Ministry of Education and Higher Education

National Policy for Alternative Education Pathways

Meeting the Diverse Learning Needs for the Vulnerable and Marginalized Children and Youth in Lebanon

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PREFACE

Lebanon's policy for **alternative education pathways** sets up prospects to meet the diverse learning needs for the marginalized children and youth, through which the regularization of Non Formal Education should be viewed as a window for change. This will provide evidence for how non-formal and lifelong learning could feed together into a coherent framework for the regularization of all education. Its elaboration is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, Education Agenda 2030, the long-term development priorities and existing successes driven by Lebanese Government. With a new vision of learning, reflecting national and local contextual realities, each child and youth in Lebanon, regardless of their origin, could become an agent of positive change in society.

In crisis there is always an opportunity, and now could be the occasion to develop better-regulated and multi-pronged set of education pathways that feed into the formal system. These pathways work in synergy with the formal education system. This policy is a response to what is asked for within RACE II - alternative education pathways for the diverse learning needs of the most vulnerable.

The policy supports our efforts to address quality education for all children and to work towards supporting cohesion and harmony, avoiding conflict and promoting coexistence among the most vulnerable as well as the refugees. We hope that the outcome of this policy will further advance the alternative pathways to learning, providing a more adaptable education, centered on equity, access, quality, accountability and transparency, with new forms of certification and accreditation established.

Ministry of Education
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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATONS

BLN	Basic Literacy and Numeracy
CBECE	Community-Based Early Childhood Education
CCA	UN Common Country Assessment
CD	Capacity Development
CERD	Centre for Educational Research and Development
CLC	Community Learning Centre
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DOPS	Département d'Orientation Pédagogique et Scolaire
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESDF	Education Sector Development Framework
ESP	Education Sector Plan
EU	European Union
FLS	Flexible Learning Strategies
GoL	Government of Lebanon
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
IBE	International Bureau of Education
IIEP	International Institute of Educational Planning
IRC	International Rescue Committee
MEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MENA	Middle East and North Africa region
MOL	Ministry of Labour
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NESP	National Education Strategic Plan
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NGF	National Qualifications Framework
NTF	National Task Force
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

ODI   Overseas Development Institute
PMU   Program Management Unit
RACE   Reaching All Children with Education in Lebanon
ROVs   Refugee Outreach Volunteers
SDGs   Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV   Sexual and gender-based violence
TA   Technical Assistance
3RP Plan   Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2016-2017
TVE/TVT   Technical and Vocational Education/ Training
UIE   UNESCO Institute for Education
UIL   UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
UIS   UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNDAF   United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP   United Nations Development Program
UNESCO   United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA   United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR   United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF   United Nations Children's Fund
UNOCHA   Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNRWA   United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in
            the Near East
USAID   United States Agency for International Development
WB   World Bank
WFP   World Food Program

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Active-learning: whereby participants take active part in their learning processes rather than passively listening or adopting knowledge through rote learning.

Alternative pathways to learning: alternative and multiple routes for engaging in learning, and a means of achieving educational qualifications alongside formal schooling.

Capacity: ability, skill, aptitude or capability to carry something out, including the competence, strength, understanding and knowledge to be effective and productive.

Capacity Development: process whereby people, individually and collectively, organizationally and institutionally, strengthen their capacities to manage their affairs in an autonomous and efficient fashion.

Child-centred: an approach whereby children are understood to be the starting point for breaking the cycle of poverty, discrimination and exclusion. A child-centered approach promotes change that is in the best interests of the child and is aimed at fulfilling children's rights to sustainable human development.

Communities of Practice: groups of individuals who share common concerns, knowledge and interests and who come to learn and develop together.

Flexible Learning Strategies: systematic, flexible, rights-based, inclusive interventions designed to match needs and circumstances for excluded children (outside of the formal schooling system) to acquire functional basic literacy and numeracy skills as well as competencies and life skills. The term is used to cover various initiatives and different terminologies, including equivalency programs, certified non-formal education (NFE), accelerated learning programs, second chance education, community-based education/school/learning, flexible schooling programs, complementary programs, alternative learning programs, etc.

Formal Education (FE): learning that takes place in education and training institutions and centres. This learning is recognized by national authorities and bodies and leads to diplomas and qualifications. Formal learning is structured according to educational arrangements such as curricula, qualifications and teaching-learning requirements.

Governance: the processes and systems through which governments, governing bodies or civil society organizations make decisions and operate.

Holistic: a complete form of education that prepares students to meet the challenges of life in all their variety and creates meaningful connections between what they learn and their environment.

Institutional capacity: the environment and climate needed for organizations and institutions to function in terms of laws, managerial regulations, policies, culture, customs, norms, etc.

Lifelong learning may be described as learning that takes place throughout life, its flexible, diverse and undertaken at different times and places. Lifelong learning is learning that takes place beyond formal schooling and throughout adult life, based on the principles of learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be.

Multi-stakeholder Partnerships for Education: a beneficial association between partners from different spheres of society (such as the private sector, community groups) to address and tackle issues in education.

Non-formal Education (NFE): learning that has been acquired in addition or alternatively to formal learning. In some cases, it is also structured according to educational and training arrangements, but more flexible. It usually takes place in community-based settings, the workplace and through the activities of civil society organizations. Through a recognition, validation and accreditation process, non-formal learning can also lead to qualifications and other recognitions[1].

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[1] UNESCO Institute of Statistics (http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/non-formal-education)

Systems Perspective: viewing systems as a whole, made up of many components, and considering all factors which contribute to a given issue or activity.

Vocational Technical Education: Compromises two basic fields: Technical and Vocational Education and Technical and Vocational Training. Technical and Vocational training focuses on the jobs and occupations, which do not require extensive theoretical knowledge. Technical and Vocational education relates to jobs and occupations requiring a thorough knowledge of the theory and a solid scientific and technological base and it is of 4 main levels:

    a. Brevet Professionnel (BP),
    b. BT (Baccalauréat Technique),
    c. TS (Technicien Supérieur),
    d. LT (Licence Technique).

