

National Policy on Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in Lebanon

| June 2023



Acknowledgments

We express our gratitude to His Excellency, Dr. Abbas Halabi, the Minister of Education and Higher Education, for his unwavering support towards inclusive education. We extend our heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to the directorates and departments at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) and the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD) for their invaluable contributions.

We are also deeply grateful for the support of our colleagues at UNICEF, UNESCO, ECW, and the EU. Additionally, we would like to thank the Beyond Education team for their dedicated assistance in developing the policy.

Furthermore, we extend our special acknowledgments to all the participants who actively took part in the consultative workshops. Your substantial contributions and active involvement were crucial to the success of this endeavour.

Lastly, we offer our special thanks to the following individuals:

Supervisors:

Mr. Imad Achkar (Director General of Education – MEHE)

Prof. Hyam Ishak (President – CERD)

Experts:

Dr. Peter Grimes (International Consultant on Inclusive Education– UNICEF)

Dr. Marieke Stevens (International Consultant on Inclusive Education– UNICEF)

Ms. Tatiana Salloum (National Consultant on Inclusive Education – UNICEF – MEHE)

Implementation Partners:

Mr. Atif Rafique (Chief of Education - UNICEF)

Mr. Maxence Daublain (EU Delegation to Lebanon)

Ms. Olena Sakovych (Education Specialist- UNICEF)

Reviewers:

Dr. Georgia El Hachem (Assistant of the Director General- MEHE)

Ms. Souhad Dandach (Inclusive Education Unit Coordinator – DOPS – MEHE)

Mrs. Nathalie Sakr (Inclusive Education Consultant – DOPS – MEHE)

Mrs. Nancy Najjar (Special Education Officer – DOPS – MEHE)

Mr. Joseph Khatat (Programme Coordinator – DOPS- MEHE)

Mrs. Marie Mouawad (Social Worker for Inclusion – DOPS – MEHE)

Dr. Micheline Aoun (Inclusion Expert- CERD)

Ms. Pascale Rami (Inclusive Education Consultant- CERD)

Coordinator of the Policy Development Process:

Ms. Hilda El Khoury (Director of DOPS – MEHE)

Forewords

Lebanon has participated in the foundation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and recognizes the principle of respecting and ensuring the fundamental rights of everyone, as stipulated in Article 1, and in accordance with all relevant international treaties and agreements, including the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which Lebanon has ratified in February 2023.

The Lebanese Law no 220/2000 guarantees the right to education for every individual-meaning that the law provides equal opportunities for education and learning for all individuals, including those children and adults with special needs, within its educational institutions of all kinds.

In line with this principle and in pursuit of the fourth goal of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), in collaboration with the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD), has been keen on developing inclusive education programs to cater for persons with special needs. The practice has shown that the successful implementation of inclusive education requires the collaboration among all of the Directorates at MEHE and CERD, in addition to the involvement of multiple stakeholders from various sectors and organisations of persons with disabilities – all with the aim of reaching an inclusive society.

Hence lies the importance of issuing laws that compel all stakeholders to build partnerships and networks to help in accepting, supporting and empowering individuals with special needs in education, as well as promoting and acknowledging a solid culture of inclusivity and diversity across all economic, social, cultural, and political sectors.

The launch of the National Policy on Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs is a turning milestone in the field of education in Lebanon and a starting point for legislations of laws and decrees that protect and ensure the right of every child in Lebanon to education, and to pave the way to inclusive and quality education for building an inclusive nation.

It is worth noting that this achievement today has been realized with the support of our implementing partners, UNICEF, and funded by the European Union, and Education Cannot Wait. We extend our gratitude to all our education partners who have worked towards the achievement of this policy.

We would also like to express our appreciation to the Directorate General of Education with all its units and departments, namely the Directorate of Counselling and Guidance that coordinated the preparation of the National Policy on Inclusive Education as well as the Directorates of Primary and Secondary Education, the Private Education Department, the Official Exams Department, and other units within the ministry. We also thank all the units at CERD who have contributed to the achievement of this policy, and we will continue the work on the development of the inclusive curricula that is currently done by CERD.

Through inclusive schools, we reach an inclusive Lebanon!

Dr. Abbas Al Halabi | Minister of Education and Higher Education

UNICEF works around the world to realise the rights of every child and leave no child behind. Inclusive Education for girls and boys with disabilities is at the centre of our longstanding partnership with Lebanon on education.

This National Inclusive Education Policy showcases strong will by Lebanon and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) on delivering education for the most marginalized children. Our shared objective with the Ministry of Education is that every child has access to a quality and inclusive education which builds the foundational literacy, numeracy and life skills they need for a brighter future.

With thanks to the Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon for their sustained leadership on education, in particular on Inclusive Education; we are proud to have supported MEHE in developing the National Inclusive Education Policy. This Policy provides a robust vision and roadmap for accelerating progress to get more children with disabilities into school, for longer and learning more.

The Policy is the result of deep and meaningful consultation with the widest range of partners and stakeholders. Over the coming years, UNICEF and our partners are committed to supporting the implementation of this Policy.

Guided by the Policy, we must continue in the spirit of collaboration to build off progress made so far in schools, classrooms and in communities. We will continue to work together and forge stronger partnerships as well as advocate for more equitable allocation of resources so that the most marginalized children have what they need for an inclusive and relevant education.

For every child, an education.

Mr. Edouard Beigbeder | UNICEF Representative
Lebanon

Based on the principle of equal opportunities in education for all members of society without discrimination, the inclusion of children with special needs becomes a top priority in securing flexible, high-quality education for all our children.

After decades of implementing educational practices that involved the separation of children with special needs, efforts have been made to integrate them into schools through a gradual process that has taken various forms. Today, inclusive education has become the prevailing educational culture that distinguishes schools across different fields, benefiting all learners without exception.

In 2018, the Directorate General of Education adopted the concept of inclusive education in 30 public schools distributed across all governorates. Recognizing that inclusive education is a relatively modern concept, it necessitated the provision of necessary support for teachers, caregivers, and learners. Consequently, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), in partnership with relevant stakeholders, particularly UNICEF, and in coordination with the Centre for Educational Research and Development, provided capacity building for teachers, raised awareness among caregivers, ensured the availability of necessary educational tools and resources, and established a team of specialists to support the implementation of inclusive education within these thirty inclusive schools. The Ministry also initiated the rehabilitation of school buildings and infrastructure to make them accessible to all learners.

Today, the number of our inclusive schools has reached 110, serving as a stepping stone towards fulfilling our commitment that by the year 2030, all schools in our country will be inclusive.

The launch of the "National Policy for Inclusive Education" marks the culmination of all the efforts made to achieve and successfully implement this project, demonstrating our unwavering commitment to respecting the right of every child to receive quality inclusive education.

Additionally, in line with the principle of inclusion, the Directorate General of Education ensures that official exams are provided with accommodations based on the specific needs of each candidate.

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to all our partners who have supported the development of this policy, including UNICEF, the European Union, and Education Cannot Wait, as well as all educational partners in formal education, private education, universities, organizations, unions, and associations. Together, we will complement this policy with practical steps to create a country that embraces all its citizens.

Inclusion is a culture, and it begins with spreading it through education. Through education, we can build the Lebanon of our dreams—a Lebanon characterized by freedom and respect for one another.

Mr. Imad Achkar | Director General of Education

Lebanon, as a founding member of the United Nations, is party to several declarations and international agreements that are issued by the United Nations and UNESCO and that emphasize the right to education for all and the need to take into consideration the educational needs of every child. Upon the development of international legislation, the concept of education for all is now conveyed in the principle of inclusive education. Inclusive education is a process that requires ensuring access to the education system for all learners, regardless of their diversity.

Based on this principle, the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD) participated with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in collaboration with UNICEF to develop the inclusive education policy aiming to provide a national framework for implementing inclusive education in Lebanon. This was based on the lessons learned from the pilot project on inclusive education and international best practices.

Effective inclusive education cannot be achieved in isolation; it requires alignment between policies and concepts on one hand, and structures, systems, and practices on the other hand. It also relies on collaboration between learners, families, teachers, and the local community. Therefore, inclusive education requires appropriate and quality professional practices that target the needs of all learners in diverse cultural, social, and educational contexts. Hence, the importance of aligning the newly launched inclusive education policy with the national plan for inclusive education, which CERD has worked on and which can be considered as one of the foundational documents contributing to the transformation of policy into practice.

Since 2006, CERD has been working on several projects that have contributed to the progress achieved to date. These include, but are not limited to:

- Training teachers on how to identify and intervene with learners with learning and behavioural difficulties and disorders.
- Publishing guides and books on special needs, such as a guide on common learning difficulties and psychological disorders in schools, and a guide on describing official exams for learners with special needs.
- Developing training materials on inclusive education.
- Providing training for the directors and teachers of the 110 inclusive schools and the multidisciplinary teams.
- Establishing the Assessment and Intervention Centre for Psycho-Educational Support in Jounieh in 2015 to support learners, in a specialised manner, to reach their highest educational potential and achieve the best possible educational performance within the framework of their schools.

Currently, the focus of CERD is on developing new curricula that adhere to global standards and modern professional criteria and ensure the rights of all learners despite their diverse educational needs. This process necessitated the formulation of a supporting document on inclusive education to serve as an extension of the inclusion policy and provide a roadmap for developing a flexible, dynamic, and comprehensive curriculum that meets the educational, psychological, and daily needs of all learners.

Let us work hand in hand to implement this inclusive education policy by improving the quality of education, developing the capacity of human resources, and preparing curricula that are inclusive in their content and form. We will do everything necessary to make the education system suitable for all learners, rather than demanding that all learners adapt to a rigid educational system.

A country will not thrive if not all its citizens enjoy their rights and have access to opportunities to invest their potential and creativity in an equitable way. A successful educational system cannot exist without inclusive education, which serves as the cornerstone for providing quality and differentiated education that cater to the diverse needs of all learners. This is clearly reflected in the fourth goal of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on education.

Good education is characterized by its quality, flexibility, and inclusiveness, leaving no one behind. Every child has the right to learn and actively engage in all educational and school activities, whether curricular or extra-curricular. Moreover, inclusion is a comprehensive culture that extends beyond educational institutions to encompass all social, economic, and intellectual domains in society.

Based on this understanding, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) initiated the inclusive education project in collaboration with the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD) in 2018, building on previous educational experiences and projects at MEHE. The children's response to this type of learning in the inclusive public schools that adopted this approach, along with the great efforts made by all stakeholders at the Directorate General of Education, as well as the cooperation of school principals, teachers, and our partners, have enabled us to confidently and steadfastly progress in the inclusive education project. As a result of this success, a significant number of learners with special needs and learning difficulties have enrolled in inclusive public schools, which, according to studies and research conducted, have excelled in various fields and benefited from the differentiated teaching methods and the principles of inclusive education. This facilitated the learning process for everyone, catering to the diverse learning styles of all learners, not just those with special needs and learning difficulties.

