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Report No. PID5511
 Project Name Lebanon-General Education Project (0)
 Region MENA
 Sector Education
 Project ID LBPE45174
 Borrower(s) Government of Lebanon
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 Environment Category B
 Date PID Prepared March 17, 2000
 Project Appraisal Date March 15, 1999
 Project Board Date March 30, 2000
 1. Country and Sector Background

Main sector issues: While Lebanon's human resource development indicators were above those of many other lower middle-income countries prior to 1975, seventeen years of intermittent war and civil strife have caused widespread damage to physical infrastructure, led to the deterioration in quality of public and social services, and caused a massive out-migration of the skilled and educated population. All development indicators in rural areas declined, and the already wide social and geographical disparities deepened. The entire educational system has experienced serious disruptions, with public education being the most severely affected. In particular, school facilities have suffered from extensive damage, there has been widespread use of unqualified teachers, and the availability of teaching materials and equipment has been substantially compromised. Although Lebanon has made a remarkable initial recovery from the effects of the war, reconstruction is far from complete. The private sector has always played a pivotal part in education provision in Lebanon. With the disruption of consistent communications between the center and the regions during the war, the private sector (NGOs as well as private entrepreneurs) grew to fill the gap left by the weakened public education system. Use of rented facilities, acceptance of unqualified teachers in under-served areas, and guarantees of employment given to displaced teachers were some of the solutions employed by the public sector. But as families with means elected to send their children to private schools, that sector grew at a rapid pace; it is now estimated that 53 percent of primary school students are in private schools, 12 percent in subsidized schools, while the remaining 35 percent attend public schools.

Efficiency, equity, and quality and are among the most serious challenges faced by the education sector, as documented in a series of reports produced or commissioned by the Government, UN agencies and the World Bank. Institutional, managerial and financial capacity of the public education system is low: human and physical resources are not rationally distributed, sector management is weak, the system is unable to attract competent staff, data needed for sound planning and decision-making are lacking, and there is evidence of worsening access to education for the poor because of increasing direct and opportunity costs

of education, even when publicly provided. Quality and internal efficiency of public education (which serves a disproportionately high share of the poor) are low levels as well: low student achievements are linked to the insufficient quality of inputs; outdated teachers' skills, often poor and unfit facilities, inappropriate examination and evaluation systems, lack of updated technological pedagogic materials, and weak counseling and supervision functions, constitute clear disadvantages for children enrolled in public institutions.

Government strategy: Understandably, the first post-conflict priority of the Government in education has been the reconstruction and rehabilitation of damaged public schools. Then, the Government launched a comprehensive educational reform including the restructuring of the education system, the design of a new curriculum from kindergarten to end of secondary, and of the development of corresponding textbooks, the in-service training of teachers. Since early 1999, social justice and education have been given a higher priority, while the Government made also clear also commitment to rationalize public expenditures. In addition, the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports (MNEYS) recognized that a clear vision of the future education sector as a whole was needed, promoted the development of a long-term sectoral strategy, and appointed a national committee to prepare such a strategy. The project will both support this endeavor, and contribute to urgent actions needed to restore the fundamentals of the sector.

2. Objectives
 The development objective of the project is to support the Government's efforts to: (i) enhance the capacity of the MNEYS to function as an effective manager of the education sector, and (ii) restore the credibility of the public general education system through improvements in quality and efficiency, and increased access at the basic and junior secondary levels.

3. Description
 The project has three components:
 A. Management and Institutional Development. This component includes:
 A.1 the introduction of an Education Management Information System to support decision-making;
 A.2 restructuring the MNEYS, introducing planning and

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- (i) programming functions, and training staff, to enhance its efficiency;
- A.3 measures aiming at a better distribution of teachers and schools;
- A.4 a pilot experiment aiming at involving school level actors and empowering school principals; and
- A.5 designing more efficient and more equitable financing schemes for the whole education sector.
- B. Quality Enhancement. This component includes:
 - B.1 building, and/or extending and equipping about 24 schools in targeted areas (in two phases);
 - B.2 the installation of a teacher training and teacher professional development scheme;
 - B.3 the reinforcement of inspection and counseling functions;

other stakeholders (Government agencies, NGOs, communities, etc.) in education provision and financing.

8. Poverty Category

The project objective is consistent with the poverty alleviation mandate of the Bank. With only a third of the education system in public hands, only those unable to afford totally private or private-subsidized schools are in public education today.

Therefore, the improvements in publicly provided education as proposed under this project would benefit the poorest segment of the population in school today, and would attempt to attract and keep those poor students currently not enrolled.

9. Environmental Aspects

The environmental category of the project is rated as 'B'. The project environmental issues pertain to the construction and/or extension of some 24 schools, throughout the country. The major issues that were identified are the siting of the new schools and the physical conditions of the selected schools and sites. There is no resettlement or land acquisition issue. An environmental assessment will be performed for each school to be constructed or extended.

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Note: This is information on an involving project. Certain components may not be necessarily included in the final project. Processed by the InfoShop week ending April 7, 2000.

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Annex

Because this is a Category B project, it may be required that the borrower prepare a separate EA report. If a separate EA report is required, once it is prepared and submitted to the Bank, in accordance with OP 4.01, Environmental Assessment, it will be filed as an annex to the Public Information Document (PID). If no separate EA report is required, the PID will not contain an EA annex; the findings and recommendations of the EA will be reflected in the body of the PID.

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