What is the Fate of Education in Lebanon?

“Since I was born, my homeland Lebanon has always been the beacon, university, and hospital of the East. It never occurred to me that the fate of schools in Lebanon would come into the unknown due to an endless series of crises.

September arrives in 2021 carrying along ramifications and impacts that are ravaging the educational sector in Lebanon on all levels and across different educational institutions. As a result, the educational sector has become like other sectors, experiencing a slow death that is affecting teachers, students, and their parents alike.

Today, this problem is reflected in several stark indicators that threaten the entire academic year, most important of which is that over 1.2 million children in Lebanon have been out of school since the beginning of the crisis in 2019 to this day, knowing that these are the reported numbers only. What is worse, is the number of unregistered Lebanese and refugee students, which proves that an entire generation is at risk of being lost. Resources indicate that 100,000 students are expected to transfer from private to public schools which may cause a major problem to the Lebanese public schools due to their inability to accommodate this number as well as to the private schools since they will be losing many students in times where no solutions are currently available. UNICEF reported that 15% of the Lebanese parents have discontinued their children’s education where at least 1 in 10 children have been forced to work to support their families during the ongoing economic crisis. As a result, many children have been deprived of their basic rights to education and psychological wellbeing and are expected to support their families instead of paying attention to their education.

How are we expected to kick-start this academic year with such difficult living conditions? How is it possible with the absence of fuel and the increase in prices and tuition fees which will prevent many students and teachers from coming back to school? How will schools manage to operate electrical generators to make heating and lighting services available for students and teachers? Academic institutions, including schools, universities, and vocational institutions, are currently unable to draw up school budgets. They will not find a way to recover without miraculous assistance from active associations concerned with education.

On the other hand, we should not forget about the refugee students in Lebanon that have been out of school for more than 10 years, a matter which made their chances to access education even more scarce. These children had to seek refuge in another country, drop out of schools for several years, and have no access to their basic rights which have increased the proportion of child labor and child marriage in refugee camps. Who is expected to help these children? Who is responsible for solving the capacity problem in public schools which accommodate Syrian refugees during the night shifts? With underserved Lebanese students transferring to public schools as they can no longer afford education in private schools, public schools are at risk of not being able to accommodate double the number of students.

The questions are as endless as the current crisis, however, we, in URDA’s education sector, declare that we will not give up our goals. We will keep encouraging the donors abroad to save Lebanon’s Economic Sector which is considered the key to solving the country’s ongoing crises. Without innovators, thinkers, and brilliant individuals, we will never be able to rise again and create educational and developmental projects aimed at supporting the youth. We only have hope with education which is our only way to succeed.”
Together, We Won’t Stop: URDA Launches its Emergency Back to School Campaign

Through its education sector, the Union of Relief and Development Associations in Lebanon launched an emergency back-to-school campaign entitled “Together, we won’t stop” which composes of four major interventions including student sponsorship for university, school, and vocational school students, in addition to offering school bags and stationery, and school supplies and equipment, as well as providing students with transportation fees.

The campaign targets 10,000 extremely disadvantaged students of all nationalities across Lebanon and will last 4 months starting in September 2021 and ending in December 2021.

The campaign comes amidst a socio-economic crisis in Lebanon, which has led to an educational disaster, where children face a real risk of not returning to school. According to a recent Save the Children report “Lebanon Education in Crisis: Raising the Alarm, “Lebanese children received a maximum of 11 weeks of education during the past school year, with fewer weeks in Syrian refugee’s schools. The same report stated that since the COVID-19 outbreak in Lebanon, more than 1.2 million children have been out of school.

Their education is in your hands. Press the Image to Donate

Al Nour School Continues its Summer Program for the 3rd Month in a

Pens, papers, clay, balloons, colors, and paintbrushes are simple tools that have come together in the hands of our young students who have been passionately drawn and painted their promising future.

It is the third month in a row in the Al Nour summer school which is filled with activities and movement. Our educational staff offers its best ideas and display high creativity seeking to provide active and targeted educational classes through class and non-class programs aimed at refining personality, and building practical skills based on experience and observation.

