

**POLICY BRIEF:**

**Mapping of Education  
data systems in  
Lebanon**

**The Education Research in Conflict and Protracted Crisis (ERICC) Research Programme Consortium is a global research and learning partnership that strives to transform education policy and practice in conflict and protracted crisis around the world – ultimately to help improve holistic outcomes for children – through building a global hub for a rigorous, context-relevant and actionable evidence base.**

ERICC seeks to identify the most effective approaches for improving access, quality, and continuity of education to support sustainable and coherent education systems and holistic learning and development of children in conflict and crisis. ERICC aims to bridge research, practice, and policy with accessible and actionable knowledge – at local, national, regional and global levels – through co- construction of research and collaborative partnerships.

ERICC is led by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) with Academic Lead IOE, UCL’s Faculty of Education and Society, and expert partners include Centre for Lebanese Studies, Common Heritage Foundation, Forcier Consulting, ODI, Osman Consulting, Oxford Policy Management and Queen Rania Foundation. During ERICC’s inception period, NYU-TIES provided research leadership, developed the original ERICC Conceptual Framework and contributed to early research agenda development. ERICC is supported by UK Aid.

Countries in focus include Bangladesh (Cox’s Bazar), Jordan, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nigeria, South Sudan and Syria.

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## Executive summary

This policy brief is based on the “Data Systems Report,” which explores Lebanon’s education data systems, focusing on data collection related to access, quality and continuity of education, especially in conflict and crisis. The study for that report maps critical stakeholders, highlighting roles and responsibilities. It examines the types of data currently collected, including frequency and quality, and identifies significant trends in data collection. The report also addresses how data are stored, shared and made accessible, revealing systemic issues related to coordination and data transparency. Findings indicate critical gaps in the available data, particularly regarding student access, enrolment for students with disabilities and disaggregation of data on refugees versus nationals. Additionally, there is a need for more data on school dropouts, learning loss and financial matters.

Addressing these data gaps is vital to improve the governance and effectiveness of Lebanon’s education system and to shape responsive policies, particularly in crisis contexts. Recommendations focus on the need to enhance data collection, put in place frameworks, clarify roles, improve accessibility and prioritise crisis impact data.

## I. Introduction

A data system is a coordinated approach to collecting data and information for decision-making. A study by the Centre for Lebanese Studies (CLS) under the Education Research in Conflict and Protracted Crisis (ERICC) programme aimed to map and analyse data collected by the government at all levels (national, regional and local) and through other large-scale research or data collection in Lebanon. The purpose was to identify and document the data collected, stored and used on access, quality and continuity in settings of conflict and protracted crisis.

Through this, the study examined the state of education data systems in Lebanon, where, despite the existence of a wealth of disparate data, there is a lack of systematic data collection. We focused on larger, systematic studies, excluding small-scale research aimed at addressing operational issues.

The research aimed to answer the following questions:

1. Who is responsible for collecting data on education in Lebanon and with what frequency?
2. How (sample, whole population, periodicity, regularity) are data collected, processed, stored and used?
3. What types of data are available to the education system for decision-making on access, quality, continuity and children’s education outcomes in settings of conflict and protracted crisis?
4. What types of data are necessary but unavailable to the education system?

As part of this analysis, CLS conducted a literature review, a stakeholder analysis and key informant interviews. The mapping of data systems included insights from desk reviews and informal conversations with key actors to identify existing data gaps.

## II. Education in Lebanon in the context of conflict and protracted crisis

Lebanon’s education system reflects the country’s deep societal complexities, marked by sectarianism, colonial legacy and compounded crises. Since end of the civil war and the 1989 Taef Agreement, education reforms have been shaped by ongoing conflicts, including the Syrian refugee crisis and Lebanon’s financial collapse. Hosting over 1.5 million Syrian refugees and a large Palestinian population, Lebanon has a divided education system. Syrian and Lebanese students attend separate shifts in public schools, while Palestinians

are served by schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

The education system also mirrors Lebanon's broader societal divides – between public and private schools and between different religious and non-profit private schools. Lebanese public education has also long been underfunded, and the financial crisis starting in 2019 has worsened this situation. Teachers' salaries have plummeted, leading to strikes and widespread disruptions. Together with the Covid-19 pandemic and other crises, these disruptions have left students facing a dramatic loss of classroom days.

