international alert

Promoting social stability through education
Guidance for educators

About International Alert

International Alert works with people directly affected by conflict to build lasting peace. We focus on solving the root causes of conflict with people from across divides. From the grassroots to policy level, we bring people together to build sustainable peace.

www.international-alert.org

About the project

This guidance note was produced within the framework of the Safe to Learn project, which aimed at consolidating knowledge and good practice on supporting social stability through education. The guidance note draws on consultations with organisations working on education and child protection and on learning generated through other projects, including those funded by Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and the Safe to Learn global initiative, hosted by the End Violence Partnership.

Acknowledgements

1. Introduction

The growing pressures of the economic crisis, teachers' strikes, child protection concerns, and the move of thousands of Lebanese students from private to public schools have increased social tensions related to education in Lebanon.[1] Public schools, which in 2016 opened their doors to Syrian refugee children and enrolled close to 200,000 students, mostly in afternoon shift classes, were facing a new set of challenges and demands on their overstretched resources. Children were witnessing high levels of violence, bullying and harassment in learning spaces, their homes and the communities where they live. Tensions within Lebanese communities and between Lebanese communities and Syrian refugees have both increased since 2018, contributing to an environment in which violence and discrimination are often the norm.[2]

In this challenging context, everyone working in education needs to prioritise efforts to make learning spaces safe and welcoming, prevent violence, promote a sense of belonging, and support children's and teachers' wellbeing and growth alongside academic achievement.

Drawing on 40 years of experience in peacebuilding and work with organisations supporting education and child protection in Lebanon, International Alert (Alert) has developed this guidance note for practitioners in the education sector to provide practical, actionable steps to enhance social stability in and through education.

2. What is social stability in the context of education?

Based on discussions with education partners and institutions, and its experience in social stability programming, Alert understands social stability in the context of education in Lebanon as a **feature of learning communities that are able to address and prevent violence against children and where students, staff and caregivers share a sense of belonging to the school and surrounding community**. In this guidance note, the concept is used interchangeably with 'social cohesion'. A learning space – a school, a non-formal education (NFE) centre or a community centre – is 'cohesive' when students, educators, other school personnel and caregivers from all backgrounds are free from violence and bullying, have a sense of belonging to the school as an entity, share a sense of solidarity with others in the school community, and follow the school rules.[3] A learning space

plays an active role in the broader community and connects community members around the shared value of education.

3. Why is social stability in education important?

Education providers need to maximise efforts to build social stability for three main reasons:

- **To prevent school dropout:** School dropout has been linked to bullying and disengagement of students from schools.[4] Research on violence has affirmed that boys and girls who have been victims of violence are 26% and 24% respectively more likely to drop out of school compared with other students.[5] Students and parents in Lebanon highlight bullying and violence in schools as a contributor to school dropout.[6] Out-of-school children in Lebanon already number more than half a million and this figure increased to more than a million during the prolonged teachers' strikes.[7]

- **To protect children from physical, emotional and psychological harm:** The ideal school is safe and free from bullying. Bullying is associated with lower self-esteem, higher anxiety and depression, higher rates of illness and more suicide ideation.[8] Research in three NFE centres has shown that 47% of children aged 7-12 had been bullied in the preceding 12 months and three in four had witnessed violence.[9] Another study established that students in both public schools and NFE centres reported verbal violence by teachers and instances of physical violence applied as a form of discipline.[10] In public schools, where the two-shift system separates students, violence occurs primarily in the transition between shifts. Public school teachers are largely unaware of child protection policies. NFE teachers are familiar with child protection, but are often uncertain of their right to intervene in cases of bullying and prefer to refer any incident to their child protection colleagues.[11] Due to the challenging environment, both students and teachers report increased psychosocial support needs, which public schools are struggling to meet due to lack of specialised staff.

- **To foster dialogue and build competencies to enable students, caregivers, teachers and other school staff to be active members of peaceful**

societies: In Lebanon, 37% of the population defines relations between Lebanese and Syrian refugees as negative or very negative, a figure that reached 82% in the Bekaa.[12] Competition over low-skilled jobs and access to services is seen as the main source of tension. Educators need to understand the real and perceived causes of social tension, and help students cope with the pressures their families face, while respecting others and resolving conflicts without violence. Furthermore, education can provide opportunities for opening dialogue and working together as part of a school community.

