities and refugees, and the use of excessive control to minimise risk of destabilisation. To address tensions between groups and prevent escalation in a more effective way, a greater emphasis arguably needs to be placed on ‘social cohesion’. The latter can be seen as more transformative, as characteristic that societies are able to anticipate and manage their conflicts without violence. Critically, positive inter-group relationships are critical for cohesive societies.

Social cohesion can be defined as a situation whereby “whole societies, and the individuals within them, are bound together through the action of specific attitudes, behaviours, rules and institutions which rely on consensus rather than pure coercion”. The term ‘social cohesion’ refers to a society in which members have healthy relationships with each other and do not resort to violent conflict. While strong, positive and integrated relationships as well as inclusive identities are indicative of high social cohesion, weak, negative or fragmented relationships and exclusive identities are indicative of low social cohesion.

In this research, social stability is understood and referred to in a broader sense – namely, as creating conditions for host communities to sustain and further their acceptance of refugees, and as addressing inter-community tensions without discrimination or violence. Therefore, this report’s definition of social stability embraces essential characteristics of social cohesion, such as not resorting to violence and encouraging positive inter-group relationships, but also places an emphasis on the role of institutions in managing social tensions through national policies and their implementation at the local level. As research geared towards providing recommendations and being based on realities in the policy and empirical fields, this report adopts language officially endorsed by the UN and the Lebanese government for practical reasons, but holds broader and more inclusive definitions for the terms used.

The link between social stability, cohesion and education is critical. Education represents a key aspect through which to further social cohesion and stability, providing an opportunity to improve trust and understanding between individuals. The school is a vital space to experience diversity, to mingle and to be trained in adopting good behaviours and attitudes in society. In Lebanon, schools are one of the few physical spaces where children can mingle together and experience diversity.

The school and other educational spaces reflect the community and society, and the existing tensions in them. As ‘microcosms’ of the community, however, education spaces are not immune to broader challenges in the community and society, and could reflect positive but also negative developments. While education has great positive potential, it also has the potential to increase negative perceptions and tensions, pushing young people towards negative coping mechanisms; therefore, it is important to mitigate such issues to ensure that education achieves its true purpose.

Previous research by International Alert has shown that the education sector appears to have a positive, albeit limited, impact on social cohesion.²⁴ The impact on social cohesion of the double shift schooling system was compared based on qualitative research with students, their families and teachers, showing that perceptions and relationships between students in mixed classes improve over time. Findings clearly indicated that social cohesion, in terms of both relationships and perceptions, between students is improved by their sharing the same classroom. This research builds on these findings by also looking at non-formal education, which includes activities in the education sector but also social stability programming.

As mentioned above, this report defines social stability in a broad sense, namely as creating conditions for host communities to sustain and further their acceptance of refugees, and in addressing inter-community tensions without discrimination or violence, a definition closely linked to social cohesion. In this context, education represents an important tool through which to further social stability. With increased trust and understanding, the level of tensions and risk for violence decreases.

Education has the potential to support social stability both as spaces for 'learning' and for 'physical interaction'. This report will highlight the latter – that is, the opportunities that education activities provide in Lebanon to increase physical encounters between children of different backgrounds. Elements of 'learning' will be touched upon, for instance when discussing school curricula and non-formal education methodologies. Overall, in order to further social stability and cohesion in Lebanon, education services and activities need to be adapted to create the physical and intellectual space for experiencing diversity and self-development.

Education has the potential to support social stability both as spaces for 'learning' and for 'physical interaction'.

4. Research findings

This section presents the report's research findings and examines to what extent education opportunities currently promote social stability or have the potential to do so. It examines four different yet interconnected elements – formal education, non-formal education, the role of parents, and structural challenges and opportunities for collaboration.

4.1 “At least if there is a system, you can strengthen it”: The role of formal education in social stability

The decision to open up the Lebanese public education system to all non-Lebanese children in the country, including Syrians as the largest group, and to regulate it on such a large scale is an unprecedented move in the region and globally. To help make this possible, the double shift school system was introduced. The double shift system exists currently in 259 schools across Lebanon, and around 400 schools have already asked for an increase in Syrian students in the afternoon shift.²⁵ Around 250,000 Lebanese children attend the morning shift,²⁶ which follows the regular curriculum, and Syrian children attend the afternoon shift, which starts at either 14:00 or 14:30 and offers a more condensed version of the Lebanese education curriculum.

“The school director told me that he made a mistake in accepting to enrol Syrian children in the morning shift. Lebanese parents stopped enrolling their children in his school because of that.” – Syrian mother in Beirut suburbs

Morning shift classes can include Syrians and children of other nationalities if there are empty spaces and at least 50% of the children in the class are Lebanese. However, anecdotal evidence from the research suggests that, although the MEHE guidelines are clear, some school directors and administrations implement them more flexibly, and do not accept any Syrians in the morning shift. Anecdotal reasons for this are fear of reduced quality of education and Lebanese parents not wanting their children to interact with Syrian children and subsequently withdrawing them from the public school.

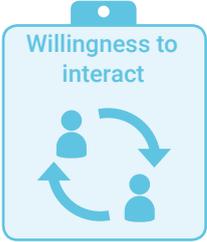
“I sometimes forget that there are Syrians in the morning shift. It is the afternoon shift that is problematic for us.” – School director, public school, Beirut suburbs

A school director in a Lebanese public school in Bourj Hammoud mentioned that, before 2011, he had 300 Lebanese children enrolled at his school. After he started accepting Syrians in the school, Lebanese parents withdrew their children, currently leaving 90 Lebanese students and 83 Syrian students in the morning shift. In the afternoon, the same school hosts 350 Syrian and other non-Lebanese students. The director mentioned that the morning shift ran smoothly, but that the afternoon shift was causing difficulties for teachers. As Syrian students in the morning and afternoon shifts have the same socio-economic background, it seems that different indicators allow for a smooth running of the class, which could well include the element of having mixed nationalities in one class.