As a result of this successful experience in the realm of inclusive education and after reviewing various inclusive educational policies and practices in several countries, it was necessary for us to establish a National Policy for Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in Lebanon. This policy aims to unify visions and define the desired goals of inclusive education in Lebanon. As part of this policy, MEHE is currently working in coordination with CERD to map out the roadmap and establish the essential components for opting for an inclusive educational curriculum that guarantees the right of every child to quality learning and meets all their diverse and varying needs.

If education is our passport to an advanced society, then inclusive education is our passport to a distinctive and inclusive homeland that embraces all its children. It is the optimal way to invest in the intellectual wealth of all members of society without exception or discrimination. Through inclusive education, Lebanon will regain its brilliance and uniqueness, and with inclusive upbringing, we can achieve the Lebanon of our dreams.

Ms. Hilda Khoury | Director of School Counselling and Guidance

Contents

Acronyms	8
Glossary	9
Introduction	12
Scope	12
Framework	12
Policy Development Process	14
Policy Structure	15
Values Statement	16
Commitment	16
Vision Statement	16
Guiding Principles	18
Strategic Goals	20
Cross-Cutting Themes	22
Current Situation	23
Strategic Interventions	26
Strategic Goal 1 – Establish Enabling Environments for Inclusive Education Implementation	26
Strategic Goal 2 – Increase Public Support for Inclusive Education	31
Strategic Goal 3 – Create and Strengthen Inclusive and Accessible Education Services	33
Strategic Goal 4 – Develop Systems and Structures to Measure and Monitor Inclusive Education Implementation	42
Conclusion	44
References	45

Acronyms

CERD	Centre for Educational Research and Development
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DGE	Directorate General of Education
DOPS	Directorate of School Counselling and Guidance
DOPS/IE Unit	Directorate of School Counselling and Guidance – Inclusive Education Unit
EMIS	Educational Management Information System
GC4	General Comment No. 4 to Article 24 of the CRPD
ICF	International Classification of Functioning, Health and Disability
MEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MTSS	Multi-Tiered Systems of Support
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OPD	Organisations of Persons with Disabilities
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIMS	Student Information Management System
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund

Glossary

Child: The UN CRC (1989) defines a child as “every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier” (Article 1).¹

Children with disabilities: The term children with disabilities is internationally accepted and is used throughout this Policy. In Lebanon, the term ‘children with special needs’ is used in official documents, as set out in Governmental Decision No. 12² in 2019.

Disability: The CRPD defines persons with disabilities as “those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (Article 1).³

Discrimination: Discrimination on the basis of disability means any distinction, exclusion, or restriction on the basis of disability that has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise, on an equal basis with others, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil, or any other field. It includes all forms of discrimination, including the denial of reasonable accommodation.⁴

Early identification: Early identification is the process of identifying potential developmental delays and disabilities in infants and young children.⁵ It requires a cross-sectoral approach. The policy focuses on MEHE’s role in early identification in the early years in education.

Early intervention: Early intervention for children with special needs is broadly defined as a systemic approach to ensuring the optimal development of young infants and supporting and enhancing the functionality of their families and caregivers.⁶ While early identification and intervention require a holistic and cross-sectoral approach, this Policy sets out MEHE’s mandate in terms of early learning and collaboration with other ministries to support broader early identification and intervention.

Early Childhood Development (ECD): ECD is a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to eight years of age, along with their parents and caregivers. Its purpose is to protect the child’s rights to develop their full cognitive, emotional, social, and physical potential. Services should focus on health, nutrition, education, and water and environmental sanitation in homes. ECD, as mentioned in this Policy, relates to children enrolled in schools.

General Comment No.4 (GC4): General Comment No.4 (2016) to the CRPD Article 24 on the Right to Inclusive Education.⁷ The General Comment was developed to provide governments with guidance on the scope of their obligation to provide quality, inclusive education for persons with disabilities. This guidance is not, unlike the terms of the CRPD itself, formally binding upon ratifying countries. However, it is significant and instructive of the requirements that the Committee will apply in reviewing compliance by individual countries

in relation to Article 24. It is also instructive of the scope of the fundamental human right for children with disabilities to receive an equitable, high-quality, inclusive education on the same basis as other children, which is best provided in their local community schools.

Inclusive education: GC4 defines inclusive education as “the result of a process of continuing and proactive commitment to eliminating barriers impeding the right to education, together with changes to the culture, policy, and practice of regular schools to accommodate and effectively include all learners” (Article 10d)⁸. Inclusive education aims to reform the education system to ensure that policies, cultures, and practices respond to diversity and address the rights and needs of all children, including those with special needs. All children have the right to an inclusive, quality education alongside their peers, delivered in their local community schools.

Integrated education: is a term which has different meanings in different contexts. In Lebanon, the term is generally understood as special units or classes for children with special needs within a school. This practice is not considered as a form of inclusive education within the CRPD and GC4.⁹

International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF): The International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health, known more commonly as ICF, is a classification of health and health-related domains. It is the World Health Organization’s framework for measuring health and disability at multiple levels. As the functioning and disability of an individual occur in a certain context, ICF includes a list of environmental factors. The ICF provides a theoretical framework to design inclusive education policies and practices, aligned with the CRPD.

Medical model of disability: The medical model of disability is a way of explaining how some persons and organisations understand disability and how persons with disabilities are treated. This model is not considered to be an inclusive approach. The medical model explains ways in which persons with disabilities are stereotyped or judged, and at the centre as the “problem”. The person is considered “defective”, “different”, or “not normal”, and this often leads to stigmatisation, discrimination, and segregation or exclusion from education and communities.

Reasonable accommodation: Reasonable accommodation, as mentioned in Article 2 of the UNCRPD, means necessary and appropriate modifications and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise, on an equal basis with others, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.¹⁰

Segregation: Segregation is a term used to refer to practices where groups of children are purposefully separated from the majority because of differences. For example, children with special needs can be classified according to their impairment and assigned to a school designed to respond to that particular impairment.

Social model of disability: The social model of disability identifies society as disabling people, by creating barriers that prevent equitable access to services, employment, education, etc. There is a recognition within the social model that there is a great deal that society can do to reduce and ultimately remove disabling barriers. It is the responsibility of society to make adaptations to ensure access and participation for all citizens, rather than expect people with disabilities to adapt to a discriminating environment.

Special education: GC4 defines special education as segregated education, which provides education for children with special needs outside the general education system.¹¹ Typically underpinned by the medical model of disability, it commonly alludes to children with special needs being enrolled in special schools and receiving a special curriculum and pedagogy, taught by special education teachers. Special education is not compatible with rights-based inclusive education, as defined in the CRPD and GC4.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (2006): The purpose of the Convention is to promote, protect, and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. Article 24 is the Right to Inclusive Education.



Introduction

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) aims to ensure inclusive and quality education for all, as per the Government of Lebanon's commitment to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically, SDG 4:

'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'¹².

MEHE seeks to transform all public and private schools into inclusive schools by 2030 in alignment with its commitment to SDG4. MEHE-Directorate General of Education (DGE), in collaboration with the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD) launched the development of the National Policy on Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs, henceforth referred to as "Policy" or "Inclusive Education Policy". It aims to provide a national framework for inclusive education implementation in Lebanon, based on the lessons learned from the Inclusive Education Pilot Programme and international best practices. This Policy was developed in a consultative manner with the support of UNICEF and funded by the EU and Education Cannot Wait Fund.

Scope

The Policy covers both formal (public and private) and non-formal education institutions. It targets general education, which extends from kindergarten to grade 12 across all regions. MEHE aims to provide inclusive, safe, and high-quality education environments for every child in Lebanon, regardless of their background.

Framework

International policies, strategies and targets relating to inclusive education for children with disabilities are strongly embedded in this Policy. The Lebanese government has participated in the development of the Declaration of Human Rights¹³ and ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child¹⁴ in 1991. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)¹⁵ was signed in 2007 and at the time of developing this Policy, the government ratified the convention via decree 10966¹⁶ addressed to the Ministry of Social Affairs on February 6, 2023. This Policy, therefore, uses the normative guidance of General Comment No. 4 to Article 24 of the CRPD¹⁷ as a framework.

The Inclusive Education Policy is linked to the following national policies, laws, decrees, and national strategic action plans:

Document	Year	Statement	Target
Lebanese Constitution (with amendments) – Article 10	1995	“Education shall be free insofar as it is not contrary to public order and morals and does not affect the dignity of any of the religions or sects.”	Provide free quality education for all
Law 220	2000	“Each and every disabled person shall have the right to education. The law shall ensure equal opportunities for the education of all disabled persons, children or adults, within all educational institutions of any kind, in regular classes thereof and in special classes, if necessary.”	Ensure access of all children with disability to education no matter what
Decree No. 11853 ¹⁸	2004	“Formation of a committee for the education of persons with disability and special needs”	Form a national committee for the education of children with disability headed by the DG of Education with members from different ministries, universities, and schools, with the support of experts when needed.
Decision No. 12 ¹⁹	2019	“The term “disabled people” will be replaced by “people with special needs” ... Assigning December 3 of each year as the National Day for Inclusion of Children with Special Needs”	Use the term special needs in all official documents and celebrate the national day for inclusion Therefore, the term children with special needs and children with disability will be used interchangeably in this policy document based on the context.
Decree No. 9138 ²⁰	2022	"Exempting children with learning difficulties, special educational and psychological needs, and chronic diseases from the school and official exams for the third cycle (G7 to G9), and determining their conditions in these classes when they should not be exempted from the exams, in addition to the conditions of those who have reached the official exams for the general secondary certificate (G12).	Provide the necessary adaptations/ exemptions for learners with difficulties on a case-by-case basis.

Document	Year	Statement	Target
MEHE Five Year Plan- PROGRAMME 1.3	2021	“Improve school inclusion and remove barriers to learning and participation”	Move forward with the inclusion programme with the aim of improving quality and eliminating barriers to education
MEHE Five Year Plan- PROGRAMME 2.2	2021	“National systems can provide equitable, high quality and inclusive Early Childhood Education (ECE) for all children”	Begin inclusion from ECE
MEHE Five Year Plan- PRIORITY AREA 5: Curriculum Reforms, Learning Assessments	2021	“An effective and inclusive curriculum is in place”	Develop a flexible and updated curriculum
The Lebanese National Framework for the General Education Curriculum	2022	“The curriculum is based on principles focused on the learner being the centre of and partner in learning, providing equal opportunities and ensuring inclusion of children with special needs...”	Provide a framework for the reform of the general education curriculum with a focus on inclusive education

Policy Development Process

The Policy was developed through a participative review process involving a wide range of stakeholders. The process began in February 2022 with a desk review and a situational analysis with the support of national and international consultants and the participation non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs), international agencies, universities, organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), school representatives, as well as children and with special needs and their families.