Promoting social stability in learning spaces is critical, but it is worth noting that this is unlikely, on its own, to achieve systemic change or impact nationwide education policies. In addition, civil society organisations need to consider the national picture and advocate for specific changes in education policy. National curricula and policies on accommodating displaced children in Lebanese schools are less susceptible to advocacy, but less sensitive issues such as child protection policies in schools offer an entry point for civil society engagement in improving systems.

4. Planning an education intervention that supports social stability

Understanding the local social cohesion context is essential when designing an education programme, planning a school lesson or adapting ongoing activities to positively impact social stability. This includes understanding relations within and between communities, the communities' perceptions of other groups and the roles of women and men, attitudes towards education and the types and prevalence of violence, including its use as a tool for discipline and conflict resolution. The context analysis needs to identify the main sources of tension, relations and perceptions of different members of the school community, and their vision for improving social stability.[13]

The theory of change needs to be directly linked to the context analysis. Results related to the prevention of violence in and around schools should be linked to the specific types of violence present in the context and the root causes of the violence. Cultural violence, which is related to dominant stereotypes and perceptions, and structural violence, which is related to the education system, and

legal and policy frameworks, are often causing the 'visible' violence against children (physical, verbal and sexual). Similarly, improving the sense of belonging to the school community should be linked to addressing the root causes of detachment, tension and mistrust towards the school or learning centre, or towards members of particular social groups. Interventions need to be tailored to reduce the violence and marginalisation experienced by different groups.

5. What are the main principles of an education programme for social stability?

An education programme that supports social stability is inclusive and conflict sensitive, promotes cultural diversity, and fosters trust between students and teachers.

An inclusive programme or lesson takes into consideration all types of learners, regardless of their background, gender, ability and learning style. Teachers in inclusive classrooms do not allow favouritism, do not strengthen stereotypes, and obstruct micro-aggressions from boys interrupting or domineering over girls.

A conflict-sensitive education programme actively seeks to reduce divisions between groups and to increase connections. Such a programme needs to be embedded in the local context and based on analysis of existing dividers and connectors between different groups (teachers and caregivers, girls and boys, Lebanese and Syrians, children from family X and family Y etc.). Staff of education programmes must be sensitised to conflict and gender issues through training, peer-to-peer dialogue and learning sessions.

Schools are regarded as places where students should learn to respect cultural diversity.[14] This is especially the case in diverse societies such as Lebanon where local demographics do not always allow children to be exposed to differences before attending university or joining the workforce. Teaching respect and appreciation of diversity can be integrated into lessons,[15] codes of conduct, school trips and cultural festivals. Bringing together students of different backgrounds can also have academic benefits.

Building strong relationships based on trust between teachers and students is another key principle of education programmes that support social stability. Research with

students in NFE centres has shown that students who are victims of violence are more likely to seek help from an adult they trust.[16] This finding emphasises the need for teachers to build strong relationships with their students.

6. Promoting social stability in early childhood education (ages 0–6)

Work on social cohesion starts in the early years, when children can learn skills to help them grow into active members of peaceful societies. Schools and education centres can integrate lessons, games and activities into their pre-school programmes to develop competencies and attitudes supporting cohesion. The most age-appropriate approach is to focus on key skills and competencies that children need.

The National Social and Emotional Learning Framework for students in grades 1-6, which was developed by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) and the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD) in 2021, can be expanded to include socio-emotional learning (SEL) skills for pre-schoolers.[17] The following competencies related to social cohesion can be taught with creative SEL tools and play-based learning tools such as puppets, storytelling, crafts and hands-on activities:[18]

- **Understanding other people's needs and preferences:** This helps the development of empathy and skills for conflict resolution (the 'theory of the mind').[19] Although children's capacities to understand others' needs are underdeveloped, most children can understand different perspectives by the age of six. Educators in early childhood education programmes need to show patience and use specific play-based tools to develop skills for kindness, compassion and calm responses to conflict.