The Syrian refugee crisis has added significant pressure to an already fragile system, straining resources and increasing tensions between Lebanon and international actors. As international funding is dwindling and political hostility towards refugees is growing, the education system teeters on the brink of collapse. Despite attempts to accommodate refugee children in second-shift schools, many Syrian youths remain out of school, highlighting ongoing challenges in Lebanon's educational landscape.

### **III. Significance of data systems for governance of education in Lebanon**

Over recent decades, there have been numerous attempts to develop a consolidated data system in Lebanon, with significant funds invested. However, a critical issue lies in the absence of a clear policy and framework for information management (Abdul-Hamid and Yassine 2020). The investments have thus been marked by limited progress.

Tensions between institutions over data collection, processing and sharing in Lebanon's education sector have been addressed in multiple plans and donor initiatives. These include Reaching All Children with Education (RACE) I and II and the five-year General Education Plan of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). The current five-year plan (2021–2025: MEHE 2021) and the associated Roadmap to Reform (MEHE 2023) outline a comprehensive strategy for data systems. A notable emphasis is placed on establishing an integrated Education Management Information System (EMIS). This commitment reflects an ongoing effort to address existing gaps and challenges in Lebanon's data systems for education. By prioritising the creation of an integrated EMIS, Lebanon aims to enhance its capacity for data-driven decision-making and improve the overall effectiveness of its educational governance.

However, the lack of a structured approach has led to fragmentation and divergence in vision and responsibilities across different units within and between MEHE and the Centre for Education Research and Development (CERD). While there has been some progress, especially in relation to plans for future alignment and consolidation, overall advances in data systems have been slow, hindering the effective monitoring of the quality and performance of the education system.

### **IV. Data systems of education in Lebanon: who collects data on education, how and with what frequency?**

The mapping conducted identifies key stakeholders engaged in either annual or periodic data collection. Official national bodies like CERD and MEHE emerge as the sole entities conducting annual data collection for the entire population. However, we also considered other stakeholders in our analysis, encompassing those with annual surveys of selected population, such as the Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees (VASyR); large one-time samples such as that of Quality Instruction towards Access and Basic Education (QITABI); and those periodically collecting substantially sized data samples. Table 1 provides an overview of the primary data sources analysed in this report.