Project Coordinator, Hamza Diab expressed his gratitude to URDA’s Education Sector, which has accompanied and supported all its employees and volunteers throughout these activities to provide the best and fairest service to students. Diab noted the efforts of the management and educational teams to adapt the curriculum in a way that serves the idea of the four programs: science, sports, art, and skills building.
URDA's Education Sector Organizes the “School in a Bus 2” Event in Al Yasmine Camp in Bekaa

In the presence of representatives of associations and non-governmental organizations, and with generous funding from Read Foundation UK, URDA's education sector launched two buses as part of the “School in a Bus” project on Tuesday, 14 September 2021, in Al Yasamine refugee camp in Bekaa and Sibleen refugee camp in Lqaim Al Kharrour, where the two buses will deliver education to 200 marginalized children who are unable to access their basic rights in a step that aims to break the deep-rooted stereotype of education in students’ minds.

The buses were equipped with the basics for a successful educational process, targeting the neediest segment of camp children, offering science and entertainment programs and interactive classes within a distinctive educational environment, with educational and technical tools, as well as targeted film screenings and puppet shows to develop thinking and build a conscious personality.

In his recorded speech during the ceremony, the CEO of Read Foundation, Jahangeer Akhtar emphasized URDA’s role and efforts as a key partner for implementing humanitarian projects in Lebanon through its professional staff that understands Read's vision, mission, and core values.

The “School in a Bus” project is being implemented in the Bekaa area for the second year in a row, and for the first time ever in Mount Lebanon, in a new experiment for refugee students in that area. Two more buses are being prepared to operate in Aarsal and Akkar to set off on a new journey that will instill hope in the hearts of students who have been denied an education where it will connect them to formal education in a unique human experience.

“The Word Puzzle,” an Innovation at Al Nour School

“During the beginning of my daily tour around classes and halls at the summer course at Al Nour School in Aarsal, I was inspired by an educational tool that is stimulating and exciting to students’ minds and their lexicon. From white and green cardstock and some decorations, our Arabic teacher Sawssan was able to create an educational tool. Our students managed to assemble around 38 words from scattered letters and cardstock.”

Teacher Sawssan says, “I was struggling with students in the first cycle due to their reading and pronunciation challenges and have been working with them so that we could build meaningful Arabic sentences. Here, by gaining some skills from the active learning training sessions, I created this game which I have called “word puzzle,” where it became easier for a student to move the characters up or down to form a word, and then the other one would move it back to form a second word until we manage to form a set of consecutive words and make up a sentence.

This endeavor is the result of abundant creativity in any teacher, where perseverance leads creativity to explode leading to great results.

I have seen the students so excited and driven to get on the white board, which I have never seen before. It is through play that our children learn with motivation and love, where information is acquired and stored in minds without the slightest bit of boredom. We all remember how we used to acquire information in our practice of educational games and without any thought of its influence or result.

Hamza Mohammed Diab
Al Nour School Project Coordinator
TRT’s report on the "School in a Bus" project which was launched by URDA's education sector in a ceremony on Tuesday, 14 September 2021.

International Day of Charity

A study published by the United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) revealed that Lebanon has 82 percent of its population living in multidimensional poverty, considering broader dimensions such as health, education, and public services.

In this context, and on the International Day of Charity, URDA stresses its continued support for everyone in need across Lebanon regardless of their nationalities through its specialized sectors. URDA strives to increase its humanitarian and relief services to alleviate the suffering of the poor. All thanks and appreciation go to our donors and partners who have always contributed to the implementation of URDA’s various relief projects, as well as to our staff and volunteers who strive to achieve the organization’s humanitarian mission.
The GBV Team in the Bekaa Concludes its Training Courses

The Gender-Based Violence team in Bekaa delivered the final training session for 78 Syrian women at URDA's Protection Center which is part of a training program that has been running over a period of one and a half months. The training sessions included a number of programs aimed at raising awareness for women to have a safe space in their lives, both physically and emotionally (free from trauma, excessive stress, violence, and fear of violence and abuse), as well as providing them with the necessary methods and courses to develop their skills, knowledge and strengths to make decisions that affect their lives, allowing them to feel valuable to themselves and others.

Finally, the certificates were distributed to the participants and it was agreed that a new program would be presented over the next weeks.