25 KII with MEHE, Beirut, February 2017

26 Number for 2015–2016. LCRP, Op. cit., ‘Education’ chapter, 2017; Education coordination meeting, UNHCR, 27 October 2016

Key findings from field research

 TARGET GROUP	LINES OF INQUIRY			
	 Knowledge of children's rights concepts	 Attitudes and perceptions of the other	 Practices and behaviours	 Willingness to interact
Syrian and Lebanese girls and boys in a mixed class at a free private confessional school 	Children showed knowledge of these concepts based on participation in a Life Skills project implemented by an NGO in their school	Mostly positive and nuanced – some children mentioned the cautious attitudes of their parents	The children mentioned having friends from different nationalities, especially citing examples from school but also from the neighbourhood	The level of interest in and willingness to interact with other children is relatively high
Syrian girls and boys in afternoon shift classes in Lebanese public schools 	Children showed limited knowledge – this topic is not covered in the formal curriculum, but children would like to learn about it; despite ad hoc lessons by volunteers and NGOs on this topic, they are not regular or formal	Mostly cautious due to negative personal experiences; most children made nuanced assessments, avoiding generalisations, but do not have positive perceptions of Lebanese children	Syrian children had few to no friendships with Lebanese children; they encountered them only on their way to or outside of school; some have friends as neighbours	Syrian children have a big interest in meeting others and a strong willingness to interact with Lebanese children, although they are also cautious
Lebanese girls and boys in morning shift classes in Lebanese public schools 	Children showed limited knowledge; although topics are covered through the formal curriculum, children do not enjoy the teaching methods	Perceptions of Syrian children ranged from nuanced to negative; perceptions are not based on personal experiences	Lebanese children had few to no friendships with Syrian children; their interactions are very restricted as they do not often meet them or interact	Lebanese children have an interest in meeting others and a certain willingness to interact with Syrian children in an informal setting
Lebanese boys in morning shift classes in Lebanese public schools and attending social stability activities 	Children showed limited knowledge; although topics are covered through the formal curriculum, children do not enjoy the teaching methods in formal school, but are taught indirectly through social stability initiatives	Perceptions of Syrian children are mostly nuanced, based on personal experiences and interactions through social stability activities	Very few had Syrian friends from school, as they only meet them when changing shifts; however, children mentioned playing with Syrians and having friends from social stability activities	The Lebanese boys spoken to show an interest in meeting others and a willingness to interact with Syrian children; they already do so in their social stability activities and expressed an interest in having more interactions
Syrian girls and boys in afternoon shift classes in Lebanese public schools and attending social stability activities 	Children showed different levels of knowledge; some were familiar with the concepts through NGO activities, and they were interested in learning more about them	Perceptions of Lebanese children were mostly nuanced, and mostly based on personal experiences and interactions through social stability activities	Very few to none had Lebanese friends in general or from school; they mentioned meeting Lebanese at social stability activities and making friendships there	Syrian children spoken to were interested in meeting Lebanese children; they already do so in their social stability activities but expressed an interest in having more interactions

4.1.1 Perceptions

While the creation of a double shift system is a concrete solution for practical reasons, such as limited physical educational spaces and teaching resources, it nonetheless weakens the potential of schools to bring together different groups, break down barriers and build social ties in communities that are already socially mixed. The findings of this research indicate that Syrian and Lebanese children who only attend segregated classes generally do not hold positive perceptions of each other. For Syrian children, this negative perception is mostly based on personal experiences. Many gave examples of their own experiences and those of close relatives such as siblings or friends. In FGDs with Lebanese children, the negative perceptions seemed to derive more from anecdotes and opinions held by parents and peers, with none of them recounting negative personal experiences with Syrian children.

“We would like to befriend Lebanese, but they don’t want to be friends with us.” – Syrian girl, afternoon shift, public school, Beirut suburbs

While both Lebanese and Syrian children gave a relatively nuanced assessment of each other and how they are perceived by others given the circumstances, in reality they have limited options for direct interactions and are strongly influenced by their surroundings. Both Lebanese and Syrian children in the research who attended non-mixed classes indicated that they did not have solid friendships with children of the other nationality or opportunities to effectively communicate with the other group at school, as they are not in the same shifts. Lebanese boys in the deprived neighbourhood of el-Ebbeh in Tripoli, who also attend a social stability football project, stated: “we see Syrian children waiting outside the school when we leave and we know they go to the afternoon shift. We don’t know them and don’t really talk to them.”

Tensions between Syrian and Lebanese students have been noted among practitioners.²⁷ Some schools have accepted Syrian students in the morning shift, generally those who have been in Lebanon longer, whose parents registered them swiftly in Lebanese schools (indicating an interest in ensuring their children’s continued education), and who have better connections with the Lebanese community.²⁸ Lebanese and Syrians in these mixed classes have generally more positive perceptions of each other and gave a more nuanced assessment of how others perceive them.

“My two best friends are Armenian and Syrian. We have known each other and been friends since kindergarten.” – Lebanese boy, free private confessional school, Beirut suburbs

This finding of previous research is confirmed by an FGD in a semi-private school in Beirut, where children’s perceptions were more nuanced and positive, with tensions cited regarding communication difficulties, as some children mentioned they could not easily understand Syrian or Iraqi accents. Moreover, the children indicated having more school friends of different confessions or nationalities, compared with Lebanese and Syrians who attend separate classes. Being together in the same physical space on a regular basis, sitting next to each other and playing together during recreation time all help to reduce negative perceptions of each other. However, anecdotes from children also point towards “fights between older students” and towards tensions existing below the surface.²⁹

4.1.2 Curriculum

The research findings also point to differences in the school curricula of morning and afternoon shifts, posing further challenges to social stability. The academic curriculum for Syrians in the afternoon shifts is more condensed with no recreation time or physical education (PE) class. This means that Syrian children who often live in overcrowded and dire circumstances do not have space for leisure or time for activities, despite their

27 KIIIs with UN and NGO representatives, as well as educators, in Beirut and Tripoli, October to December 2016

28 Z. Alba and M. Al-Masri, Op. cit., 2016

29 FGDs, Beirut, December 2016



Photo: Adam Patterson/Panos/DFID (Creative Commons BY 2.0)

A mixed class of Lebanese and Syrian students in Beirut, 2016.

learning needs being more acute than those of their counterparts in the morning shift.³⁰ This lack of space to develop social skills is not beneficial to the children for developing positive perceptions and relations with others.

None of the Syrian children in the research said they had discussed human and children's rights as part of their school curriculum. Lebanese children mentioned having civic education in which this issue was mentioned,³¹ with an emphasis on the "values of peace and justice and effective involvement in the social and political life" in Lebanon.³² The Lebanese children all stated that they did not enjoy the class, as teachers simply read out from a textbook and students had to memorise and repeat definitions.³³ Across the respondents, the lack of participatory and child-centred approaches in teaching civic education and other subjects in school was highlighted.

"We are taught about human rights in the civic education class. But no one understands or likes it. It is very theoretical and all about learning definitions by heart." – Lebanese boy, morning shift, Tripoli

Civic education is valuable, teaching children and young people about how to effectively participate in their countries' political and social life and how to understand democratic principles. However, Lebanese respondents criticised the teaching methods for being too top-down with little engagement from students. It is also important to state that young Syrians who are growing up in exile are not receiving basic civic education in any systematic way. This can create challenges in the longer term, as having basic knowledge of democratic principles and

30 KII with NGO representative, Beirut, November 2016

31 FGDs, Beirut and Tripoli, November and December 2016

32 K.K. Jabbour, Civic education in Lebanon, Bulgarian Journal of Science and Education Policy (BJSEP), Vol. 8, No. 2, 2014, pp.392–407, <http://bjsep.org/getfile.php?id=178>

33 FGDs, Beirut and Tripoli, December 2016; and Ibid.

human rights would benefit the sustainable rebuilding of Syria's socio-political fabric. It is worth mentioning that some NGOs are providing civic engagement classes in their community learning centres, but these are still very limited in number.