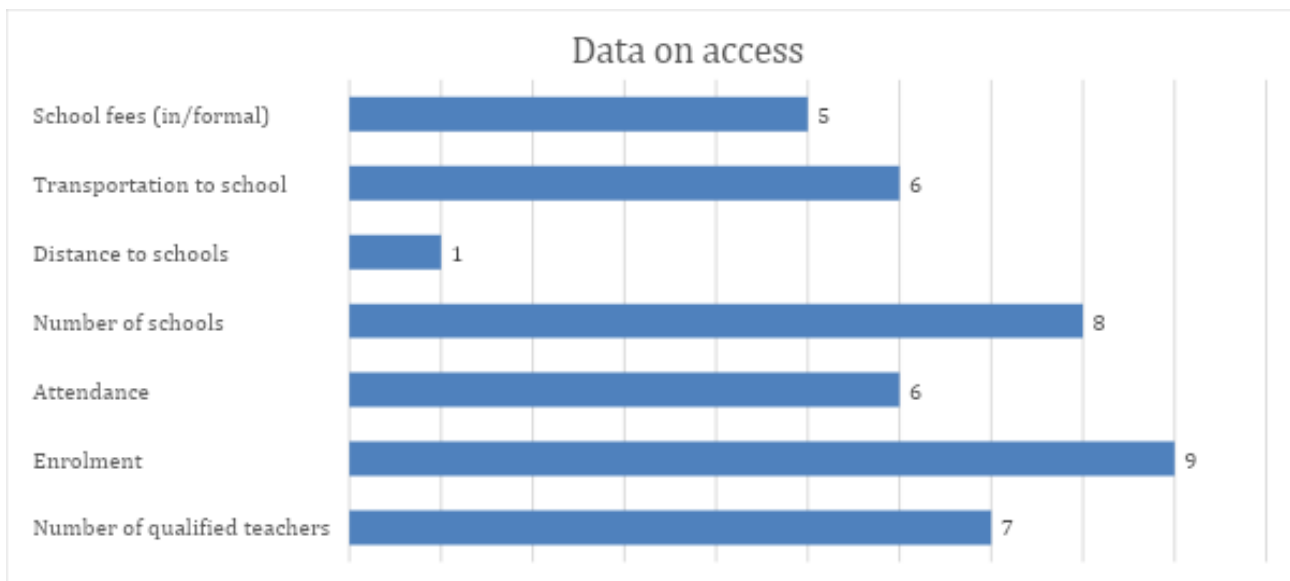
**Table 1: Main data sources**

| Stakeholder    | Type of data          | Collection frequency | Description  |
|----------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--|
| CAS            | Sample and population | Periodic             | The Central Administration of Statistics is Lebanon's national body responsible for collecting, processing and disseminating social and economic data.   |
| UNICEF         | Sample                | Annual               | The United Nations Children's Fund conducts biannual Child-Focused Rapid Assessments (CFRAs) and uses data from MEHE and CERD for programmes like the Transition Resilience Education Fund (TREF) and inclusive education policy.  |
| World Bank     | Sample                | Periodic             | The World Bank's EdStats Portal offers education data on enrolment, literacy and spending. Lebanon's page provides insights up to 2018, with data from CAS, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). |
| CERD           | Sample and population | Annual               | The Centre for Education Research and Development publishes national education statistics, including quarterly magazines on teacher affairs and annual bulletins with data on students, staff and schools, and analyses exams.   |
| CLS            | Sample                | Annual               | The Centre for Lebanese Studies conducts research on Lebanon's education sector, examining teaching practices, curricula and policy. It surveys schools annually to assess the impact of financial and social crises on education.   |
| MoSA           | Sample                | Periodic             | Ministry of Social Affairs provides social protection in Lebanon, collaborates with NGOs on education, and funds vocational training through partnerships. It does not currently play an active role in collecting educational data.   |
| MEHE           | Population            | Annual               | The Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Lebanon uses the School Information Management System (SIMS) to collect data on schools and students, focusing on enrolment and attendance, especially for Syrian refugees.  |
| UNRWA          | Population            | Annual               | The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East educates 39,144 Palestinian refugees in 65 schools in Lebanon and assesses educational services and student profiles. Its data, including on enrolment and dropout rates, are often highly aggregated.  |
| QITABI (USAID) | Sample                | Periodic             | Quality Instruction towards Access and Basic Education 1 and 2, funded by the United States Agency for International Development improves education facilities and literacy in Lebanon. It assesses 278 schools and boosts learning for over 300,000 students, including Syrian refugees.  |
| UNESCO         | Sample                | Annual               | The UNESCO Institute for Statistics provides internationally comparable education data for Lebanon, including on participation, completion, expenditure and literacy rates.  |
| VASyR          | Sample                | Annual               | The Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees, carried out by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF and the World Food Programme, assesses Syrian refugee vulnerability, including through school attendance data for 2,887 pre-primary, 6,517 primary and 1,570 secondary students.  |

