



Learning Readiness Assessment Analysis Report



**APRIL
2020**

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Executive Summary

Due to the temporary suspension of Non-Formal Education (NFE) programmes as a result of the Government of Lebanon (GoL) COVID-19 containment measures, over 20 LCRP education partners conducted a Learning Readiness Rapid Assessment (LeaRA) in March-April 2020. As a result, participating partners reached approximately 10,000 households representing over 45,000 children, predominantly refugees, to identify the needs and sources of support to continue to support children's right to education via distance learning modalities.

The assessment confirmed that there is a need and an enabling environment. The assessment finds that there are over 25,000 children in need of some form of learning support within the approximately 10,000 households surveyed. In order to support these children, 95% of parents want NFE providers to communicate regularly with their children to support their learning. All of these households have at least one smartphone device, 98% have access to electricity, and 92% have access to Internet. Many parents identify WhatsApp as the preferred method of communication – sending videos and audio messages – to provide content and guidance to support their children's learning needs.

Despite the enabling environment, organizations will need to identify other resources to support children's access to selected distance learning modalities. Given the current deteriorating economic situation in Lebanon, further exacerbated by the COVID-19 public health crisis, families may have less money to support access to Internet and electricity in their homes. This, combined with the increased Internet usage required for distance learning modalities, may require organizations to support vulnerable households with Internet access. Further, not all parents are literate in foreign languages needed to transition to formal school in Lebanon, let alone Arabic – 21% are illiterate. While some parents can identify other literate family members that can support their children's learning, this is not the case for all – 11% of children in need do not have a literate parent or another family member that can support them. In combination with adapting the content and implementation modalities for the context, organizations will need to ensure the most vulnerable households can utilize the content to meet the learning objectives without having a literate parent or family member.

In summary, in spite of the challenges, the enabling environment for distance learning exists. If organizations can respond quickly and appropriately to ensure children's education is not delayed in the short-term, the work done during this critical stage is an opportunity to inform a mid-term and long-term NFE response - in the case that the COVID-19 crisis does not end soon – to support children's right to education.

Background and Methodology

In light of the Government of Lebanon (GoL) COVID-19 containment measures, LCRP education partners launched a Learning Readiness Rapid Assessment (LeaRA) to better understand the refugee and host community children and parents' readiness to continue learning amid the crisis. The aim of the assessment was to provide a comprehensive insight into the implementation environment to conduct NFE programmes, including the access to Internet and devices, as well as the capacity, preferences, and needs of refugee and host families who the education sector currently supports. These insights are vital for civil society organizations to inform their education programmes in order to adapt the content and implementation modalities to keep children and parents engaged and learning during the GoL COVID-19 containment measures.

This report highlights the results of the LeaRA assessment as well as key strategic, operational, and technical considerations to adapt current NFE programming to ensure the continued engagement of children in learning. It also builds on these considerations to inform some key suggestions for the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), donors, and the education sector partners to enable the implementation of short-term and mid-term responses in light of the COVID-19 public health crisis.

LCRP education partners conducted the LeaRA data collection remotely over the phone with households of children who were participating in non-formal education (NFE) and retention programmes before GoL COVID-19 containment measures. Twenty-six LCRP education sector partners collected the data between 27 March and 2 April 2020. The survey consisted of a technology, connectivity, and distance learning preferences of the households. The households surveyed represent a cohort of the population that was receiving education support by participating partners (no statistical sampling was used).

Findings

This Section summarizes the main findings of the LeaRA that constitute the basis for the proposed partners' programme adaptation.

3.1 Coverage

Twenty-six LCRP education sector partners covered the whole territory of Lebanon, the highest percentage surveyed among the eight Governorates was in Bekaa (32%) followed by Mount Lebanon (18%) then Baalbeck (15%) and Akkar (14%) governorates.

Collectively education partners have reached 9,996 Households (approximately 72,000 individuals). The assessed households included in total 47,282 children and specifically 25,437 Children in Need (CiN) of remote Learning Support.

The repartition of household (HH) and children per governorate is shown in **Table 1** below. On average, there are 2.5 CiN per household out of 4.7 children.

Table 1: Number of HH's assessed per Governorate

Governorate	HH's	HH size	Children	CiN
Akkar	1,352	9,785	6,350	3,547
Baalbek	1,461	10,419	6,950	2,989
Beirut	63	501	265	202
Bekaa	3,204	23,580	16,253	8,596
El Nabatieh	348	2,509	1,696	889
Mount Lebanon	1,761	11,544	7,538	4,055
North	1,040	7,618	4,932	3,206
South	767	5,470	3,298	1,953
Grand Total	9,996	71,426	47,282	25,437

The LeaRA assessed the children according to the learning programme they were enrolled in prior to the suspension of activities, or outreached to be enrolled in. **Figure 1** shows the overall distribution of programmes, according to the children assessed, and Table 2 depicts the detailed distribution of learning programme per governorate.

