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# Setting an Inclusive Framework for Human Security & Social Justice

within the IMF and GoL Restructuring  
and Reform Plan: **Education an  
Equalizer and Enabler**

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# Education as an Equalizer and Enabler

## Promoting education for all in Lebanon

- ❖ Lebanon is facing a complex multifold crisis and the burden is being disproportionately borne by the poor and the middle class. Nearly 82 percent of the country's residents now live in multidimensional poverty.
- ❖ The education sector is among the most impacted. Weak governance and poor public financial management made access to education for students inequitable.
- ❖ Given this context, the Lebanese government sought financial and technical support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the purpose of macroeconomic stabilization.
- ❖ Although reforms may entail a reduction in public spending as part of austerity measures, these reforms should carefully consider ensuring the necessary social safeguards in Lebanon to avoid the erosion of education and other social sectors.
- ❖ Policy recommendations in Lebanon should cater to the needs of the most vulnerable groups if Lebanon were to adopt a structural adjusting program with the IMF.

## What's the issue?

Weak public financial management characterizes the sector leading to a deadlock in financing public schools and the deterioration of the quality of education provided. On the demand side, access to education is becoming more difficult for families that incurred losses with the unprecedented devaluation of the Lebanese pound and heightened crisis.

It is believed that if Lebanon were to adopt a restructuring plan with the IMF that does not promote social safeguards, the education sector is expected to face a more serious institutional, organizational, and financial collapse. Implementing austere measures may thus exacerbate poverty among vulnerable groups, especially girls and women.

## Why is this important for Lebanon?

Evidence around the world shows that austerity in low and middle-income countries is a policy decision that women and girls pay the price for. As Lebanon goes deeper into the crisis, access to education is becoming less equitable for women and girls. While structural reforms may entail a reduction of public spending as part of the IMF-sponsored measures, for Lebanon, such structural reform should carefully consider providing the necessary social safeguards to prevent the erosion of the education sector.

Given the fragile context Lebanon is facing today, it is important, in the event of an IMF program, that the latter integrates a social justice and human security lens in each of the prospective reforms. Any recovery plan that fails to promote education will jeopardize long-term prospects of sustainable recovery and social peace in addition to economic development. Exacerbating social injustice may in return contribute to weakening security and fueling inequalities and injustices, hitting particularly women and girls.