## V. What data are available?

### A. Data on access

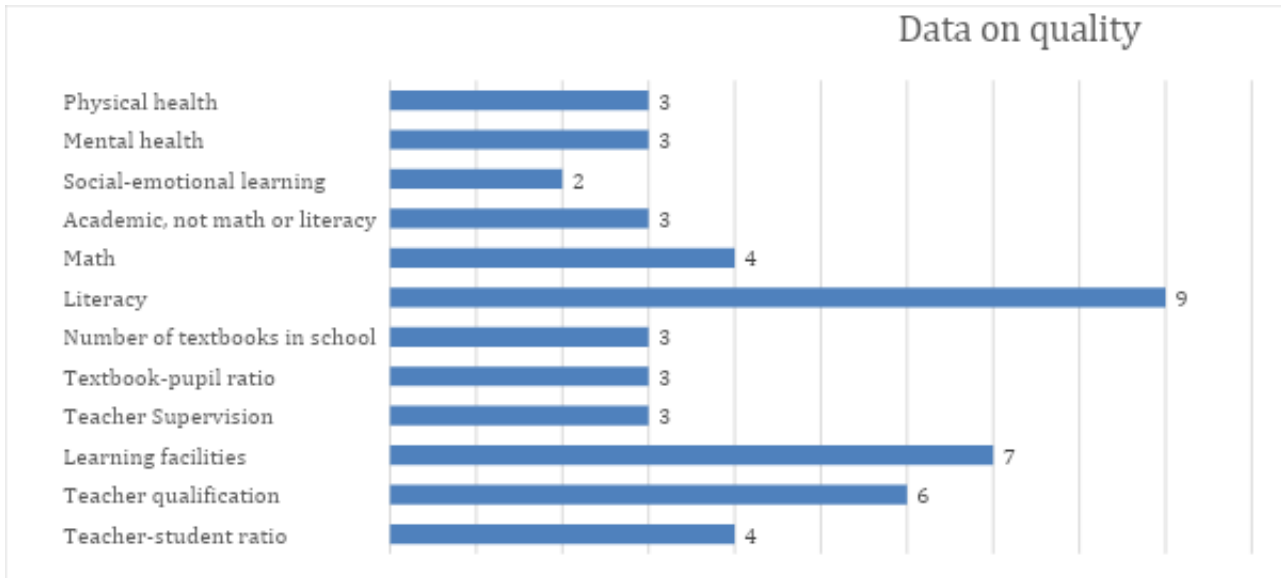
Numerous stakeholders in Lebanon collect data access, with CERD being the primary source and UNRWA collecting data on Palestinian refugees. Most stakeholders focus on indicators like numbers of schools and enrolment; gaps exist in data on school distance, fees and transportation. Comprehensive data covering the entire population or multiple periods are lacking. While some stakeholders publish access data, specific indicators may be available only upon request from CERD. MEHE prioritises Syrian refugee enrolment and attendance, as these numbers are needed to secure funding from international bodies. Key access indicators like transportation costs are sampled only sporadically, not annually.



**Figure 1: Distribution of stakeholders collecting data on access (out of 11 stakeholders)**

### B. Data on quality

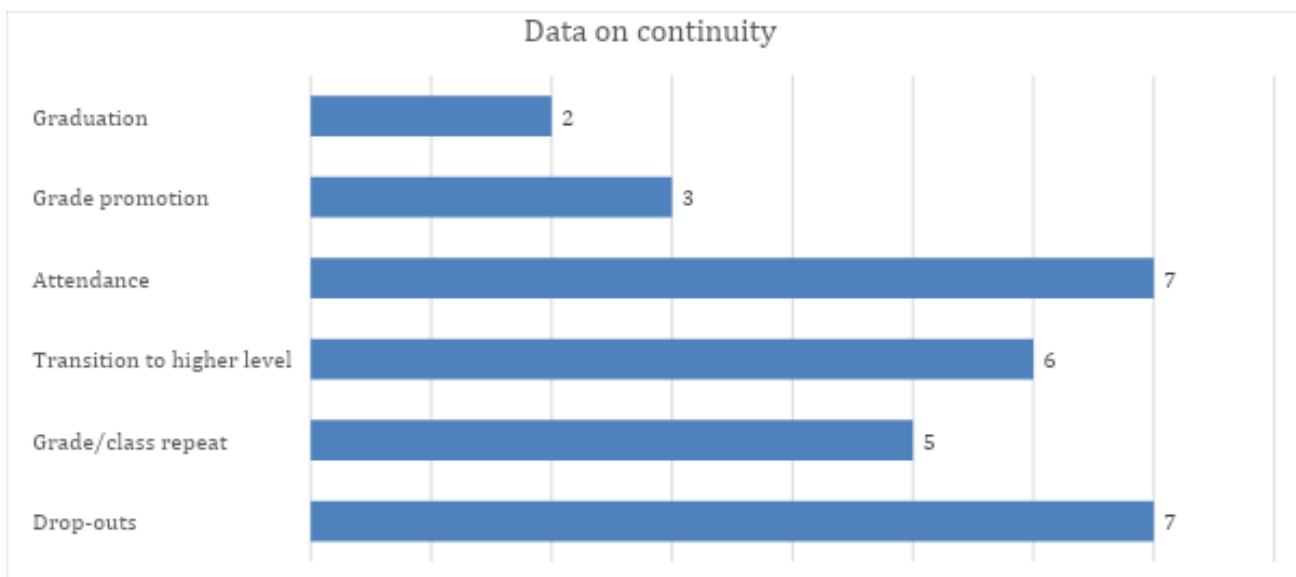
Regarding data on the quality of education, it is possible to access some data on literacy, learning facilities and teacher qualifications. Yet the overall picture is that there is a lack of data on education quality in Lebanon, particularly on teaching and learning. While data on teacher qualifications are collected, gaps remain in areas like instructional practices, retention and student engagement. Studies such as QITABI focus on learning loss but are limited to specific grades or years. CERD is the main source of education quality data, which are often reformulated by other stakeholders. Access to data on certain indicators, especially those covering entire populations, is restricted and available only on request. Additionally, varying methodologies between stakeholders, such as CAS and QITABI, lead to inconsistent measurements of literacy and other key indicators.