Overall, around 80% of assessed children were either already enrolled or outreached to be enrolled in CB-ECE (34%), BLN (29%), or ALP (15%). The remaining 20% include children who were targeted with retention support programmes (in the morning and afternoon shifts) in formal education.

Figure 1: Distribution of Programmes

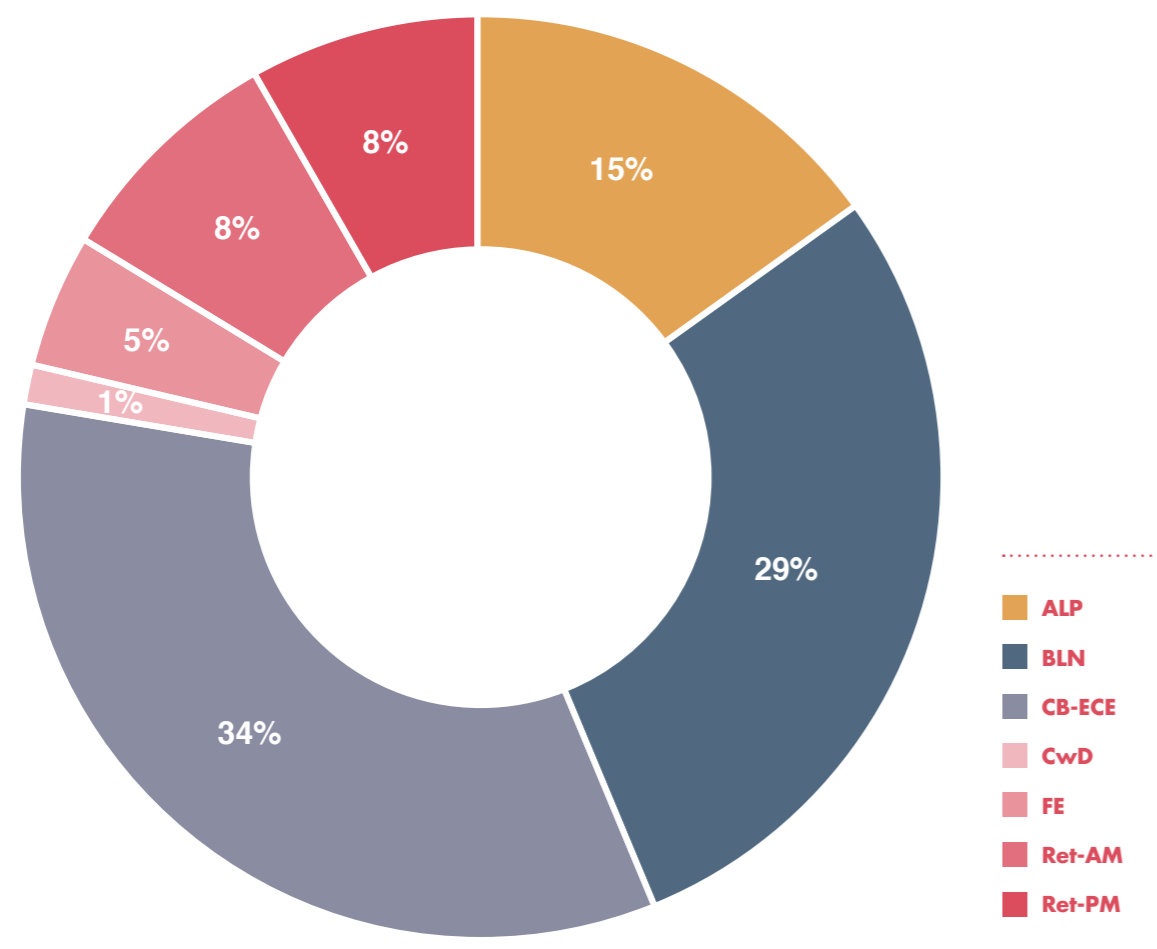


Table 2: Distribution of Learning Programs in the assessed population per Governorate