- **Emotional regulation to help nurture non-violence:** Early childhood education programmes need to teach young children the skills to recognise, manage and regulate their emotions, such as anger and frustration (the Turtle Technique is a commonly used play-based tool). Dimmed lights, calm music and warm water can help children overcome feelings of anger and frustration. These competencies are particularly important for educators working with children who have experienced trauma.

- **Anti-discrimination attitudes including recognising bias:** Educators in early childhood education programmes need to model behaviours that are non-discriminatory and teach young children how to actively recognise and challenge bias. Educators need to be aware of the impact of their actions and relations with colleagues and children of different backgrounds and genders on young children. Teaching young children about discrimination is best achieved through storytelling and the use of persona dolls (dolls representing people of different nationalities, religions and ethnicities to whom children can address questions about their lives and customs).

- **Skills for non-violent conflict resolution:** These skills can be developed in young learners through puppets and role plays that demonstrate ways to manage emotions, listen, take turns and offer help. Educators can also use disputes between children to work with the group and brainstorm peaceful solutions. (Note that it is important to hear from the children who were involved in the dispute before discussing it.)

7. Promoting social stability in programmes with school-aged children (ages 7–15)

Work with school-aged children can be integrated into the activities of schools and NFE centres or take the form of additional activities focused on peace and social cohesion such as peace education curricula in community centres.

7.1 Integrating activities into regular lessons in schools and NFE centres

Work on social cohesion in schools and NFE programmes needs to be integrated into regular lessons or introduced in extracurricular activities because the established curricula (such as basic literacy and numeracy) do not allow for the introduction of new courses.

To create a culture of non-violence and foster a sense of belonging, teachers should plan a series of sessions that they can integrate into their lessons. A series of sessions, rather than a one-off lesson, creates a process and allows students to build stronger connections and empathy with

each other, and develop skills to manage conflict without violence. Educators can use short exercises, discussions, role plays and group activities to build cohesion within the class, develop awareness on bullying and violence, discuss children's rights, and build skills for leadership and collaboration. Detecting and responding to hate speech, especially online, and learning to protect themselves from cyberbullying are also essential skills for students.[20]

7.2 Extracurricular activities led by school staff or older students

Extracurricular activities can bring students together across classes and even across school shifts. An example of such an activity is a reading group, in which a teacher or an older student reads stories to young students and leads a discussion afterwards. This activity not only develops a culture of reading, but also develops skills for critical thinking and empathy. The choice of stories can also allow teachers to open up discussions on specific issues related to social cohesion, such as the use of violence and alternatives to violence, the understanding of diversity and the issue of migration and belonging.

Another example of an extracurricular activity is a sports tournament. This should be organised by teachers and coaches familiar with the use of sports-for-development and sports-for-peace methods to emphasise collaboration and non-violence over toxic masculinity and excessive competitiveness. The training sessions and preparation for the tournament should emphasise the values of teamwork and sportsmanship, ensure that both girls and boys can participate, and sanction violence and cheating. A school tournament also offers opportunities for students who are not interested in participating in sports to get involved in other ways, for example, as part of the organising committee or cheerleading groups.

School trips offer an opportunity for learning and bonding. Visits to cultural and religious sites can have a strong impact on children for developing a broader awareness of their area and other parts of the country and developing a sense of appreciation and curiosity. School trips also offer an opportunity to link students between classes and shifts and can be used as an empowerment tool, for example, by asking groups of students to prepare presentations. It is important to involve the students in the process of selecting and planning extracurricular activities. Participation in decision-making supports a sense of belonging and agency, which is at the heart of social cohesion. Experiences in peacebuilding projects have shown great progress in understanding the

'other' and discovering a sense of freedom and connection when participating in a school trip together. The collaboration required for students to sit together on the bus and experience a new place for the first time engages them in fertile discussions where listening is positive and open.[21]

7.3 Developing codes of conduct and child protection systems in schools and NFE centres

The collaborative development of codes of conduct and child protection rules for a school or learning centre fosters social stability by engaging students, teachers and caregivers and creating trust among them. These codes of conduct commit students to respecting each other and not using violence in and around the school. Piloted in Lebanon by the UNDP Peacebuilding Programme, the violence-free school initiative involved 56 intermediate public schools in fostering a culture of peace. This involved developing a code of conduct on non-violence, which was then adopted as a school policy.[22] MEHE has also adopted a policy that includes a referral mechanism for identified child protection cases in all public schools and CERD trained teachers on the policy.