From March 2022 to December 2022, a series of in-depth consultations, both in person and online, was organised to collect detailed information on the status of inclusive education in Lebanon, develop a general vision for the Policy, reach agreements on the aim, commitments, and intervention areas, develop a framework for the Policy and co-write sections collaboratively.

Sections of the Inclusive Education Policy document were shared and discussed in-depth with various stakeholders based on their mandates with respect to inclusion in education.

As a result, modifications were made in the document to ensure that the Policy reflects the visions and commitments of stakeholders and government partners and is contextualised and realistic.

A further updated draft of the Policy was presented in December 2022 and was finalised through a series of consultative workshops, focus group discussions, and stakeholder reviews between January and May 2023.

Policy Structure

The Policy starts with a Values Statement Chapter, which includes the overall statement of commitment of the Lebanese government towards inclusive education, the vision underpinning this Policy, the guiding principles for the development, implementation and monitoring, and an overview of the strategic goals and cross-cutting themes. The Strategic Intervention Chapters detail the intervention areas per strategic goal. Each intervention area includes a brief rationale with key guidelines from international conventions, ongoing efforts, and references to relevant national policies and strategies. Each intervention area also includes an intended outcome to provide a general direction to coordinate efforts from various partners and stakeholders and an overview of key strategic interventions to achieve the intended outcome. The strategic interventions will be further discussed in more detail in a Road Map, which will be developed after the Policy.



Values Statement

Commitment

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education is committed to ensuring that all children with special needs can attend, learn, and participate in their school.

Vision Statement

MEHE formulates the following vision towards achieving inclusive education:

This Inclusive Education Policy adopts a rights-based model of inclusive education. The approach to inclusive education is guided by international policies, such as the CRPD²¹ and GC4 to Article 24²², national education policies and strategies, including the Five-Year General Education Plan²³, and international evidence and promising practices on effective inclusive education implementation in country contexts similar to Lebanon's. All children have the capacity and the right to learn and participate in their general education schools. MEHE is committed to building inclusive school communities where everyone is accepted, feels safe, and thrives. Inclusive school communities value diversity, ensure that everyone is treated with respect, integrity and equity, and combat discrimination, bullying and other forms of violence. These inclusive school communities support the development of an inclusive society in which all members are respected, and their contributions are recognised and valued.

As access to education is one of MEHE's top priorities, MEHE will move beyond merely placing children with special needs in schools to ensure learners are encouraged and supported to make progress in learning. Therefore, MEHE and CERD will support the creation of learner-centred learning environments which provide full equitable access to the curriculum, with all the necessary support, to all learners in the school setting. This includes developing a curriculum which reflects the requirements of a 21st-century workforce and is flexible, competency-based, and accessible to all learners. All learners have the right to access high-quality teaching and learning resources tailored to their specific accessibility needs. All assessment strategies need to be inclusive and accessible for all. Creating learner-centred learning spaces necessitates the development of learning areas, both in schools and online, that are accessible to all learners.

Teachers and school principals are at the heart of building high-quality inclusive education systems. Capacity building of school principals, teachers and inclusive education advisors and coaches is important for the effective implementation of inclusive education. Detailed attention must be given specifically to pre- and in-service teacher development and support to ensure all teachers are able to provide high-quality education to all learners, including those with special needs.

Inclusive education cannot only be achieved by the individual efforts of schools, principals, or teachers. Therefore, support and collaboration are required across sectors and levels. While MEHE is mainly responsible for implementing and monitoring this Policy, it will seek close and continuous collaboration with CERD and other relevant institutions, ministries, and inclusion stakeholders to ensure a holistic and sustainable approach, aligned with policies and strategies from other line ministries. At the field level, collaboration will be encouraged between schools, parents, and communities. MEHE aims to ensure the full involvement of persons with special needs and their organisations at all stages of the policy implementation. Efforts will be made to involve learners with and without special needs in decision-making and monitoring processes.

MEHE values a life-long learning approach to education: learning starts from birth and continues into adulthood. As shown in the figure below, this policy focuses on the general education system but also makes connections with other domains and ensures support at key transition stages.

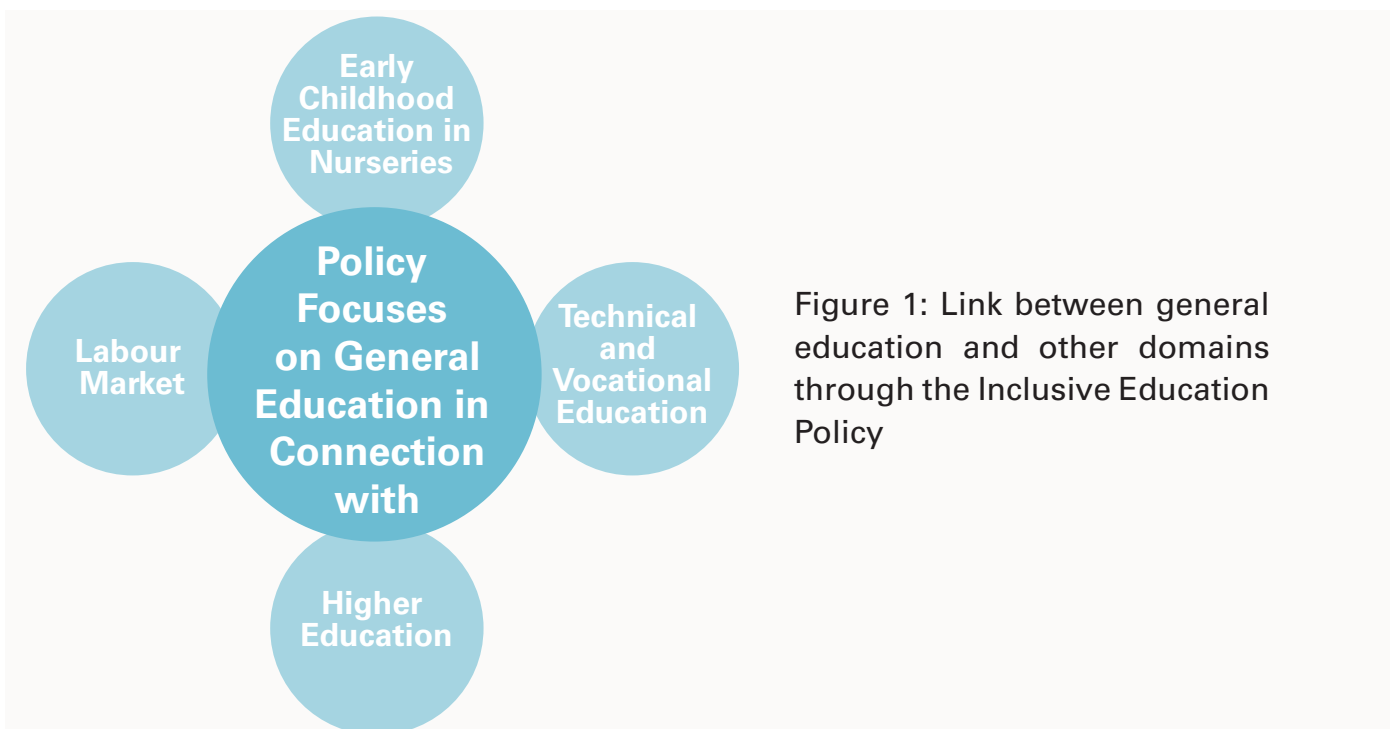


Figure 1: Link between general education and other domains through the Inclusive Education Policy

The Policy will be accompanied by a road map which guides implementation and provides more detailed interventions and indicators. Regular monitoring of the Policy strengthens its implementation at all levels and ensures accountability and transparency. MEHE will collaborate with various stakeholders, including learners and their parents/caregivers, CERD, other ministries, OPDs, UN agencies, universities, NGOs, and inclusive school representatives, in order to obtain a comprehensive overview of achievements and challenges in the implementation process.

Where necessary and agreed upon with key stakeholders, updates will be made to the road map.

Guiding Principles

The guiding principles for the development and implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy are based on the CRPD and GC4 and discussed with key Lebanese stakeholders. They ensure a comprehensive and evidence-based approach to inclusive education development and implementation.

Whole-Systems Approach

A strong collaboration between partners and stakeholders at all levels of the education system ensures that available resources are all directed towards inclusive education, removing barriers to learning and participation and embedding necessary changes in institutional cultures, policies, and practices at all levels of the education system. This policy will build on existing collaboration structures under the leadership of MEHE and in close collaboration with CERD and other ministries such as the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), and others.

Whole Educational Environment

To create sustainable and inclusive learning environments, reviews and updates are necessary in all aspects of the education system. These include, for example, teacher performance standards, curriculum, procedures for learning assessment, teaching and learning materials, pedagogy, and infrastructure. While this Policy provides the general framework for inclusive education implementation, further efforts are necessary to align whole education environments towards the common goal of including all children in learning.

Whole Person Approach

The capacity of every person to learn educationally, socially, physically etc is recognised. Everyone, including learners with special needs, has the right to the same high-quality curriculum which should support the development of the whole person. Education systems are made accessible for all, and accommodations and adjustments are provided when necessary.

Supported Workforce

All teachers, school principals and other relevant education staff must receive capacity building and support to develop and enhance the core values, competencies, and confidence needed to create inclusive learning environments. Promising practices, based on evidence, are shared and inclusive cultures in schools are strengthened. Continuous professional learning, coaching, and mentoring are encouraged and supported, and systems, including school-based support, must be in place to provide ongoing support for inclusive education implementation. Employment of teachers with special needs is encouraged.

Respecting and Valuing Diversity

All members of the learning community are welcomed equally, with respect for diversity. Diversity, including disability, is perceived as a strength. Effective measures need to be put

in place to support respectful relationships within the school community and to prevent discrimination, abuse, bullying and other forms of violence. At the community and individual levels, barriers to learning and full participation are to be examined and addressed.

Learning-Friendly Environment

Inclusive learning environments where everyone feels safe, supported, stimulated and able to express themselves must be created with a strong emphasis on involving learners in building a positive school community.

Effective Transitions

Transitions from early childhood and care settings to basic education, at different levels within the education system, and from education into employment are significant points where children with special needs are at a greater risk of being dropped out of the education system. Schools must continue to work in partnership with learners, families, community organisations, professional groups, and other governmental and educational organisations to plan and support successful transitions at all points in a learner's education. Learners with special needs must receive support to ensure effective transitions at key stages.

