



CAPACITY STATEMENT



World Learning
EDUCATION | DEVELOPMENT | EXCHANGE

PROVIDING PSYCHOSOCIAL
SUPPORT FOR STUDENT WELLBEING



Public schools in Lebanon today serve 30%¹ of the most marginalized children in the country.² Most of the children in Lebanese public schools come from families living under the poverty line – a shocking 28% of the population are from refugee communities who have witnessed atrocities of war and have experienced violence, trauma, displacement, and a daily struggle to survive. According to the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan, the Lebanese students enrolled in the public sector tend to be “... more economically vulnerable than those enrolled in semi-private or private primary schools;”³ and according to World Bank Lebanon, it is estimated that as a consequence of the neighboring Syrian crisis, an additional 200,000 Lebanese citizens have been pushed into poverty,⁴ adding to the erstwhile 1 million poor.⁵ Moreover, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education reports that Lebanese public schools currently host over 200,000 Syrian refugee children who are in dire need of a spectrum of services to help them overcome the trauma of war, the “toxic stress” of trying to integrate into host the communities as refugees, and the reality that these children have not been in school consistently some for over five years.

In 2014, a rapid needs assessment (RNA) was conducted by World Learning Inc. through the USAID-funded Developing Rehabilitation Assistance to Schools and Teacher Improvement (D-RASATI 2) program. The findings indicated that there was a serious need to develop the capacity of teachers and school staff to better support the psychosocial wellbeing of the children suffering from trauma and to deal constructively with problem behaviors arising from it. In addition, children were in need of services to help them overcome challenges and stress related to living in poverty.

WORLD LEARNING’S APPROACH TO CAPACITY BUILDING

World Learning led the development of the Psycho-social Support (PSS) for Student Well Being training and coaching material, building Center for Education, Research, and Development (CERD) trainers’ and Department for Guidance and Counseling (DOPS) counselors capacity through a

training of trainers (TOT) approach to building capacity and sustainability. In addition, World Learning supports CERD in rolling out the training to public schools located in communities most affected by the Syrian refugee crisis. The program is comprised of three phases:

- **Training-of-Trainers.** A TOT training program was implemented for over 100 ministry trainers and coaches/mentors to deliver the subsequent teacher training and coaching phases. Trainers received instruction on participatory methods, coaching skills and school protocol, and the training course content for teachers.
- **The Essentials in Psychosocial Support for Teachers.** A 5-day training program for over 500 teachers from 190 schools across Lebanon. The content focused on psychosocial support concepts and framework, classroom communication and management, and teacher wellbeing. Classroom kits that included supplies to stimulate creativity and artistic and emotional expression were also provided to the schools to support the implementation of PSS activities.
- **School-Based Coaching.** Following the training program, teachers were visited by PSS coaches who helped guide teacher reflection and offer another lens for exploring teaching and learning. World Learning developed a comprehensive coaching protocol with a specific focus on classroom practice that promotes the psychosocial wellbeing of students.





IMPACT EVALUATION

The impact evaluation examined whether World Learning's capacity building program met its intended objective to reduce tension in schools. Five questionnaires—Teacher, Knowledge, Student, and Principal Questionnaire, and Psychosocial Wellbeing Assessment were administered successfully with about 100 participants at baseline (February, 2016) and endline (May, 2016). Focus areas of the evaluation included (1) teachers attitudes, knowledge, and skills in relation to PSS; (2) teachers' and students' perceptions of their classroom environment; (3) the psychosocial wellbeing of students; (4) level of support for the implementation of PSS among principals; and (5) awareness among principals of trauma-related behavior among students and school discipline policies. Findings include:

TEACHERS

- **The 5-Day Essentials training positively impacted teachers' teaching practices.**
- Significant increases were seen in developing social-emotional competence (SEC), **confidence and motivation in handling student behaviors** arising from trauma, and **strengthening teachers' existing positive attitudes with regard to PSS**, and a more positive classroom environment for social cohesion, trust, and safety among students. There was a **significant decrease in reported disruptive behavior.**