In some private schools, using a participatory approach, teachers and students approve a common code of conduct. Educators have found this to be an engaging approach to classroom management. In learning centres, child protection policies are usually already in place and staff receive regular training. Posters act as a useful reminder to children on their commitments to non-violence and what they need to do if they are a victim or witness bullying.

7.4 Psychosocial sessions in community and NFE centres

Psychosocial support (PSS) sessions can have a strong impact on social cohesion, particularly when targeted at students who are facing stress and trauma. PSS programmes are often a necessary starting point for peace education programming because they help the process of healing and regaining a sense of self. These individual-level transformations are necessary for building strong relationships within and across communities. Although PSS is usually provided separately from social cohesion work, through child protection, healthcare and other services, addressing trauma "should be a building block for all social cohesion efforts when working with communities affected by conflict and displacement".[23]

In contrast to schools, which follow strict curricula, community centres run by NGOs often provide a broad range

of services to children and their families, creating a variety of opportunities for strengthening social cohesion. Community-based education and PSS programmes can involve families in a holistic approach with the students and their caregivers, and possibly collaborate with other organisations, businesses (such as cafés or sports venues) and institutions (e.g. municipalities or social development centres).

NGOs running NFE programmes often have PSS programmes at their centres, allowing for a holistic approach to child development. Education and PSS are, however, usually delivered by staff from different departments with different priorities. Alert's work with NFE centres has established that educators often shy away from intervening when they witness bullying and prefer to refer the case to the child protection teams, which are in charge of PSS. This division of roles and responsibilities creates certain risks because students usually trust their teachers more than other staff in NFE centres and are more likely to seek help from teachers. Therefore, a close coordination between NFE and PSS programmes can ensure that incidents of violence and bullying are addressed immediately not only with the participants in the incident, but also with the whole class, taking the opportunity to promote a culture of non-violence.

PSS is currently available more widely to Syrian students, so it is important that NGOs running NFE and community centres proactively target Lebanese students.

7.5 Peace education for children in community and NFE centres

Peace education can be applied both in formal schools and community centres to support social stability. Peace education is generally aimed at promoting a culture of peace and triggering "a transformation of individual and community relationships characterised by polarisation, dehumanisation and delegitimisation towards reconciliation, solidarity, and tolerance".[24]

In Lebanese public schools, peace education can be mainstreamed as an approach, building on the work of MEHE and CERD on the SEL framework.[25] Peace education aspires to develop individuals who are "capable of empathy and solidarity" across borders and social groups and "are able to deconstruct foundations of violence […] and take action to advance the prospects of peace".[26] Therefore, in addition to adopting an individualised approach that strengthens students' self-esteem, wellbeing and conflict resolution skills, peace education also builds awareness of structural and

cultural violence, i.e. the laws, institutions, social norms and beliefs that create inequality and suffering.

In community centres in Lebanon, NGOs have run standalone peace education programmes for students and youth that focus on understanding the self and the other. Older students are also trained and supported to plan and implement initiatives in their communities, fostering a sense of belonging, self-confidence and values of community participation and volunteerism. For younger children (grades 1-3), the Active Citizenship activities developed by CERD and the British Council in 2021 are a useful resource for teaching skills and concepts relevant to social stability.[27]

8. Promoting social stability in work with adolescents

Developing understanding and skills for the job market, community activism and volunteering are age-appropriate approaches to promote social stability through programmes targeting adolescents, in addition to PSS and peace education. For youth groups who feel the existing framework of education does not prepare them to find employment, employability, entrepreneurship and vocational training programmes offer opportunities to develop skills such as communication, collaboration, problem solving, creativity and critical thinking, and help them grow into active members of peaceful communities. Conflict-resolution skills, empathy and a broader awareness of power structures and cultural norms that create or sustain conflict are also useful in work and in communities characterised by division and polarisation.[28]

Community activism and volunteering are also elements that NGOs integrate into their informal education programmes with adolescents. Collaborative planning of community initiatives, implementation, and cross-community dialogues are often integrated into peace education and broader social stability interventions, and demonstrate how education programmes can also foster social cohesion with older students.