Recognition of Partnerships

Teacher associations, learner associations, federations of OPDs, school boards, parent-teacher associations, and other functioning school support groups, both formal and informal, are all encouraged to increase their understanding and knowledge of special needs and inclusion. Learners with and without special needs, parents, and other caregivers must receive support in order for their views to be considered in decision making at all levels.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation must be undertaken at all levels – school, regional, and national levels – to ensure that the Policy is implemented effectively and all relevant stakeholders support the development of inclusive school communities. Monitoring and evaluation systems should ensure the involvement of persons with special needs, including children and OPDs as well as parents and caregivers, where appropriate. The emerging Policy Road Map will guide monitoring and evaluation initiatives.

Equitable Financing and Resource Allocation for Inclusive Education

Legislation and finance structures must provide clear guidance so that resources are directed to ensure that all learners have equitable access to quality education and that available resources are used flexibly and targeted to support participation and learning in inclusive settings.

Strategic Goals

Strategic Goal 1

Establish enabling environments for inclusive education implementation

To ensure sustainable change, it is necessary to institutionalise key principles of inclusive education in the Lebanese policy framework. Reliable and accurate data concerning education and special needs is necessary to create a baseline for programming, budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation. Strategic Goal One, therefore, focuses on the following key areas of intervention:

- Review, update, and align relevant national policies and targets to support inclusive education
- Build on the existing systems to create a reliable, accurate, and unified database on children with special needs and their educational situation
- Ensure funding and financing mechanisms to enable the field implementation of inclusive education
- Develop coordination and leadership structures and mechanisms to ensure coherent and comprehensive implementation of the Policy

Strategic Goal 2

Increase public support for inclusive education

Successful inclusive education implementation depends strongly on local support and collaboration among a range of stakeholders and beneficiaries. Strategic Goal Two, therefore, includes the following intervention areas:

- Develop structures at different levels for parent and community involvement in creating school communities that provide high-quality education for all children and young people
- Increase awareness on the right to inclusive education
- Establish awareness and advocacy programs at the political leadership level to further support the implementation of inclusive education

Strategic Goal 3

Create and strengthen inclusive and accessible education services

Based on the guiding principles of a whole-systems approach, a whole education environment, and a learning-friendly environment, this Policy aims to simultaneously address various aspects of the general education system. Intervention areas under Strategic Goal Three include:

- Develop and strengthen early identification and intervention services for children with special needs
- Refine models for inclusive education practices in schools
- Build the capacity of the workforce to effectively implement inclusive education
- Increase the accessibility of learning environments and infrastructures
- Review and update the curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment to be accessible for all learners
- Ensure the availability of teaching and learning resources for all
- Strengthen and expand education support services for learners, parents/caregivers, and teachers
- Ensure the provision of assistive devices and technology for children with special needs, where necessary, to participate and learn in the general education system

Strategic Goal 4

Develop systems and structures to measure and monitor inclusive education implementation

Regular monitoring supports MEHE and its partners to track progress and identify remaining challenges in inclusive education implementation. This provides opportunities to adjust the strategic road map where necessary to maintain high-quality, inclusive education systems in Lebanon. To this end, the Policy focuses on the following intervention areas:

- Develop standards and indicators for inclusive education
- Build monitoring and quality assurance systems and structures

Cross-Cutting Themes

In addition to the four strategic goals, the Policy includes two cross-cutting themes which underpin all four strategic goals:

Gender

Globally, girls with disabilities have less access to education than boys with disabilities, and the intersection of disability and gender creates double marginalization.²⁴ Specific data on girls with special needs in education in Lebanon is lacking. Throughout the four strategic goals, attention must be given to targeted interventions to support the inclusion of all children with special needs in education, regardless of their gender.

Children affected by Crisis and Conflict

At the time of developing this Policy, almost all children in Lebanon were affected by multiple crises, such as the socio-economic crises and the COVID-19 pandemic. Specific interventions to ensure access to education for children affected by crisis and conflict must be part of the overall implementation of inclusive education in Lebanon.



Current Situation

The Lebanese government, MEHE and CERD have shown a strong commitment to improving the quality of education for all, especially in developing and implementing inclusive education. At the time of developing this Policy, Lebanon is facing a significant economic crisis, which has negatively impacted progress towards inclusive education implementation due to the reduced availability of human and financial resources. The Beirut blast, affecting the infrastructure of many households and school buildings in Lebanon, seriously damaged the economic structure of Lebanon. It also had severe psychological effects on a wide range of learners, parents, and school staff, and in some cases, it physically affected many people who suddenly became people with special needs. These crises, in addition to the following political unrest and the consequences of the global COVID-19 pandemic, created significant barriers to the effective educational management and retainment of trained teachers, coaches, and other educational personnel, such as the paraprofessionals and special educators involved in inclusive education implementation.²⁵

In 2018, the MEHE-DGE and CERD, in collaboration with UNICEF and with the support of donor funding, initiated the Inclusive Education Pilot Project in 30 public schools. The Project aimed to support the enrolment of learners with special needs and those who experience difficulties in learning to ensure accessible and high-quality education for all learners. To ensure support, a multidisciplinary team was recruited for each school and it included a full-time special educator and a part-time team of paraprofessionals consisting of a psychologist, psychomotor therapist, speech and language therapist, and occupational therapist where needed. The pilot project also aimed to increase awareness on the right to inclusive education at the family, decision-making, and community levels, as well as the capacity of the public school system, by providing teachers, administrators, and other education personnel with the necessary knowledge and skills to foster inclusive educational environments.²⁶ At the time of developing this Policy, the Pilot Project was already entering its second phase, scaling up to additional inclusive public schools, which increased the number of inclusive schools in the country to a total of 90 first shift and 20 second shift inclusive public schools.

In 2021, MEHE and CERD endorsed a unified information management system framework to streamline and improve the efficiency of data gathering and analysis in the education sector. The Student Information Management System (SIMS) of MEHE serves as the primary information source for administrative and educational matters. The unified framework has increased system efficiency, promoted evidence-based policymaking, and streamlined information reporting in schools.²⁷

In previous years, many national and international NGOs and CSOs have implemented initiatives to support inclusive education implementation in Lebanon. Any initiative that began after the Inclusive Education Pilot Project was implemented in support of the Project and aligned with the vision of MEHE. The Case Study on the Inclusive Education Pilot Project in 2021 showed that the Project effectively involved parents in the inclusive education implementation process.²⁸ The study also found evidence that involved stakeholders at the school level have a good perception of inclusive education as a feasible concept. However, very few participants identified inclusion from a rights-based perspective, and most conceptualised it through a medical model of disability.²⁹

The study also showed that teachers who were not yet trained in inclusive education and had no experience in teaching learners with special needs had more concerns and negative attitudes toward inclusive education.³⁰ This indicated that the teacher development activities of the Pilot Project and other programmes were beginning to have a positive impact on teachers' attitudes. As part of the Pilot, CERD provided training on basic inclusion concepts, multi-tiered systems of support, and differentiated instruction to teachers and school principals³¹. Capacity building was also provided for multidisciplinary teams and inclusive education coaches with the support of different stakeholders.

Nevertheless, significant challenges remain in the implementation of inclusive education in the country. The Lebanese policy framework continues to support a dual model of provision for the education of children with special needs, supporting both inclusive and segregated models. A clear sectoral plan to gradually phase out segregated education provisions is also lacking. Strong collaboration between MEHE and relevant ministries will be required to meet this goal.

Obtaining accurate data on children with special needs in Lebanon remains difficult. The number of children officially identified as having special needs remains low. In 2020, MoSA provided 14,000 disability cards to children identified as having special needs.³² According to Lebanese government data, only 2 percent of the population has a disability.³³ This is considerably lower than international estimates that 15 percent of any population will have a disability at some point in their lives.³⁴ While various screening tools are used to identify children with special needs in Lebanon,³⁵ these services are not widely available. The absence of a coherent and accurate cross-sectoral data set on the number of children with special needs and the barriers they face in accessing education leads to challenges in efficient, effective, and responsive planning for inclusive education.

Accessibility of educational infrastructure and transport between home and school has been reported as another critical barrier to inclusive education implementation.³⁶

The current economic crisis in Lebanon has further decreased the accessibility of Lebanese schools. There is, for example, a restriction on the power supplies for elevators, making it difficult in some schools for persons with special needs to access buildings.³⁷

The Inclusive Education Pilot Project has demonstrated promising practices in providing support services such as speech and language, psychological, occupational, and psychomotor interventions to support the learning progress of learners. The Project also supported teachers and families in creating inclusive learning environments.³⁸ MEHE is collaborating with different NGOs and centres to provide the necessary assistive devices and external therapy services, when needed, outside the school. While the efforts of MEHE and other organisations are promising, the scope remains relatively small. Many children with special needs still lack the necessary support, assistive devices, technology, and accessible teaching and learning resources that would enable their inclusion in schools. Teachers and school leaders still require significant capacity building to support them in creating more inclusive and responsive classrooms.

This Inclusive Education Policy aims to build on the achievements made thus far in inclusive education implementation and address the remaining gaps and challenges. Cross-sectoral collaboration is required to achieve a holistic and comprehensive approach to inclusive education, consistent with the rights-based model of inclusive education and guiding principles, as defined in the previous chapter of this Policy.



Strategic Interventions

Strategic Goal 1

Establish enabling environments for inclusive education implementation

Intervention Area 1.1 – Create a supportive legal framework for inclusive education implementation

Rationale

The Lebanese government signed the CRPD in 2007 and ratified it in 2023. Several national policy documents, such as Decree 9706 dated July 7, 2022 and related to organizing and defining the conditions for compulsory free education³⁹, clearly state the right of children with special needs to access education, without discrimination. Law 220/2000 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁴⁰ states the rights of persons with special needs. CERD launched the Lebanese National Framework for the General Education Curriculum. These efforts contribute towards the realisation of the CRPD⁴¹, although a dual system of inclusive and segregated education continues to be supported. Both the CRPD and GC4⁴² form a sound foundation to develop a comprehensive policy framework in support of rights-based inclusive education.

Intended Outcome

All relevant legislative and policy documents will be reviewed and updated to support the full inclusion of children with special needs within a rights-based approach.

Strategic Interventions

MEHE and CERD, each entity as per its mandate, will:

- Based on the ratification of the CRPD, initiate a review and update of all relevant educational legislative and policy documents to ensure alignment with the CRPD
- Upon the endorsement of this policy, begin drafting the road map

Intervention Area 1.2 – Develop an accurate database on children with special needs and their educational situation to inform evidence-based inclusive education policy development and programming built on existing systems.