**Figure 2: Distribution of stakeholders collecting data on quality (out of 11 S=stakeholders)**

### C. Data on continuity

Data on student continuity are often limited to samples and collected only sporadically. The School Information Management System (SIMS) collects data from all schools but it is unclear if dropout data for the entire population exist. CERD and MEHE monitor student progression, with official data mainly on grade promotion, public school attendance and exam success rates, particularly from Grades 9 to 12. While CERD's annual reports provide many figures, some indicators are available only upon request. CERD remains the primary source for continuity data, which are used by other stakeholders in their databases.

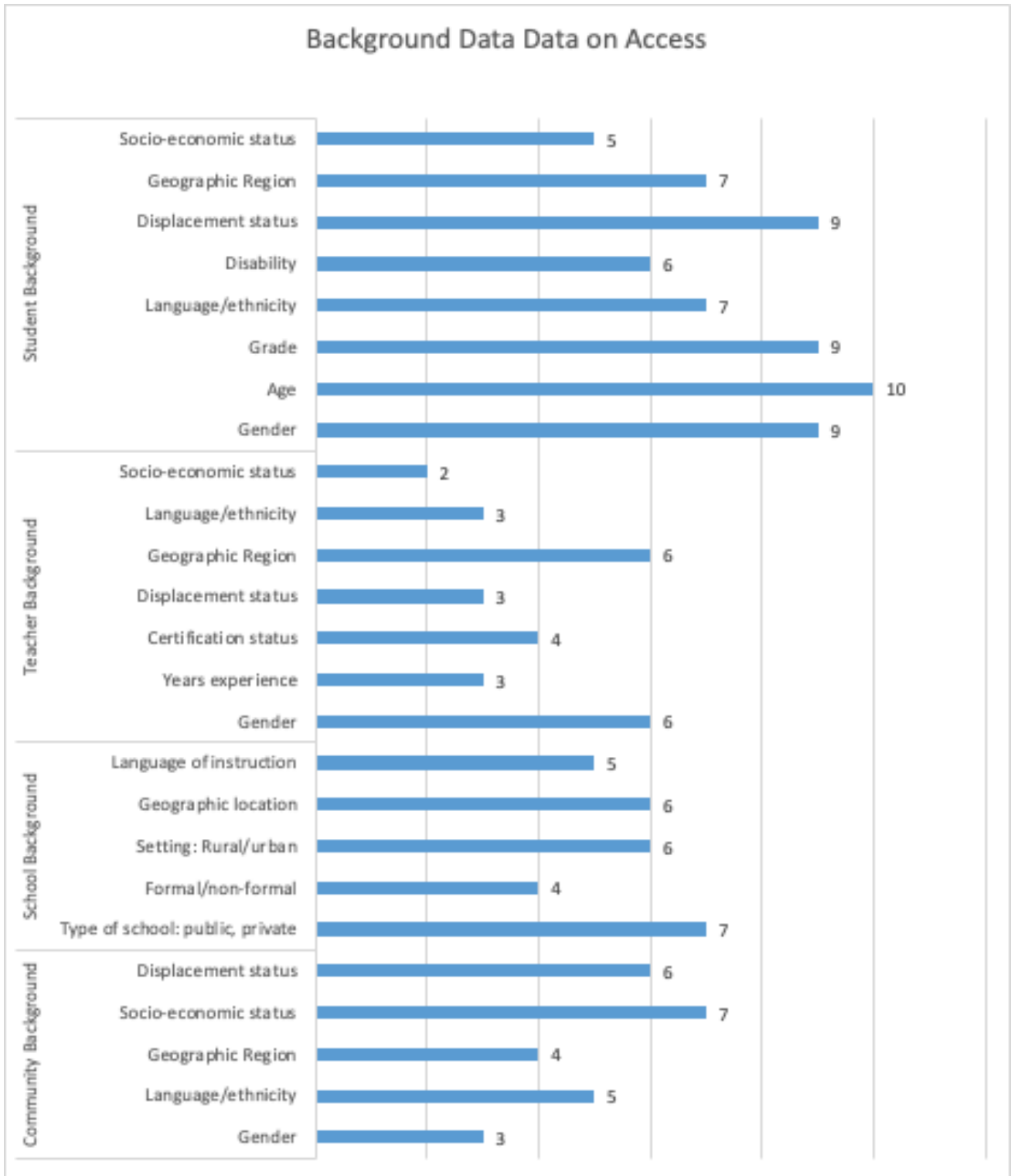


**Figure 3: Distribution of stakeholders collecting data on continuity (out of 11 stakeholders)**

#### D. Background and demographic data

Lebanon's last official census was in 1932, which means there are gaps in the data available on gender, ethnicity and geographical distribution. However, CERD and MEHE collect background data on students, teachers, schools and communities. They track school location (urban vs rural); type (public vs private); language of instruction; and teacher experience, sex and certification. Student data, including sex, age, grade and legal status, are monitored annually. Syrian refugees are covered by VASyR, and Palestinian refugees by UNRWA. CAS should provide population data but outdated figures affect MEHE and CERD. Data on community, socioeconomic status and disabilities are inconsistent and often come from small samples. Yet, given Lebanon's financial crisis, socioeconomic data on teachers and students are crucial to address teacher strikes and student dropouts. Different stakeholders use varying methodologies: VASyR uses the Washington Group Short Set on Functioning for disability, while UNICEF follows the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, and has recommended unified terminology for consistency.





**Figure 4: Distribution of stakeholders collecting data on teacher, student and community background (out of 11 stakeholders)**

## VI. Data storage, sharing and accessibility

The quality of SIMS data collected by MEHE were questioned by interviewees and in the literature (Shal 2022), given difficulties in collecting the data and for data collectors in using SIMS. Furthermore, data are rarely published, and studies show that information technology staff struggle with system use and infrastructure and with frequent changes (Kassir 2022). The public school system appears to be unprepared for SIMS, with ongoing capacity and relevance issues. Data circulation and sharing problems lead to repeated errors, while the outdated nature of Lebanon's census compounds the challenge.