CHAPTER ONE

LOCAL CONTEXT AND DYNAMICS

Context for Emergency Action

In total 47 million people across the Arab region, live with conflict and crisis, are displaced and vulnerable, facing insecurity and uncertainty, with a limited sense of belonging and what the future holds for them. (UNESCO 2017)[2] The problem of out of school children becomes significant in countries affected by conflict, where the proportion increased from 63% to 87% (UNESCO 2015)[3]. Within this regional context, the Government of Lebanon instituted The Lebanon Response Crisis Plan, which recognizes that over **1.4 million children and youth in Lebanon** are currently identified as being vulnerable (LCRP 2017-2021)[4].

While better living standards and access to education may be attainable for some, the poorer and lower middle class are unable to do so and thus their living conditions and quality of life are affected. The effect of this is stark, with lower attainment of education outcomes, particularly within a family context with limited education, severely contributing to inequality of opportunity (World Bank, 2017)[5].

Lebanon has been further challenged by hosting of more than 1.5 million Syrian refugees, the highest per capita ratio in the world. 35% of this population are children (3-18 years old) of school-going age.

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[2] UNESCO (2017) UNESCO Strategic Framework for Education in Emergencies in the Arab Region (2018-2021) https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/unesco_strategic_framework_for_eie_in_arab_region_english.pdf

[3] UNESCO (2015) Education for All: 2000-2015. Achievements and Challenges. Global Monitoring Report. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002322/232205e.pdf

[4] Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (2017-2020). http://www.un.org.lb/lcrp2017-2020

[5] World Bank (2017) Lebanon: Promoting Poverty Education and Shared Prosperity. Systematic Country Diagnostic http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/698161468179049613/pdf/97498-CAS-P151430-SecM2015-0202-IFC-SecM2015- 0073-MIGA-SecM2015-0047-Box391476B-OUO-9.pdf

The majority of Syrian refugees have settled in **low-income areas within Lebanon**, spread across informal settlements already stricken by poverty and instability. Almost 9 out of 10 refugees are concentrated in 251 locations, considered to be among the poorest and most disadvantaged in Lebanon (EU 2017)[6]. The public sector is currently under intense strain to cope with the influx of refugees. This has been circumvented by the opening up of second shift schooling for afternoon sessions, leading to greater uptake by Syrian refugee children. With strategic and tireless efforts taken by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), trends show moderate enrollment growth over the past years, reaching 60% of refugees in compulsory education (age 6-15). Nevertheless, the majority of secondary age children of refugees remain out of school, a significant number of which cannot be overlooked, in further exacerbating their vulnerability.

The proportion of Syrian refugees living below the minimum threshold for survival (unable to afford **necessities like food and shelter**) has doubled in the last two years. Legal income-generating opportunities are limited and or restricted. This, in turn, has led to 97% of the refugees employing negative coping strategies such as reducing the amount spent on food, dropping out of school, child labour, early marriage for girls, as well as the potential for young people falling into radicalization and extremism. (VASyR 2016)[7].
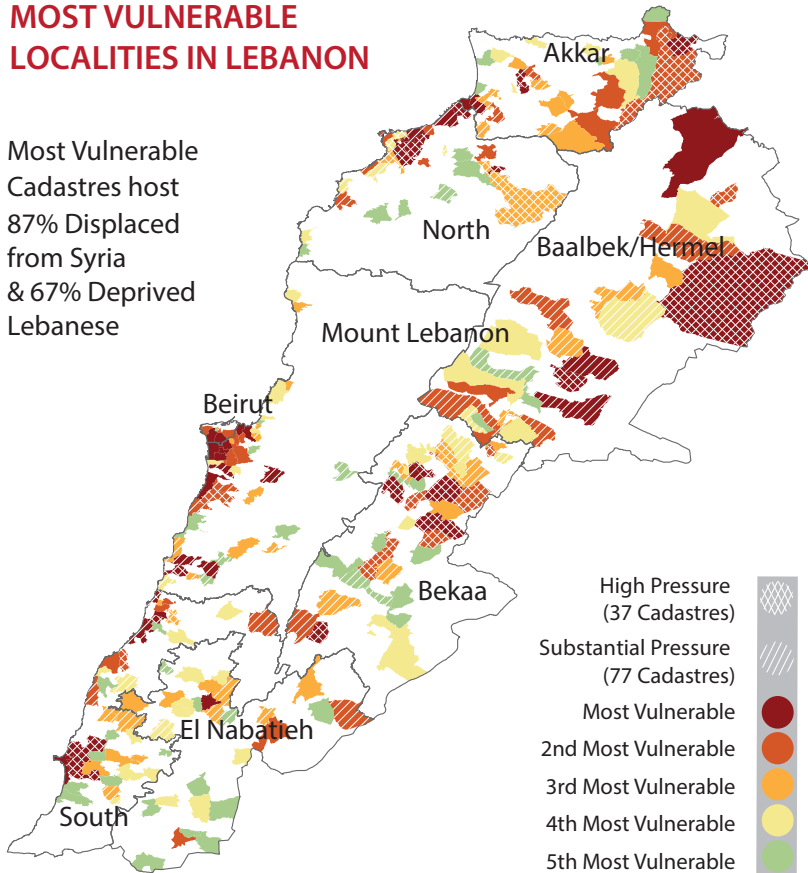
But **tensions are not just economic**. There has been an upsurge in cultural and political tensions, especially in the under-served localities settled by refugees, notably in the North where 30% of Syrians live and in the Bekaa, where 34% are concentrated. Within this contextual reality, Lebanon's response on many fronts, particularly the education front, has been vital to ensure that a whole generation of young refugees and vulnerable Lebanese's do not get left behind.

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[6] European Commission (2017). Lebanon: Syria Crisis https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/lebanon_syrian_crisis_ en.pdf

[7] United Nations **Children's** Fund (UNICEF), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) (2016). Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR-2016) https://reliefweb.int/sites/ reliefweb.int/files/resources/VASyR2016.pdf

MOST VULNERABLE LOCALITIES IN LEBANON

Most Vulnerable Cadastres host 87% Displaced from Syria & 67% Deprived Lebanese

Akkar

North

Baalbek/Hermel

Mount Lebanon

Beirut

Bekaa

El Nabatieh

South

High Pressure (37 Cadastres)

Substantial Pressure (77 Cadastres)

Most Vulnerable

2nd Most Vulnerable

3rd Most Vulnerable

4th Most Vulnerable

5th Most Vulnerable

Source: LCRP 2017 update – the map and figures are currently under review to include more vulnerable cadasters - it will be updated later in 2019.