Rationale

Education data in Lebanon is collected through the SIMS. Each school has an IT Data Entry Officer, responsible for collecting and uploading SIMS data, including data related to special educational needs, in collaboration with the IT department at MEHE when needed. The Directorate of School Counselling and Guidance – Inclusive Education Unit (DOPS/IE Unit), under the management of MEHE-DGE, develops annual reports based on data collected from inclusive public schools. CERD has developed a set of tools to identify learners who experience difficulties in accessing the curriculum. Efforts are being made to further align data collection tools and reporting from MEHE and CERD. MEHE’s ongoing work to collect educational data and efforts toward disaggregation by special need, are aligned with Article 31⁴³ of the CRPD, which requires governments to collect information about children with special needs. It also follows the GC4 recommendation to update existing data collection tools, such as SIMS, to collect data on children with disabilities.⁴⁴ MEHE’s efforts will contribute to the annual progress reporting on SDG 4.⁴⁵ It will also support progress monitoring of the implementation of the three pillars of the Five-Year General Education plan and will directly contribute towards the implementation of Programme 7.1, on Information Management for Evidence-Based Policy Formulation and Decision-Making.⁴⁶

Intended Outcome

A cross-sectoral approach to special needs data collection, based on a unified definition of special needs and the internationally validated International Classification of Functionality (ICF)-based tools, will be applied. SIMS data will enable MEHE to generate the number of children with special needs in schools and the participation barriers they experience, to support inclusive education programming and resourcing.

Strategic Interventions

MEHE and CERD, each entity as per its mandate, will:

- Strategically streamline special needs data collection tools and procedures, based on the ICF framework, within the education sector and among other relevant sectors

- Promote a unified and comprehensive ICF-based data collection system to be applied in all schools; this will generate different levels of data, which are necessary to plan for and implement inclusive systems and practices, both at the national and school level. This ranges from initial ICF-based screening towards more specific data collection on accessing the curriculum using ICF, as well as identifying the need for medical diagnosis where referrals will be made. MEHE will collaborate with other sectors to enable and manage data collection outside the education sector, for example, referrals for further assessment, diagnosis, and disability certification
- Ensure that data collection tools are standardized and validated to obtain reliable and internationally comparable data. Internationally validated and accepted data collection approaches and tools for education and special needs will be used, with contextual modifications where necessary
- Ensure schools and relevant stakeholders have appropriate resources and capacity to conduct uniform data collection procedures. With the support of national and international partners in this area, this will enable:
 - o inclusive school planning regarding school-based strategies to address barriers to participation for learners identified with functional difficulties;
 - o regional and national resource allocation (including, for example, specialist support, teaching and learning materials, and assistive devices and technologies) based on identified needs; and
 - o targeted awareness-raising amongst families of learners with identified functional difficulties to support application for disability certification.
- Improve the tracking of individual education data, through SIMS and the individual Education ID, to allow for the provision of targeted interventions and accommodations for learners at risk of dropping out, or who have already dropped out of the education system
- Strengthen data safeguarding and protection, aligned with MEHEs commitment 7.1.1 of the Five-Year General Education Plan,⁴⁷ to ensure ethical and privacy norms are respected
- Re-enforce the National Committee for the Education of Children with Disability, as established by the decree 11853⁴⁸ in accordance with Law 220/2000 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,⁴⁹ to facilitate intersectoral coordination and alignment of data collection on special needs in education settings. This involves:
 - o a unified definition of special needs, and models of disability like the social model of disability aligned with the CRPD and ICF frameworks, the medical model, etc., and
 - o a unified approach to data collection, based on standardized and validated approaches such as the child functionality approach, and a joint database
- Coordinate with other ministries as appropriate to extend inter-sectoral special needs data collection where necessary

Intervention Area 1.3 – Ensure appropriate financing and funding for inclusive education implementation

Rationale

MEHE has allocated government funding for the salaries of special educators who support inclusive schools. The EU, UN agencies, and international and national NGOs support the government in implementing inclusive education programmes. The provision of sufficient financial resources is aligned with Articles 69 and 70 of GC4.⁵⁰ MEHE recognises the importance of developing education sector and cross-sector plans that support inclusive education implementation. In response to GC4, MEHE will explore the development of funding models, including private-public partnerships, and allocate resources to create inclusive learning environments with all necessary support systems available. This will also support the implementation of Programme 7.4 of the Five-Year Plan, which aims to develop a financial system to rationalise spending on education. Financial mechanisms will be established to ensure the transparent and equitable allocation of funds to support inclusive strategic planning.⁵¹

Intended Outcome

A feasible cross-sectoral budget framework will be in place, enabling sufficient and efficient human and financial resource allocation, avoiding duplication, for inclusive education implementation. The financial plan will ensure that all available resources from different ministries, UN agencies, NGOs, and CSOs are coordinated and directed towards the full inclusion of children with special needs in general education and a gradual phasing out of segregated practices.

Strategic Interventions

MEHE and CERD, each entity as per its mandate, will:

- Initiate collaboration with relevant ministries to coordinate resource allocation to support education for children with special needs within a rights-based model of inclusive education, as defined in this Policy and aligned with the CRPD
- Coordinate efforts and funding from all involved donors, including government partners, UN agencies, International organisations, NGOs, private partners, and other donors to avoid overlap and contradiction in inclusive education implementation
- Research opportunities for public-private partnerships to fund specific aspects of inclusive education implementation efforts
- Explore options to mobilize community-based resourcing and support school communities to produce local and low-cost resources to support inclusive education

Intervention Area 1.4 – Support strong leadership and coordinated management for inclusive education development and implementation

Rationale

A National Committee for the Education of Children with Disability, headed by the DGE and consisting of various governmental, international, and civil society partners, was established as per decree No. 11853⁵² dated February 11, 2004 to support the education of children with special needs, according to the framework presented in Law 220/2000 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.⁵³ MEHE provides capacity building for school principals in the inclusive education pilot schools. This contributes to Priority 6 of the Five-Year General Education, which focuses on improving school management and school leadership and equipping public school principals with skills and knowledge to create a positive school climate and improved learning.⁵⁴ Cross-sectoral coordination for inclusive education planning and implementation is in the initiating phase. As noted in GC4⁵⁵, MEHE recognises the importance of committed leadership in educational institutions to establish inclusive education cultures, policies, and practices at all levels and in all areas. MEHE is working with other line ministries, as appropriate, to establish coordinated, cross-sectoral inclusive education coordination and management mechanisms.

Intended Outcome

A cross-sectoral coordination mechanism will operate at all levels to coordinate, implement, and monitor the implementation of inclusive education. The roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders will be clearly defined.

Strategic Interventions

MEHE and CERD, each entity as per its mandate, will:

- Lead awareness and advocacy programmes at the political leadership level to further support the implementation of inclusive education
- Collaborate with relevant parliament members and decision makers to work on the amendment of laws to clearly define the mandate of each ministry in developing, implementing, and monitoring inclusive education under the leadership of MEHE
- Ensure the development of similar coordination mechanisms at sub-national levels
- Ensure that the positions of schools and leaders, such as principals, supervisors, programme coordinators, and similar positions are undertaken by candidates who have, or have the capacity to acquire the identified knowledge and skills related to operationalising the Inclusive Education Policy framework
- Enhance the capacities of education leaders at all levels on inclusive school management

Strategic Goal 2

Increase Public Support for Inclusive Education

Intervention Area 2.1 – Raise awareness on the right of children with special needs to inclusive education

Rationale

The Government of Lebanon designated, in decision no 12⁵⁶ dated August 22, 2019, December 3 of every year as the national day for inclusion. MEHE has initiated special needs awareness-raising events, targeting teachers, parents, and/or caregivers within the inclusive education pilot schools. These initiatives will be expanded to the additional schools in the next phase of the programme. According to the stakeholders who participated in the development of this Policy, and based on the yearly qualitative reports and the Inclusive Education Case Study Report, teachers and parents in the inclusive education pilot schools are better informed and more open to accepting children with special needs within their school communities. MEHE's initiative to conduct awareness-raising events is aligned with Article 8 of the CRPD⁵⁷ and Article 48 of GC4,⁵⁸ which require governments to undertake awareness raising campaigns at the society, family, and school levels to address stereotypes, and prejudices regarding persons with disabilities, with a specific emphasis on women and girls with special needs, children affected by crisis and conflict, persons with intellectual disabilities, and persons with intensive support needs. These initiatives also support the implementation of Strategy 1.2.3 of the Five-Year General Education Plan, which is to organise outreach campaigns using diverse communication channels to reach parents and communities to promote the enrolment of all children, regardless of age, gender, or special needs.⁵⁹

Intended Outcome

An evidence-based strategic plan for communication and social and behavioural change towards the inclusion of children with special needs, with the purpose of reducing stereotypes, and prejudices, and increasing public support for inclusive education will be available and implemented.

Strategic Interventions

MEHE and CERD, each entity as per its mandate, will:

- Support research to identify community based common prejudices and stereotypes towards children with special needs, which impede progress towards inclusive education implementation and make recommendations for future actions to address these. MEHE will support ongoing research to monitor the ways in which discrimination against children with special needs is being identified and addressed in alignment with the MEHE Child Protection Policy

- Lead the development of an evidence-based, long-term, and ongoing national communication and social and behavioural change strategy to address discrimination in education against children with special needs. This includes a specific focus on the inclusion of children with all types of special needs and children with intensive support needs
- Support awareness raising and advocacy to increase public support for inclusive education in close collaboration with OPDs, children with special needs and their families, and other ministries, where relevant
- Ensure, through pre-service and in-service capacity building, that school principals and teachers have resources and capacities to foster inclusive cultures
- Promote positive images and the use of rights-based, gender and inclusive terminology in school textbooks and other teaching and learning resources

Intervention Area 2.2 – Strengthen parent and community involvement in inclusive education implementation

Rationale

MEHE will ensure that parents and communities are fully involved in the planning and implementation of inclusive education. Initial initiatives around parent and community collaboration are being developed in the inclusive education pilot schools. This effort is aligned with the Five-Year General Education Plan. Strategy 1.1.7 includes implementing parental communication programmes to promote the enrolment of all children. Strategy 1.6.6 aims to develop engagement strategies to increase the involvement of parents in education planning.⁶⁰ Parental and community involvement in education is supported through a rights-based framework aligned with Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which states that parents have the right to choose the education they want for their children.⁶¹ Article 18 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) ensures that parents remain the main persons responsible for the upbringing and education of their children.⁶² GC4 Article 72 states that parental, learner, and community involvement is not only a basic right but also a source of support for inclusive education implementation.⁶³

Intended Outcome

Institutionalised collaboration between MEHE and other stakeholders will allow inclusive schools to benefit from local resources and expertise, such as learners with and without special needs, parents, community members, and OPDS, for inclusive education implementation.