Governorate	ALN	BLN	CB-ECE	CwD	FE	Ret-AM	Ret-PM
Akkar	11.6%	18.2%	31.9%	1.6%	5.2%	13.8%	17.6%
Baalbek	0.1%	58.9%	30.4%	0.2%	3.4%	4.7%	2.3%
Beirut	76.2%	23.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Bekaa	26.3%	17.9%	31.5%	0.7%	3.0%	9.9%	10.6%
El Nabatieh	12.6%	14.5%	48.8%	0.0%	3.2%	0.3%	20.6%
Mount Lebanon	5.9%	34.6%	34.6%	2.3%	5.5%	14.0%	3.0%
North	23.9%	31.7%	32.4%	0.1%	3.9%	1.7%	6.3%
South	10.5%	23.5%	48.6%	3.3%	11.9%	0.2%	2.0%
Grand Total	15.1%	28.7%	33.9%	1.2%	4.6%	8.4%	8.2%

In summary, between 30% and 50% of children surveyed in all governorates (except for Baalbeck and Beirut) were either already enrolled or outreached to be enrolled in the Community-Based Early Childhood Education (CB-ECE) programme.

3.2 Demographics

With respect to the surveyed households, 87% stated that they have a valid UNHCR case number, indicating that the majority of surveyed children are refugees who are persons of concern for UNHCR. The majority of the surveyed households and hence children in need are located in the Bekaa (33%), Mount Lebanon (16%), Akkar (14%), North (12%) and Baalbek (11%). The detailed breakdown of population per governorate is provided in **Table 3** below.

Table 3: Population assessed per Governorate

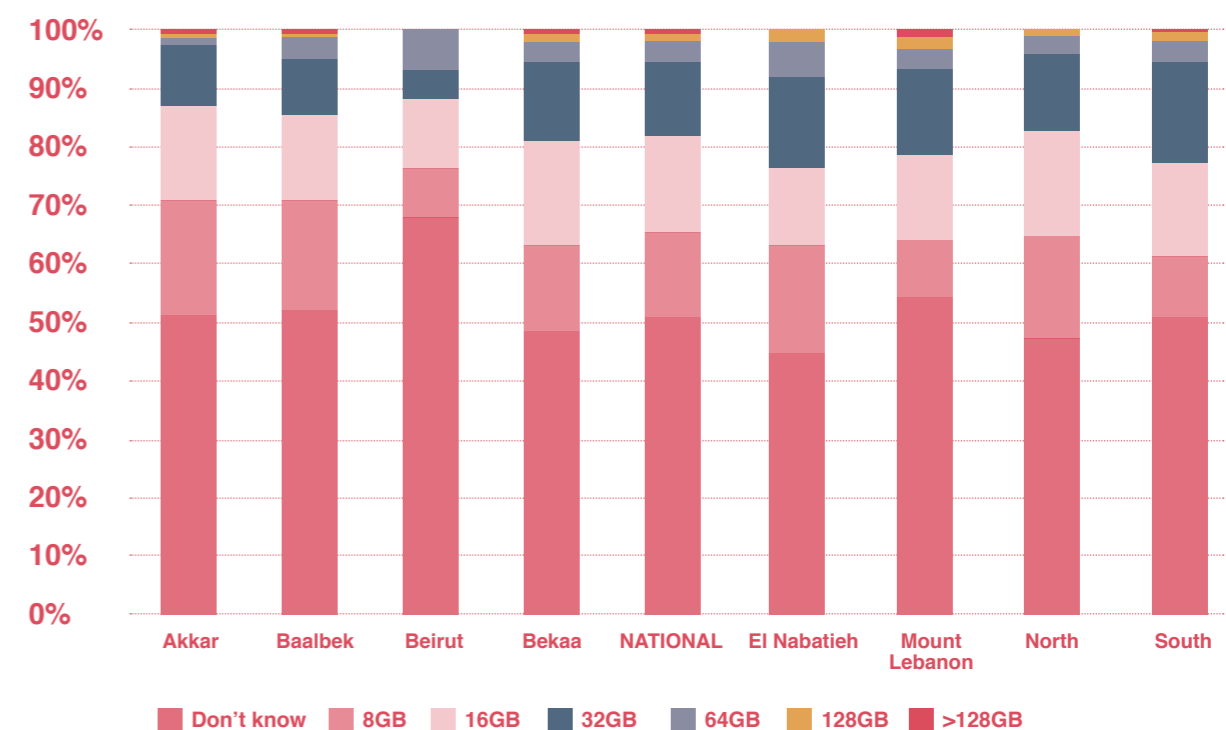
Governorate	Population size	Children	Children in Need (CiN)	%
Akkar	9,785	6,350	3,547	56%
Baalbek	10,419	6,950	2,989	43%
Beirut	501	265	202	76%
Bekaa	23,580	16,253	8,596	53%
El Nabatieh	2,509	1,696	889	52%
Mount Lebanon	11,544	7,538	4,055	54%
North	7,618	4,932	3,206	65%
South	5,470	3,298	1,953	59%
Grand Total	71,426	47,282	25,437	54%

3.3 Availability of devices and phone characteristics

When asked about the availability of electronic devices within their households, the vast majority of interviewees confirmed having a smartphone - operating on the Android platform (96%) while around half of them possess a TV (56%). On average each household has access to one smart phone. Availability of electronic devices other than smartphone and TV is negligible. The implication of this finding is that TV, one of the MEHE distance learning modalities, will not be accessible to many children in need of learning support, in both FE and NFE.

