

## FOREWORD

In the past few years, the United Nations Development Programme increasingly encouraged and supported the preparation of national human development reports. Such reports examine the human development concept from a national perspective and adapt it to specific national experiences, and emphasize national priorities. They give a more concrete and elaborate picture of the status of human development at the national level. They may, in particular, shed light on complex problems, which may have gone unnoticed, or may have been under-studied, misdiagnosed or untreated.

The first national human development report for Lebanon, titled A Profile of Sustainable Human Development in Lebanon was published early in 1997. The favourable reaction to the Report, in both the public sector and civil society, encouraged the Council for Development and Reconstruction and United Nations Development Programme to continue this initiative and further extend its support.

The Lebanon National Human Development Report for the year 1998 provides a national perspective of human development in the light of the experience of the past years and, in particular, discusses the subject of Youth and Development. The present report points to challenges the country faces as it re-emerges economically and is engaged in demographic health and other social transition towards the achievement of sustained and sustainable human development.

The selection of the theme of the report was no coincidence, but deliberate. Today's youth face an array of important problems, perhaps only matched by their developing potential and expectations. The importance of youth for the country's future did not escape visiting dignitaries of recent years, notably President Jacques Chirac of France, Pope John Paul the Second, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, UNESCO Director General Federico Mayor, etc., each of whom met and entertained an extensive dialogue with youth.

To fulfill the promise they hold, it is crucial that youth, as the rising generation, be accepted and recognized as such. Developmental action must target the increase of their capabilities and capacity. Opportunities must be created for their integration in political, economic and social life. To unleash the potential of youth as agents of change, it is essential to put in place a coherent, integrated set of focused development policies, and to create the mechanisms and arrangements that will elicit their participation at different levels.

The present report is a contribution to confronting the challenges of development and a bid to achieve the aspirations of human development. The country's youth, no doubt, are the entry point for change, for engaging the future.

Gualtiero Fulcheri  
Officer-in-Charge