Strategic interventions

MEHE and CERD, each entity as per its mandate, will:

- Promote continued parental and community involvement in schools by strengthening capacity and providing tools and guidelines to education leaders at all levels
- Enhance the role of the teacher-parent associations to strengthen collaboration between the school and parents and/or community members
- Support advocacy and information-sharing initiatives to ensure that parents and communities are aware of inclusive education and their role in it

Strategic Goal 3

Create and Strengthen Inclusive and Accessible Education Services

Intervention Area 3.1 – Support the development of early identification and intervention services

Rationale

MEHE supports the development and implementation of early identification and intervention services within basic and secondary education in collaboration with relevant ministries and partners. MEHE, CERD, NGOs, and private institutions have worked on several pilot initiatives to address early identification and/or intervention for young children with special needs. These have contributed to the government's ratification of the CRPD. Article 25 requires governments to provide early identification and intervention, and other services to minimize and prevent further disabilities.⁶⁴ GC4 Article 63⁶⁵ recognises the importance of developing early identification and intervention services to facilitate learning in inclusive settings for children with disabilities. MEHE's efforts in this area will support the achievement of SDG 4.2, ensuring that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, and care.⁶⁶ The development and expansion of early identification and intervention will furthermore support strategy 1.3.4 of the Five-Year General Education Plan, which aims to implement a coherent screening process for identifying common disabilities amongst learners.⁶⁷

Intended Outcome

National-level, cross-sectoral coordination will be established to ensure children with special needs are identified as early as possible and have access to a wide range of early intervention services, which facilitate their access to early learning in inclusive public and private kindergartens.

Strategic interventions

MEHE and CERD, each entity as per its mandate, will:

- Coordinate with relevant ministries to develop a joint holistic policy and framework on early identification and intervention. MEHE will contribute by sharing its expertise to create early learning opportunities for all children, including children with special needs
- Promote mutual collaboration between different ministries and partners to develop mechanisms to provide early identification and intervention data
- Support early learning programmes to refer young children for further assessment, diagnosis, and support when necessary
- Work with partners and other line ministries to strengthen transitions from early childhood services and nurseries into kindergarten and primary education
- Strengthen and expand the role of multidisciplinary teams to support kindergarten teachers in providing high quality teaching and learning to all young children, including children with special needs

Intervention Area 3.2 – Adopt a rights-based model for inclusive education practices at schools

Rationale

A rights-based approach to inclusive education is implemented in inclusive education pilot schools and in several private schools. This is aligned with Article 24 of the CRPD,⁶⁸ which requires governments to ensure children with disabilities have access to quality education in their schools without discrimination and based on equal opportunity. However, children with more complex support needs are currently still referred to segregated forms of education or are regularly withdrawn from the classroom to receive individual support provided by specialists. MEHE is working towards increasing the capacity of inclusive teachers and enhancing support services in schools to include all learners, including those with more complex support needs. This follows the recommendations of GC4⁶⁹, which state that institutionalisation and segregated forms of education, withdrawal of learners from general classrooms, and partial inclusion are incompatible with inclusive education as intended by the CRPD. MEHE's efforts towards rights-based inclusive education contribute towards achieving SDG 4, ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education, and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.⁷⁰

Intended Outcome

A clear strategic choice will be made for inclusive education. A strategic plan to gradually phase out segregated provision will be developed and implemented. This will be reflected in all relevant legislative and policy documents.

Strategic interventions

MEHE and CERD, each entity as per its mandate, will:

- Strategically plan for the gradual phasing out of institutionalised provision for children with special needs and all forms of segregated education practices
- Work with relevant ministries and sectors to enhance inclusive education in all areas. MEHE will advocate with relevant ministries to develop a joint policy or strategy to coherently phase out segregated education practices, while ensuring sufficient resources and capacities in schools. The Phase-Out Strategy will set out how learners will continue to receive necessary support within the education system and in collaboration with partners, such as rehabilitation centres or support system hubs

Intervention Area 3.3 – Provide capacity building and support for the education workforce to ensure high quality and sustainable implementation of inclusive education

Rationale

The ongoing efforts of MEHE and CERD to enhance teacher capacity for inclusive education meet the requirements of Article 24 of the CRPD.⁷¹ This includes the incorporation of awareness on special needs and the use of educational techniques, materials, and communication to support persons with special needs in teacher development initiatives, as intended by the CRPD. GC4⁷² notes that inclusive education teacher training content should focus on understanding diversity, rights-based models of inclusion, and inclusive pedagogy, as well as identifying functional abilities.

CERD provides in-service teacher training for inclusive education, and universities are beginning to offer pre-service teacher training courses on inclusive education and special needs. MEHE GDE provides continuous support and coaching for teachers, through the DOPS/IE Unit, Primary and Secondary Education departments for inclusive education public schools, and through the Private Education department for private schools, MEHE's and CERD's commitment to inclusive education teacher development supports Goal 4, specifically, Goal 4.c of the SDGs, and will increase the supply of qualified teachers.⁷³ It also supports the realisation of the Five-Year General Education Plan, where priority area 4 focuses on improving the quality of teaching and workforce management. This includes pre-service and in-service teacher training.⁷⁴

Intended Outcome

A national policy or strategy for teacher development will be available and will integrate inclusive education as a key competency for all teachers at all education levels. In collaboration with relevant universities, the pre-service teacher training curriculum will be reviewed and updated to ensure all teachers are equipped with the necessary knowledge,

skills, and values to teach in inclusive settings. In-service teachers will receive continuous, school-based, professional development and support to create inclusive learning environments and provide high-quality education for all learners.

Strategic interventions

MEHE and CERD, each entity as per its mandate, will:

- Strengthen and institutionalise current teacher development initiatives for inclusive education, both pre- and in-service, by updating the existing teacher competency framework and extending it to all relevant school personnel
- Establish national teacher training policies, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders
- Strengthen the role of inclusive education coaches in supporting and monitoring the quality of accessible teaching, learning, and assessment practices in schools
- Ensure schools can access and retain the trained human resources necessary for inclusive education implementation

Intervention Area 3.4 – Increase accessibility of learning environments and infrastructures

Rationale

MEHE is enhancing the accessibility of school infrastructure. Newly constructed schools are accessible for persons with functional mobility difficulties, in accordance with decree No.9091⁷⁵ dated November 15, 2002 on the Guidelines and Standards Organising the Construction of Public Schools, and existing school buildings are gradually being upgraded. The Department of Engineering at MEHE is planning to upgrade school infrastructure to be accessible for learners with special needs with a focus on sensory difficulties. These efforts contribute to achieving SDG 4.a, building learning environments that are child, disability, and gender sensitive.⁷⁶ Improving accessibility is also aligned with Article 9 of the CRPD⁷⁷, which requires governments to take measures to ensure persons with disabilities have access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, transportation, information, and communication. MEHE is also implementing Programme 3.1 of the Five-Year General Education Plan, which aims to expand and improve school infrastructure and equipment across Lebanon by building new schools and rehabilitating existing ones.⁷⁸

Intended Outcome

School communities will be supported to identify and address physical barriers in the school infrastructure. Schools will collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders to increase the functional use of infrastructure and remove barriers to accessing school infrastructure and transport between home and school.

Strategic interventions

MEHE and CERD, each entity as per its mandate, will:

- Extend current efforts to ensure accessibility of school infrastructure and transport for all children
- Enhance the capacity of school principals to collaborate with the community to identify and implement local, low-cost solutions for accessibility barriers

Intervention Area 3.5 – Review and update curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment to be compatible with a rights-based approach to inclusive education

Rationale

CERD, in collaboration with MEHE, has launched the Lebanese National Framework for the General Education Curriculum and committees have been established to prepare for the reform of the National Curriculum. CERD, in collaboration with MEHE, will develop a national curriculum compatible with the fundamental principles of rights-based inclusive education. This is aligned with Priority Area 5 of the Five-Year General Education Plan to reform the curriculum and learning assessment based on the key principles of competency-based and learner-centred pedagogy.⁷⁹ The MEHE DGE/Official Exams Department has initiated strategies following Decree 9138⁸⁰ to provide accommodations for identified children with special needs for Cycle 3 school assessments and the standardised official exams for grades 9 and 12 and allow exemptions only from grade 9 official exams. The support will be provided in earlier years of cycle 3 to ensure the learners receive the needed accommodations. This supports the implementation of both the Five-Year General Education Plan⁸¹ and the National Policy Assessment Pathways.⁸² The Five-Year Plan aims to develop new learning assessment strategies to assess the learning outcomes of learners.⁸³ The National Policy for Alternative Pathways seeks to provide children and youth with knowledge and skills that are based on their needs by developing a flexible assessment method.⁸⁴ These initiatives support the realisation of Article 24 of the CRPD⁸⁵, which obligates States Parties to provide reasonable accommodations within the general education system. GC4⁸⁶ specifies that Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles must be applied in designing curricula, pedagogical approaches, and learning assessment procedures for all learners, including children with disabilities. Curricula and assessments must respond and adapt to the requirements of all individuals.

Intended Outcome

A flexible and high-quality national curriculum, based on principles such as UDL, which promotes learner-centred teaching and learning approaches, will be accessible and available to all learners.

Strategic interventions

- Ensure that ongoing efforts to reform the national curriculum are based on international evidence and promising practices and are supportive of inclusive education implementation
- Support the Official Exams Department to extend the scope of accommodations provided to children with special needs when taking standardised national official exams and to design learning assessment approaches aligned with the updated, inclusive, national curriculum, following Decree 9138⁸⁷

Intervention Area 3.6 – Ensure accessible teaching and learning resources are available for all

Rationale

Accessible teaching and learning materials and assistive devices are distributed through the Inclusive Education Pilot Project and programmes led by NGOs, CSOs, and private organisations. MEHE is currently developing resources and skills to provide learning materials in Braille and will continue to do so with the aim of providing accessible resources to teachers and learners. These initiatives are aligned with international frameworks such as the CRPD,⁸⁸ requiring governments to offer alternative and augmentative modes of communication in general education and to ensure children with special needs are provided with assistive devices and technology and accessible transport to facilitate their mobility. GC4⁸⁹ emphasizes the right to affordable, high-quality education for all learners. Accommodations, assistive devices and technology and accessible learning resources should therefore not entail additional costs for children with special needs and their families. Continuous efforts from MEHE to provide accessible teaching and learning materials and assistive devices will contribute to the implementation of Programme 7.3 of the Five-Year Education Plan, which involves resources management and distribution of physical and human resources.⁹⁰

Intended Outcome

Textbooks and other learning materials will be accessible to all learners, including children with special needs. Textbooks will include positive references to the aforementioned people. Assistive devices and technology that enable learning and participation will become available in schools and distributed based on actual needs.

