



D-RASATI

Developing Rehabilitation Assistance to Schools and Teacher Improvement

Outcomes Report: Education System Reform

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Introduction

Monitoring of quantitative project outputs is an essential element of implementation, but it does not in and of itself provide a full picture of what a program has achieved in terms of changes in target populations and systems. Nor does it allow for exploration of lessons learned that can improve follow-on or longer-term programming. D-RASATI's performance monitoring plan (PMP) also therefore included the collection and analysis of more detailed and nuanced information on the project's outcomes, to support an overall examination of the effect of the project interventions on education system reform in line with MEHE's Strategic Plan. Overall, the interest was in assessing whether project activities had truly contributed to an improved public education system, as envisioned in MEHE's 2010-2015 Strategic Plan.

This report addresses indicator CDCS 1 within the D-RASATI results framework. Phrased as "Education System Reform," this indicator addresses the question:

To what extent has D-RASATI contributed to public school system reform, as outlined in MEHE's strategic plan?

The report reviews the project's multiple interventions to support the reform of national systems as captured in quantitative output indicators 1.1, 1.3.1, 1.4.1, 3.1, 3.1.1, and 4.2. It supplements those data with an analysis of qualitative and documentary evidence including documentation of stakeholder engagement in policy and practice development; documentation of adoption of strategies, policies and procedures such as the Progress Scale, teacher standards, and ICT strategy; and documentation of the use of D-RASATI data for planning purposes beyond the project.

Output Data Summary

Assessment and Planning

Indicator 1.1.1 Number of Assessments Completed

D-RASATI's assessment activities provided the basis for master planning, policy making, and system analysis and alignment. Designed to provide the most complete set of data ever collected on the Lebanese public school system, the assessment included a series of activities, from literature reviews and strategy papers to direct, focused field data collection. All targeted activities were completed, including:

- 1) Field survey of schools (2011): comprehensive data on the status of facilities and infrastructure; teachers and teaching; equipment; extracurricular activities; and school-community interactions was collected from 1279 of the 1280 public schools (1 school refused to participate).

- 2) Teacher English test (2011-12): D-RASATI was tasked with testing the English proficiency of all public school teachers who use English as an instructional language. 4175 teachers were identified as Anglophone for the purposes of the test, and 4061 teachers were tested, using the internationally-normed BULATS exam, in the period November 2011-March 2012. Although the Ministry of Education mandated the activity and multiple testing opportunities were offered to teachers, a small number of teachers did not agree to participate, apparently for political reasons or because they believed that their English was either too good or too poor to make the test useful to them.
- 3) Progress Scale observations (2012-13): Progress Scale classroom observations were conducted in a representative sample of Lebanese public school classrooms, focusing on MEHE's core interest areas of languages, mathematics, and science. Observers from CERD and DOPS were trained to carry out the observations, although more DOPS than CERD personnel were ultimately used, per MEHE request. 760 teachers were selected for observation in the original national sample; 68% of those selected (516 teachers) were actually observed, with observation rates lowest in the insecure North and Beqaa regions. 56 kindergarten observations were removed from the sample due to DOPS not providing KG specialists for training. 112 observations were in high-risk areas and not conducted because of the negative security context. Repeated and protracted teachers strikes during the period when observations were planned delayed implementation and limited the number of classrooms that could be visited. Limited DOPS capacity to integrate the observations within their regular uncompensated work load also limited the ability to make up observations that were missed within the strike period.
- 4) Gap analysis: Extracurricular Activities (2012): The extracurricular activities gap analysis included a literature review of ECA best practices, focus groups with school stakeholders, supplementary analysis of the field survey data, a framework review, and a summary gap analysis.
- 5) Gap analysis: School Improvement Planning and Community Engagement (2012): The SIP/CE activities gap analysis included a literature review of best practices in school-community engagement, focus groups with school stakeholders, supplementary analysis of the field survey data, a framework review, and a summary gap analysis.

Each of these activities resulted in a report to MEHE and recommendations for next steps that were agreed to with the D-RASATI Coordination Committee.