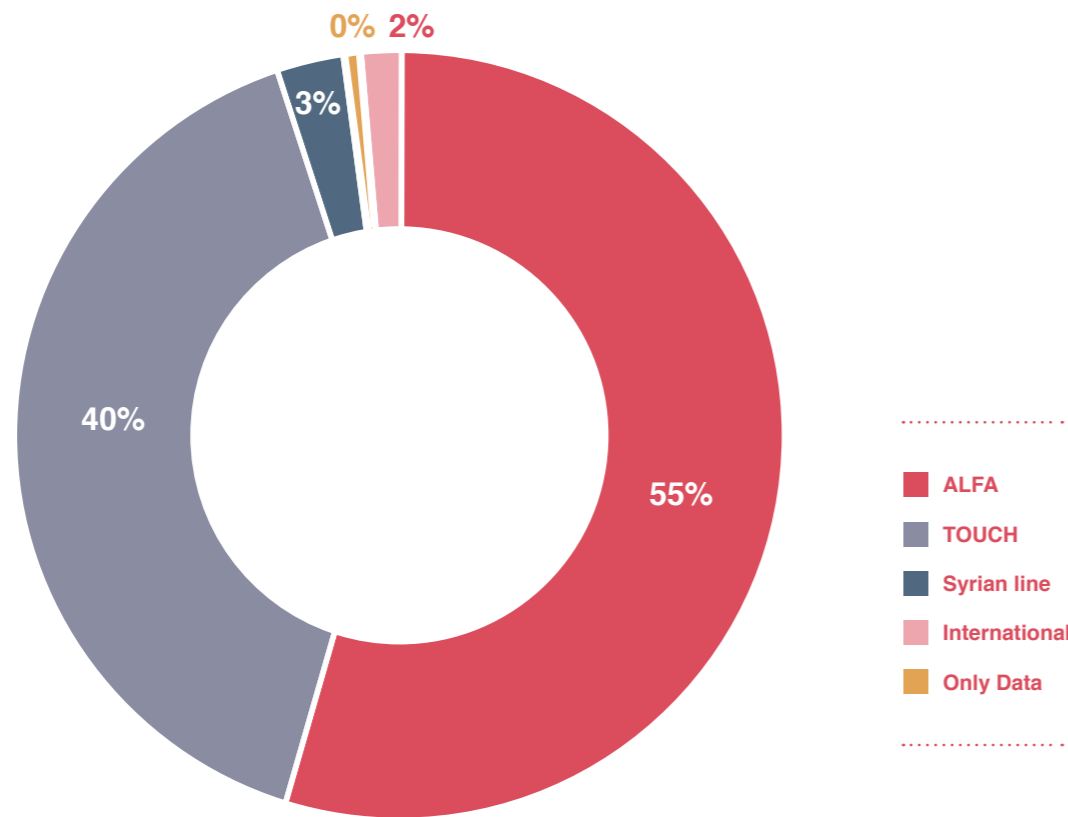
As shown in **Figure 2**, when attempting to understand the storage capacity that parents might have on their phones to receive media materials for distance learning, it was difficult to assess as most of the households are not aware of the capacity of their smartphones.