Education Sector Response

Considering the enormity of the task in accommodating vulnerable Lebanese and an influx of refugees, the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) with the support of donor agencies and education partners, has coped remarkably well in the development and implementation of the first phase of 'Reaching all Children with Education' (RACE I) (MEHE 2014-2016)[8] as a crisis response plan. Centered around the three pillars of access, quality and systems strengthening, and within the framework of the 'No Lost Generation' (UNICEF 2013)[9], MEHE constructively utilized education and schooling as a primary shield for child protection, limiting disruption where possible, helping children retain some notion of routine and familiarity, while providing them with learning opportunities to carry on with their lives. RACE I demonstrated commitment and good progress towards increasing the demand for education and thus encouraging enrollment of both vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian refugees into formal public education.

The first phase of RACE I (MEHE 2014 to 2016)[10], has been completed with much success. Building upon the achievements and addressing the systemic issues that the program had faced, RACE II: 2017 to 2021, (MEHE 2016)[11] has been launched with the goal of sustaining increased and equitable access to quality education for all children aged 3 to 18 in Lebanon. RACE II is framed within the SDG goal 4/ education, aimed to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."(UN 2015-2030)[12] Within this context the MEHE as a priority through RACE II acknowledges the importance of addressing the needs of the child, family and community, whether they be vulnerable Lebanese or refugees.

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[8] MEHE (2013). Reaching all Children with Education in Lebanon (RACEI) http://www.mehe.gov.lb/uploads/file/2015/Feb2015/Projects/RACEfinalEnglish2.pdf

[9] UNICEF (2013) No Lost Generation. Protecting the Futures of Children Affected by the Crisis in Syria. https://www.unicef.org/appeals/files/No_Lost_Generation_Strategic_OverviewJanuary_2014.pdf

[10] MEHE (2014) Reaching All Children with Education (RACE I: 2014-2016). Ministry of Education and Higher Education. http://www.mehe.gov.lb/uploads/file/2015/Feb2015/Projects/RACEfinalEnglish2.pdf

[11] MEHE (2016) Reaching All Children with Education (RACE II: 2017-2021). Ministry of Education and Higher Education. http://www.mehe.gov.lb/uploads/file/2016/Oct/RACE%20II_FINAL%20 Narrative_29AUG2016.pdf

[12] United Nations (2015) Sustainable Development Goal in Education. http://www.un.org/ sustainabledevelopment/education

Key Current Factors and Issues

Lebanon clearly sees education as a **fundamental human right** and a **life-saving intervention**, and its schools-based response to the refugee crisis should be acknowledged. Despite the evident successes of RACE I, the increase in the numbers of refugees, leaves a significant number of Syrian children without access to formal education. While the MEHE is making constructive progress in cooperation with education partners towards redressing this, the problems seem to relate to whether children and youth are able to get to school, or parental restrictions due to poverty and livelihood circumstances or a lack of commitment to education. Systemically, the limited available funds to scale up access on the one hand, and quality on the other, are further issues that restrict progress.

Prior to the Syrian crisis, Lebanon's public sector education was involved in a process of reform, notably to address low academic attainment in its schools, and increase the spread of pre-schools for vulnerable Lebanese communities. Successes were achieved in assuring access to education, and it goes without saying that the Syrian crisis and the priorities of the emergency response, have redirected efforts elsewhere, but **the need for reform** remains solid.

This policy is a response to what is asked for with RACE II - alternative education pathways, which provide an opportunity for Lebanon to address education for all but also to work towards supporting cohesion and harmony, avoiding conflict and promoting coexistence among the most vulnerable as well as with the refugees. The importance for recognizing and accepting difference as a valuable common good, enriches lives.

More than

1/2 of displaced
from Syria are Children

Source: LCRP 2017 update

The public sector employs only 43.8 per cent of the 88,413 teachers (RACE 2015)[13] in Lebanon and numbers are stretched. Teacher qualification comes after a 3-4 years university degree. The national pupil teacher ratio in basic education is 7.4 but this varies from region to region. In order to deal with the effects of the refugee crisis, the MEHE is employing contractual teachers to supplement its own staff.

There is also a large contingent of Lebanese educators and facilitators in non-formal settings. A fair proportion of these people, both contractual teachers and NFE facilitators, have not been trained in managing large groups or been helped professionally in how to engage in **child-centered practices** - or how to provide **support in areas such as health, well-being and trauma** alongside the program content.

School directors and teachers must frequently work independently to find practical solutions to quickly changing situations. At the forefront teachers in the public school sector have been facing mounting **demands on their time and resources**. Newly hired teachers were particularly challenged to address the individual needs of traumatized refugees within large classrooms in addition to challenges related to the differences in their skills and age. Some teachers have had to resort to teaching

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[13] MEHE (2015) Reaching All Children with Education in Lebanon.
   http://www.mehe.gov.lb/uploads/file/2015/Feb2015/Projects/RACEfinalEnglish2.pdf

solely in Arabic while others have noted that the whole **dynamic of classrooms** has changed, and requested improved basic learning material to replenish school libraries and enrich the learning environment.

Vulnerability assessments identify obstacles for low enrollment of Syrian refugee children (VASyR 2016) as follow[14]:

▶ Some public schools have no access to piped water and sanitation facilities, significant in under-serviced areas where the pupil to latrine ratio may be very high (UNHCR 2017).

▶ School Infrastructure which in some cases not well equipped with adequate latrines and wash facilities.

▶ Access to schools which may be geographically too far from refugee settlements and neighborhoods.

▶ Trauma resulting from conflict, migration, displacement and transition.

▶ Parents unable to commit to a year's education as refugee families are often living with uncertainty about moving on, and identifying opportunities to settle down.

▶ Bullying and violence is experienced by both Syrian and Lebanese pupils and parents.