Indicator 1.3.1 Number of Standards Developed

A critical D-RASATI contribution to system reform and alignment was the project's support for the development of standards for a range of school and system components and activities. These standards included:

- 1) Rehabilitation standards (2011): The project developed a set of standards for school facilities and infrastructure in existing buildings that mediates between the ideal reflected in MEHE's standards for new school construction and the conditions in and surrounding

existing facilities, many of which are in rented spaces, in buildings that were not designed as schools, or in areas where expansion to conform to new building standards is not possible. Minimum standards for safety, functionality, and comfort were agreed to with MEHE to guide the project's rehabilitation work in schools.

- 2) Science equipment standards (2012): The project developed a set of science equipment standards that allow for the effective implementation of the secondary science curriculum in the Lebanese public schools. Minimum and ideal standards were approved by MEHE, with the minimum standard used to procure the project's science lab equipment allocations for all secondary schools.
- 3) ICT strategy (2012): The project developed the first national strategy for the use of information and communications technology in teaching and learning in the Lebanese public schools. In addition to technology principles, the strategy also includes important discussions of expectations for teacher and student skills in the use of ICTs. Endorsed at the ministerial level, this strategy will serve as the basis for MEHE ICT activities and procurement for the future.
- 4) ICT equipment standards (2013): Drawing on the ICT strategy, the project produced a set of technology standards and specifications for ICTs in Lebanese public schools at four tiers of intervention, providing a basis for testing of various applications under future procurements and initiatives.
- 5) Teacher performance standards (2013): D-RASATI supported the development of standards for teacher performance in pre-college programs. The new standards support the alignment of pre-service preparation, in-service training, school-based support, and teacher evaluation and inspection around a common set of principles and measurable practices that will promote better instruction and more positive student outcomes.
- 6) Trainer standards (2013): In parallel to the teacher standards, the project supported the development of standards for trainers who will prepare, train, and support teachers. These standards align with the general expectations of the teacher standards and ensure that training will be designed and conducted in a manner that reinforces the expectations of teachers and models and mirrors expected best practices in instruction and coaching.

Indicator 1.4.1 Master Plan Developed

The collaborative development of the D-RASATI Master Plan (April, 2012), in consultation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Center for Educational Research and Development, operationalized the Ministry's national strategy goals for learning environment improvement, teacher professional development, improved management of the education system, and increased access to high-quality extracurricular activities for all students. By integrating assessment; standards-setting; training of teachers, trainers, and administrators; facilities and infrastructure improvements; equipment procurement and distribution; materials development; and reflection on data, the Master Plan knitted together the disparate strands of planning and implementation within the MEHE strategy, and provided measurable steps towards improvements in the education system overall.

Increased School Learning Opportunities

Indicator 3.1 Number of Teachers/Educators/Teaching Assistants who Successfully Completed In-service Training or Received Intensive Coaching or Mentoring with USG Support (F 3.2.1-31)

D-RASATI's efforts to increase school learning opportunities for students centered around the in-service training of professional staff. Teacher trainers from CERD, school-based support staff from DOPS, and teachers themselves benefitted from a range of training, coaching and mentoring activities, including 1) training on the use of the Progress Scale classroom observation tool; 2) training in subject-specific instructional methods; 3) training on the establishment of teacher learning circles in schools; 4) training on the establishment of subject matter learning hubs; 5) piloting teacher learning circles in a representative sample of schools; and 6) training on the use of the new secondary science laboratory equipment that was provided by the project.

D-RASATI targeted 894 MEHE and CERD employees for training, and reached 835 (93%) of them. Even with the uncertain security situation, regional distribution of participants was proportional. Attrition from the multi-day trainings was extremely limited, as participants reported high levels of satisfaction with the workshops and practical training. In fact, demand outstripped the project's ability to provide trainings, particularly in the case of the science lab training for teachers, in which all training sites reported teachers who had not been nominated by their schools to attend requesting to be included. All trainings were determined to be successful in terms of meeting participant needs and addressing challenges identified with MEHE in reflection on D-RASATI's assessment data.