## What should policymakers do?

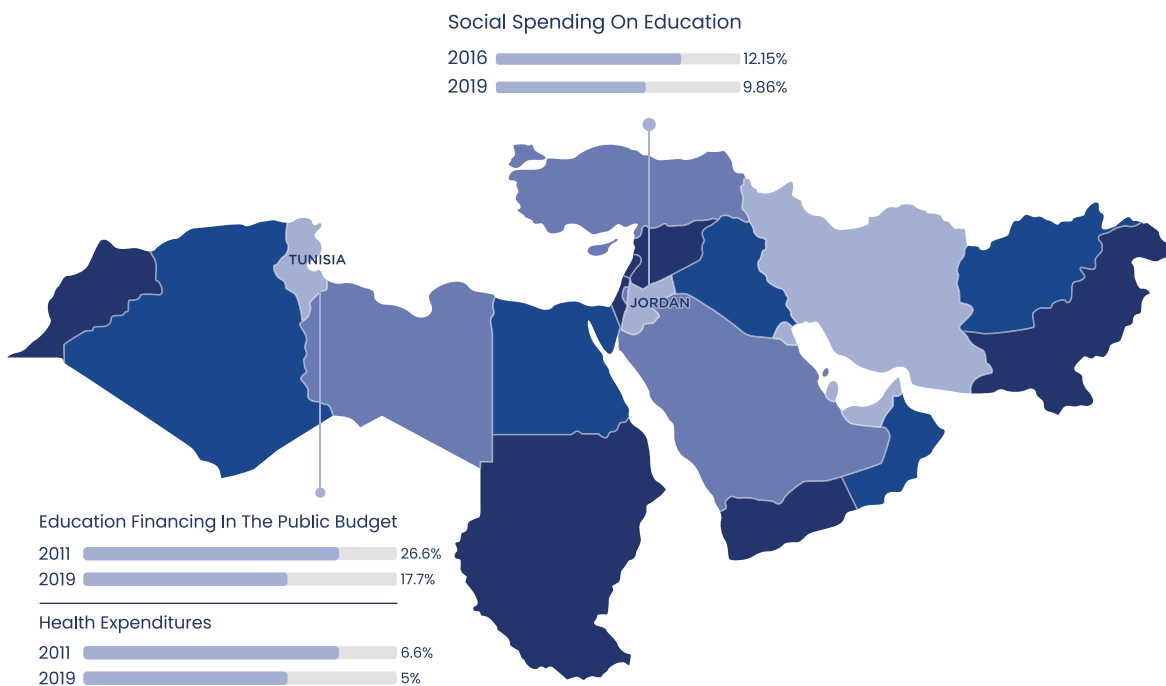
- ❖ **Restructuring public finances while ensuring social safeguards is the first step toward achieving national social justice.** Restructuring public finances are necessary to generate fiscal space needed to allocate resources to the social sectors such as education and healthcare. The budget deficit should be addressed, and public finances put on a sustainable path so that the social sector would not fall victim to austerity measures and suffer further losses.
- ❖ **Reforms should prioritize sound budgeting processes and practices to ensure long-term commitment to education.** A shift from line-item budgeting to performance and gender budgeting is recommended as outputs of programs would be tailored to the needs of the population or group targeted, which in this case encompasses girls and all segregated groups in Lebanon.
- ❖ **Financing of the education sector should be conditioned by a restructuring of its financial management, better targeting of budgetary resources, and strengthening of school-based management and funding systems.** This encompasses mapping the education system including main sub-sectors and stakeholders to ensure no financing parameters are omitted. Undertaking budget reviews and assessing education sector financing against sector performance should guide resource allocation, especially to targeted groups namely women and girls. Setting performance indicators linked to funding contributes to maintaining the reform momentum focused on critical priorities.
- ❖ **Strengthen transparency and accountability frameworks so that funding is channeled to targeted groups, namely girls and women.** Transparency is directly connected with better accountability and better value for money. To ensure that resources are being invested efficiently and are meeting the needs of intended beneficiaries, it is imperative to put in place monitoring and transparency parameters by different stakeholders involved in the implementation i.e., local authorities, donor community, and civil society.

❖ **Investment in infrastructure is essential if merging all-boys and all-girls schools were to happen to decrease the operational cost of the education sector and to accommodate the needs of the most marginalized communities.** Investment in public school infrastructure comes at the forefront of recommendations and must be conducted responsibly if single-sex schools were to be merged to decrease operational costs. In this sense, public school facilities must take into consideration the foreseen dropout rates among girls if such a merger were to happen.

❖ **Cooperating with the national government, intersectional feminist civil society, and donor community to enhance accountability and transparency.** Better governance of the education sector depends on continuous dialogue and cooperation with the main stakeholders concerned with the advancement of the sector, namely governments, civil society, and the international donor community.

❖ **Allocate more funding for the purpose of inclusive education for all, particularly for the most vulnerable. Mobilizing and seeking global funding from international donors to support equitable funding for all factions of society is instrumental to support the sector.** In addition, allocating funds from the national budget is necessary to maintain the sector as the equalizer and enabler it used to be. All funding, however, should be aligned with international standards of equitable education, such as the ones recommended during the UN Transforming Education Summit.

## Examples of how austerity measures affect education



**Tunisia:** In Tunisia, between 2011 and 2019, the share of education financing in the public budget decreased from 26.6% to 17.7%, and the share of health expenditures decreased from 6.6% in 2011 to 5% in 2019.

**Jordan:** Jordan's social spending on education has decreased from 12.15% in 2016 to 9.86% in 2019. This led to the income gap between men and women in Jordan to further grow. For instance, male-headed households earn 15% more than female-headed households.

## Consulted Readings

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