Figure 2: Storage capacity of phones



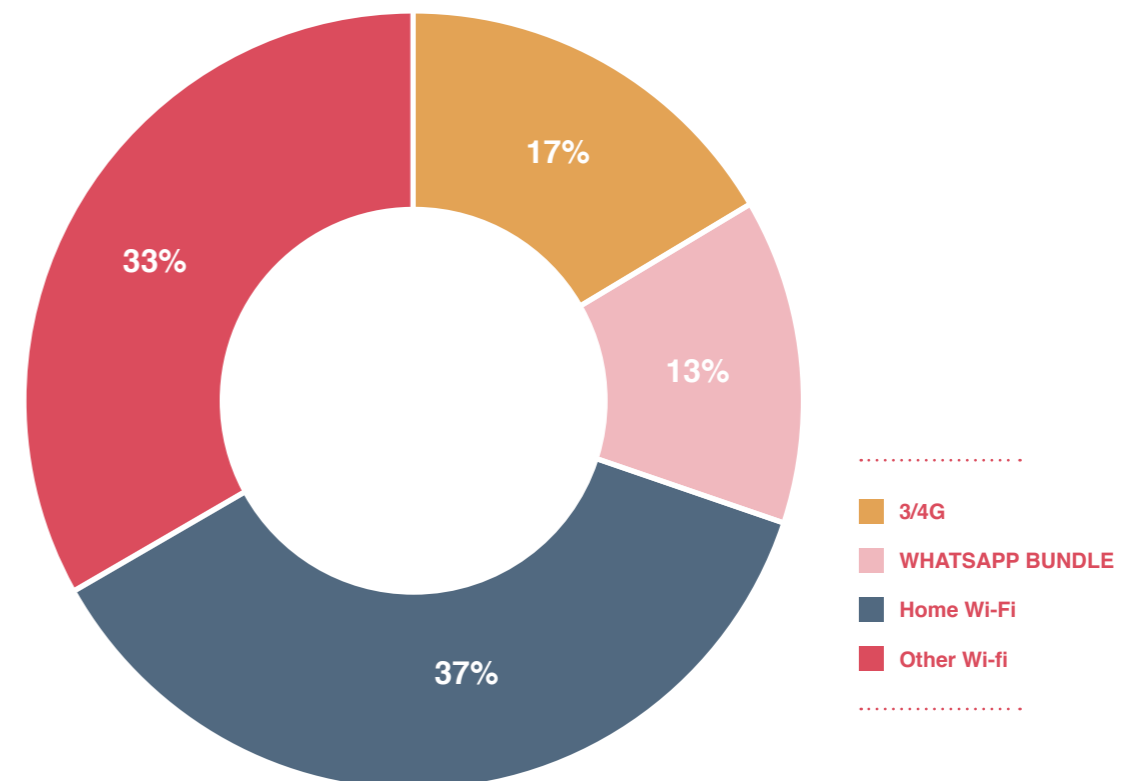
In addition, as shown in **Figure 3**, while 55% of the households use ALFA as their mobile network providers and 40% use Touch, the remaining 5% use either Syrian, international or only data lines.

Figure 3: Mobile network providers



67% of the HH have stable internet access through different sources (WhatsApp bundle, 3/4G, home Wi-Fi), the other 33% still have access to internet but through different sources (neighbors' Wi-Fi, others' Hotspot).

Figure 4: Sources of Internet



3.4 Access to Internet and electricity:

Based on the assessment that was performed with 9,996 HHs, 92% of the households stated having access to internet from different sources. Some of that is considered stable internet access meaning that the household can control the access, whereas other households have conditional access meaning that they may not control the access points.

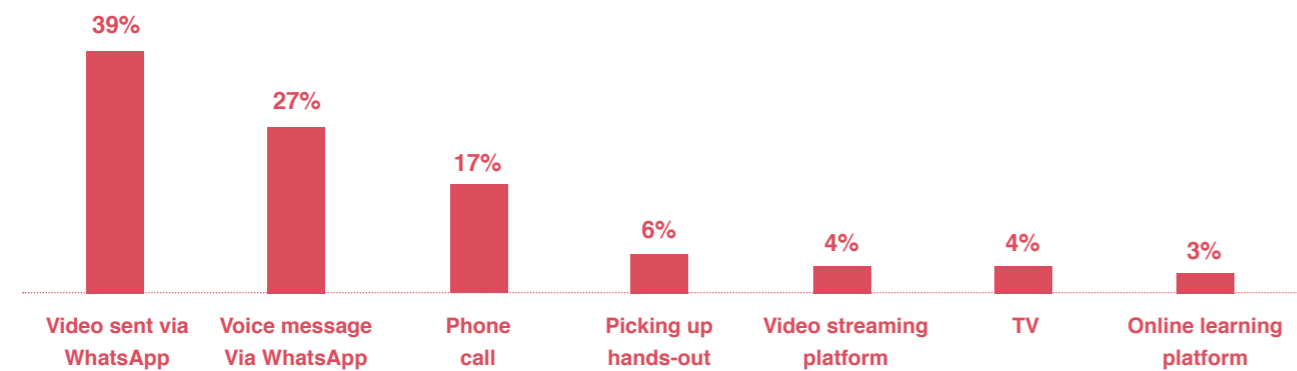
Half of the assessed households spend less than 25,000 LBP to cover their Internet expenditures per month, the other half spends between 25,000 LBP and 50,000 LBP per month; higher internet usage in distance learning requires additional Internet connectivity expenses for households.