Strategic Interventions

MEHE and CERD, each entity as per its mandate, will:

- Strategically plan to expand the distribution of accessible teaching and learning resources and assistive devices based on evidence of actual needs, available resources, and international promising practices in producing educational resources that offer value for money
- Support the development of local assistive technology and devices, including the use of sign language in Lebanon
- Lead the transformation of the current school-based inclusive education support system in the inclusive pilot schools towards a nationwide and needs-based support system, operated from regional support service hubs (further explained in the next section)
- Provide support service hubs with specialised staffing, and accessible teaching and learning resources and assistive devices, which will be shared with the schools in the region, based on the outcomes of school based ICF screening of functional difficulties and the outcomes of further assessments

Intervention Area 3.7 – Strengthen and expand education support services for learners, parents/caregivers, and teachers

Rationale

An inclusive education support system with coaches and school-based multidisciplinary teams is available in the inclusive education pilot schools and some private schools. Outside the pilot school areas, support services for children with special needs are provided in collaboration with relevant ministries and partners. These efforts are aligned with the CRPD⁹¹ and GC4,⁹² which secure the right of children with special needs to receive support, including rehabilitation within the general education system. MEHE acknowledges that rehabilitation services must be multidisciplinary, start at the youngest possible age, support participation and inclusion in the community, and be available in inclusive schools. External support services should be available as close as possible to the communities where children with special needs live.⁹³ Efforts to provide support services will support MEHE in implementing Programme 1.1 of the Five-Year General Education Plan, which aims to expand retention for vulnerable groups and increase enrolment rates.⁹⁴

Intended Outcome

Inclusive education support system hubs will provide a full range of multidisciplinary services for children with special needs, parents, teachers, and school administrators within the school, along with additional external central and regional support as per the need.

Strategic interventions

MEHE and CERD, each entity as per its mandate, will:

- Collaborate with other relevant ministries to develop a system of support for school-based multidisciplinary teams in the form of support service hubs. The inclusive education support service hubs will provide identification services, and multidisciplinary support for school administrators, teachers, learners, and parents to increase participation and learning; and they will offer a range of accessible teaching and learning resources and assistive devices and technology, based on actual needs. A wide range of services and interventions can be provided, including:
 - o Early identification and intervention services
 - o Ongoing identification and multidisciplinary assessment
 - o Education and child and family support planning
 - o Support for inclusive schools, teachers, and other staff, such as school psychologists, to establish inclusive and supportive learning environments for all
 - o Community-based therapy and rehabilitation services and family support
 - o Coaching and on-the-job support for school principals, teachers, and school staff on key skills and knowledge necessary to implement inclusive education
 - o Coordinating a collaborative-problem solving process to identify and remove barriers to learning and participation with a range of local stakeholders
 - o Providing information and support for parents or caregivers
 - o Managing school-based multidisciplinary support for learners with special needs, which avoids withdrawal from classroom activities, with a focus on the inclusion of children with more complex support needs
 - o Sharing accessible teaching and learning resources and assistive technology and devices with schools, families, and learners, depending on the outcome of identification and assessment procedures

Specialists working at the inclusive education support service hubs will include specialists who are officially certified in inclusive education, psychologists, social workers, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, psychomotor therapists, and art therapists. This will increase targeted support for learners with complex needs.

- Ensure regional inclusive education support service hubs have the capacities and resources to perform their functions in supporting inclusive education in schools

Intervention Area 3.8 – Create safe learning environments for all learners

Rationale

The MEHE Child Protection in the School Policy⁹⁵ supports the protection of children from forms of violence detected in schools, whether this has taken place in schools or in the community/family. This enforces the realisation of Article 7 of the CRPD,⁹⁶ which obligates governments to take all appropriate measures to protect from and prevent all forms of violence and abuse towards persons with disabilities. It also acknowledges the importance of GC4⁹⁷ which guides governments to implement measures that support building positive relationships, friendships, and acceptance at school as well as preventing abuse, bullying (Article 12) and gender-based violence (Article 46) within the education context. Continuous efforts from MEHE to improve child protection in schools contribute towards achieving SDG 4.a, creating schools that are child, disability, and gender sensitive and providing a safe, non-violent, inclusive, and effective learning environment for all. ⁹⁸

Intended Outcome

National action plans and strategies for the protection of all children with special needs will be aligned with the Child Protection in the School Policy which includes clear measures to ensure safe school and learning environments.

Strategic interventions

MEHE and CERD, each entity as per its mandate, will:

- Support all schools in institutionalising specific measures for safe environments for learners with special needs in their school in alignment with the Child Protection in the School Policy
- Collaborate with relevant stakeholders, including persons with special needs and their organisations, to research the safety of current learning settings

Intervention Area 3.9 – Support effective transitions

Introduction

MEHE acknowledges the importance of supporting effective transitions between education levels and the labour market, which are significant within a lifelong learning framework. Accommodations are provided for identified and certified learners with special needs during national official exams in Lebanon. These initiatives are in line with GC4,⁹⁹ which considers effective transitions as a core feature of inclusive education.

Intended Outcome

Schools and education institutes will be guided in supporting children with special needs to make educational transitions. Accommodations will be made to ensure children with special needs can participate in national, standardised, grade-level, final, and other types of exams or tests on an equal basis with others.

Strategic interventions

MEHE and CERD, each entity as per its mandate, will:

- Collaborate with relevant governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to overcome:
 - o Challenges and bottlenecks in relation to key transition moments in education for children with special needs and possible risks of dropout
 - o Institutional and other barriers experienced by children with special needs to participate in tests or exams necessary to transition between education levels

Strategic Goal 4

Develop Systems and Structures to Measure and Monitor Inclusive Education Implementation

Intervention Area 4.1 – Build monitoring and quality assurance systems and structures for inclusive education implementation

Rationale

MEHE and CERD have developed tools to track the learning progress and achievement of expected standards set out in the national curriculum. If disaggregated, these can provide insight into the learning progress in general, within inclusive schools, and for children with special needs, specifically. MEHE monitors the implementation of inclusive education efforts in collaboration with relevant international organisations, NGOs, and CSOs. These monitoring efforts will support MEHE in realising Article 33 of the CRPD¹⁰⁰, which requires governments to design systems and structures to monitor the convention's implementation, including the right to inclusive education for persons with disabilities. It emphasises the need to establish an independent monitoring mechanism and engage CSOs and OPDs in the process. Standardised indicators, tools, and structures to measure the quality of inclusive education would support MEHE in its progress towards achieving SDG 4, on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all.¹⁰¹

Intended Outcome

A national education monitoring system, based on national standards and indicators for quality education and the SDGs, will be in place to track the implementation of inclusive education. Monitoring systems will involve the active participation of children with special needs, their families, persons with special needs, and their organisations.

Strategic interventions

MEHE and CERD, each entity as per its mandate, will:

- Ensure national education standards, which reflect and support key principles of rights-based inclusive education are developed based on consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and aligned with key international policies and targets
- Ensure that a comprehensive strategy for regular monitoring of quality education, including inclusive education implementation, is in place
- Support the capacity building of children with special needs, their families, and OPDs to participate in inclusive education monitoring processes
- Promote the development of a unified database with the results of the monitoring efforts, to be used by different ministries for planning purposes



Towards an inclusive and equitable education for all

In the challenging situations in Lebanon, the need for ensuring that all children, regardless of their background, have access to high-quality inclusive education in education systems has become more necessary.

At the heart of the Inclusive Education Policy is the rights-based model of inclusive education promoted by the CRPD and GC4 to Article 24, supporting the achievement of SDG 4.

It aims to create inclusive schools that value diversity and enable equitable access to learning for all children. The policy emphasises a learner-centred and lifelong learning approach and aims to comprehensively reform the Lebanese education system and address the barriers preventing children with special needs from participating in education.

The Policy will build on the promising practices demonstrated in the Inclusive Education Project and other efforts by the government and development partners. To accelerate progress in inclusive education, the Policy will address four strategic goals:

- (1)** Establishing an enabling environment (legal framework, data, financing, and leadership and management)
- (2)** Increasing public support for inclusive education (awareness-raising and parent and community involvement)
- (3)** Creating and strengthening inclusive and accessible education services (early identification and intervention, inclusive school practices and approaches, capacity building for the education workforce, accessible and safe learning environments, updated and flexible curricula, pedagogy and assessment, accessible teaching and learning resources, multidisciplinary support services, and effective transitions across education stages)
- (4)** Developing monitoring and quality assurance systems and structures

Implementing the Policy will require coordinated efforts from MEHE, CERD, relevant government agencies, development and implementing partners, organisations of persons with special needs, universities, unions, and most importantly, learners, teachers, school principals, parents, and the wider school communities. A road map detailing the implementation and monitoring of the Policy will be developed collaboratively with key stakeholders.

This Policy marks a key milestone in Lebanon's continued commitment to education for all and to building inclusive school communities where everyone is accepted, safe, and thriving.

References

- Algolaylat, A. (2016). The Evaluation of Educational Inclusion Programs for Learners with Intellectual Disabilities in Jordan. Wayne State University Graduate School.
- El-Jardali, F, Abou Samra, C, Soueidan, S & Hilal, N. (2018). K2p Policy Brief: Addressing Early Identification and Intervention of Children with Disabilities and Developmental Delays. Knowledge to Policy (K2P).
- Government of Lebanon. (2021). Five-year General Education Plan 2021-2025. Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
- Government of Lebanon. (2000). Law 220/2000 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Government of Lebanon
- Human Rights Watch. (2018). I Would Like to Go to School. Barriers to Children with Disabilities in Lebanon. United States of America.
- Khochen, M. & Radford, J. (2012). Attitudes of Teachers and Headteachers Towards Inclusion in Lebanon. International Journal of Inclusive Education.
- Ministry of Education and Higher Education. (2019). National Policy for Alternative Education Pathways. Meeting the Diverse Learning Needs for the Vulnerable and Marginalized Children and Youth in Lebanon. Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
- Ministry of Education and Higher Education. (2022). Child Protection in the School. MEHE and UNICEF
- Ministry of Education and Higher Education. (2021). Lebanon Five-Year General Education Plan 2021-2025. Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
- Mercer, C., Algozinne, B. & Trifilleti J. (1979). Early Identification: Issues and Considerations. *Exceptional Children* 46, no. 1. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/001440297904600109>. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/001440297904600109>.
- Merhej, R. (2021). Case Study on the Inclusive Education Pilot Project in Lebanese Public Schools. UNICEF, MEHE, and Haigazian University.
- Pacer Center. (2022). Natural Environments Support Early Intervention Services. Pacer Center. <https://www.pacer.org/parent/php/PHP-c178.pdf>.
- United Nations. (2006). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol. (Retrieved from: <http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf> (last accessed on 25/08/2014).
- United Nations. (1989). Convention on the Rights of the Child. (Retrieved from: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx> (Last accessed on 22/09/2014).
- United Nations. (2015). Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. General Assembly of the United Nations.
- United Nations. (1948). Universal Declaration of Human Rights. UN.
- United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2016). General Comment No.4 (2016), Article 24: Right to Inclusive Education, Crpd/C/Gc/4. UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Retrieved from: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/57c977e34.html> (Last accessed on 07/09/18).
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2020). Gender Report: A New Generation: 25 Years of Efforts for Gender Equality in Education. Global Education Monitoring Report. UNESCO.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2022). Education Programme- Lebanon. Fact Sheet. (https://www.unhcr.org/lb/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2022/02/UNHCR-Lebanon-Education-Fact-sheet_December-2021.pdf (Last Accessed on 25/09/22).
- United Nations Children's Fund. (2019). Action for Refugee Children. Good Practices That Bring the Global Refugee Compact to Life. UNICEF (<https://www.unicef.org/media/63091/file> (Last Accessed on 25/09/22).
- United Nations Children's Fund. (2022). Disability Data Collection in Lebanon. UNICEF
- World Health Organization & World Bank. (2011). World Report on Disability. World Health Organization.
- World Bank Group. (2021). Foundations for Building Forward Better – an Education Reform Path for Lebanon. World Bank Group.