STUDENTS

- There was an improvement in overall classroom environment for 6-8 year-olds, particularly with regards to levels of trust. **Teachers and students reported an increase in students' comfort in sharing feelings in class.**
- There was a **significant increase in children's psychosocial wellbeing**, which was assessed using a tool based on a clinically validated measure of psychosocial wellbeing. The average psychosocial wellbeing of students moved

from 'borderline abnormal' to 'normal', which, given the short timeframe of the evaluation, is highly significant. Surprisingly, there were also indications that **Lebanese children, on average, had a lower level of psychosocial wellbeing than their non-Lebanese counterparts.**

PRINCIPALS

- Principals described, in detail, the severity of the social, financial, and familial problems that students face, with one describing his students as "crushed financially and socially." A dysfunctional home environment was **the main reported cause of problem behavior and trauma among students**, with 27% citing domestic abuse as a factor. Only 13% of principals reported that teachers in their schools had the competencies required to adequately support the psychosocial wellbeing of students and 43% said that motivating teachers to implement psychosocial support measures was a significant challenge. In addition, **65% of principals said that they did not have adequate resources to provide specialized psychological support to students in need of it.**

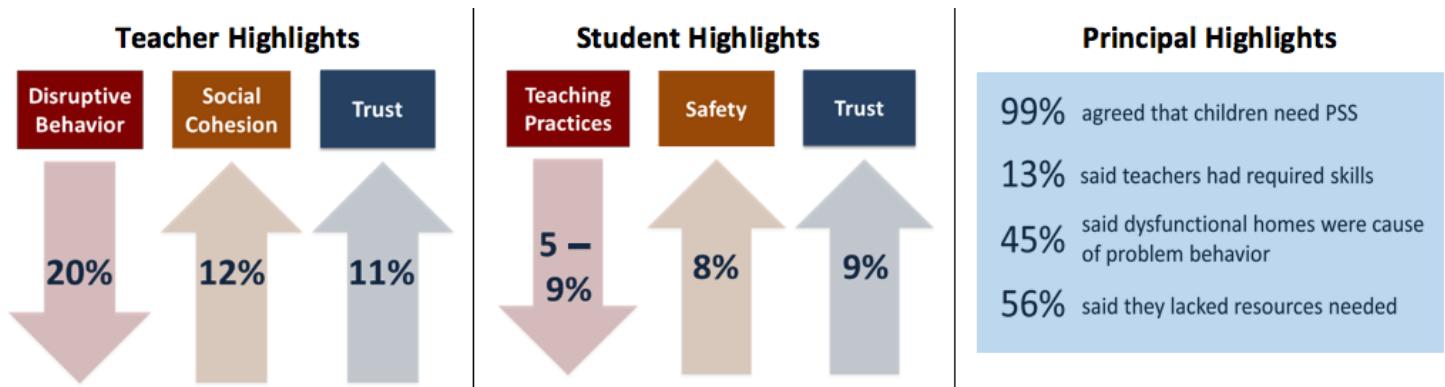
¹Sarah Al-Jamsl & Rachel Eichholz, AUB Policy Institute, "Poverty and social protection in Lebanon", *Policy brief*, 8, April 2016

²World Bank website, News, "US \$224 Million more to support the Lebanese education system", 27 September 2016 <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2016/09/27/us224-million-more-to-support-the-lebanese-education-system>

³Sarah Al-Jamsl & Rachel Eichholz, AUB Policy Institute, "Poverty and social protection in Lebanon", *Policy brief*, 8, April 2016

⁴Sarah Al-Jamsl & Rachel Eichholz, AUB Policy Institute, "Poverty and social protection in Lebanon", *Policy brief*, 8, April 2016

⁴Ibid



SUSTAINABILITY

Integrating PSS curriculum in the In-Service Teacher Training Plan

The ministry has begun to take steps to adapt and expand PSS materials to include them in the teacher training plan. CERD has taken ownership over the PSS trainings and is committed to continuing to offer these trainings to schools.

Policy Paper: “A Systems Approach to Providing Psychosocial Support for Public School Students”.

World Learning has drafted a policy paper that focusses on the measures needed to integrate both a culture of and the capacity to provide PSS in the Lebanese public school systems. It advocates for a systems change approach that responds to the psychosocial needs of all vulnerable children, Lebanese and non-Lebanese, enrolled in public schools. Based on the recommendations of the policy paper, the ministry has shown keen interest in implementing a referral system to ensure that schools are able to refer students to counseling, health, or other social services that are needed to support their overall ability to thrive in school.