Capacity of MEHE/CERD to Provide Quality In-Service Teacher Training Improved

Indicator 3.1.1 Coordination Among Professional Development Providers Improved

As discussed in the D-RASATI Outcome Report, Coordination Among Professional Development Providers (2013), D-RASATI has made significant strides towards supporting MEHE's strategic vision of an integrated and professionalized teacher workforce and professional development system. Actors who previously interacted rarely (and often not positively) have built strong working relationships and agreed on common definitions and practices; the best resources of the private training sector have been engaged and mobilized to support public education; and new instruments and practices to support quality teaching and learning have been tested and institutionalized.

D-RASATI interventions have contributed to significantly greater alignment across the teacher professional development continuum. The four previously-independent and non-aligned entities responsible for preparing, training, supporting, and evaluating teachers have moved towards more integrated and harmonious practices with D-RASATI support, through the development of teacher and teacher trainer standards; development of and training on the Progress Scale

observational instrument; collection of baseline data on teacher English proficiency and classroom practices; and joint, common training of trainers for training and support staff in best practice methodology and school-based professional development for teachers.

High Quality Monitoring and Evaluation

Indicator 4.2 Number of MEHE/CERD Staff Trained to Support Monitoring and Evaluation

D-RASATI's mandate to support improved monitoring and evaluation of education quality at MEHE was intended to include training of staff to administer project-developed tools, manage the data derived from those efforts, and reflect on the results to better inform planning and ensure sustainability of the data collection activities. Trainees were originally intended to primarily be CERD data collectors and information management staff, who are legally delegated to conduct the Ministry's annual and special research efforts, as well as a small number of Ministry staff, to ensure effective communication across agencies around the relevant data. 159 relevant personnel were targeted for training (among whom 19 were from MEHE and 140 from CERD).

The success of the project's data collection initiatives and the interest in the results that were generated when they were shared across MEHE divisions and departments resulted in a much higher demand for M+E training than had been anticipated. In particular, requests for participation by MEHE management and policy staff and DOPS personnel in training increased significantly – a positive development, as this will support the institutionalized use of the Progress Scale process and data within both the Ministry and CERD. Ultimately, 248 (92 Ministry personnel and 156 CERD staff) were trained to administer, organize and use the project's data tools and systems.

Outcomes

Reflection on Data and Accountable Planning

The assessment phase of D-RASATI was a significant medium for trust-building, relationship-strengthening, and policy exploration both between the project and MEHE and across MEHE divisions and departments. The deliberately collaborative process of assessment design helped MEHE representatives to clarify their thinking about the assessment, about how it would work, and about what they wanted from it. It also made it clear where internal information gaps existed, and highlighted the need to fill those gaps before leaping into program planning. As a result of their participation in the development of the assessment tools and data collection processes, MEHE fully owned the mechanisms for collecting data and was fully invested in their application and results. The Ministry also was able to advocate for the decisions made about resource allocation based on data that they accepted and approved, promoting a more transparent and accountable process of distribution of benefits than has been possible under other efforts.

Indeed, communication about D-RASATI data and the decisions that built upon it was reportedly unprecedentedly open and frank, and included stakeholders from across the system in what they indicated was a new and appealing approach. Selection of schools for rehabilitation, for instance, built on detailed assessment data on the conditions of schools, and involved representatives from the Engineering Coordination Unit, MEHE's regional directorates, and the primary and secondary directorates, as well as lead policy staff and administrators. Clear criteria based on objective data supported equitable distribution of rehabilitation resources across regions and demographic groups, in a process that MEHE publicly owned and endorsed.

Science laboratory equipment allocation followed a similar process of debate and prioritization, which included science specialists from CERD and DOPS, the primary and secondary directorates, the ECU, and lead policy staff and administrators. While the result did not satisfy the primary school directorate, whose schools were not equipped, it was rigorous, thoughtful and defensible within the overall constraints facing the Ministry. Placing a priority on secondary schools and ensuring that they all had common sets of complete equipment aligned with the curriculum ensures that secondary science instruction, which prioritizes lab experiences, will be able to be delivered equitably in all schools and to all students.

