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Minutes of the Education Sector Working Group Meeting

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 6th of February 2013 at 10:00 a.m.

**Participants:**

UNHCR (chair), MEHE, UNICEF (co-lead), UNESCO, The French Embassy, British Council, Alpha Association, AVSI, Amel, Balamand University, HWA, IQRA, Makhzoumi, NRC, SCI, FPSC, RI and WVI

**1) Welcome and introductory comments by the General Director, Ministry of Education and Higher Education.**

The General Director opened by mentioning few reported difficulties reported so far concerning the accessibility of Syrian students in the public system with the main challenge being retention of children in schools. Remedial classes is a needed intervention for children above 8 years old, and the general director encourage the working group to initiate work with the schools: teachers, principals on how to work with students in a multicultural environment, new students, multi-level teaching etc. He stressed that Accelerated Learning Programs now to reintegrate the drop-outs into the formal system and to capture those on waiting list/new arrivals who arrive late in the year and won’t benefit from entering the formal system mid-year.

The French Embassy informed that they have been training people for 7 years in several regions on dealing with multicultural contexts. They want to work on standardization of the French part of the Accelerated Learning Program while the British Council will work on the English language learning.

The General Director stressed the need to plan and look holistically at the ALP program. This is being done through the ALP task force that meets on a weekly basis. He also requested that the EWG steering committee look into establishing a financial tracking system.

**2) Review and approval of minutes from last meeting**

The minutes were reviewed, approved and signed by all EWG member.

**3) Status of Action Points from last meeting**

MEHE to distribute a list of public and private schools and UNHCR will integrate it into the IM system for education.

SCI took the lead of the ALP task force and sent the invitation for the next meeting. They were requested to include the French embassy and British Council in the invitation.

Ms Sonia Khoury from the Ministry is the focal point for any report on school violence.

The UNHCR deployment to the MEHE is currently testing the SoPs that were developed to speed up processes for education partners who wish to work in the public schools.

The fuel matrix was sent out to all partners and overlap was discovered in 80 schools. Luckily, some schools were running double shift and required more fuel, while UNICEF had yet not started the planned distribution and would be able to redirect the effort to serve other schools.

Ministry of Education provided a salary list to UNHCR to make it easier for partners to harmonize their response. The agreed upon fee for extra hours in primary school is about 10 dollars.

MoSA shared a template for violence reporting that will be circulated to all participants for their comments and inputs.

**4) Update (statistics, trends and field updates etc.)**

UNHCR gave an update on the latest registration trend and influx area. Due to the increased influx and differences in rural and urban programming, the Education Coordination in the North will most likely be split and held both in Tripoli and Qubbayat office.

EWG on central level is supposed to be an over-all steering committee and deals with the over-all policies and program development. The detailed coordination should ideally happen during field coordination meetings and partners should ensure to send decision-makers to suck meetings.

UNICEF and Save the Children reported on students out of school in Ersal and Bar Elias. MEHE needs a list of these students in order to follow up. MEHE is coordinating with the Head of Bekaa region concerning the out of school children in Ersal and is waiting for the exact number. In the North there is also the issue of private schools teaching the Syrian curriculum and initially promising accreditation. Between 6000 and 11000 Syrian students are attending these schools, and with increasing funding difficulties may be at risk of dropping out. Efforts will be made to integrate them in local public schools or during second shift programs like ALP. The field is already informed on the approach and is working towards this solution.

**5) Activity Matrix**

UNICEF IMO presented the updated matrix filled by all sectors and an education sector activity map. The matrix should be updated on monthly basis, and before the next EWG on the 6th of March. UNICEFs IMO is leaving and the IM position won’t be filled in at least one month. This creates a gap in the IM for Education. UNHCR has recruited a GIS person that can be of help in developing further maps for the sector.

**6) Examination Decree**

The decree that was issued in January 2013 by the MEHE requires Syrian students to present a new ID – either issued by their country of origin or the embassy. Due to the sensitivity of the issue, the EWG has been advocating for the MEHE to waiver the requirements. The MEHE has issued a decree that provides for more flexibility and it is currently waiting for the Minister’s approval on flexibility. Date for paying the examination fee and register to sit for the exams will be made flexible.

**7) Syrian teachers**

MEHE confirmed that Syrian teacher can be hired in areas where the need for extra capacity is dire, and shared the equivalence procedures needed to transfer degrees from Syria to Lebanon. UNHCR will circulate the documents to all participants.

**8) Youth programs**

UNESCO stressed the importance of mapping on-going activities for refugee youth in Lebanon and as a working group develop a common framework. According to Amel there is a big need in education and in psychosocial support. They had already mapped Saida, and found a high number of idle youth between 14-29 years old. Many are females. Amel is in the process of mapping Beirut.

NRC and Save the Children both mentioned that youth activities were integrated in their on-going programs. UNHCR is supporting secondary school enrolment and vocational training but the number of beneficiaries targeted is still very limited. Funding is available but limited for formal vocational training, secondary school enrolment and tertiary education.FPSC and UNESCO will conduct some more mapping and invite all the organizations working with youth to the next meeting.