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[14] United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) (2016). Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR 2016) https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/VASyR2016.pdf

Key Principles for Alternative Education Pathways in Lebanon

Defining learning differently

People are always learning, at all time, wherever they are, whoever they are. We learn from experience and from exchange with others. We interact, we discover, inquire, observe, copy and mimic, practice and fail, try again and teach others. Each new day brings the need for new skills and understanding. Schools and formal education settings dominate the education agenda worldwide and often are the only channel to get competences tested and certificated. The inadequacies of students sitting in rows in teacher-led classrooms for defined period of times - focusing on one subject area without any application to the real world - are something all education systems are having to face up to. A move towards a **more versatile and diverse education systems to accommodate the multiple locations and pathways for learning**, provides an opportunity for education systems to diversify and work towards enhancing the quality of education provided. Alternative pathways (MEHE 2016)[15] to learning are a firm recognition that **learning isn't just formal** and that there are a multitude of approaches within different learning spaces. Alternative pathways are any learning activities which occur both inside and outside of formal education. In other words, education where learning can be improvised and adapted to any specific tasks and any population groups, its aspirations and needs. Protection will be at the heart of NFE at all levels, with emphasis on non-violent policies.

In the case of Lebanon, such a form of education would be to provide vulnerable children and young people and refugees with immediate tools, necessary know-

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[15] MEHE (2016) Reaching All Children with Education: RACE II (2017-2021).
http://www.mehe.gov.lb/uploads/file/2016/Oct/RACE%20II_FINAL%20Narrative_29AUG2016.pdf

how and attitudes, that are not always possible for them through the formal system. The aim is to provide disadvantaged groups to access or return to school or for those groups whose education pathways were interrupted because of poverty, conflict or violence so they can eventually catch up with the Lebanese educational system.

Flexible settings and modes of delivery

Alternative pathways make full use of the skills, knowledge and competences we use in life or will use in life rather than narrowly interpreted school-based competencies. They can take the shape of anything from community meetings, workshop sessions, workplace training, entrepreneurship programs, language classes, arts and crafts groups, multimedia clubs, youth skills counselling, self-help therapy, after- school classes, awareness groups or peer learning.

The MEHE has already made good progress towards developing and implementing Preparatory Early Childhood Education, Community Based Early Childhood Education (CBECE), Basic Literacy and Numeracy (BLN), Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), Youth BLN and Technical and Vocational Training. The content of these learning programs is further being planned and developed by the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD) in close coordination and cooperation with the Program Management Unit (PMU) at the MEHE. These are all good examples of highly adaptable learning pathways, all certified and working towards the formal education system. They can suit any number of settings and delivery modes. Some of these programs can also take place within formal schools, others in community learning centres or spaces, as part of mobile teaching schemes, at weekends or in the evening. They can mould to different teaching methodologies (multi- grade, activity-based learning, specific approaches for people with a disability or special needs children.

Alternative pathways to learning in Lebanon could also encompass everything from remedial language support designed to support retention, vocational and livelihood skills development, to accredited programs supported by the MEHE. The establishment of safe, protective, and quality learning environments is central, to ensure learners' best interest as well as to protect children and youth based on the "Do No Harm" principle. Utilizing the settings that approved NGOs provide, allows opportunities to work with children on issues that cause tension, exclusion, conflict, violence and lead to extremism. The NGOs settings also allow facilitators to

respond constructively to the cultural diversity, forming the basis for cohesion and harmony, conflict avoidance, non-violence, and peaceful coexistence. All of this is certainly possible and could be very easily incorporated as part of the current RACE II programs ranging from Accelerated Learning Programs (ALP), Basic Literacy and Numeracy (BLN), Early Childhood Education (ECE), and agricultural techniques.

Targeting the most vulnerable and marginalized

The focus of alternative learning pathways should be the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, thanks to accessible and flexible, learner-centered channels to education with methodologies close to **learners**' needs and contextual realities, namely:

▶ Vulnerable out of school children and youth, such as: children and youth with special needs, stateless children, working children, etc

▶ Refugee children and youths: Syrian, Palestinian outside camps and Iraqi children

▶ Hard-to-reach population groups (particularly children from Informal tented settlements)

▶ Girls, particularly those at risk of early marriage and sexual exploitation

▶ Ethnic minority children and youths

Alternative pathways to learning are egalitarian and accountable

The purpose of alternative learning pathways is to ensure that everyone, whatever their background, is given the opportunity and skills to reach their full education potential.

▶ Enables learners to acquire essential academic competences and contributes to their personal development, thereby preparing them to step confidentially to the formal education system.

▶ Learning content and educational tools of all kinds can be produced reflecting lived contexts and are specific to identified local needs.

▶ Education content is prepared directly relevant to the specific needs of learners, based on the Lebanese curriculum, empowering them to catch up with their peers in the formal system.

▶ Education skills are prepared directly relevant to work and life-long activities, seeking to meet basic everyday needs (such as water, good, shelter, health, income).

▶ Promoting cohesion and harmony and conflict avoidance, non-violence, and peaceful coexistence do not require lengthy investment over time and can prepare learners immediately reflecting the environment and context of individuals lives.

▶ Require no certification or formal testing to enter into. They do not discriminate against those who are not able to afford formal schooling or have no specific prior knowledge needed for schooling.

- ▶ Are less likely to create social distinctions or intimidate learners.
- ▶ Relations between educators and learners are less formal. They are a step away from authoritarian teaching.
- ▶ Some programs may not necessarily compartmentalize learners by age, ability, gender, etc.
- ▶ Benefit the most excluded, allowing the disadvantaged to catch up with the advantaged.
- ▶ Includes qualified and well-trained educators preferably form the community.

