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Lebanon - Vocational and Technical Education Project

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1. Country and Sector Background: The Government's reconstruction efforts over the last few years have created a hospitable environment for the inflow of private capital. The resulting rapid growth (nearly 7% p.a. in recent years) created an increase in the demand for labor, and skill shortages have begun to appear due to the lack of a qualified labor force. The reconstruction program and the pattern of growth of the economy further increase the need for a flexible and skilled workforce, which in turn will require reform of the Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) sector, including substantially more effective delivery systems.

2. In view of its importance, the vocational training effort resumed in 1993 with the rehabilitation of existing public vocational schools under the World Bank Emergency Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Project (ERRP) and the creation of a separate Ministry for Vocational and Technical Education (MVTE). The Government has increased the VTE budget by 62% in real terms since 1993, indicating its strong commitment to vocational skill formation. The Arab Fund and Islamic Development Bank have provided funding in an amount of about US\$80 million for the construction of facilities. The MVTE is currently receiving assistance from the German and French governments and the UNDP to improve curricula and develop cooperative training with industry. In addition, there is a strong private sector presence. However, the quality of training offered, mostly in service-oriented occupations (secretarial, commerce, and computer operation), is mixed. By contrast, a number

of NGOs provide relatively good training in industrial trades. Some NGOs have developed strong ties with Germany and France and are equipped with competent staff and modern equipment and training methodologies.

3. Despite these efforts, weaknesses in the system are evident in three key areas: management and efficiency; relevance, responsiveness and quality of training; and condition and adequacy of the physical infrastructure. These weaknesses include: (a) absence of a comprehensive VTE policy framework; (b) low status of

- VTE; (c) weak sector coordination; (d) high dropout and repetition rates; (e) weak linkages between VTE schools and employers; (f) outdated curricula and course materials; (g) lack of modern equipment, resource materials and library books; (h) low level of instructor salaries and consequently low levels of technical knowledge by instructors; and (j) limited availability of training for the handicapped and disadvantaged groups.
4. Project Objectives: The objective of the project is to improve the performance of the Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) system by making it more demand driven and responsive to market needs. The project would achieve this objective by: (a) strengthening the institutional framework; (b) improving relevance, responsiveness and quality of training; and (c) improving delivery mechanisms by (i) making existing VTE schools more efficient, and (ii) establishing new schools in which the private sector plays the lead role in management and operation. The project would support the Government's policy of developing a more flexible VTE system that facilitates the acquisition and adaptation of skills to new jobs, as the structure of the economy and occupations change.
5. Project Cost and Financing: Project cost is tentatively estimated at US\$69 million. Proposed IBRD financing would be about US\$63 million; the Government US\$6 million.
6. Project Implementation: The MVTE would be the implementing agency in cooperation with the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR). Detailed arrangements were discussed extensively during project appraisal and post-appraisal in November and December, 1997 respectively. A matrix outlining the responsibilities between CDR and MVTE-PIU with respect to the various activities relating to civil works and equipment procurement based on the format provided by the mission will be presented during negotiations scheduled for January 12, 1998.
7. Project Sustainability: Overall sustainability of the VTE system would be accomplished through: (a) improved planning and management of the sector, (b) an information system for policy formulation and implementation, (c) more effective governance, (d) improved supervision monitoring and quality control, (e) strengthening coordination with other agencies/ministries and, (f) developing strong linkages with the labor market. Financial sustainability of the project would be accomplished through: (g) reduction of unit costs, improved management and internal efficiency in public VTE schools; (h) introduction of shorter, more cost-effective training programs against which fees can be charged, (i) expanded use of existing VTE schools by the private sector for special fee-paying training programs; (j) improved revenues from fees, production and contributions from the private sector.
8. Poverty & Program Objectives Category: The project is not a poverty reduction operation, but as a large number of students come from poor to low income households, the project would have a positive effect on poverty reduction.
9. Environmental Aspects: The proposed project has been cleared for Category C. No adverse environmental impact is expected from the project. There will be a series of small construction contracts as part of the operation and implementing agencies will be required to ensure that appropriate environmental protection measures are taken as part of each construction contract. Training for trades

with environmental pollution implications and addressing the adverse impact of such activities (such as automotive) is being incorporated in the proposed training.

10. **Project Benefits:** The project is expected to: (a) improve labor productivity and global competitiveness resulting from improvements in the quality and relevance of the training; (b) generate tax revenues from increased numbers of VTE graduates and higher tax contributions from graduates with higher earnings due to the qualitative improvements in training; (c) result in more efficient use of public funds applied to the sector through improved planning and decision-making processes; (d) create a more flexible, responsive and quality oriented VTE system, which would enable the creation of new enterprises increasing self-employment opportunities, which would reduce unemployment by retraining unemployed workers; (e) increase participation of females in the labor market by reducing female dropout rates; (f) provide greater equality of education opportunity (g) improve coordination between basic, vocational/technical and higher education levels by strengthening the Higher Council for Vocational and Technical Education ; (h) improve cooperation between the public and private sectors through consultation and partnership in the provision of VTE; (i) provide a better trained labor force which could be deployed to both local and international markets; (j) improve the image of VTE; and (k) assist in the integration of VTE into the broader Human Resources Development policy.

11. **Project Risks:** There are two potential risks arising from the danger of continued emphasis on a supply driven VTE system. The project may not succeed in: (a) ensuring relevance of training to market needs; and (b) quality of training. The first risk would be mitigated by involving the private sector (employers) in the design and implementation of training programs. The second risk is more difficult to address since improving the quality is a longer term process both with respect to the quality of the instructors and the quality of the students' knowledge base. The project will, however, help provide the basis for quality improvement.

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Note: The contents of this document are subject to change and the components described may not necessarily be included in the final project. Processed by the World Bank InfoShop week ending March 20, 1998.

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