"I would really like to learn more about human rights. At the moment, no one is teaching us about this. We want to learn as much as we can to help each other." – Syrian girl, afternoon shift, public school, Beirut suburbs

Some of the Syrian child respondents had heard of or received lessons on human and children's rights through NGO activities. One Syrian girl aged 13 in el Minieh, Tripoli, explained that she had taken part in weekend activities provided by an NGO, where the facilitator spoke about children's rights. She provided a solid definition of the concept of children's rights. All Syrian children spoken to expressed a strong desire to learn more about this topic.

4.1.3 Teaching methods

The newly introduced afternoon shift has meant that the same teachers who teach in the usual morning shift take on extra hours in the afternoon. The teachers are often tired when they reach the afternoon shift after an already long morning of teaching, and have less energy and tolerance for Syrian students, who often have greater needs, given the gap in their formal education and trauma experienced due to displacement. The majority of Syrian and Lebanese children in the research mentioned that they wished their teachers would be more involved and committed. Children in both Beirut and Tripoli mentioned teachers providing only brief lessons before letting children play in the classroom.³⁴

When asked what children like the most about their school, the majority of Syrian and Lebanese children mentioned positive experiences with teachers. Some Syrian students mentioned liking when their teachers "are in a good mood", signifying that the general atmosphere is usually more tense. This finding further indicates children's need for role models in their lives and how important educators are in this regard.

"I like the sport lesson the most because the sports teacher likes me and is nice to me." – Syrian boy, afternoon shift, public school, Beirut suburbs

Speaking to teachers in Beirut, they mentioned that the language barrier represents a major challenge in classes. A Lebanese teacher at a semi-private school in Beirut stated: "A major challenge for me is the age difference inside the classrooms due to the language barriers. The Syrian and Iraqi students' level of Arabic is very good, but their level of foreign languages is very low. This was forcing older students to stay back in lower grades, which in turn was causing a non-conducive and disruptive learning environment."³⁵ In the case of this school, proactive measures were taken to hire additional teaching staff and divide the English and French lessons into two groups per levels.

4.1.4 Use of corporal punishment

The research further highlights that violent practices and behaviours are prevalent in public schools. According to one key informant: "Discrimination has always been present in schools, and traditional ways of teaching have included psychological and physical violence without them being recognised as 'violence' per se."³⁶ Accounts by Syrian children, supported by practitioners in the field, highlight that widespread harassment exists towards Syrian children on their way to school. Syrian children in both Beirut and Tripoli recounted feeling anxious walking towards school, as people would swear and shout at them.³⁷ Tensions continue outside the school premises, where verbal and physical quarrels are common and the school administration

34 FGDs, Beirut and Tripoli, November and December 2016

35 KII with teacher, Beirut, December 2016

36 KII with UN official, Beirut, November 2016

37 FGDs, Beirut and Tripoli, November and December 2016

is not legally obliged to intervene.³⁸ This seems to take place particularly during the shift change between morning and afternoon classes.

“Teachers do not share their names with us. They tell us they came here to teach and not to give us their names.” – Syrian girl, afternoon shift, public school, El-Minieh, Tripoli

Inside the classroom, Lebanese and Syrian children both report the use of corporal punishment by their teachers. Field practitioners and Syrian parents interviewed confirm these accounts, stating that teachers disproportionately punish minor mistakes. While an official complaint mechanism does exist, many Syrian parents and children are wary of using it for fear of reprisal. Syrian parents recounted having complained about teachers physically punishing their children, only for their children to face more punishment shortly afterwards by the same teachers.³⁹ Accounts by NGO practitioners point towards an acute situation in schools, whereby overstretched teachers do not have the required skills or time to cater for large classes of Syrian children needing special care and who are somewhat accustomed to a normalisation of violence. In the near future, the MEHE wants to dedicate more attention to addressing violence in schools.⁴⁰ At the time of writing, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) is working to put in place a robust child protection strategy inside public schools.⁴¹

“The level of violence is very high in the community – men beat their wives, mothers beat their children and students do not listen in class if they are not beaten.” – CBO director, El-Minieh, Tripoli

An additional measure by the MEHE is the introduction of counsellors in the second shift of public schools to address the use of violence in schools and to respond to the psychological needs of children traumatised by conflict and displacement. Cases of violence are reported to the MEHE by the counsellors for psycho-social support and by NGOs. The MEHE then follows up these cases through its DOPS (*Departement d’Orientation Pédagogique Scolaire*) Centre. The counsellor has a one-hour class per week using a special curriculum. They discuss issues such as respect for oneself and others, health and hygiene, dealing with harassment.⁴² However, none of the Syrian children interviewed in the research mentioned this counsellor, possibly indicating a lack of knowledge about this available service. Moreover, the Education Community Liaison volunteers introduced in early 2017 by UNHCR are partly tasked with referring children to relevant education support groups according to their needs and to child protection agencies, should a serious incident occur inside the schools.

4.1.5 ‘Violence-Free Schools’ initiative

Before turning to the research findings on non-formal education, it is worth mentioning a positive example of a crossover between the education and social stability sectors – namely, the ‘Violence-Free Schools’ initiative of the UN Development Programme’s (UNDP) peacebuilding programme. This initiative is being implemented in around 30 schools in Bekaa and Mount Lebanon at the time of writing and has two objectives: to try to reduce tensions between Syrian and Lebanese communities and to improve the Lebanese school system.⁴³ UNDP engages teachers, parents and students through trainings, pilot programmes and by monitoring them to create violence-free schools.

The measures include developing a code of conduct for the schools, setting up a student representatives system that includes Lebanese and Syrian students, strengthening parents’ engagement in the school, developing music

38 Ibid.

39 FGDs, Beirut and Tripoli, November 2016

40 KII with UN official, Beirut, November 2016

41 At the time of writing, UNICEF is working on a comprehensive child protection policy, setting up referral pathways and identifying protocols for reporting incidents inside public schools.

42 Paragraph based on KII with MEHE, Beirut, February 2017

43 KII with UN official, Beirut, November 2016

and arts activities inside the school, and improving the physical school space itself.⁴⁴ This project is showing great impact and is being lauded as a success, highlighting the potential to support social cohesion efforts in formal education. An important aspect of this project's success is the buy-in from the Lebanese government, making it possible to implement it in public schools, and the systematic nature and potential of the initiatives. Since the activities focus on violence prevention, such as bullying or harassment, they would also be very relevant to the second shift classes.

