

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Lebanon National Human Development Report of 1998 consists of two distinct parts. The first deals with the concept of human development and its application in the national context, and the second, thematic part deals with various aspects of youth and development. A summary of the findings of the report together with recommendations relating to each topic are presented below. The summary is in regular print and the recommendations are in italics.

I. GENERAL

Human development involves a development strategy that is different from that of economic growth in that it deals with the economic and social aspects of development in a balanced and simultaneous fashion. It also emphasizes good governance and wide public participation in the making and implementation of policy decisions. Whereas economic growth is measured in terms of increases in per capita income, human development is measured principally by the Human Development Index (HDI) which combines income, health and education measures. Specific aspects of human development are measured by special indices such as the Disaggregated HDI that measures human development among various social groups in the country, the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) which is a gender-sensitive measure of human development and the Human Poverty Index (HPI) which emphasizes the measurement of deprivation in human development.

Lebanon has made great progress in human development since the end of the war, particularly as of 1993. This progress is the more impressive considering the unprecedented destruction that resulted from the war and the relatively meager foreign grant aid received after the war. The rank of Lebanon with respect to the Human Development Index rose to 66th among 174 countries in 1995, after it had dropped to its lowest level at the end of the war, 103rd among 173 countries in 1991. Lebanon seems to have reached a relatively stable rank around the level achieved in 1995.

This achievement came, in large part, from the economic component of human development. Most important in this respect were: a rapid rise in GDP per capita, particularly between 1993 and 1995; the stabilization and appreciation of the national currency, associated with a substantial rise in the foreign currency reserves of the Central Bank; the control of inflation; a persistent surplus in the balance of payments; and, the reestablishment of confidence in the economy in the regional and international financial markets. The cost of this impressive recovery was that gross public debt exceeded national income and a debt servicing charge of 88 percent of all government revenues in 1997. Continuing high deficits in the government budget and the resulting escalation of debt threaten to destabilize the currency and the economy.

Progress was also made on the social side of human development, particularly in the areas of health and education. This resulted from an undeclared partnership between the private and public sectors. Expectation of life at birth rose considerably after the war

reflecting a rapid decline in mortality levels. Infant and child mortality fell to low levels. Enrollment in schools increased substantially and gender equality was achieved in this respect. Illiteracy was virtually eliminated among the younger age groups of the population for both males and females. Nevertheless, wide differences in education and health indicators remain between regions and among population groups. Environmental problems relating to waste disposal, quarries, air and sea pollution and other environmental issues continue to plague the country.

Lebanon has also maintained its democratic base in spite of a long and destructive war that took place from 1975 to late in 1990. Since the end of the war, it organized parliamentary elections in 1992 and 1996 and also municipal elections in 1998, the first in more than three decades. Participation in these elections steadily increased, indicative of a rapid decline in the apathy generated by the war and its aftermath. In addition, some four thousand registered non-governmental organizations operate in the country with activities covering every aspect of social life. Yet, problems of governance and public participation persist. The civil service is inflated and contains an undue proportion of unqualified elements. Efforts at administrative reform have not succeeded so far in improving the situation. The process of consultation with the civil society is generally limited in scope and governance often lacks wide public participation.

A serious effort is underway on the part of government to control the budget deficit but the results of this effort are not clear yet. What is actually needed is a programme to stimulate the economy and to gradually reduce the budget deficit and eliminate it in the medium term. Such a programme should have the authority of law. It should include elimination of waste in government expenditures and a process of radical administrative reform; a better collection of taxes and fees; a continuous review of the debt, restructuring it when necessary, to insure a minimum of debt servicing burden; a review of reconstruction priorities and postponement of less urgent and less productive projects; privatization of some of the public services and infrastructure under different arrangements, including BOT (build, operate and transfer); the use of government assets for income generation and, after all is done, the raising of taxes in a way that combines equity with ease of collection. The government has recently begun action on most of these fronts but the formulation of a comprehensive and transparent programme, that has a time frame and is legally binding, remains to be done.

There is clearly a need for the redistribution of economic activities in favour of rural and underprivileged areas, through direct government investment and through incentives and disincentives to the private sector. This should be accompanied by greater emphasis on education and training of the local populations in order to enable them to fully participate in economic activities. Special programmes aimed at combating poverty, generating incomes at the local level and undertaking community development, particularly in rural areas, could contribute a great deal towards decreasing disparities in living levels. Greater effort at controlling environmental abuses and at promoting a healthy and pleasant environment should be made. In many instances, appropriate environmental laws exist but application of these laws remains incomplete. Most important, there is urgent need for a comprehensive and transparent plan for the reconstruction and development of the country. Such a plan should set reconstruction priorities as well as development goals and means for achieving them and should take into account the financial programme mentioned above.