9. Promoting social stability in work with young adults

Outside universities, young adults can access informal, unregulated education opportunities tailored for social stability through NGOs. These programmes can create a much-needed space for interaction between students

from different genders, faiths, regions and nationalities. Responding to the immediate needs of youth to access job opportunities in a collapsing economy, many NGOs offer vocational skills training, entrepreneurship education, traineeships and career guidance for Lebanese and Syrian refugee students. The participation of students from different nationalities does not, however, automatically produce social stability outcomes. Such programmes need to have special provisions to strengthen social cohesion such as soft-skills training, spaces for dialogue, and opportunities for participants to discuss specific drivers of tensions openly.

Young adults can become peer educators and work with young people across communities. Peer education is not only empowering to the youth educators, it also has the advantage of creating role models for students in peer-learning programmes. For stronger impact on social cohesion, peer learners and student groups can work in mixed-gender and nationality teams, sending an implicit message of collaboration to students in the classroom. Participatory methods used in peer learning create great opportunities for interaction and dialogue across division lines.

Community activism is another part of informal education for young adults. Training and workshops on participation, rights, gender and many other topics can support young people to develop their own projects and initiatives and work on identified problems in their communities. This type of experiential learning is a form of informal education practised by many NGOs that can be tailored to achieving social stability objectives by linking youth across divides (horizontal linkages) and connecting youth to institutions and decision-making processes (vertical linkages).

10. Promoting social stability by supporting teachers

Supporting teachers to counter their own biases is a precondition for effective, inclusive and conflict-sensitive education programmes that strengthen social stability. Teachers and other school staff need to model positive relationships between different groups and genders. Starting with early childhood education and continuing throughout the school cycles, children learn from what they see in the behaviour and relationships of adults. The relations between female and male teachers, for example, teach students about power and gender, as do the ways in which Lebanese

and non-Lebanese staff work together. As teachers often share community perceptions that can be discriminatory and reflective of structural and cultural violence against marginalised groups, programmes need to help them challenge their stereotypes and biases.

Teachers' capacity to support students' SEL is another building block of education programmes that foster stability. CERD and MEHE's Department of Orientation and Guidance within the Directorate of General Education has developed a national SEL framework for children. SEL skills are needed not only for success in school and the workplace, but also for building relationships and being an active citizen, and are therefore highly relevant to social stability. In the Lebanese context, the important SEL skills include: empathy, emotional awareness, crisis management, self-efficacy, respecting the environment, flexibility to adapt to given contexts, value systems, working memory, and self-esteem.[29]

Further to SEL, teachers may need support with specific approaches and tools applicable to different age groups. Teachers in early childhood education need to expand their knowledge of and skills to work with children on the theory of the mind, emotional regulation and anti-discrimination. For teachers working with school-age children, approaches and tools for preventing violence and bullying, sports-for-peace and dialogue facilitations can help them to integrate segments on non-violence and diversity into their regular lessons or to initiate extracurricular activities. PSS tools and peace education curricula can also assist educators to shift their classes to broader social stability learning and bonding objectives.

Training, toolkits and guidance notes are needed for tailoring education programmes to social stability.[30] The more educators understand their role, the better they are able to respond to violence and support their students. Training courses should be followed by refresher sessions and sessions that engage educators in reflecting on their own practices.

A range of toolkits developed by academic institutions and NGOs in collaboration with MEHE and CERD are relevant to social stability. These include:

- SEL Toolbox;
- Ana Aqra's Quality Teaching and Learning (DTL) Handbook;[31]
- Norwegian Refugee Council's Better Learning Programme (BLP) wellbeing tool;[32]
- International Alert's Prevention of violence against children toolkit for educators;[33] and

- the forthcoming toolkit on social stability in education developed under the Nataf3al project.[34]

CERD has also developed short videos on bullying, and recognises a need for a comprehensive teacher training programme due to the high prevalence of bullying and violence and deteriorating mental health of children.