Summary

Despite the positive development that all children in Lebanon have the chance to receive an education, regardless of nationality or legal status, many challenges persist. Overall, the research findings show that formal schools are not currently reaching their full potential in supporting social stability.

Formal education has been and remains the focus of educational support to Syrian children in Lebanon. This is because of the structure of the Lebanese public school system, which can provide accreditation to children and consistency in the curriculum. However, a number of challenges remain, including the condensed curriculum for pupils in the afternoon shift with no recreational time, physical education or civic education class. Moreover, teaching methods and conditions for learning do not currently offer the right setting to support social stability.

As a space for 'physical interaction', public schools often have an institutional division of different nationalities through a double shift system, as few schools have accepted Syrians and non-Lebanese into the standard morning shift. Even if the creation of the double shift system is based on practical considerations, the lack of direct contact and interaction means less time and space for developing social skills, experiencing diversity and making friendships.

The children in the research who attend morning and afternoon classes, respectively, have few to no friends from different nationalities. Compared with their peers who do have direct contact with others, they held more negative perceptions of other children. In free private schools, classes are often of mixed nationality and children have more positive perceptions and interactions with each other than children in public schools do. Moreover, the issue of corporal punishment in schools establishes a barrier to creating the right setting for social stability and the development of positive perceptions and relations between children. Children are exposed to violence in their homes and communities, which makes positive discipline challenging.

44 Ibid; UNDP, The violence free schools initiative in Mount Lebanon, 2016, <http://www.lb.undp.org/content/lebanon/en/home/ourwork/crisispreventionandrecovery/successstories/The-Violence-Free-Schools-Initiative-in-Mount-Lebanon.html>; and J. Guay, Social cohesion between Syrian refugees and urban host communities in Lebanon and Jordan, World Vision, 2015, <http://www.wvi.org/disaster-management/publication/social-cohesion-between-syrian-refugees-and-urban-host-communities>

4.2 Untapped potential for social stability: Non-formal education in Lebanon

As outlined above, this report considers non-formal education to include activities related to the education sector, such as homework support, language support and life skills, as well as those concerning the social stability sector, such as improving trust and positive perceptions between children from different backgrounds. It is worth noting that homework and language support, in addition to remedial classes, are not officially categorised as 'non-formal education' by the MEHE, but are considered as 'retention activities' that provide support to formal education.

However, this research groups them under the broad umbrella of 'non-formal education', as they are activities with an educational aim and outside the formal education system. Programmes under the education sector are funded by donors and implemented by NGOs, but, in line with the RACE strategy, their main aim is to support the enrolment and retention of children in formal education. Only ALP is implemented by public schools and the MEHE. Activities related to the social stability sector are not under the remit of the MEHE, but of the MoSA.

4.2.1 'Non-formal education' supported by the MEHE

Regarding non-formal education programmes, important elements include remedial support to formal education in the form of language and homework support classes as well as PCGs, which will be assessed further below. Some Syrian children in the research were attending a homework support group in Beirut suburbs. The community-based nature of these activities means that they are cost-effective and practical for children, taking place in Syrians' own homes and within walking distance of other children's homes, in a safe environment, tailored to children's learning needs and delivered by a volunteer.⁴⁵ Syrian parents also highlighted the benefit of these homework support groups, underlining their necessity in their children's academic work.⁴⁶

This research shows that remedial education activities are very much focused on Syrians themselves. While this is understandable given the objective of these activities to retain Syrian children in the public school system, there is still untapped potential to support positive perceptions and relations between Syrian and Lebanese children through joint activities. This is especially relevant, as the children generally do not have the chance to interact in the formal school space, as examined in the section above. Lebanese and Syrian children spoken to in the research expressed a clear willingness to meet and interact with each other. While some expressed slight hesitation, based on negative experiences with the other, the majority were open to the idea and expressed the wish to have more opportunities to meet other children.⁴⁷

"I would like to attend extra-curricular activities, and yes I would still attend if there are Lebanese children too. But I don't think they would want to play with us." – Syrian girl, afternoon shift, public school, Beirut suburbs

These activities have purely educational objectives and yet, with minor adaptations, they can support social stability. Examples exist of homework support programmes engaging Lebanese volunteers. Some homework support groups are already facilitated by Lebanese volunteers, especially when there is a need for volunteers proficient in foreign languages. When properly sensitised about the needs of Syrian children and the specific challenges they face in Lebanon, Lebanese volunteers can play a key role in building inter-community trust. Similarly, recreational activities connected to homework support, for example, can involve Lebanese children from the area and create a structured space for interaction.

45 KII with UN official and NGO representative, Beirut, November 2016

46 FGD with Syrian parents, Beirut, November 2016

47 FGDs, Beirut and Tripoli, November and December 2016



Photo: Stars Foundation (Creative Commons BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Boys take part in a play and learn session run by an NGO at a UNRWA school in Bsharri in northern Lebanon, 2012.

4.2.2 Non-formal education with social stability objectives

Social stability activities are designed to bring children from different nationalities together. Speaking to Syrian and Lebanese children attending life skills and sport activities, they were more direct about having friends who are different to them and from other nationalities. While the same children said they did not have many friends from school that are different to them, they said they do meet them either through their neighbourhood or through social stability activities. Speaking to groups of Lebanese boys, Syrian boys and Syrian girls separately who all attend these activities, it becomes clear that such activities provide a rare opportunity for social interaction, where the latter is 'engineered'. Talking about what they most like about the sports activity, Lebanese boys mentioned getting along with each other, the team spirit and discipline in the group.

This project therefore builds on the willingness of Lebanese and Syrian children to interact, by providing a structured framework within which this can take place in a positive manner. Accounts by Lebanese and Syrian children point towards the lack of recreational time and space in their lives. While Lebanese children criticised the lack of structure or repetitive nature of the sports lesson at school, Syrian children mentioned not having any recreational activities whatsoever in their condensed afternoon curriculum. The organised activities within a structured setting provide an important opportunity for children's self-development, including learning about self-confidence, teamwork, discipline and tolerance.

"The sports lesson at school is different. It is always the same programme and sometimes we organise it ourselves, as the teacher does not pay attention. I like this sports activity more." – Lebanese boy, morning shift, public school, el-Ebbeh, Tripoli

Children targeted through these activities come from marginalised backgrounds and generally face high levels of violence in the home and community. In Tripoli, the children spoken to come from a conservative environment, where it is difficult for girls to take part in social life let alone in sports activities. First-hand accounts of harassment from men on the way to school or in the school transport bus highlight the widespread lack of safety, which is reducing girls' physical mobility. Engaging parents has therefore proven to be a vital part of the sports activities' success, especially in raising their awareness about child protection and children's rights, including the right to play and be a child. The programme includes transport buses to and from the activity venue for children who either do not live within walking distance or whose parents are wary of letting them walk by themselves.⁴⁸

Children seem to compartmentalise their experiences and emotions between 'school' and 'recreational activities'. The question of sustainability remains as children return to their homes and communities, where basic needs are not being met and housing remains a big issue. Syrians move very often, as they cannot always pay rent regularly, which means that children are often uprooted, cannot stay in the same school or finish a cycle of a recreational activity.⁴⁹ Moreover, given the restricted mobility and time, parents prioritise formal education over non-formal activities, which are not a requirement.