On the other hand, electricity, which is the main source of power does not seem to be a hindering issue, as on average, it is available for more than 17 hours per day (sufficient) from different sources (Government Electricity, Private providers, or personal generator).

3.5 Learning preferences

As shown in **Figure 5**, the households preference of distance learning modality is heavily skewed towards WhatsApp communication (dominating first and second choice); 66% of HHs prefer that their children are provided with the needed Education materials through WhatsApp (via Videos and Voice Messages), 17% through phone while the remaining households reported their preference via other means of communication from hand-outs, Video steaming, and TV.

Figure 5: The learning preferences of HH



This is in addition to the fact that the majority of HHs (92%) know how to use WhatsApp, while only 14% are familiar with other communication applications (e.g. Telegram, Skype, etc.).

As 95% of the children do not own a device (smart phones, tablets, Laptops), children need to share the household device given the limited number of electronic devices available at home. Out of the 95%, there are only 100 smartphone devices available for every 212 children, which would require at least two children to share a device during distance learning. While the vast majority of parents (93%) allow their children to use the device, the use is limited to an average of 3 hours per day. Parents also reported preference for communication with the NGOs 4 days per week (on average); these findings are key for the adaptation of the

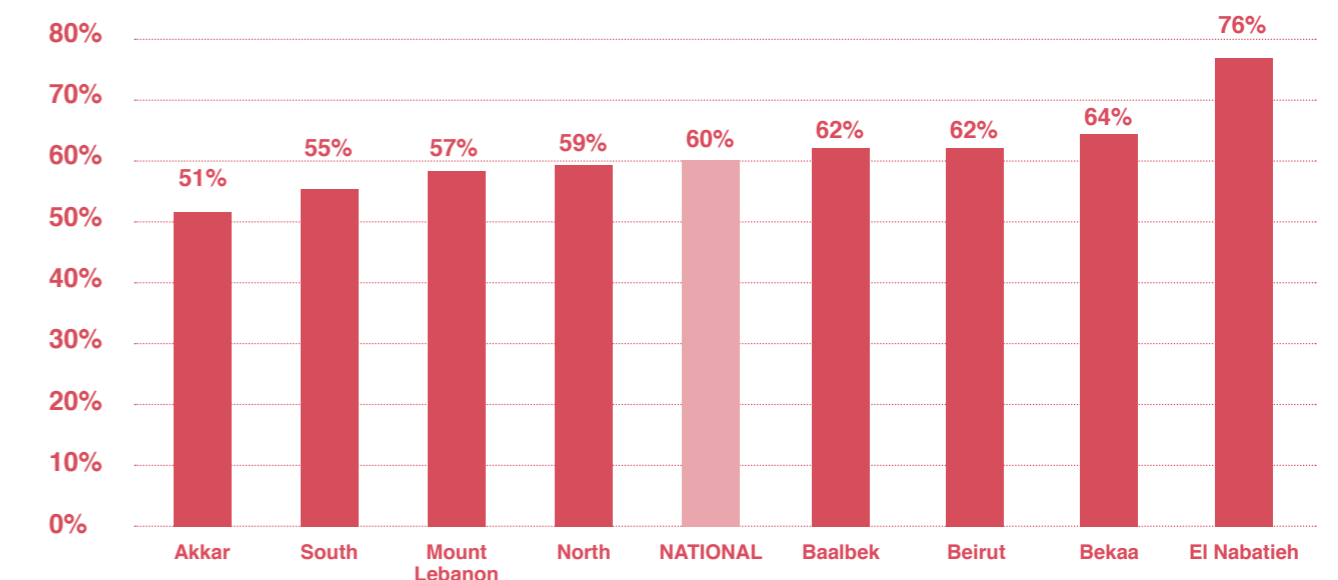
partner programmes and may enable monitoring and follow-up with parents. Other means of communication to deliver distance learning such as TV and E-learning are possible, however, the majority prefers WhatsApp communication.

3.6 Parental learning support

The vast majority of parents have expressed their willingness to allow their children to use the electronic device for their distance learning during this period to keep them engaged; 95% gave their permission for education providers to communicate with their children regularly.

When it comes to supporting children with their studies, more than half of the households (60%) indicated their availability/ability to support children with their lessons; either directly by the parent/spouse (75%), or through sibling (17%) or another family member (8%); the distribution by governorate is shown in **Figure 6** below.