Guidance notes and learning papers for educators are also a useful mechanism for supporting change in practice. In 2021, Alert supported partner organisations to co-create guidance for educators in NFE on responding to bullying. The guidance note was developed by child protection specialists and reviewed by educators, a process that created space for discussing different responses and increased awareness of and support for proactively countering bullying in learning centres. Educators were also trained on the implementation of anti-bullying activities within the NFE curricula.

Learning circles are another participatory methodology applied in learning centres. Educators are invited to participate in workshops, reflecting on their own practices and sharing experiences from the classroom. In the context of partnership projects, learning circles create space for exchange across organisations and across different types of programmes with children, including NFE, PSS and peace education. Such an approach offers an opportunity to show educators the value of their work and establish a professional discussion between educators about their work, challenging perceptions and approaches, and offering alternatives and success stories to inspire change in practice.

11. Promoting social stability in outreach and activities with parents and caregivers

Working with caregivers on positive discipline, gender sensitivity and non-violence is a pathway to strengthening social stability through positive modelling. When planning education programmes in formal schools and NFE centres, organisations should target caregivers as part of a holistic approach to maintain stability and coherence around the child. Parents can be invited to awareness sessions on violence in the household and to follow-up sessions giving them specific scenarios regarding identification of abuse and countering abuse when spotted. Often sessions with caregivers are limited to mothers or female care providers. It is important to engage fathers and other male caregivers

to explore positive discipline/parenting, and gender equality and rights. Caregivers can be introduced to multifaceted perspectives of gender and the impact of repressive gender stereotyping. Such interventions can create a more enabling environment for children to develop their strengths.

Involving caregivers in school governance is another approach to empowerment and modelling participatory and inclusive decision-making. Parents may be invited to discuss the rules of the centre with the educators and management. A participatory process to agree a code of conduct can increase the engagement of caregivers in children's education. This reinforces trust in the learning centre and establishes communication between families and the education centre. Caregivers can also be invited to lead or participate in school events such as festivals, school trips and sports tournaments. All of these are well placed to involve students from both shifts and to bring together students with members of the wider community.

One peacebuilding approach that can increase openness and cohesion between community members is a cross-community dialogue. This links community members around specific topics to raise awareness and also to engage them in addressing sensitive issues and provoke critical discussions. Facilitated dialogues aim to enhance understanding of each other's perspectives and develop relationships, without necessarily trying to reach a consensus. Topics related to raising children, helping adolescent children in choosing careers, and online safety can bring together caregivers across divides, and motivate male caregivers to participate.

Involving caregivers in the education experience brings families closer to the learning centre and can strengthen the bonds between children and adults, which helps to create a more protective environment around the child. Schools and learning centres can host events such as open classes, student art exhibitions and concerts, and create spaces for discussions with students and caregivers. Cohesion in the household can initiate pro-social skills to be used outside the home, and vice versa – the learning centre can improve relationships in the household by engaging students in activities needing feedback from parents. Celebrations such as Mother's Day or Father's Day offer an opportunity for teachers, students and caregivers to come together and have conversations relevant to education, career choice and social issues where all participants can share their stories in a safe space.

12. Engaging communities outside the classroom in education for social stability

Schools and learning centres are often the beating heart of the community. It is therefore natural for a school or learning centre to connect with institutions and organisations in the community to maximise opportunities for students' learning and develop a sense of community.

Organising events, campaigns and festivals involving all groups in the school community promotes social stability. Such activities initiated by schools or learning centres not only offer an opportunity to bring members of different groups together and strengthen the community, they also empower students to lead, organise and perform for others. In villages and small towns where social and cultural activities are scarce, concerts, exhibitions and sports tournaments organised by students, teachers and caregivers offer entertainment and an opportunity to socialise outside the home (such opportunities in many areas are very limited, especially for women and girls).

Inviting role models from the community to discussions and events can inspire students and create a sense of hope and purpose. This is critical for students from marginalised backgrounds, for whom seeing someone from a similar background in a position of leadership encourages a feeling of equality and representation despite the struggles and discrimination these children may be experiencing.