There is an obvious need also for a radical administrative reform in order to improve the performance of the public sector. Such reform should include: a review of the numbers needed in the different sections of the civil service and the elimination of surpluses; improving the quality of civil servants through improved recruitment policies and civil service training, modernizing the instruments of work, including computerization; improving delivery of services so as to facilitate the completion of public formalities; and re-structuring of administrative units where and when necessary to improve efficiency of delivery. Administrative reform, it should be emphasized, is a pre-requisite for the effective implementation of policies and programmes by the government. A more transparent system of governance with a broader public participation is also called for in order to tighten the partnership between government and the public in the reconstruction and development of the country.

The pursuit of sustainable human development requires, in addition to the type of actions mentioned above, an institutionalized monitoring process based on a broad database relating to the different aspects of human development. Such process should be organized at both the national and sub-national levels. In Egypt, for example, district governors meet regularly to examine regional disparities in human development and try to reduce them. They established a monitoring process, which is available to the executive and legislative branches of government for decision making. A comparable system should be considered for Lebanon. A series of seminars should be organized for policy makers and others in the public sector in particular to explain and discuss the concept of human development, its goals and the most appropriate means of implementing it in the circumstances of the country.

A sound economic policy, accompanied by social measures that reduce disparities and protect the environment, undertaken by an efficient and transparent system of governance, are the essence of the human development approach and the only guarantee for the sustainability and durability of the reconstruction and development effort now underway in the country.

II. THE DEMOGRAPHY OF YOUTH

The decline in the fertility of the population that has been taking place in the past two or three decades has resulted in a process of ageing of the population. This process is still at its early stages but is likely to intensify in the near future. It is expected that in the next twenty-five years or so (more specifically, the 1996-2021 period) the proportion of children (under 15 years of age), and eventually their number, will decline. The proportion of youth (15-24 years of age) will decrease slightly, but numbers will continue to increase. The proportion and numbers of the elderly (65 years and over) will increase significantly. The burden of support placed on the working population (which will increase during this period) will tend to gradually move from the support of children and youth to the support of the elderly.

While the total burden of support will decline *demographically*, that is, in terms of the number of persons supported per worker, it will not necessarily decline *economically* since parents are likely to support their children for a longer period of time because of increased education and to support their parents longer because of the longer span of life. Furthermore, the shifting of the support towards the elderly is coming at a time when the family support

system is declining in the country because of migration of the working age population from villages and towns towards the city or towards other countries.

There are serious issues associated with internal migration, particularly as it affects youth. Heavy rural-to-urban migration has been characteristic of the national economy and the war came only to intensify this movement. Added to it was the population movement caused by forced migration, that is, the movement of the displaced persons. As a result, there is urban overcrowdedness, particularly in the greater Beirut area, and labour force depletion in many rural areas. In these population movements, youth are affected more than the rest of the population.

International migration, a phenomenon that has characterized Lebanese society since ancient times, particularly since the last part of the nineteenth century, has intensified during the sixteen-year war. The desire to emigrate has remained quite high after the war, especially among youth in view of the unduly high unemployment rate among them. Emigration affects more the skilled and better-educated segment of the population; it is largely of the brain drain type that involves great waste of human resources.

These demographic changes have policy implications for both the public and private sectors. For example, the coming decline in the number of children will tend to reduce the demand for goods destined for them as well as schools at the primary level. The rapid growth expected in the number of elderly persons has major implications for the cost of the public health system and on social security, in addition to the increased need for social services for the elderly. Today's youth will carry the burden of this support whether directly through the support of their children and parents or indirectly through the payment of taxes towards social security and old age pensions. It is recommended that a detailed study be undertaken of the social and economic implications of forthcoming demographic changes in order to guide future policies in the areas impacted by these changes.

Policies are needed to rationalize internal migration. Although some rural-to-urban migration is inevitable due to increases in agricultural productivity and limited agricultural land, rural-to-urban movements need not be so intense and need not go in major part to the capital city. Policies in this regard should include: rural development, a better regional distribution of economic activities as indicated earlier, a better distribution of social and cultural amenities, the development of secondary cities and increasing the absorption capacity of the major urban areas. In addition, the return of the displaced should constitute a major priority, not only because it results in an economically better distribution of the population but also because it serves the reintegration of society.