Alternative pathways to learning are flexible

Depending on the nature and objectives of each program:
- ▶ They are programs that provide basic levels of education but are also about promoting human-centered development and social cohesion.
- ▶ They can use techniques to reach audience within a classroom or in MEHE approved NGO settings.
- ▶ Can use any opportunity as a chance to learn or as an educational tool. They do not employ convoluted theories and abstraction but use every day experiences and habits as entry points.
- ▶ Work around the participant's time: learners take on learning at their own pace – whether this is within the formalized MEHE setting of NFE programs or within communities in partnership with NGOs.
- ▶ Can adjust to each learner's profile and condition. They treat each student as a whole person with a variety of needs (psychosocial and economic).
- ▶ Can cover any subject matter formally approved by MEHE and established by CERD as per an agreed framework: reading, writing and numeracy, from local issues to global concerns.
- ▶ Value practical observation and intuition. They involve learning by practice (mirroring the empirical ways things are made and commercialized in excluded settings - particularly the informal economy).
- ▶ Work on the basis that no community is deprived of knowledge and the challenge is to reveal that knowledge.
- ▶ Work with community structures, culture, language and belief systems to create greater ownership and participation.
- ▶ Work with a wide range of MEHE approved and accredited providers, partners and approaches.

TOWARDS INCLUSIVE POLICY FOR ALTERNATIVE LEARNING PATHWAYS IN LEBANON

> *Provide learning spaces to improve quality learning, life skills and employability for youth (MEHE, 2016)*[16]
>
> *Alternative, flexible and inclusive learning programs equivalent to conventional/traditional schooling and accredited by the government will be the key for addressing access to quality education for all learners in the 21st century and a future-oriented approach to basic education. These will enable children to acquire not only basic literacy and numeracy but also the competencies/ life vocational skills required to live in a globalized world. (UNESCO, UNICEF 2013)*[17]
>
> ***Non-formal Education (NFE):*** *learning that has been acquired in addition or alternatively to formal learning. In some cases, it is also structured according to educational and training arrangements, but more flexible. It usually takes place in community-based settings, the workplace and through the activities of civil society organizations. Through a recognition, validation and accreditation process, non-formal learning can also lead to qualifications and other recognitions.*
>
> *(UNESCO 2006)*[18]

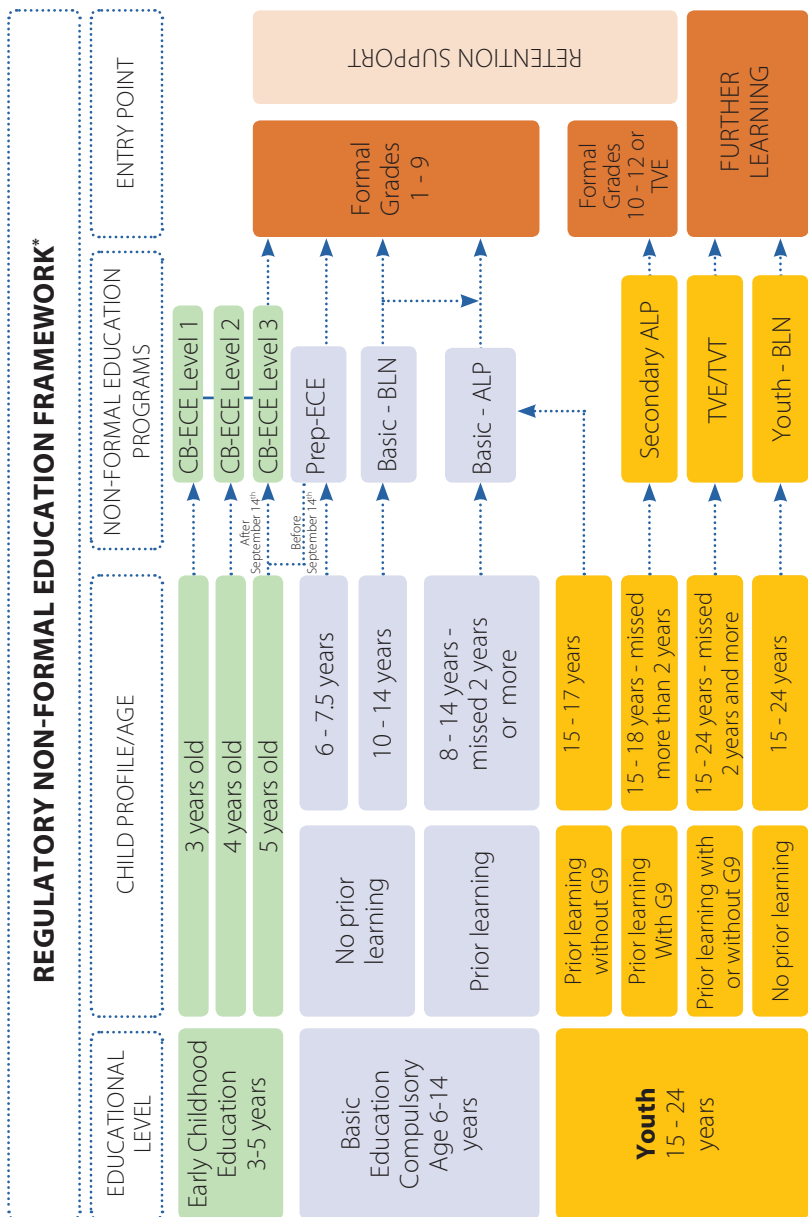[16] MEHE (2016) Reaching All Children with Education: RACE II (2017-2021)

[17] UNESCO & UNICEF (2013). Flexible Learning Strategies for Out of School Children. http://www. unescobkk.org/news/article/ regional-consultation-meeting-on-flexible-learning-strategies-for-out-of-school-children-29-30-nove

[18] UNESCO (2006). Synergies between Formal and Non Formal Education. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/ images/0014/001460/146092E.pdf

Many of the basic assumptions that shaped and guided employment, social relations, culture, politics, economics and the environment have radically changed over the past 30 years. Regrettably much of the education reform planned in Lebanon has been severely affected by the Syrian crisis, restricting all the efforts being undertaken with Lebanon's public sector education system. The MEHE accepts the choices it has to make with regards to education and has already broken new ground within the constraints of the crisis. The double-shift system for refugees has been a critical and innovative way forward, and the development of **RACE II**, **embracing a more inclusive approach**. It is important to also acknowledge that the current education response and the proposed RACE II framework, does provide opportunities for learning that enables skills acquisition, ultimately for accessing jobs and organizing a more stable and autonomous future for individuals.