"We like playing football and mixing with people. But there is a lot of violence in the home; our siblings and friends are working [to make ends meet], so it is not very appropriate to go out and 'play'." – Syrian girl, afternoon shift, public school, el-Minieh, Tripoli

Another finding is that non-formal education programmes are mostly targeted at younger children aged under 14. This is because of the low numbers of Syrian children who are enrolled in secondary education. On the other hand, social stability programmes are more diverse. While they include younger children aged between 5 and 14, programmes are also targeted at youths (aged 15 to 24), including out-of-school minors. Programmes for older children include vocational training, arts, music and sports activities, which provide young adults with skills while also supporting social interaction.

Several Lebanese young men in Tripoli who take part in an arts and music programme highlighted the skills-gaining aspect and the programme's ability to increase employability and therefore livelihood opportunities. Youths aged between 14 and 22 need more opportunities that are adapted to their age group and expectations. With a high school-dropout rate in formal education, there is a big demand for vocational training and education. Moreover, children spoken to seem to be more interested in skills-based activities that fit with their schedules and mobility restrictions, and that are gender-sensitive as girls and boys face different realities.⁵⁰ Short vocational courses are being discussed between the UNHCR and the MEHE to serve exactly this purpose.

4.2.3 Non-formal education as an income generation opportunity

Another important aspect worth mentioning is the livelihood component for many Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian volunteers in the programmes, who generally deliver activities on the ground and earn varying incomes depending on the NGO. Many of them include Syrians and Palestinians who face difficulties working legally in Lebanon and who often support their families. An NGO field coordinator based in Beirut but travelling frequently to activity locations stated: "These volunteers often face difficult conditions in their own lives, and with time you develop personal relationships with them. They come to you with financial or personal problems and everyone helps out together. Just recently a Syrian female volunteer was being kicked out of her flat, and a large group of us mobilised and covered her moving costs as she would not have been able to do so herself."⁵¹

Several key informants mentioned the critical role of Syrian educators and teachers, who are currently not allowed to work in the formal education system. While up to now their role only existed in non-formal education

48 KII with NGO representative, Tripoli, December 2016

49 Ibid.

50 NGO and UN representatives, Beirut, October and November 2016

51 Ibid.

programmes, this is changing with the appointment of Syrian Community Liaison Volunteers inside Lebanese public schools. The formal involvement of Syrian educators promises to have a positive impact on the wellbeing and learning of Syrian children in public schools, especially as anecdotal evidence from this research pointed towards the vital role of Syrian educators. Some Syrian parents and children are leaving public schools and attending non-accredited Syrian schools, in full knowledge that they would not receive certificates, but citing the presence of Syrian teachers as a reason.⁵²

The Community Liaison Volunteers inside Lebanese public schools will embody the link between schools and refugee communities, taking on the responsibility of providing personalised follow-up to Syrian students and addressing issues such as bullying, violence or discrimination, which often lead to children dropping out.⁵³ Moreover, Syrian organisations interviewed for this research stated that they were currently only targeting Syrians, which makes sense in the framework of their objectives and targeted programmes. However, some of them expressed the need to be more inclusive and to involve children of other nationalities in the community, especially Lebanese and Palestinians.

This research has shown that non-formal education does support positive perceptions and social interactions between children and adults (in the case of the educators and parents involved) of different nationalities. However, challenges remain, especially regarding the nature of the sector, including the lack of regulations or systematisation of activities, the different programmes of varied quality, and the short-term funding leading to short-term projects with limited impact. As an NGO practitioner stated: “‘Social stability’ geared work is excellent, but it is not a long-term strategy to put children in one room and let them play for two hours. What about the other 22 hours of the day?”⁵⁴ Volunteers in the field have been asking to work more closely with schools, including in coordinating timetables and creating links with children who can benefit the most from the programmes.

Summary

While formal schooling is vital to provide children with an accredited and recognised certificate, opportunities for positive social interaction are crucial where tensions are high between and within communities. More structured synergies between both sectors seem vital therefore to ensure that there are opportunities for self-development and positive social interactions.

Non-formal education, such as homework and language support groups, is critical to support students through the academic curriculum. While these activities are rightly targeted at Syrian children, there is nonetheless a huge potential to include Lebanese students who are struggling, which would support positive social interactions. Other opportunities for integrating social stability objectives can be explored by engaging Lebanese volunteers, or adding sports and recreational activities involving children from the local community.

Social stability activities seeking to improve perceptions and provide spaces for social interaction are the most effective measures for creating positive bonds between Syrian and Lebanese children. In difficult times, they allow children to be themselves again while supporting their personal development and learning.

Connecting formal and non-formal education becomes vital in this context, enabling each to complement the other. As many children see non-formal education activities as separate from their daily life, the impact of social stability activities can be strengthened through better coordination with the local schools, especially in selecting children with specific needs. For instance, teachers and counsellors can help select children who engage in fights or bully their peers for inclusion in activities, promoting self-respect and respect for others, non-violent communication and tolerance.

52 KII with NGO representative, Beirut, October 2016; and FGD with Syrian parents, Beirut, November and December 2016

53 LCRP, Op. cit., 2017, p.52

54 KII with NGO representative, Beirut, October 2016

4.3 “Essential yet limited”: The role of parents in contributing to social stability through education

This research has identified the role of parents to be of high importance in children’s educational performance and in creating opportunities for social interactions. As argued above, positive social interactions and cohesion support social stability, by increasing trust and in turn reducing levels of tension between different groups and communities. All key informants spoken to highlighted the essential role that parents play in advancing their children academically, emotionally and socially. This section will examine in more detail the current situation regarding parents’ involvement in education and the indirect role they are playing in supporting social stability.

4.3.1 Parent committees

In the formal school system, parents have a mixed relationship with the school and especially school administrations. By law, Lebanese public schools elect a parents’ committee for the school. Since the establishment of the double shift system, this parents’ committee is restricted to the morning shift only.⁵⁵ While there are a few Syrian parents in the formal committees of parents of first shift students, the majority of Syrian parents whose children attend afternoon shifts cannot formally be part of any committee structure, since this is not available to them and they generally avoid interaction with the school administration.⁵⁶ Recently, NGOs have been working on forming the Syrian PCGs, which operate in a similar way to the formal committees except that they are community based and non-formal – that is, not officially recognised by the school or by law.