URDA's GBV Program Offers Art Therapy to Women in Aarsal

Because creative psychotherapy has become one of the basic treatments offered by the gender-based violence program in URDA, a group of women who benefited from our psychosocial support sessions in Aarsal carried out activities that included handicrafts and painting, centered on the freedom of abused women and the way out of abusive environments.

Our GBV team is currently providing this method of therapy to Syrian women who suffer the consequences of conflict and crisis with a view to alleviating the psychological burden they feel. One of the team’s active volunteers stressed that art therapy is a psychological therapeutic approach based on artistic mediums such as painting, sculpting, and all that is picturesque as an essential tool of expression, as individuals not only rely on speech in the communication process, but also interact with artistic work in order to communicate their thoughts and strive to overcome their psychological difficulties.
URDA's Child Protection Program Concludes its First Training Course in Psychosocial Support and Positive Parenting in Saida

In a day full of fun, laughter and entertainment, URDA's Child Protection Program completed its first cycle of activities on psychosocial support for children and positive parenting for women. A special celebration was held for the beneficiaries at the Protection Center in Saida on 26 August 2021. The program included awareness-raising activities for Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian children and women, including the involvement of children in various physical activities and games, the development and investment of their talents, the enhancement of drawing skills for their importance in eliminating suppressed negative feelings and the provision of space to alleviate stress and psychological tension.

To foster a sense of confidence among the participating women, courses have been offered on the foundations and skills of healthy positive parenting to raise healthy grown children, who can face the future positively and vigorously, whatever the circumstances are, through practical ways and ideas for developing the child’s personality.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the beneficiaries expressed their thanks and gratitude to the team overseeing the implementation of these projects, which will be established periodically in all URDA protection centers in various Lebanese regions.

URDA's Protection Sector Provides Psychosocial Support Sessions for Members of the Druze Women's Association

URDA’s gender-based violence program, in collaboration with the Druze Women’s Association and the Social Health Center, distributed food parcels to Lebanese women in the Majdelbeana area after participating in psychosocial support sessions through Zoom in Mount Lebanon. The sessions addressed a number of social concepts of social stress, as well as the importance of taking care of mental health and accepting the other.

The sessions were positively received, as participants expressed the extent to which they had benefited from these sessions, which gave them hope that life can continue in the current circumstances. The sessions also discussed topics and ideas that will be the focus of future sessions. The gender-based violence program continues to provide psychosocial support sessions on various topics in various Lebanese regions to beneficiaries of all nationalities.
URDA’s Livelihood Sector Supports Agricultural Projects

Currently, the agricultural sector in Lebanon is facing many problems that have a negative impact on development, namely, the imbalance between population growth and available natural resources.

It is in this spirit that the agricultural sector is considered the cornerstone of economic and social development, especially since the worst economic crisis in Lebanon casts a shadow over the agricultural sector.

Amidst this crisis, URDA undertakes various agricultural projects across the livelihood sector and with generous support from several donors, with the aim of strengthening agricultural skills, securing food, and empowering women among the neediest groups in Lebanon.

URDA’s Livelihood Sector Supports and Implements Productive Projects

URDA’s Livelihood sector has been and will always be supporting and implementing projects based on a whole production system, taking care of each component including labor, capital and land, for example, in our micro-gardening project, the livelihood sector implements the following:
1. Crop production by planting seeds with no fertilizers, no pesticides
2. Harvesting crops
3. Cooking meals
4. Recycling organic plant debris such as compost reused in our next agricultural cycle.

This way, all projects will guarantee production, food security and sustainability.
URDA's Legal Protection Program Studies the Legal Needs of Syrian Refugee Women in Bekaa

The Legal Protection Program in URDA is pursuing a field study on the legal status and needs of married Syrian refugee women in the Bekaa area. 170 women have so far been interviewed to study their basic legal needs, such as their need to prove marriage or divorce, birth registration, and other legal matters.

The importance of the field study in humanitarian action lies in the fact that it is the primary method of obtaining information, identifying needs through observation, direct contact with the target group of the study, as well as guiding humanitarian action based on the results of the study.

Tips by URDA's Healthcare Sector

Our healthcare team prepared more important tips on the importance of being vaccinated against COVID-19. Make sure to get vaccinated!