The purpose of a policy dealing with international migration should be two-fold: to reduce the outflow, especially of young persons with higher education and skills, and to establish contact with expatriates abroad in order to solicit their participation in the reconstruction and development of the country and to enlist their political support in their countries of residence. The most effective measure for reducing the outflow of young emigrants is to reduce unemployment among them through measures ranging from insuring an education more relevant to market demand – which necessitates the elaboration of a manpower plan – to the creation of an efficient system of private and public employment agencies and the formulation of programmes aimed directly at the employment of youth. To establish and develop contacts with the expatriate community should be done through organized visits, convening business conferences and undertaking exhibits in which they can

participate and the utilization of their skills in specific reconstruction and development projects in the country (including through the UNDP-supported project Transfer Of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals, (TOKTEN), (through which expatriates are invited to the country for short periods to provide specialized technical assistance).

It should be noted that demographic data are not only essential for the formulation of population policies, they are necessary for the formulation of all social and economic policies and for development planning in general. After a period of relative neglect of statistics that started long before the war, the government has expended major effort on data collection, starting in 1995. The collected data so far have been on general demographic, social and economic conditions and have already proved to be of great usefulness. What is needed at present is an intensification of this effort through a programme of systematic data gathering and analysis, particularly on specific issues of concern such as internal and international migration, questions of youth and the elderly, gender questions as they relate to employment and comparative remuneration and the like. Government, universities and other concerned institutions should encourage policy-oriented research utilizing the produced data and targeting issues of immediate policy concerns.

III. YOUTH AND THE LABOUR FORCE

Great progress has been made in the participation of women in the labour force. Lebanese women above school age (i.e. 25 years of age and over) have the highest participation rate in the Arab countries. They are entering new professional groups that were originally the domain of men, such as engineers, judges, medical doctors and the like. Their average salary is less than that of men but this might be, at least in part, a reflection of their concentration in lower paid occupations within broad occupational groups (e.g. nurses as against doctors in the health sector) and their lesser seniority in the higher paid occupations (e.g., less years of work on average as doctors than males).

The two major problems in the area of employment are found to be the generally low salary levels of workers in relation to the cost of living (in spite of major salary increases since the end of the war) and the high rate of unemployment of youth relative to the rest of the labour force (together with an unduly long period of search for a job for young new entrants into the labour force). Low salary levels are partly the result of the war but reflect also the lack of trickle down of the large investments made in rebuilding the infrastructure. The high unemployment rate of youth is due to the limited relevance of education to the needs of the labour market, to the virtual absence of an effective system of public and private employment agencies and to the lack of programmes aimed specifically at the employment of youth, in addition, of course, to the slow-down in economic activities.

The first requirement in the area of youth and the labour force is the elaboration of a manpower plan that permits the identification of the skill and specialization needs of the labour market in the next five to ten years. Such a plan would permit proper counseling of students as to career tracks from as early as the secondary level of education. Incentives should also be established whenever needed for students to move into the type of training most needed by the economy. Greater emphasis should be placed on vocational and technical training in view of the demand of the labour market. In addition, private and public employment agencies should be vigorously promoted in order to facilitate the matching of job applicants with job opportunities. These measures, together, will reduce structural

unemployment (i.e., available jobs not matching the skills of the unemployed or not easily located by them), but not unemployment due to the overall shortage of employment opportunities. For the latter kind of unemployment there is need to stimulate the economy through labour - intensive investments and to control and organize the inflow of foreign labour that competes with local labour, particularly youth. In addition, special programmes for the employment of youth should be initiated as well as measures for encouraging entrepreneurship among young persons. These measures would help increase employment opportunities while reducing the gap between the unemployment rates of youth and those of the rest of the labour force. Finally, controlling the inflow of foreign labour so as to diminish competition between them and the local labour force is recommended.

IV. YOUTH AND EDUCATION

In a partnership between the private and public sectors, education has spread considerably during the past twenty-five years. The gender gap in enrollment was closed at all levels with a slight edge in favour of females at the intermediate and secondary level. Illiteracy has been virtually eliminated among youth although it is still relatively high among the older age groups, indicating an implicit policy aimed at eliminating illiteracy through the spread of regular education rather than through adult literacy campaigns. Access to education remains problematic in rural areas resulting in a rural-urban gap in enrollment and literacy. The clear difference in quality of education in public and private institutions in favour of the latter makes parents anxious to send their children to high-cost private schools. This tendency has made household expenditures on education unduly high. Finally, the relevance of education to labour market demand and to the requirement of good citizenship is still wanting, in spite of the introduction by government of a new curriculum at the pre-university level that includes more up-to-date subjects such as modern technology and civic education.