Data on teacher English skills derived from the D-RASATI test of teacher English proficiency also provided an opportunity for reflection on system strengths and weaknesses and a forum for accountable planning. While the data demonstrated that there is a wide range of English ability in the Lebanese public school teaching corps, including some very highly-qualified English teachers, they also exposed a concentration of poor English skills in the lower grades and among teachers who are teaching math and science. These data parallel and may partly explain trends in poor performance on the Lebanese middle school and secondary exams and with Lebanon's performance on the TIMSS – teachers with poor English skills themselves are not able to prepare students to understand and perform in English within the curriculum. Improvements in teacher English capacity are needed if students are to meet expectations in subjects that are to be taught in English. The extent of the low scores disappointed MEHE personnel, but it also motivated serious and practical discussions among staff from DOPS, CERD, LU, and MEHE's key policy and administrative departments about how to address the issue within the context of limited resources and high need. Prioritizing permanent teachers over those with time-limited contracts, for instance, provided one margin of security for ensuring that the training investment would remain in the public schools.

D-RASATI data have also served to inform a range of other MEHE programming, including efforts supported by UNICEF (community-friendly schools), the World Bank (improvement of kindergarten facilities), the Council of Ministers (improvements to Tripoli's public schools and to schools at physical risk across Lebanon), and USAID (D-RASATI 2, DCO school support programming, and programming to support Syrian refugees in Lebanon). The project's data products are well-established as rigorous independent resources for policymakers and planners and the most comprehensive references available on Lebanese education.

Greater Coordination Across the Education System

Facilities and Equipment

D-RASATI's standards development efforts provided an opportunity for increased coordination among the various departments and agencies with interests in public school facilities and equipment, and for agreement among them on a common vision and expectation for physical quality of the public schools. The Engineering Coordination Unit, CERD, DOPS, and MEHE's administrative and policy managers were all engaged in the process of examining data, coming to agreement on the balance between current conditions and aspirations for the future, and endorsing the standards for use in the public schools. The facilities and infrastructure standards, science lab standards, and ICT standards will now provide a basis for future programming and support consistent and equitable resourcing of schools.

Teacher Training

Although D-RASATI's planned in-service teacher training interventions were cut short by the project's reprogramming in 2013, they remain among the most successful of the project's activities (see the Outcomes Report on Indicator 3.1.1, 2013). Great strides were made towards improved alignment of institutions operating along the teacher professional development continuum, through standards development, common training, and collection and reflection on data. Through the standards, the diverse and sometimes at-odds approaches of MEHE, CERD, LU, and the Education Inspectorate to teacher preparation, training, support and evaluation have been harmonized and streamlined, and closer coordination with private teacher training departments has provided benefits to teachers who might otherwise not be able to access these elite institutions.

Conclusion: Institutionalization of Reforms

D-RASATI has provided strong support for the Ministry of Education's 2010-2015 strategy, as well as a basis for structural and institutional developments to improve the quality of public education long-term. While this influence was uneven across the project's component domains, the commitment to a systemic approach through the assessment and master planning process has borne important fruit.

Institutionalization of reforms supported by D-RASATI has been most visible in the domain of teacher training and support. The teacher standards have been embraced by all concerned stakeholders, and the Progress Scale has been incorporated into the regular work of DOPS, with coordination with CERD around the data derived from any application at scale. The National Strategy for ICT in Teaching and Learning is also driving the Ministry's independent ICT procurement, allocation and training activities in that arena.

Other policies developed with D-RASATI support have been referenced in follow-on work, and there is discussion of the formal incorporation of many of the D-RASATI standards sets

(particularly those for facilities, science labs, and ICTs) into the Ministry's evolving Effective School Profile and accreditation program. Modification #3 to the program left the development of extracurricular activities and school leadership development systems with project support incomplete, but those activities will be incorporated into the mandate of USAID's follow-on procurement.