Syrian parents who join PCGs work together to raise any issues experienced by Syrian children in the afternoon shifts, or mediate any conflicts that arise among students or between students and teachers. Syrian parents interviewed in the suburbs of Beirut stated that being part of the PCGs has increased their self-confidence and created opportunities for interaction with the school administration. For instance, they played an important role in coordinating pick-up times for the school buses for Syrian children in the afternoon shift, as the buses were initially arriving too early, leaving children standing outside the school for an hour before their shift. Critically, the PCGs have empowered Syrian parents to stand up for their children and themselves when it comes to clarifying misunderstandings.

This research found that Syrian parental support in their children’s formal education is generally limited. According to one key informant, there is increasingly a generational and educational shift between Syrian parents and their children. Parents do not frequently take the initiative to be involved in their children’s educational development as they often feel intimidated by the schools, not least because of the language barrier.⁵⁷ While Syrian parents do greatly value certified education, the difficult living conditions mean that they do not always have the luxury of time or capacities to support their children in issues faced in schools.

4.3.2 Parents’ engagement in activities

The findings also point to a gender discrepancy, whereby fathers are much less involved than mothers in their children’s education, the latter being deemed a female role. Given the shift in gender roles during situations of displacement, women often find themselves with more burdens and tasks, making it difficult for them to

55 Z. Alba and M. Al-Masri, *Op. cit.*, 2016

56 FGD with Syrian parents, Beirut, November 2016

57 KII with UN representative, Beirut, November 2016



Photo: Adam Patterson/Panos/DFID (Creative Commons BY 2.0)

A Syrian boy studying art at a public school in Beirut, 2016.

continue to meet gendered expectations.⁵⁸ In this case, children's education is the responsibility of mothers, who simply do not have the capacities to support them to the necessary extent.⁵⁹

Given that parents' close involvement in their children's education leads to better performance, the lack of Syrian parents' involvement today is creating the risk of a divide and resentment between the generations.⁶⁰ It would be beneficial, therefore, for Syrian parents to be empowered to play a more active role in their children's education. The need to involve parents within the formal education system has been recognised and is being addressed. For instance, the Violence-Free Schools initiative led by the UNDP involves parents closely in school-level peacebuilding initiatives and in developing a code of conduct. NGOs are not allowed to operate inside public schools, but those that are working in semi-private schools do implement activities that include parents, such as for Christmas or Mother's Day.⁶¹

"Initially, it was difficult to include Lebanese children, as their parents were wary of who else would take part in the activity and did not feel comfortable for their children to interact closely with Syrians." – NGO representative, Beirut⁶²

58 For discussions on the impact of displacement on gendered relations among Syrian communities, see R. El-Masri, C. Harvey and R. Garwood, *Shifting sands – Changing gender roles among refugees in Lebanon*, Beirut: Abaad/Oxfam, 2013, <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/shifting-sands-changing-gender-roles-among-refugees-in-lebanon-300408>; L. Khattab and H. Myrntinen, 'Most of the men want to leave' – Armed groups, displacement and the gendered webs of vulnerability in Syria, London: International Alert (forthcoming 2017)

59 Research validation workshop, Beirut, January 2017. See International Alert, *Education is key for social stability, shows new Lebanon research*, 31 January 2017, <http://international-alert.org/news/education-key-social-stability-shows-new-lebanon-research>

60 KII with UN representative, Beirut, November 2016

61 KII with NGO representative, Beirut, December 2016

62 Ibid.

In non-formal education activities, especially social stability activities, parents often create an obstacle to smooth implementation. NGOs interviewed lament the negative role that parents play, especially in encouraging exchanges and extra-curricular activities.⁶³ One example that was cited was a programme implemented by the peacebuilding organisation Search for Common Ground (SFCG) called 'Rainbow of Hope', which started in October 2014 and targeted 600 economically disadvantaged Lebanese and Syrian children, aged 6 to 11, in 25 areas where Lebanese communities are hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees. The programme provides basic and intermediate English language as well as conflict-resolution skills.⁶⁴

Initially, it was difficult to include Lebanese children, as Lebanese parents were wary of allowing their children to interact closely with Syrians. Moreover, some Syrian children were changing their accents and adopting a different identity to be accepted by others, which highlights how aware young Syrian children are of their perceived 'otherness' in Lebanon. However, the programme has shown positive results and parents have become increasingly involved, acquiring greater ownership over the project, especially by taking part in seasonal festivities such as Mother's Day and Christmas celebrations, and even organising activities by themselves.⁶⁵

Further feedback from NGOs underlines the need to significantly rethink parents' involvement in their children's education. As explained above, some Lebanese children's statements in the FGDs echo the sentiments of adults. Given that some have had limited interaction with Syrians themselves, they clearly draw their perceptions from family and public discourse. Programmes targeting children from diverse nationalities and backgrounds often do not involve parents in any way, although the latter are strongly shaping their children's worldview and perceptions of other groups. According to the director of a community-based organisation (CBO) in el-Minieh in Tripoli, "more work needs to be done with parents than with the children". In a context of high tensions between communities, which impact on people's livelihoods and quality of life, it is crucial to acknowledge the context in which children are being brought up, to adapt programmes so they have lasting impact, and to prioritise working with adults and caregivers as well.

Summary

Parents' involvement in their children's education constitutes an important prerequisite for children's positive educational performance. In practice, however, there are obstacles to parents' involvement – such as limited time, low capacities and gender divisions. Moreover, parents often create an obstacle to initiatives seeking to bring children together and need to be further included in such initiatives.

Generally, parents' involvement in their children's education activities is limited, especially among more vulnerable population groups. Parents often lack the time to engage in their children's education due to work, or face security risks when moving around different areas if they lack documentation. While education activities as spaces for 'physical interaction' could bring together parents from different backgrounds, empowering them and their children, in practice challenges remain both in the formal and non-formal spheres.

In public schools, no formal structure exists for parents of children in afternoon shifts to be involved and have a say in the school. Formal parents' committees only exist for the morning shift. Positive initiatives are under way to involve and empower Syrian parents regarding their children's formal education, for instance through PCGs. For non-formal education activities and especially social stability programmes, Lebanese parents are often reluctant to involve their children because of negative perceptions of other groups. The inclusion of parents is generally limited, but NGOs are increasingly recognising the importance of including them in programmes. Involving parents has considerable potential to support social stability through positive perceptions and relations.

63 KIs with NGO representatives, Beirut, November and December 2016

64 KI with NGO representative, Beirut, December 2016

65 Ibid.

4.4 Structural challenges and collaboration opportunities: Making the link between national and local levels

As outlined above, this research explores the work of two separate sectors – education and social stability – albeit not the whole sector, only programmes with an educational focus. The two sectors are coordinated and overseen by two different ministries, the MEHE and the MoSA. The institutional division of two separate sectors, coupled with the existing humanitarian crisis and the scale of the response, mean that the need to maximise positive impact is necessary but difficult to implement.