The mapping of data systems shows that some datasets are accessible online, while other actors publish only key findings without the raw data. CERD annually publishes a statistical report with the main findings from a nationwide survey covering all schools, teachers and students in Lebanon. Full data are available only via email request. Major stakeholders often use and reformat CERD data for their own databases. Informal data-sharing exists but there is no publicly available information on how this takes place.

CERD and MEHE collect similar data using different methods, leading to discrepancies. The involvement of many actors without a central data hub has led to fragmentation and misalignment in the sector. Additionally, more data are collected than are published, suggesting capacity issues in processing data.

Interviewees expressed frustration over the accessibility and reliability of government data, highlighting broader concerns about data quality and transparency at the national level. This has led many of them to collect their own data, which they share with MEHE and CERD. Reliable, comprehensive data access thus remains a challenge.

## VII. What data are necessary but unavailable?

### A. Gaps and discrepancies in the data

Lebanon's education data systems face significant gaps and inconsistencies. Data on students with disabilities are scarce, and refugee data, in response to international funding requirements, focus primarily on enrolment and attendance while sidelining long-term outcomes in the areas of continuity and quality of education. The division between national and refugee students in data collection – where a wider-ranging set of data is collected – reflects a more general marginalisation of refugees in society.

Reliable information on instructional practices, teaching methods, student engagement and professional development is lacking. Even when data exist, they often cover limited populations or academic levels. Data on dropout, completion and out-of-school rates are also unavailable. Financial, budget and non-formal education data are largely absent, although MEHE plans to establish a non-formal education database by 2025.