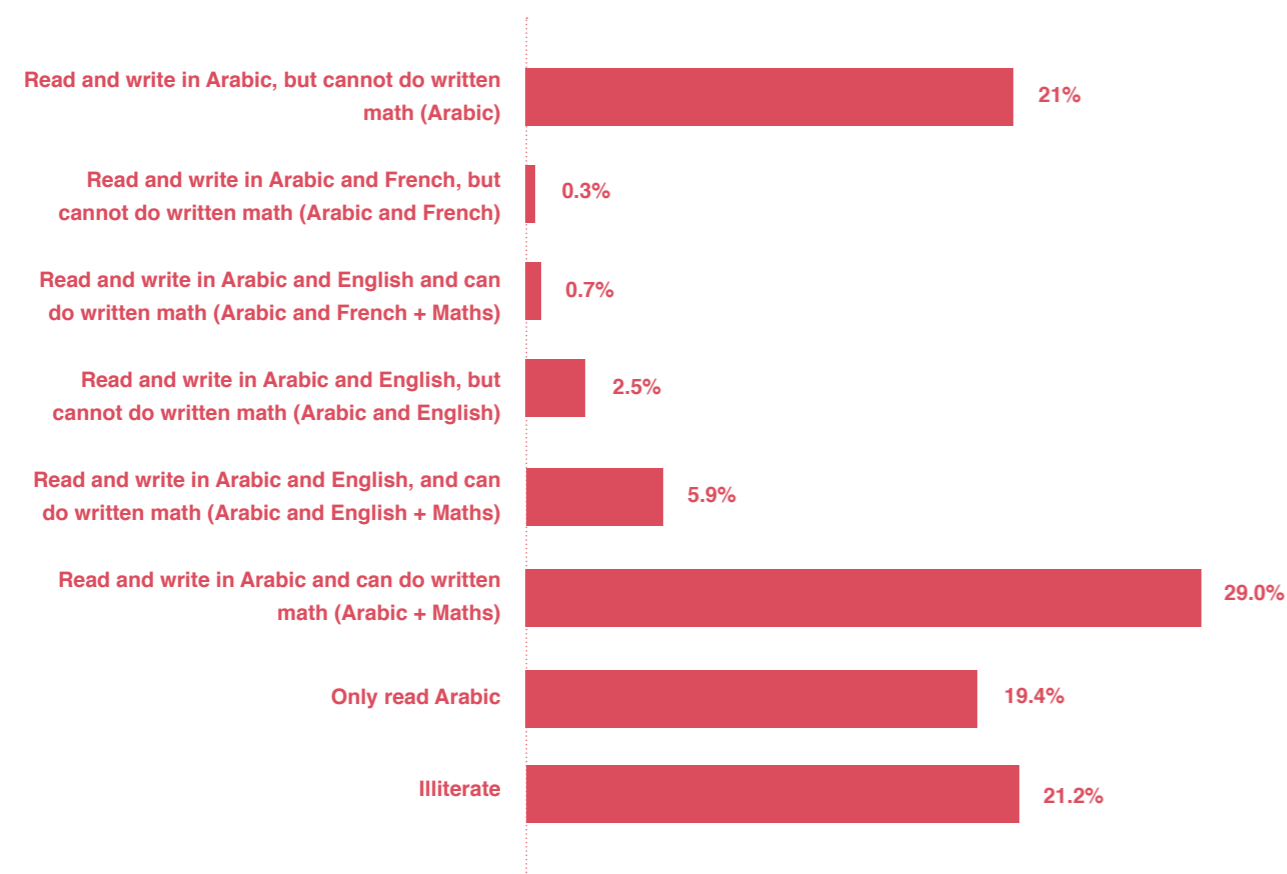
Figure 6: Availability of lesson support to children



Despite their willingness to support, 21% of parents lack the literacy and numeracy to provide any type of education support. The remaining 79% are able to support depending on the language of instructions Arabic, English, or French; 79% can at least read Arabic, 59% can at least read and write Arabic, 35% can do written Math, and 9% know English or French.

The following **Figure** represents the parents' literacy and numeracy levels:

Figure 7: Parent literacy and numeracy levels



Providing a deeper nuance to the kinds of support parents and family members can provide at home, %11 of children in need do not have a literate parent and there are no literate family members that can support that can support these children's learning.