## 9) Summary of action points for follow up.

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|  | **What** | **Who** | **When** |
| 1. | UNHCR to distribute MEHEs list of public and private schools. | MEHE/UNHCR | 11 Feb |
| 2. | MoSA template on complaints of violence in school to be sent out to all partners. Partners to provide feedback and comments. | All | 15 Feb |
| 3. | French Embassy and British Council to present on their language program  | French Embassy/British Council | Next EWG |
| 4. | Look at how to improve the IM system at the MEHE to ensure a better coordination (financial and programmatic) | UNHCR/UNICEF/IMs/MEHE | 6 Mar |
| 5. | Field to update on the drop-out situation and transition of students into the formal school | Field Focal Points at MEHE/UNHCR/UNICEF | 1 Mar |
| 6. | Partners to update the Activity Matrix before next meeting. UNHCR will receive the updates this time. | All | 1 Mar |
| 7. | UNHCR/UNICEF/MEHE to expand the list of schools approved for UNICEF intervention to include all schools in need | UNHCR/UNICEF/MEHE | ASAP |
| 8. | SOPs tested by MEHE. Updates next EWG. | MEHE | 6 Mar |
| 9. | MEHE to ensure flexibility for Syrian students in presenting ID papers for the official exams 2013 | MEHE | 25 Feb |
| 10. | Teacher equivalence procedures to be circulated. | MEHE/UNHCR | ASAP |
| 11. | FPSC and UNESCO to conduct more mapping on youth programming and invite all the organizations working with youth to the next meeting |  | 6 Mar |

NEXT MEETING: 6th of March 2013

Venue: **Ministry of Education, 11th floor.**

The following dates: 20th of March and 3rd of April

**Participants – Approval of minutes** (the list may be incomplete, since one sheet from the participant list disappeared – please do add your name, title etc. below if you were there but are unaccounted for)

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| Org | Name | Title | E-mail | Phone | Sign |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Alpha association | Emilie Luciani |  | Luciani.alpha@gmail.com | 71034649 |  |
| Amel | Iman Al Khatib | Education Coordinator | i.alkhatib2@gmail.com | 3331985 |   |
| AVSI | Leny Chemali |  | lenychemali@gmail.com | 03159070 |  |
| Balamand University | Nina Lahham Salamah | Technical Advisor | ninalahham@live.com | 03917845 |   |
| British Council | Claire Ross |  | Claire.ross@lb.britishcouncil.org | 70315221 |  |
| British Council | Elizabeth White |  | Elizabeth.white@sy.britishcouncil.org  | 70125231 |  |
| FPSC | Alain Kiwan | Project Coordinator | Alain.fpsc@gmail.com | 03184828 |  |
| French Embassy | Geraldine Briand |  | Geraldine.briand@diplomatie.gov.fr |  |  |
| French Embassy | Celine Place |  | Celine.place@diplomatie.gov.fr |  |  |
| French Embassy | Isabelle Grappe |  | Isabelle.bassil.grappe@gmail.com |  |  |
| HWA International | Heba Hamed | Project Manager | heba.hamed@hwa.or.at | 70073587 |   |
| IQRA Association | Amina Kleit | Program manager | justkleit@gmail.com | 70665645 |  |
| IQRA Association  | Maysa Mourad | Communication coordinator | mouradmaysa@gmail.com | 71950638 |   |
| MEHE | Fida Samarani | Manager Assistant  | Fidasamarani@gmail.com | 03/726020 |   |
| MEHE | Soha Bou Chabke | Senior Program Assistant | sbouchabke@mehe.gov.lb | 03-535549 |  |
| NRC | Haifa Farhat |   | hayfa.farhat@nrc.no | 3008878 |   |
| RI | Gary Zeitounalian |  | Gary.zeitounalian@ri.org | 03513798 |  |
| RI | Valerie Rowles | Program Development Manager | Valerie.rowles@ri.org | 03114721 |  |
| SCI | Miled Abou Jaoude | Project Manager | Miled.aboujaoude@savethechildren.org |  |   |
| UNESCO | Nilse Ryman | Regional Program Director | n.ryman@unesco.org | 01850013 |  |
| UNESCO | Mejda M'Rah | Education Programme Specialist | m.m'rah@unesco.org | 78807413 |   |
| UNHCR | Linda Kjosaas | Education Expert | kjosaas@unhcr.org | 78891687 |   |
| UNHCR |  Agatha Abi-Aad | Senior Community Services Assistant | abiaad@unhcr.org  | (01) 849 201 ext. 1651  |   |
| UNICEF | Sarah Shouman | Education Expert | sshouman@unicef.org | 70996934 |   |
| UNICEF | Anna Schemper | Information Management Officer | aschemper@unicef.org | 78800577 |   |
| UNICEF | Rania Zakhia | Education in Emergency Officer | rzakhia@unicef.org |  03 862042 |   |
| UNICEF | Tomoya Sonoda | Education Officer | tsonoda@unicef.org | 76030769 |  |
| WVI | Jessica El-Moujabber | Program Officer | Jessica\_moujabber@wvi.org | 70741259 |  |