Having opened its doors to Syrian children, the formal education system is struggling to meet the significant demand from both Syrian and Lebanese populations. The non-formal sector is filling this gap, and has shown itself to be effective in addressing the needs of children affected by conflict and of communities experiencing social conflict. However, initiatives in this sector are often short term and lack the scale of impact that can be

provided by state-driven initiatives. Thus, improving the connections and collaboration between the state and non-state education sectors can help to reduce social conflict by combining the skills and expertise of the non-state sector with the capacity and scale of the state sector. Social stability activities seeking to improve positive perceptions between children of different backgrounds rely on short-term funding, often between four and twelve months, which is not conducive to achieving attitude or behaviour change and makes the work patchy.⁶⁶

While nationwide policies are essential, the real challenges and successes of implementation take place at the community level.

Moreover, there is a risk of duplication of programmes in the same locations or with the same target groups among NGOs at present. The sheer scale of the education sector and number of actors involved means that a clear oversight of all activities is not easily possible, especially of Syrian schools that are deemed ‘illegal’ – although the inter-agency education coordination meetings do bring together as many actors as

possible. While social stability programmes are more straightforward, the coordination and knowledge-sharing mechanisms can be strengthened further, especially in terms of measuring impact, sharing context analyses and learning from programming challenges and adaptations.

In the interest of sustainability, it is imperative to build the capacity and technical expertise of local organisations and their staff, who are mainly on the frontline in mitigating tensions between communities. Furthermore, the business sector is not currently involved in this process, although there is a potential for them to tap into local resources and create local ownership.⁶⁷ Businesses can support social stability in communities through schemes seeking to increase positive social interaction inside and outside the workplace, but also through investing more in the community by supporting rehabilitation of public spaces or through investing in start-up ideas.

Within the formal education sector, there is currently no holistic method of addressing violence and social tensions. In a promising and positive move, the Lebanese government has highlighted the importance of non-violence in schools and aims to focus efforts on this issue. A comprehensive child protection policy for public schools is being developed by UNICEF at the time of writing, which represents an important next step in reducing violence and tensions among students as well as between teachers and students at school. Critical for this policy’s success will be to raise awareness about it at community level among children, teachers and parents,

⁶⁶ KII with NGO representatives, Beirut, October 2016

⁶⁷ KII with NGO representative, Beirut, November 2016

to ensure the established mechanisms will be taken up. This policy represents a positive first step in the broader thinking about addressing social stability in schools.

While nationwide policies are essential, the real challenges and successes of implementation take place at the community level. Municipalities and local CBOs play an essential role in improving trust and cohesion within the community – for instance, in collaborating on the rehabilitation of public spaces such as parks or children’s playgrounds. There is a need for better communication between schools and community-based initiatives to inform people about available extra-curricular activities and to coordinate logistics for those children who attend. Closer collaboration between parents, schools, municipalities and local NGOs offering recreational or extra-curricular activities seems vital at this stage to support social stability in a more sustainable way. At the same time, rehabilitation of public spaces is crucial in order to create the physical space enabling this interaction.

Summary

The sheer scale of the protracted humanitarian crisis in Lebanon means that response efforts are complex and involve different institutions and stakeholders at various levels. An important challenge is bridging discrepancies and gaps between national and local levels when it comes to implementing policy decisions.

Non-formal education activities, as defined by this research, stretch from the education sector to the social stability sector. In conceptualising the role of education as both spaces of ‘learning’ and of ‘physical interaction’, it seems that these two objectives are broadly divided across the two sectors. Non-formal education activities with the aim of improving perceptions and relations between children are often short term, ad hoc and highly dependent on donors. Formal education, on the other hand, is more structured and sustainable as it is implemented by the national government.

The myriad of educational activities being implemented in Lebanon means that, although inter-agency coordination is efficient, some elements fall through the cracks and are not easy to regulate. Moreover, to ensure sustainability of activities and support social stability, efforts need to be made to build the capacities of local organisations and frontline staff in conflict resolution and diversity management.

To ensure that educational spaces provide an enabling environment for learning, self-development and building new relationships, the exchange of opinions and experience of diversity is crucial. Focusing on limiting corporal punishment in public schools, for instance, through a new child protection policy developed by UNICEF represents a promising development in this regard. Furthermore, closer collaboration at the local level between state and non-state actors, bridging traditional ‘education’ actors such as schools and ‘social stability’ actors such as municipalities and NGOs, would present a great opportunity to increase social stability.

5. Conclusion

This report aimed to examine the potential of current education opportunities in Lebanon to support social stability between host community and refugee children. It argues that there is strong potential for education to support social stability in Lebanon by mitigating inter-community tensions, promoting diversity, positive perceptions and behaviour, increasing people's wellbeing, and reducing the use of negative coping strategies. The research has highlighted several existing challenges as well as potential for a constructive intersection between education and social stability.

Formal education

Despite the unique move by the Lebanese government to open its public schools to all school-aged Syrian children in the country, signifying an unparalleled commitment by a national government in the region, the research shows that the formal education system is currently not reaching its full potential in supporting positive social interactions between children, teachers and parents. In the short to medium term, it is vital to continue supporting and strengthening the formal education system, by ensuring enrolment of children from marginalised communities, building capacities of teachers and educators, providing opportunities for physical interactions between children of different nationalities such as recreational activities, and creating more links with non-formal education programmes.

Research findings have demonstrated that children in mixed classes had the most nuanced views of each other, revealing the benefits of schools as spaces for 'physical interaction'. Findings indicate that structural issues such as a lack of engaged teachers, violence and impunity to some degree make social stability in schools more difficult for Syrian and Lebanese children. The Violence-Free Schools initiative of the UNDP represents a good example of incorporating social cohesion activities within the formal education system, and demonstrates the benefits of collaboration between formal and non-formal education, which is otherwise limited.

Non-formal education

This research has shown that programmes supporting children's enrolment in the formal education system, targeted at children's different levels and heterogeneous needs, as well as retention programmes such as homework and language support groups, are critical to supporting students through the academic curriculum and hold untapped potential to support positive social interactions. Social stability activities seeking to provide spaces for social interaction are the most effective at creating trust and positive perceptions between Syrian and Lebanese children but are sometimes seen as being disconnected from children's daily life. In difficult times, they allow children to be themselves again while supporting their personal development, learning and social skills.

As physically bringing together children and youth already helps to break barriers, connecting these activities more to the formal education structure would be widely beneficial. More structured synergies between both sectors can help to address existing gaps in the formal system, such as providing recreational and sports activities for Syrian children who attend the afternoon shift and raising awareness of human rights and children's rights. In addition, activities providing children with useful and practical skills represent a real opportunity for furthering social stability, especially for over 16-year-olds.