Key Considerations to adapt education programmes

In summary, the education sector should adopt the following technical and operational considerations to implement NFE programmes via distant or blended learning modalities:

- Approximately 26,000 children identified in need of remote Learning Support, should be collectively targeted by the education sector on the short-term in order to remain engaged in some type of learning.
- 95% of parents gave permission to communicate with children regularly which will increase ability to monitor the learning and track progress of activities; contact with the families is advised not to exceed 4 days per week.
- The vast majority of households have access to Internet, electricity and smartphones which indicate a digital-ready infrastructure.
- Additional (hidden) costs such as Internet Connectivity need to be incurred in budgeting for alternative emergency education programmes. This would include limiting the data used by parents (e.g., compressing video files first before sending them to parents via WhatsApp).
- The vast majority of parents (93%) allow their children to use smartphone however with a limit that does not exceed an average of 3 hours per day; education programmes need to be adapted not to exceed this limit on daily basis.
- The households' preference in modality of distance learning is heavily skewed towards WhatsApp communication therefore education partners are encouraged to rely on WhatsApp as main means of communication.
- More than half of the parents (60%) indicated that there is someone in their family who can support their children's learning, therefore education providers will need to identify inventive

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ways to support children's education as well encourage support by parents and family members to engage in the learning of the children in need.

- Ensure interoperability of learning resources i.e. learning materials shared by partners should be accessible through a variety of platforms.
- Ensure learning content are relevant to the key learning objectives of NFE programmes, acknowledging the limitations with distance learning and limited support parents or other family members can provide children academically.
A fifth of the surveyed parents lack the literacy and numeracy to provide any type of education support to their children therefore an investment is needed in digital literacy programmes for parents.

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Suggested next steps

In order to meet the learning needs of children, it is clear from the LeaRA findings that parents are willing to support their children's learning during the GoL COVID-19 containment measures. To build on this willingness and enabling environment to support children's learning, MEHE and education sector partners can collaboratively identify adaptations to education programmes to meet the educational and learning needs of children during these exceptional circumstances based on LeaRA findings and their implications for education programming. This includes both short-term and mid-term considerations prior to the start of the 2020/2021 scholastic year.

The following are short-term considerations for MEHE and education sector partners based on the LeaRA findings and their implications on programming to ensure continuity of learning:

- Building on the LCRP education sector short-term emergency framework including relevant material compilation, mobilize the sector resources to roll out for CiN via accessible modalities identified.
- Setup communication channels between education staff and households.
- Identify and provide Internet connectivity bundles with service providers or unconditional cash distributions to facilitate access to Internet for vulnerable families participating in NFE programmes and provision of additional electronic devices (smart phones/tablets)(for the 5% lacking access to electronic devices and to increase # of smart phones accessible per household).
- Finalize the content review of NFE alternatives aligned with existing NFE curricula, ensuring the learning opportunities correspond to educational objectives.
- Make necessary adaptations to the NFE curricula content delivery modalities to ensure all children have access to learning, including households with limited or no Arabic literacy.

- Identify the possibility of education sector partners to access to the MEHE whitelisted sites for NFE providers and children, and include curated content selected by civil society, NGOs, and UN agencies on selected sites.
- Collect additional data that captures other factors that may affect distance learning including family and work responsibilities, motivation, as well as pedagogical factors regarding course design, course delivery and learning inclusivity.
- Document experience implementing the short-term education response to inform the mid-term education response in collaboration between MEHE and education sector partners
- Build on LeaRA findings, for example only half of the refugee children having access to TV (one of MEHE learning modalities) to better inform planning for distance learning modalities for second shift students and vulnerable children with similar situations in first shift.

The following are medium-term considerations for MEHE and education sector partners based on the LeaRA findings and their implications on programming to ensure continuity of learning and transition to formal school in the 2020/2021 scholastic year:

- Review content NFE alternatives aligned with existing NFE curricula, ensuring the learning opportunities correspond to MEHE NFE educational objectives.
- Identify feasible minimum criteria for NFE programming over the summer via distance or blended learning modalities depending on relevant GoL COVID-19 containment measures.
- Plan for a coordinated effort to ensure children to return to classroom having missed months of school or after a long interruption/disruption.
- Identify and update NFE to FE transitional pathways relevant to the adaptations of NFE programming considering: 1) the number of children whose NFE programmes was disrupted in March 2020, 2) the number of children in need of NFE programmes over summer 2020.
- Identify simple and effective ways to share data on children in need between education sector partners. This includes LeaRA and other data collection exercises (e.g. OOSC profiling) to ensure all children can exercise their right to education. The data sharing agreements should be compliant with beneficiary data protection standards.
- Support proposals to secure additional resources and procure needed items for distance or blended learning modalities.

To support the aforementioned short-term and mid-term strategies, donors to the education sector should:

- Continue supporting adapted NFE programmes in order to keep children engaged in learning, reduce dropout rate during the 2019/2020, and ensure access for children to enrol in the 2020/2021 scholastic year, either in MEHE public schools or ALP.
- Allow for funding flexibility to support adapted implementation modalities to reach all children in need, which can include unconditional cash to support parents' Internet access, procurement of smart devices for households that have no devices, etc.

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