Schools can collaborate with municipalities on holding student-led community events in public spaces and visits to the school by the mayor. Inviting guest speakers from the local administration or organising visits to the municipality for older students introduces them to the work of the institution. Municipalities are perceived more favourably than other state institutions, both by Lebanese and by Syrian refugees,[35] and can help introduce students to issues related to governance and citizenship. Closer cooperation on activities in public spaces, attendance of the mayor to school celebrations or student voluntary work in the community can reinforce a sense of belonging and strengthen trust in institutions (vertical social cohesion).

Collaboration with community leaders such as the *mokhtar* or religious leaders can help schools and learning centres address negative social norms related to education and child protection. UNICEF and its implementing partners on the QUDWA programme engage directly with local leaders and influencers to change social norms that lead to violence against children and women.

Collaboration between schools and NGOs is perhaps most beneficial for social cohesion, although public schools are limited in their engagement due to the need for ministry approval for any collaboration. Private and semi-private schools and NGO-run learning centres are better able to cooperate at the community level. This can facilitate referrals to additional services (i.e. targeted PSS or case management, gender-based violence support, livelihoods support for caregivers etc.). It can also help students and caregivers learn about civil society work, community development and the role young men and women play in improving their community or assisting vulnerable families.

13. Developing education policies that promote social stability

Education is not apolitical, and therefore advocacy for social stability includes advocacy for inclusive and equitable education. NGOs working on education can support social stability by creating evidence that supports advocacy asks and targeting national and donor governments. Policies that directly affect social stability include the regulation of access to education for Lebanese and non-Lebanese students, the child protection policy, and the SEL framework, among others. Equitable access to opportunities is demanded in the formal schooling system, where access to and quality of education for Lebanese and non-Lebanese students differ, and in non-formal education, where access for Lebanese students is often limited to retention support programmes and does not extend to basic literacy and numeracy classes, accelerated learning or community-based PSS programmes.

NGOs should advocate for and support the implementation of key strategies that will enable a safe and violence-free environment for children in education. The implementation of MEHE's child protection policy still requires the establishment of a functioning reporting mechanism and increased awareness and capacity of school staff to use it. Other relevant frameworks for supporting social stability through education include recent policies and action plans on the protection of children and women and the prevention of child marriage,[36] which are for the most part almost unknown to school staff.

Endnotes

1   In 2021, around 90,000 students moved from private to public schools due to the inability of caregivers to cover tuition fees. In early 2023, many students from public schools are reported to have transferred to private schools due to the public-sector teacher strikes. For more information see: Lebanon's new poor pull children out of private school, France 24, 31 August 2021, https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210831-lebanon-s-new-poor-pull-children-out-of-private-school

2   UNDP-ARK, National perceptions surveys on social tensions, 2018-2022

3   In education literature, the sense of belonging is seen as belonging to a specific group or sub-group (i.e. refugee students) and a belonging to the school as an entity. The orientation towards a common good is another aspect of social cohesion, which refers to "solidarity with classmates and others" and "compliance with school rules". For more information see: G-J. Veerman and E. Denessen, Social cohesion in schools: A non-systematic review of its conceptualization and instruments, Cogent Education, 8(1), 2021, https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2021.1940633

4   J. Jenkins and J. Urbanski, Connecting bullying and school dropout, Presentation, National Youth at Risk Conference Savannah, 4 March 2019, https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/nyar_savannah/2019/2019/25

5   T. Diette et al, Child abuse, sexual assault, community violence and high school graduation, Review of Behavioral Economics, 2017, quoted from https://sanford.duke.edu/story/experiencing-violence-childhood-linked-high-school-dropout/

6   Norwegian Refugee Council, The obstacle course: Barriers to education for Syrian refugee children in Lebanon, 2020, https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/the-obstacle-course-barriers-to-education/executive-summary---the-obstacle-course_barriers-to-education.pdf

7   One million children left without education in Lebanon after public schools shut their doors, Save the Children, 19 January 2023, https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/one-million-children-left-without-education-lebanon-after-public-schools-shut-their-doors