Moreover, measuring educational quality is challenging, as current national exams are less rigorous than in previous years, making them unreliable indicators of quality. Socioeconomic difficulties and disruptions to schooling further complicate assessment results (USAID 2022). Limited access to existing data, compounded by capacity issues, exacerbates these challenges.

### B. Need for additional data

Lebanon's education sector, already fragile, has been severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and the financial crisis. Data gaps fall into three key areas: general education, crisis-related impacts and financing.

First, general education data on access, quality and continuity are lacking, largely because of the absence of a census and a unified data system. More information is needed on school dropout rates, learning losses and financial barriers for all groups, including refugees. Critical gaps exist in understanding teaching methods, classroom management and student engagement.

Second, crisis-related data are essential to address challenges like commuting costs for students and teachers, financial struggles and learning loss. Evaluating the cost of living and teacher compensation is vital to prevent future disruptions. Data on parents' income and other financial stressors would help ensure education remains accessible.

Third, data on education financing and the impact of donor interventions are limited. Better data are needed to evaluate the efficiency of the significant investments made since the Syrian refugee crisis began.

Lastly, a greater emphasis on qualitative data could provide deeper insights into Lebanon's education challenges, compensating for current gaps in the system.

## IX. Conclusion and recommendations

Lebanon's education sector has long struggled with developing effective data systems, despite substantial donor efforts. Inaccessibility, secrecy and limited research on data systems persist, requiring systemic change.

MEHE and CERD collect the most comprehensive data, but the planned EMIS lacks clear policies on data management and public access. Institutionalising these systems and improving data-sharing mechanisms could enhance transparency and research.

Data from other organisations are sporadic and lack coordination. Gaps in refugee data persist, and weaknesses in datasets are often reproduced. Access, quality and continuity indicators vary, with those on enrolment and school numbers being the most common while data on teaching practices and student outcomes remain sparse. While MEHE and CERD track student progression, dropout data are unclear for the entire population.

There is also misalignment between Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian refugee data, as different departments collect information without integrating it into a unified system. Data on education financing, especially international aid, are limited, making it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of educational policies.

Non-governmental organisations collect data but their efforts are less systematic and often project-based. Data access remains a significant barrier, with CERD's statistical reports available only upon request.

Major data gaps exist, particularly on school fees, transportation, teaching practices and socioeconomic status. To improve education policy and governance, better use of existing data is essential, along with careful evaluation of its reliability and accuracy.

From the analysis conducted, several general recommendations emerge for consideration:

- 1. Develop robust data system frameworks:** Establish more robust frameworks within MEHE and CERD to enhance the effectiveness and integration of data practices.

2. **Clarify roles and responsibilities:** Clearly define the roles and responsibilities involved in data collection, validation, management and utilisation to improve consistency and reliability.
3. **Enhance data-sharing and accessibility:** Formulate policies to make educational datasets available to the public without prior official request, promoting transparency and public engagement.
4. **Strengthen general education data collection:** Establish a unified and comprehensive data system to gather consistent data on school access, quality and continuity. This system should include other metrics that fill current data gaps, alongside traditional indicators.
5. **Collect crisis impact data:** Systematically collect data that capture the direct and indirect impacts of crises on students, families and educational institutions.

Finally, the report also points to some more focused recommendations:

1. **Enhance data collection on disabilities:** Prioritise the collection and analysis of data on students with disabilities to address the significant gaps in accessibility and enrolment information.
2. **Bridge data gaps between nationals and refugees:** Standardise data collection across both national and refugee student populations to ensure comprehensive coverage of access, quality and demographic information. Address the marginalisation of refugees in data practices by integrating their long-term educational needs.
3. **Improve quality and continuity measures:** Develop reliable metrics for instructional practices, supervision, retention and learning outcomes. Expand data on teaching methods, classroom management and student engagement to cover all student populations uniformly.
4. **Systematic financial and budget reporting:** Address the lack of financial and budget data by ensuring transparency and regular updates from all educational actors.
5. **Establish a non-formal education database:** Accelerate the development of a non-formal education database as planned to better track and support students outside the formal education system.

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