Parent involvement

Syrian and Lebanese parents are not sufficiently involved in their children's education, due to limited time and capacities, as well as difficulties faced by Syrian parents in accessing school administration or supporting their children. Initiatives such as the PCGs are beneficial in empowering Syrian parents, but would benefit from feedback to improve the model's credibility. The stronger collaboration between teachers and parents through



Photo: Russell Watkins/DFID (Creative Commons BY 2.0)

Syrian girls study maths at a temporary school set up by UNICEF and Beyond Association in northern Lebanon, 2014.

community models with buy-in from the municipalities would be ideal. The involvement of fathers in their children's education is currently at low levels, and in the spirit of gender equality it should be further encouraged. Moreover, parents often create an obstacle to initiatives seeking to bring children together and improve their perceptions and levels of trust, and need to be involved more strongly and creatively in these programmes.

Structural challenges and collaboration opportunities

The scale and protracted nature of the Syrian humanitarian crisis in Lebanon means that response efforts are complex and involve different institutions and stakeholders at various levels. An important challenge is bridging discrepancies and gaps between national and local levels when it comes to implementing policy decisions. This is especially relevant to ensure that valuable national policies, such as the UNICEF Child Protection Policy, are effectively implemented at the local level, with the buy-in, involvement and awareness of teachers, parents and municipalities. Ultimately, there are constructive opportunities for greater convergence between the education and social stability sectors at national and local levels, such as through increasing coordination of educational activities with children between schools and NGOs, and using school facilities for community events.

Overall, while there are challenges to education and social stability between refugees and host communities, there are many more opportunities to be seized that would improve positive perceptions and relations, and contribute to improved social stability in Lebanon. The next section outlines more targeted recommendations for different stakeholders.

6. Recommendations

For the Lebanese government

The Lebanese government is particularly encouraged to build on the potential of the education sector to contribute to social stability through the formal education system as well as through non-formal education programmes. General recommendations to the Lebanese government include ensuring that non-formal education initiatives aimed at strengthening social stability complement efforts made by formal public schools; and supporting the establishment of a school environment that sustains the personal development of children, including their social skills, self-awareness, and ability to deal with differences and conflicts without violence. The following recommendations outline more specific actions that can enhance the school environment and contribute to more stable communities.

- Build the capacity of teachers in schools and educators in community learning centres to apply more participatory and creative teaching methods that are focused on learner-centred pedagogy, positive approaches to discipline, psycho-social support and skills supporting children with special needs. Promote good practice by publicly recognising the achievements of teachers and incentivising teachers with awards.
- Prioritise the implementation of the memorandum prohibiting corporal punishment in public schools and actively work on sanctioning educators who use violence, as part of broader efforts to improve child protection in the public education system. Increase initiatives and efforts based on the Violence-Free Schools model, which includes the participatory development of school codes of conduct by students, parents and teachers, and the organisation of community activities led by students, teachers and parents.
- Build on initiatives involving Syrian educators in strengthening stability in public schools, and continue efforts to engage them in school and community activities. As the creation of Education Community Liaison Volunteer positions in formal schools already represents a constructive step, this can be followed up with close monitoring of the impact and provision of necessary training support.
- Seek to better integrate life skills and civic awareness into children's education in formal school. For example, adapt the civic education or physical education classes in the first shift by drawing on best practice from similar programmes provided by civil society organisations. Consider integrating similar activities into afternoon shifts and in MEHE-endorsed non-formal education programmes, such as the ALP.
- Finalise the curriculum revision and teacher training package that incorporates psycho-social support and recreational activities targeted at both Syrian and Lebanese children. In the short term, facilitate access for civil society partners that offer extra-curricular activities for second shift students. To maximise the potential of such activities to support social stability, they could focus on raising awareness of children's rights, positive coping strategies, conflict resolution and tolerance.
- Maximise the potential of parents' involvement in the formal education of their children, such as through organising information sessions on relevant topics inside the school premises and talks by education experts or community events. Open the space for dialogue in the schools by making parents' committees more inclusive and representative, and ensure existing mechanisms for grievances and complaints are strengthened and used.
- Continue to develop policies and interventions that are open to all communities to avoid tensions arising from targeting Syrians exclusively. Also, ensure that children with special needs of all backgrounds receive sufficient support.

For implementers of non-formal education programmes

Implementers of non-formal education programmes are encouraged to increase collaboration, starting with mapping out programmes that show evidence of positive impact on furthering social stability, sharing best practices, facilitating linkages to complement each other's work, and supporting the formal system with the know-how and expertise from the non-formal education field. Specific recommendations are as follows.

- Target children for social stability activities by ensuring a balanced composition of gender and nationality, including Lebanese and non-Lebanese children, to support positive group dynamics and set an example for inclusion in community and social life.
- Cater for the different needs of children in diverse settings, taking into account gaps in the formal education system such as physical education, rights awareness and the development of skills related to employability. Ensure that programmes are gender sensitive and account for the gendered expectations of, and restrictions on, boys and girls.
- Scale up the involvement of parents in education activities for children through sharing lessons learned and best practices regarding positive parent engagement between practitioners, building on community groups and family-based approaches. This could include, for instance, increasing PCGs for afternoon shifts, and ensuring systematic, accountable and structured interaction between Syrian parents and school administration in order to improve the school environment.
- Engage local authorities and the community more directly in non-formal education programmes to ensure buy-in, ownership and sustainability of efforts. This will also help to avoid tensions arising from perceptions of targeting specific groups based on their nationality.
- Use public spaces and school premises to foster interaction between communities and encourage collaboration between schools, community groups and municipalities. Also, link rehabilitation of social infrastructure with follow-up activities, such as non-formal education and cultural events that bring youth from both communities together.

For donors

Donors are particularly encouraged to support programmes that integrate social stability objectives into education provision and to ensure complementarity of ongoing efforts in the formal and non-formal education sectors.

- Encourage collaboration between MEHE, MoSA, and education and social stability actors in harnessing the potential of education to support social stability. For example, support the promotion of human rights, diversity and tolerance in the formal school system and through enabling easier access to schools for non-formal education initiatives geared towards improving perceptions and social interactions between refugee and host communities.
- Provide financial support for multi-year programmes to ensure sustained impact on children's relationships with and perceptions of peers and educators from the other community. Prioritise programmes that have already proven to build trust between implementers and communities, and those that facilitate enrolment and retention in the formal education system, such as homework and language support groups. At the same time, facilitate learning and exchanges between refugee and Lebanese children.

- Support a holistic response to the crisis in all sectors, including education, mainstreaming social stability objectives and involving the active participation of stakeholders, especially at the community level – such as parents, teachers, municipality representatives, and children and youth themselves.
- Encourage and support national, regional and global efforts to research, challenge and learn from programmes that use education to support social stability.

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