8   J. Jenkins and J. Urbanski, 2019, Op. cit.

9   K. El Mufti, Safe to Learn: Action research on preventing violence against children, International Alert, 2021

10 R. Halat, Safe to Learn: Appreciative inquiry, Center for Lebanese Studies/International Alert, 2022

11 Ibid.

12 UNDP-ARK, National perceptions survey on social tensions, Wave 14, July 2022

13 For a list of guiding questions to conduct the context analysis, see Annex 1.

14 J. Schuitema and W. Veugelers, Multicultural contacts in education: A case study of an exchange project between different ethnic groups, Educational Studies, 37(1), 2011, pp.101-114

15 See, for example: International Alert, Toolkit with activities on social cohesion, forthcoming in 2023 and Prevention of violence against children toolkit for educators, 2021

16 K. El Mufti, 2021, Op. cit.; I. Slavova and C. Saad, Six ways to prevent violence against children, International Alert, May 2022, https://www.international-alert.org/blogs/six-ways-to-prevent-violence-against-children-in-schools/

17 R. Caires et al, Starting from square two: Building a cohesive national SEL framework, NISSEM, 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360374884_Starting_from_square_two_Building_a_cohesive_national_SEL_framework_in_Lebanon

18 These competencies are discussed in greater detail in: International Alert (for Plan International), Maximising the potential of ECD programming to contribute to peaceful and just societies: Scoping review of opportunities, potential approaches and applicable tools, 2022

19 T. Grimmer, Developing a loving pedagogy in the early years: How love fits with professional practice, Routledge, 2021

20 See, for example: International Alert, Prevention of violence against children toolkit for educators, 2021, https://www.international-alert.org/publications/guides-toolkits/prevention-of-violence-against-children-toolkit-for-educators/

21 In an education and social cohesion project implemented by a consortium of NGOs in Lebanon, including International Alert, teachers voiced their need for recreational activities that engage students from different communities and provide entertainment for students, teachers and parents, as well as joint competitions where students from diverse backgrounds can participate together.

22 B. Akar, The Violence Free Schools Initiative: Transforming a culture through schools, UNDP, 2021, https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/lb/VFS-EN.pdf

23 R. Simpson, Peace education and psychosocial support for social cohesion, Forced Migration Review, February 2018, https://www.fmreview.org/syria2018/simpson-r

24 C. Brooks and B. Hajir, Peace education in formal schools; Why is it important?, International Alert, 2020, https://www.international-alert.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Peace-Education-Schools-Formal-EN-2020.pdf

25 For information on SEL resources developed by CERD, with support from partners, see www.crdp.org (in Arabic)

26 C. Brooks, 2020, Op. cit.

27 The Active Citizenship activities can be used with students in grades 1-3 from schools and NFE centres and can be accessed here (in Arabic): https://www.crdp.org/project-details/32982

28 See, for example: International Alert's online course 'Towards success and wellbeing: 21st century skills', available at: https://campus.kiron.ngo

29 Lebanon SEL Framework Mapping Project, Harvard University, https://easel.gse.harvard.edu/lebanon-sel-framework-mapping-project

30 See, for example: International Alert, 2021, Op. cit.

31 Ana Aqra, Quality Teaching and Learning (DTL) Handbook, https://ana-aqra.org/publications/

32 For information on BLP, see: https://www.nrc.no/perspectives/2022/children-in-lebanon-battle-barriers-to-education/

33 International Alert, 2021, Op. cit.

34 The toolkit was developed by International Alert in cooperation with CERD, under the Nataf3al project implemented by the Norwegian Refugee Council, Ana Aqra Association and Amel Association, forthcoming, 2023.

35 UNDP-ARK, National perceptions surveys on social tensions, 2018-2022

36 The National Action Plan to Prevent and Mitigate Child Marriage in Lebanon (NAPPCM 2020-2025) under the leadership of the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), the Strategic Plan on the Protection of Women and Children (2019-2026) of MoSA, and the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women and Girls in Lebanon (2019-2029) prepared by the Minister of State for Women's Affairs under the National Commission for Lebanese Women.

/InternationalAlertLebanon

/IntAlertLB

/InternationalAlertLebanon