1. UN. (1989). Convention on the Rights of the Child (Retrieved from: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx> (Last accessed on 22/09/2014).
2. MEHE. (2019). Terminology and National Day for Inclusion. decision no 12.
3. UN. (2006). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol (Retrieved from: <http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf> (last accessed on 25/08/2014).
4. UN. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol.
5. Cecil D. Mercer, Bobo Algozinne, and John J. Trifiletti. (1979). Early Identification: Issues and Considerations, *Exceptional Children* 46, no. 1. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/001440297904600109>, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/001440297904600109>.
6. Pacer Center. (2022). Natural Environments Support Early Intervention Services. <https://www.pacer.org/parent/php/PHP-c178.pdf>.
7. UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2016). General Comment No.4 (2016), Article 24: Right to Inclusive Education, CRPD/C/GC/4. UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Retrieved from: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/57c977e34.html> (Last accessed on 07/09/18).
8. UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2016). General Comment No.4 (2016), Article 24: Right to Inclusive Education, CRPD/C/GC/4. UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Retrieved from: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/57c977e34.html> (Last accessed on 07/09/18).
9. UN. Convention on the Rights of the Child.
10. UN. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol.
11. UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2016). General Comment No.4 (2016), Article 24: Right to Inclusive Education, CRPD/C/GC/4. UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Retrieved from: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/57c977e34.html> (Last accessed on 07/09/18).
12. UN. (2015). Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. General Assembly of the United Nations.
13. UN. (1948). Universal declaration of human rights. UN.
14. UN. Convention on the Rights of the Child.
15. UN. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol.
16. (2023). Ratification of the UNCRPD. decree 10966
17. UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2016). General Comment No.4 (2016), Article 24: Right to Inclusive Education, CRPD/C/GC/4.
18. (2004). Formation of a national committee for the education of children with disability. decree 11853.
19. MEHE. (2019). Terminology and National Day for Inclusion. decision no 12.
20. (2022). Exempting children with learning difficulties, special educational and psychological needs, and chronic diseases from the school and official exams for the third cycle (G7 to G9), and determining their conditions in these classes when they should not be exempted from the exams, in addition to the conditions of those who have reached the official exams for the general secondary certificate (G12). decree 9138.
21. UN. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol.
22. UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2016). General Comment No.4 (2016), Article 24: Right to Inclusive Education, CRPD/C/GC/4.
23. MEHE. (2021). Lebanon Five-Year General Education Plan 2021-2025. Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
24. UNESCO. (2020). Gender Report: A new generation: 25 years of efforts for gender equality in education. Global Education Monitoring Report, UNESCO.
25. Rita Merhej. (2021). Case Study on the Inclusive Education Pilot Project in Lebanese Public Schools. UNICEF, MEHE, and Haigazian University.
26. Merhej. Case Study on the Inclusive Education Pilot Project in Lebanese Public Schools.
27. World Bank Group, Foundations for Building Forward Better. (2021). An Education Reform Path for Lebanon.
28. Merhej. Case Study on the Inclusive Education Pilot Project in Lebanese Public Schools.
29. Merhej. Case Study on the Inclusive Education Pilot Project in Lebanese Public Schools.
30. Maha Khochen and Julie Radford. (2012). Attitudes of Teachers and Headteachers Towards Inclusion in Lebanon. *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 16, no. 2.
31. UNICEF. (2022). Disability Data Collection in Lebanon.
32. UNICEF. (2022). Disability Data Collection in Lebanon.
33. Ahmad Salem Algolaylat. (2016). The Evaluation of Educational Inclusion Programs for Learners with Intellectual Disabilities in Jordan, Wayne State University Graduate School.
34. WHO and World Bank. (2011). World Report on Disability. World Health Organization.
35. Fadi El-Jardali et al. (2018). K2P Policy Brief: Addressing Early Identification and Intervention of Children with Disabilities and Developmental Delays. Knowledge to Policy (K2P) Center.
36. Human Rights Watch. (2018). I would Like to Go to School. Barriers to Children with Disabilities in Lebanon.
37. Human Rights Watch. (2018). I would Like to Go to School. Barriers to Children with Disabilities in Lebanon.
38. Merhej. Case Study on the Inclusive Education Pilot Project in Lebanese Public Schools.
39. Presidential decree no 9706: "Organize and define the conditions for compulsory free education"
40. Government of Lebanon. (2000). Law 220/2000 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Government of Lebanon.
41. UN. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol.
42. UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2016). General Comment No.4 (2016), Article 24: Right to Inclusive Education, CRPD/C/GC/4.
43. UN. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol.
44. UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2016). General Comment No.4 (2016), Article 24: Right to Inclusive Education, CRPD/C/GC/4.
45. UN. Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
46. Government of Lebanon. (2021). Five-Year General Education Plan 2021- 2025. Ministry of Education and Higher Education
47. Government of Lebanon. (2021). Five-Year General Education Plan 2021- 2025. Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
48. (2004). Formation of a national committee for the education of children with disability. decree 11853.
49. Government of Lebanon. Law 220/2000 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
50. UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2016). General Comment No.4 (2016), Article 24: Right to Inclusive Education, CRPD/C/GC/4.
51. Government of Lebanon. (2021). Five-Year General Education Plan 2021- 2025. Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
52. (2004). Formation of a national committee for the education of children with disability. decree 11853.

53. Government of Lebanon. Law 220/2000 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
54. Government of Lebanon. (2021). Five-Year General Education Plan 2021- 2025. Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
55. UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2016). General Comment No.4 (2016), Article 24: Right to Inclusive Education, CRPD/C/GC/4.
56. MEHE. (2019). Terminology and National Day for Inclusion. decision no 12.
57. UN. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol.
58. UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2016). General Comment No.4 (2016), Article 24: Right to Inclusive Education, CRPD/C/GC/4.
59. Government of Lebanon. (2021). Five-Year General Education Plan 2021- 2025. Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
60. Government of Lebanon. (2021). Five-Year General Education Plan 2021- 2025. Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
61. UN. Universal declaration of human rights.
62. UN. Convention on the Rights of the Child.
63. UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2016). General Comment No.4 (2016), Article 24: Right to Inclusive Education, CRPD/C/GC/4.
64. UN. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol.
65. UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2016). General Comment No.4 (2016), Article 24: Right to Inclusive Education, CRPD/C/GC/4.
66. UN. Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
67. Government of Lebanon. (2021). Five-Year General Education Plan 2021- 2025. Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
68. UN. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol.
69. UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2016). General Comment No.4 (2016), Article 24: Right to Inclusive Education, CRPD/C/GC/4.
70. UN. Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
71. UN. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol.
72. UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2016). General Comment No.4 (2016), Article 24: Right to Inclusive Education, CRPD/C/GC/4.
73. UN. Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
74. Government of Lebanon. (2021). Five-Year General Education Plan 2021- 2025. Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
75. (2002). Guidelines and Standards Organizing the Construction of Public Schools. decree 9091.
76. UN. Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
77. UN. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol.
78. Government of Lebanon. (2021). Five-Year General Education Plan 2021- 2025. Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
79. Government of Lebanon. (2021). Five-Year General Education Plan 2021- 2025. Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
80. (2022). Exempting children with learning difficulties, special educational and psychological needs, and chronic diseases from the school and official exams for the third cycle (G7 to G9), and determining their conditions in these classes when they should not be exempted from the exams, in addition to the conditions of those who have reached the official exams for the general secondary certificate (G12). decree 9138.
81. Government of Lebanon. (2021). Five-Year General Education Plan 2021- 2025. Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
82. Lebanon Ministry of Education and Higher Education. (2019). National Policy for Alternative Education Pathways. Meeting the Diverse Learning Needs for the Vulnerable and Marginalized Children and Youth in Lebanon. Lebanon: MEHE, the Republic of Lebanon.
83. Government of Lebanon. (2021). Five-Year General Education Plan 2021- 2025. Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
84. Lebanon Ministry of Education and Higher Education. (2019). Short National Policy for Alternative Education Pathways. Meeting the Diverse Learning Needs for the Vulnerable and Marginalized Children and Youth in Lebanon.
85. UN. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol.
86. UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2016). General Comment No.4 (2016), Article 24: Right to Inclusive Education, CRPD/C/GC/4.
87. (2022). Exempting children with learning difficulties, special educational and psychological needs, and chronic diseases from the school and official exams for the third cycle (G7 to G9), and determining their conditions in these classes when they should not be exempted from the exams, in addition to the conditions of those who have reached the official exams for the general secondary certificate (G12). decree 9138
88. UN. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol.
89. UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2016). General Comment No.4 (2016), Article 24: Right to Inclusive Education, CRPD/C/GC/4.
90. Government of Lebanon. (2021). Five-Year General Education Plan 2021- 2025. Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
91. UN. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol.
92. UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2016). General Comment No.4 (2016), Article 24: Right to Inclusive Education, CRPD/C/GC/4.
93. UN. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol.
94. Government of Lebanon. (2021). Five-Year General Education Plan 2021- 2025. Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
95. MEHE. (2022). Child Protection in the School. MEHE and UNICEF.
96. UN. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol.
97. UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2016). General Comment No.4 (2016), Article 24: Right to Inclusive Education, CRPD/C/GC/4.
98. UN. Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
99. UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2016). General Comment No.4 (2016), Article 24: Right to Inclusive Education, CRPD/C/GC/4.
100. UN. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol.
101. UN. Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