Education policy needs to promote a better distribution of education institutions between Mohafazats and a greater equality in the quality of education among regions. Greater effort should be expended on improving the quality of education in the public sector at all levels so as to reduce the education bill for households. While illiteracy has been virtually eliminated at the younger ages, its elimination at the older ages should be pursued through adult literacy campaigns. Waiting for illiteracy to disappear through attrition is a long and wasteful process. Civil society, with public encouragement, can play a crucial role in this regard. Relevance of education to labour market demand should be a priority subject of education policy but this can only be obtained after the elaboration of the manpower plan mentioned in the previous section. Such a plan will also permit informed counseling of students regarding areas of concentration at secondary and university levels of education.

V. YOUTH AND HEALTH

Human development views a healthy population not only as a means of economic development but also as a goal of development. Great strides were made in the area of health in the past twenty-five years and in particular in the nineties. Mortality levels have gone down considerably, particularly for infants and children, and expectation of life at birth has risen substantially, reaching at present a level that is not too far from that in developed countries. Health data and indicators at the national level conceal important regional differences, however. A major problem in the health field is that the health system is costly

(total expenditures represent 9.7 percent of GDP). Medical insurance is not universal (less than 60 percent). The Ministry of Health covers most of the health charges for the rest of the population. A very major part of the budget of the Ministry goes towards this end.

The reproductive health situation is generally satisfactory as a result of the efforts in this area by government and the civil society. Knowledge and use of contraception is widespread among youth and the general population. Pre-natal and natal health care are sought by a large majority of young pregnant women and qualified medical personnel generally offer this service, although there seem to be regional disparities for seeking pre-natal care. Post-natal health care remains inadequately desired, particularly among less educated women.

In the present stage of epidemiological transition, there has been a shift from health problems related to infectious diseases, some of which remain important, to increased concern about risk behaviour and related health problems, particularly with respect to non-communicable diseases. The population in general and youth in particular are generally aware and well informed about health needs and seeking related assistance. Smoking and drinking by youth has increased in the past years, particularly among young males. Together with inadequate dietary habits and rather sedentary life, there is an increased threat of non-communicable diseases for youth in the future. Addiction of youth to hard drugs appears to be marginal. The spread of AIDS, which affects mainly young working age adults, is still limited. Serious efforts at awareness raising and prevention action are being made by government to keep it under control.

Disability statistics are still quite deficient in spite of the particular importance of this issue due to the effects of the war. Physical disability, the most common type of disability in the country, affects greatly age groups now above the youth age, that is, groups that were in the youth age during the war. Car accidents and injuries are a major cause of physical disability, especially among youth. Second in importance is mental disability caused by the still high rates of consanguineous marriages. There are also indications that depression and suicide may add to disability.

In spite of the improvements in the overall health situation that took place in the past two to three decades and the relatively wide knowledge among Lebanese of their health needs, efforts in the areas of health information and education and of preventive action should be maintained, indeed intensified. Such efforts should specifically target youth and focus in particular on reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, smoking, drug abuse and lifestyle. Access to and full use of postnatal care is to be promoted, particularly among less educated women. A wider range of modern contraceptive methods is to be made available. Consanguineous marriages should be discouraged in order to reduce mental disability. Organizing traffic, especially on highways, and the strict implementation of traffic laws should go a long way in reducing deaths and physical disability, particularly among youth. Major tasks facing the government in the health field, however, relate to reform of the health system with a view to ensuring universal access to a minimum level of health services, eliminating waste and abuse, and reducing the cost

VI. YOUTH AND FAMILY FORMATION

Age at first marriage - 28 years for females and 31 years for males - is one of the highest in the world. It has risen considerably during the past 25 years. Furthermore, marriage rates among young persons have declined and have reached levels lower than in other countries of the region and in many of the developed countries. There are several reasons for this: First, adverse economic conditions and high unemployment among youth are forcing some young persons to postpone marriage. Second, increased female education and the choice of full-time careers by some women have had a similar effect. Third, a number of cultural factors play a role. Most important is the fact that women tend to marry men who are five to ten years older, that is a smaller group due to mortality and emigration. Educated women tend not to marry men with lesser education which restricts further mate availability.

Because of late marriages, very few households are headed by young persons. Young persons typically live in households headed by their parents.

Divorce rates have increased in the past 25 years, but have not yet reached levels anywhere comparable with those prevailing in most of the western countries.