REGULATORY NON-FORMAL EDUCATION FRAMEWORK*

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	CHILD PROFILE/AGE		NON-FORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS	ENTRY POINT
Early Childhood Education 3-5 years		3 years old	CB-ECE Level 1	Formal Grades 1 - 9 (RETENTION SUPPORT)
		4 years old	CB-ECE Level 2	
		5 years old	CB-ECE Level 3	
Basic Education Compulsory Age 6-14 years	No prior learning	6 - 7.5 years	Prep-ECE (After September 14th)	Formal Grades 1 - 9
		10 - 14 years	Basic - BLN (Before September 14th)	
	Prior learning	8 - 14 years - missed 2 years or more	Basic - ALP	
Youth 15 - 24 years	Prior learning without G9	15 - 17 years		
	Prior learning With G9	15 - 18 years - missed more than 2 years	Secondary ALP	Formal Grades 10 - 12 or TVE
	Prior learning with or without G9	15 - 24 years - missed 2 years and more	TVE/TVT	FURTHER LEARNING
	No prior learning	15 - 24 years	Youth - BLN	FURTHER LEARNING

Reaching All Children with Education: RACE – PMU / MEHE (2018)

* Eligibility criteria for admission to a specific program is based on age and/or educational needs of the learner.

In crisis there is always an opportunity and now could be the occasion to develop **better-regulated and multi-pronged set of NFE Programs as pathways to formal education**. These pathways work in synergy with the formal education system (UNESCO 2006)[19]. This is an opportunity to accept the role of formal schooling and its infrastructures, but also of **recognizing and gradually creating synergies and bridges** with a series of complementary pathways **(non-formal, lifelong)** in, around and out of **formal** learning settings. Each should be monitored, accredited and certified, but also regulated and evaluated within a coherent and coordinated whole. Such a system would address the learning needs of every child and potential or active learner, from children and young people who drop out of education or working with high-achieving school graduates, working with a wide range of partners from schools to civil society and NGOs.

Policy Aim

The aim is to move towards a **more versatile and diverse education systems to accommodate the multiple locations and pathways for learning**, and to provide vulnerable young people and refugees with immediate tools, know-how and attitudes, that are not always possible for them through the formal system or are too abstract in that system to be accessible.

Policy Objectives

▶ Provide disadvantaged children whose education was interrupted with alternative pathways to **return to school and catch up with the formal educational system**.

▶ Strengthen a **system for alternative pathways** for learning which address the learning needs of every child in Lebanon.

▶ Provide children and youth with **knowledge and skills** responding to their needs in order to improve their quality of life.

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[19] UNESCO (2006). Synergy between Formal and Non Formal Education. An Overview of Good Practices. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001460/146092E.pdf

Priority NFE Programs

▶ **Preparatory Early Childhood Education** (Prep-ECE for ages 05 and 07) – to be implemented in public school setting throughout the regular scholastic year in parallel to the other cycles. The program content is developed by CERD. It combines learning materials of KG1, KG2 & KG3 in one condensed program.

▶ **Community Based Early Childhood Education** (CB-ECE for ages 03 – 05) – to be implement in community setting by eligible NGOs under MEHE SOPS. The program content is developed by CERD. It is divided into 3 consecutive levels, where each is delivered for a short period of 3-4 months.

▶ **Basic Literacy and Numeracy** (BLN for ages 10 - 24) – to be implemented in community setting by eligible NGOs under MEHE SOPS for children (Basic-BLN for ages 10 – 14) and adolescents (youth-BLN for ages 15-24). The program content is developed/approved by CERD.

▶ **Accelerated Learning Program** (ALP for ages 07 – 24) – to be implemented in public school setting for children (Basic-ALP for ages 07-14) and adolescents (secondary-ALP for ages 15-24) who have missed 2 years or more of education. The program content is developed by CERD. It is designed to reflect a condensed version of the national Lebanese curriculum. The program is to be delivered in short periods of 4 months.

▶ **Technical and Vocational Training** (TVE/ TVT for ages 15 to 24+) – to be implemented in a well-equipped setting and through linkages with the private sector.

Psychosocial support and life skills education will be mainstreamed within the contents of all regulated NFE programs.

Key Indicators for NFE Programs

▶ Net enrollment of learners in each NFE program disaggregated by gender

▶ Net enrollment in programs' graduates disaggregated by gender

▶ Number of learners who retain in NFE programs

▶ Number of schools/centers equipped and implementing NFE programs

▶ Number of NFE learners transited to formal Education

▶ Number of trainers and trained educators and education personnel

- ▶ Number of educators employed in NFE learning spaces
- ▶ Number of educators who receive a MEHE-endorsed NFE educators' guides and training materials
- ▶ Development and roll out of improved NFE program content and examinations, supported by appropriate teaching materials
- ▶ Number of national NFE textbooks and supplementary materials covering core competencies piloted, evaluated, and printed
- ▶ Number of national NFE educator's guides developed and printed
- ▶ Enhanced national institutional technical capacity in planning and managing of NFE programs
- ▶ Enhanced technical capacity of institutions for the collection, storage, processing, and analysis of data and information
- ▶ Number of governmental and non-governmental partners
- ▶ Amount of donor funding to the non-formal education programs.

Priority Policy Actions

Under the leadership of the MEHE, the PMU and CERD, taking on board the development and future implementation of alternative pathways to education to help meet the diverse learning needs for the marginalized, will require (under the framework of the SOPs provided by PMU) the following:

Provide disadvantaged children whose education pathways were interrupted to return to school and catch up with the Lebanese educational system

1. Country-wide advocacy and awareness-raising in communities, especially hard-to-reach communities, on the right to education and the possibilities of multiple routes towards certification;
2. Advocate for the value of education by providing evidence and on how earning potential is enhanced by school participation;
3. Fully subsidize enrollment fees for children and youth who opt to enroll in NFE programs;
4. Fully subsidize education related costs such as textbooks, stationery, meals, and special needs equipment;

5. Enable food security so that children and youth can truly benefit from education;

6. Equip NFE learning spaces with relevant equipment and appropriate infrastructure;

7. Enable safe transportation coverage so that children have access to education.

To provide children and youth with knowledge and skills responding to their needs in order to improve their quality of life:

1. Develop regulated content for each non-formal education program targeting out of school children and youth, with defined standards and indicators to monitor effective outcomes and quality education;

2. Explore and develop education responses for out of school youth and adolescents that focuses on the dual relationship between basic education, livelihood and vocational skills;

3. Build and sustain capacity and competence of educators and service providers to deliver and maintain development of quality education for out of school children and youth;

4. Recruit and train assessors within PMU and CERD, who should be experts in their field of education and training;

5. Recruit and train facilitators , ensuring professional development of facilitators with appropriate qualifications, skills and competencies, including guidance and trauma counselling;

6. Respond to addressing the diverse learning needs of children with special needs;

7. Respond to addressing gender equality for programs to be sustainable and meaningful;

8. Ensure that prior knowledge of learners is recognized, if needs be through counselling and guidance and information sharing, if necessary bridging courses and supplementary courses might be provided to fill in gaps;

9. Develop flexible forms of assessment (both summative and formative), combining formal and less formalized methods (these might include interviews, evidence collection, self- assessment, preparation of individual plans; evaluation of credentials and qualifications, observation and demonstration);

10. Developing partnerships between education providers and with labor unions, employers, welfare stakeholders so that job-seeker competencies are matched with the learning that is enabled by education providers, while respecting the employment Lebanese regulations for non-Lebanese;

11. Ensure young people learn in safe environments, doubled with psychosocial support for trauma and discrimination counseling;

12. National cross-sector mapping of learning gaps and shortcomings, including understanding of causes for low student enrollment, school drop-out, high repetition rates, etc. in the formal system and how parallel pathways could address these causes.

To strengthen a system for alternative pathways for learning which address the learning needs of every child in Lebanon:

1. Develop and create the systematic monitoring and evaluation of the application of the policy for alternative pathways, so that implementation and progress can be sustained;

2. Nurture cooperation with civil society organizations, validating their involvement in working towards delivery of accredited education programs;

3. Articulate synergies between NFE, lifelong learning, and formal education, scaling up areas of learning excellence, reinforcing efficient structures;

4. Establish evidence-based planning and budgeting, collecting and disseminating good practices from the field, where technical expertise might be needed for the bringing together of the various threads of learning;

5. Ensure close coordination and partnership agreements between MEHE and learning providers, including NGOs: coordinating and synchronizing responses, strengthening implementation strategies and arrangements, opening up communication channels between the MEHE and the providers of the various alternative pathways;

6. Assure that certificates given through alternative pathways have equal currency within formal education and training, as well as the labour market. Certification should be of similar type and value as formal education and vocational training and be part of a wider qualification and quality assurance framework;

7. Involve the private and public sector in the range of educational providers, and in the design of commonly agreed flexible learning content directly linked to the present and future needs of the employment market;

8. Assure legal and policy foundations for the NFE framework for regularizing all education providers. A legislative framework further secures investment from both public and private sources and guarantees wider acceptance, creating a consensus among key stakeholders who have defined roles and responsibilities;

9. Identify and ensure vetting and organization for the accreditation of NGOs and provider partners, establishing positive relationships and collaboration;

10. Cross-sector and country-wide recognition of the new alternative pathways approach and a common understanding of these pathways (including a standardization of terminologies, and what is meant by non-formal, formal, lifelong learning). The process of recognition should include all stakeholders in a decentralized structure, including participants in education programs themselves.

Proposed System for direct service provision

The overall responsibility for the implementation of the program for Alternative Pathways to education lays with the MEHE, delegated the PMU. Operationalizing RACE II is the key mandate for the PMU in cooperation with MEHE relevant departments. Delivering the various NFE and alternative pathways programs relies on coordinated implementation by schools, municipalities, and community learning centres.

Roles and responsibilities of service providers:

Providers	Responsibilities
MEHE	• Overall responsibility for assuring education system nationally for all children including vulnerable Lebanese, Syrian, Iraqi and Palestinian refugees. • Relates to ensuring licensing, registration, validating and accreditation. • Assuring development, maintenance of infrastructure to oversee accountability and implementation.
Project Management Unit (PMU)	• Responsible for NFE education policy, planning, research and development. • Coordination with CERD to undertake research to inform planning, program content development, teacher training, as well as assessing delivery of quality education with a particular focus on NFE. • Selecting and approving NGO's to undertake targeted NFE programs. • Review, plan and monitor inclusive NFE programs, sustaining enrollment, completion and addressing those out of school. • Review and identify through monitoring and evaluating programs addressing vulnerable and marginalized children and youth. Including monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the CB-ECE, ALP, BLN and Youth BLN and other community-based interventions. • Collecting, collating, and analyzing education data. • Undertake and support development of accredited training curriculum and pilot programs to bring teachers and service providers up to speed in working with targeted children, youth and communities. • Develop and disseminate the SOPS for NFE programs. • Collate and register education data revealing outcomes and efficacy.

Centre for Education Research and Development (CERD)	• Structuring and revising the Lebanese program content for NFE. • Drafting and designing NFE national textbooks. • Designing NFE educators performance standards and teacher monitoring protocols. • Drafting and revising NFE comprehensive educators training packages for public schools. • Drafting the content of NFE Program exams and assessments. • Develop training of NFE education staff in coordination with PMU • Deliver training for trainers and facilitators as requested by PMU. • Plan and develop education program content and training of educators in competent delivery of quality NFE learning content • Developing in coordination with PMU tools and mechanisms to determine NFE learning outcomes, on effective enrollment, completion, retention and transition from NFE to formal education. • Undertake development of accredited training counselling programs for teachers and school health promotion program providers and accessible to NGOs and communities. Focus of these programs should be related to psychosocial issues dealing with displacement and trauma.
UN Agencies	• UNESCO, UNHCR, and UNICEF are the key UN agencies to support the delivery of NFE programs in Lebanon. The role of each of these agencies in so far as NFE education provision is concerned relates to supporting children and youth to access education and learning opportunities. The three UN agencies can support MEHE as such. • Provide technical and capacity building expertise to the development and implementation of the NFE different programs.