Total fertility, that is the average number of live births per woman, has declined considerably. It is now around 3 which is only slightly above the replacement level of around 2.2 children. This low level is greatly affected by the high degree of celibacy. Among married couples, in fact, fertility, though also declining, is still much higher (estimated at around 6 children) and varies greatly between Mohafazats. In other words, fewer people are married causing low total fertility but those who are married still have, on average, relatively large families, particularly in rural and underprivileged areas.

Family formation policies should aim at facilitating marriage and reducing celibacy while, at the same time, reducing the high fertility rates within marriage, particularly in rural areas and among underprivileged groups.

The reduction of celibacy may be obtained through various actions. The reduction of youth unemployment, through measures described earlier (in section on youth and the labour force above), will tend to reduce the age at first marriage leading to a reduction in celibacy. The encouragement of the construction of low-cost housing that is affordable in relation to the income of the young and the provision of affordable day care centers for children of career women and other such assistance should have a similar effect. The reduction of emigration of young males and encouraging the return of emigrants (permanently or for short stays) should help re-establish a better mate availability ratio in the country.

The reduction of marital fertility may be achieved through better family planning services, to be undertaken by both the public and private sectors. Since the highest marital fertility rates are found among the least privileged areas and population groups, more balanced regional development (a major aspect of human development) including a better distribution of accessible educational and health facilities in addition to a more even distribution of economic activities, should prove to be a powerful factor in reducing marital fertility in these areas and among these population groups.

VII. YOUTH AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Lebanese youth are relatively quite active in the political, social and cultural life of the country. This has been true for several generations at least.

Youth vote in parliamentary elections to the same extent as the older age groups. However, since the voting age is 21 years, higher than in the vast majority of countries in the region and elsewhere, a part of the youth population is deprived of the voting privilege. In schools and universities where students' elections are common, students seem to participate intensively and cover a wide selection of issues (political, environmental, social, etc.) in their electoral campaigns.

Confessionalism seems to be rooted in the thinking of youth and certain aspects of their behaviour. When asked about the religion of their best friend or their preferred leader, a large majority of students chose a person from their own sect or religion. This sectarian attitude seems to be greatly reinforced where young persons live in areas or attend schools where one sect predominates. Confessionalism is a major handicap to social integration.

Youth participate in civil society in a considerable manner. They form the large majority of an active scouting system that was re-invigorated after the war. They also form the majority of the volunteers of the Lebanese Red Cross and other emergency response non-governmental organizations permitting them to offer services free of charge or at minimal cost. Youth also participate heavily in non-governmental organizations dealing with such human development issues as human rights, the environment, peace, democracy and social services. But youth are not only a resource for activities of non-governmental organizations, they also are the subject of activities of many non-governmental organizations and the target group of the programme of a special Directorate-General of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

Youth are also active in cultural activities. Youth clubs exist in some of the most remote villages of the country and cover activities that span a wide variety of interests from sports to cultural gatherings to local social services.

Yet, civic education in primary and secondary schools, so much needed after the war, is admittedly quite deficient. The new curriculum being introduced by government is intended, among other things, to partly remedy this situation. Preparation of students at the university level for political participation and civic responsibility is uneven between institutions but is generally less than desired.

The first requirement for the increased political participation of youth is the lowering of the voting age to eighteen years, in line with that adopted in most democratic countries of the world. The confessional barrier to integration should be eliminated and this is best done by promoting the existence of multi-confessional neighborhoods and schools. The return of the displaced should go a long way in re-establishing multi-confessional life where it is lacking. The unified campus of the Lebanese University, now under construction, should also eliminate branches where one confession dominates.

The collaboration of schools themselves, and the civil society at large, in this undertaking is crucial. Civic education should be emphasized and should target confessional integration. The organization of multi-confessional camps for local and expatriate youth should be intensified. Programmes in and out-of-school encouraging volunteerism among youth should be multiplied. What is needed, in other words, is a serious mobilization of the

youth of the country, in multi-confessional settings, to deal with various social, economic and environmental issues of national interest.

It is recommended that government consider specifically the recommendations emanating from international conferences on youth or dealing with youth issues with a view to implementing recommendations that are of particular relevance to the national situation. A focal point within government dealing with youth issues and coordinating multi-sectoral action relating to youth development should clearly be established. Consideration should be given to the establishment of a National Youth (Development) Council, with representatives from the public and civil society sectors. The main purpose of the Council would be to advise government on innovative youth programmes, including those aimed at developing and strengthening leadership capabilities of youth and at devising community service projects, cultural and civic activities and the like.