UN Agencies	• Provide financial support to the implementation of the NFE programs. • Support with the registration fees for enrolled children. • Provide students and families with incentive package such as (food, transportation, stationaries, etc). • Conduct in coordination with MEHE outreach and awareness raising efforts.
National NGO's, community based organizations, and International organizations	• Utilizing their capacity and reach, national, community based and international NGOs are grounded on delivery of humanitarian program. As such, they serve a valuable conduit for MEHE to deliver and undertake education programs that would form a pathway to accredited education. Under the regulation of MEHE they can: • Support MEHE in delivering certain NFE programs. • Support MEHE in data collection and M & E. • Support with the outreach and awareness raising efforts • Support the learning content printing process when and as requested by the PMU

Regulatory body and functions

Regularization, coordination and certification of alternatives to formal schooling are essential to ensure the quality and relevance of the diverse education programs being implemented across Lebanon. In addition to contributing to quality and relevance, it spells out the potential for synergies between formal and non-formal education, thereby shaping the MEHE's vision for learning as a whole. Working towards a common and mutually beneficial education system is critical for all stakeholders, then regulation is an important aspect of how the MEHE enables and maintains quality education. Given the broad interpretations and visions of education outside of formal schooling, a more regulated and coherent synergy between formal and non-formal education clearly needs to be developed. The PMU within the MEHE has the lead role in maintaining not only an affirming role for the delivery of non-formal education of quality, but to continue to develop further alternative pathways as a means of addressing education is accessible for all in cooperation with the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD). Both these entities are mandated to design and develop the implementation of

alternative pathways focused on NFE. Some of the critical areas of development for these two entities would include developing capacity and tools that commit to a strong focus on inclusion, child protection and safety within learning. CERD based on the request of PMU will engage in a consultative process to undertake NFE program content development and revision of already developed programs, in partnership with the service users, so that program content is developed in line with what is required.

Implementation of NFE programs will take place within public schools premises or community learning spaces, led by the PMU in full coordination with partners. Tracking this policy action points to assess effective enrollment, completion, retention and transition rates in NFE programs, will be critical towards monitoring the efficacy of the overall delivery system.

Building approved partnerships with civil society with capacity to deliver multiple forms of education, will further support the delivery non-formal education. NGO's need to be identified, with their competencies assessed and provided clear terms of reference to legitimately provide standardized alternative pathways to education. Faced with finite resources and capacity, the MEHE thus has a dual challenge: to expand necessary partnerships between MEHE and NGOs, and demand a greater degree of accountability and oversight of education outside of the formal system. This would be vital for MEHE to assure that quality and transparency is maintained. Therefore, a reporting mechanism should be respected.
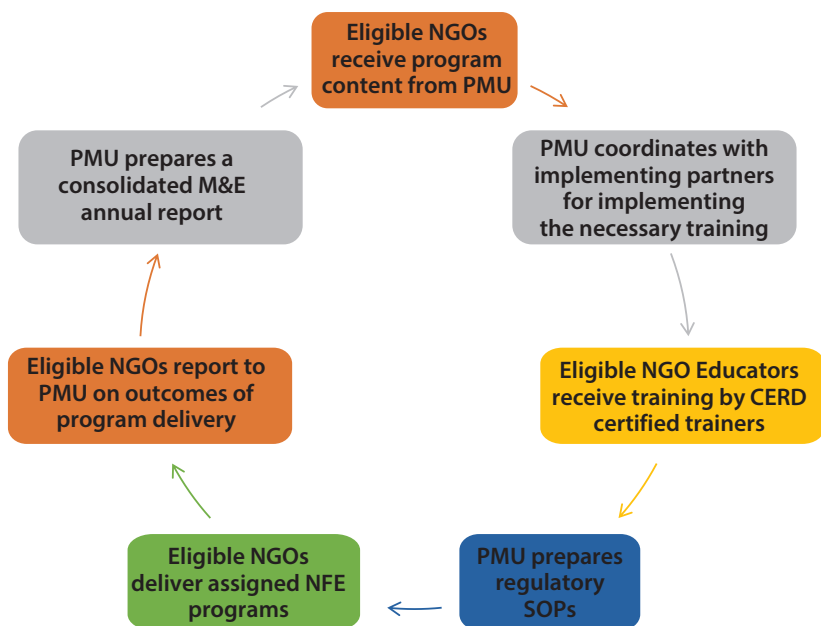
Reporting and Regulatory System Led by PMU

* Eligible NGOs are those who have applied for the Expression of Interest to implement a specific NFE program, received acceptance letter by MEHE, completed the certified training, and committed to implement the program as per the SOPs terms of reference.

TOWARDS INCLUSIVE AND FLEXIBLE PATHWAYS TO EDUCATION

Within the Lebanese context, non-formal education pathways to learning are an urgent and necessary counterpart to double-shift schooling. A far-reaching **remodelling and diversification of the educational landscape** would help Lebanon address some of the pressing issues facing especially the out of school Syrian refugees and Lebanese vulnerable children and youths and provide them with different education pathways to join the formal system.

RACE II and the NFE Framework facilitates the implementation of alternative pathways to education, particularly for the most vulnerable and marginalized. Focusing on the principals of access, quality and accountability, **RACE II sets out a broader vision to assure education for all**. Strengthening capacity, building infrastructure and enhancing the regulatory function headed by the MEHE, will guide the different strands of learning based on what is necessary. For all this to happen, there is an openness to inclusive education provision and recognition that alternative learning pathways can work in synergy with the formal sector.

Alternative pathways to education will require an investment in inventive modes of delivery in order to create **synergies between non formal and formal education for the vulnerable**. With all this in place, the framework for alternative pathways to education could filter the work of NGOs, INGOs, UN agencies and the international community to support Lebanon more comprehensively, becoming both an operational platform and an opportunity for funding and research, boosting national capacity and creating responsive and sustainable pathways for sustainable development. Within a new and plural educational landscape in Lebanon, **everyone, including the most disenfranchised, could become a participant in learning**. While the **Lebanon's** education system provides a source of innovation and an example for the Arab Region, it also offers the chances of reconstructing Syria not be missed one day.