



Leading Change in Fragile Times

The Leadership for Learning Through Displacement Project

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Insights from:
Janine Weber-el Meouchy,
Executive Director at
Teach For Lebanon



Insights from:
Juan Gabriel Wells,
Country Director at the
International Rescue Committee



Co-author:
Nagham El Banna,
Project Coordinator at
Teach For Lebanon



Emergency Context in Lebanon

Lebanon is facing an unprecedented education crisis due to a series of overlapping crises, including the 2019 economic collapse, the Beirut port explosion, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the ongoing strain of hosting millions of refugees. The recent escalation of war in the South and Beirut has displaced over 1.2 million people, deepening the humanitarian disaster (The Media Line, 2024).

As the economy has plummeted, with GDP contracting by 40% and inflation soaring, over 80% of the population now lives in poverty (World Bank, 2023). This financial crisis has forced families to choose between survival and education, with many unable to afford school fees, supplies, or transportation.

To make matters worse, teachers' salaries lost over 95% of their value, leading to widespread strikes and school closures (Harvard International Review, 2022). The Ministry of Higher Education and the international community found solutions and support for the teachers - but the salaries still have not recovered.

In response to these growing challenges, the Teach For All's Leadership for Learning through Displacement initiative, funded by the generous support of the Chubb Foundation, Kohlberg Kravis Roberts company, the Fialkow Family Foundation, and General Atlantic, was developed and implemented by Teach For Lebanon (TFL) in collaboration with the International Rescue Committee (IRC).

"Most education initiatives in protracted crises focus on access to any learning as the end goal, but there is still too little investment toward ensuring quality teaching and learning, and in generating the systemic changes to sustain these improvements," said Wendy Kopp, Teach For All's Co-founder and CEO. This initiative in Lebanon goes beyond immediate learning needs by equipping teachers and communities with the skills necessary to provide education in emergency settings.

It was also part of a broader collaboration across the Teach For All network - with Teach For Poland partnering with IRC Poland, and Teach For Bangladesh partnering with IRC Bangladesh.

"Education systems succeed or fail based on the professional capacity of their teachers," said David Miliband, President, and CEO of the IRC. "Ensuring that teachers can do their job effectively, even in the most challenging contexts, is an essential step toward safeguarding the right of every child to a quality education. Through this partnership, the IRC looks forward to bringing its evidence-based approaches to helping teachers develop professionally and in turn, positioning children to learn, thrive, and realize their potential."

Project Overview

The Leadership for Learning through Displacement project aims to ensure that displaced children in North Lebanon continue receiving quality education amidst adversity.

From 2022 to 2024, the project provided capacity building to:



Collaboration was key, with Teach For Lebanon (TFL) recruiting teachers, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) providing expertise in Education in Emergencies, and Teach For All supporting with funding and strategic guidance.

Despite challenges like teacher strikes, the project teams adapted quickly, shifting to remote teaching and enhancing assessment tools. Training covered trauma-informed teaching, inclusive education, child protection, positive discipline and social-emotional learning, empowering educators to support students both academically and emotionally.

The impact extended beyond the classroom, with TFL alumni leading additional community-driven initiatives and strengthening local leadership in education. This project, a partnership between TFL and the IRC, has laid the foundation for a more resilient education system in Lebanon, ensuring that vulnerable children continue to receive meaningful learning opportunities.

To gain deeper insights into the Leadership for Learning through Displacement project and its impact, we spoke with two key figures who have played a crucial role in conceptualizing the approach:

Janine Weber-el Meouchy, Teach For Lebanon's Executive Director, and Juan Gabriel Wells, Country Director at the International Rescue Committee. Their perspectives shed light on the project's challenges, benefits, and future prospects. Below are some of the key questions posed to both directors, highlighting their reflections on the project's design, implementation, and its role in addressing the ongoing educational crisis in Lebanon.

Addressing Critical Gaps: The Need for the Leadership for Learning through Displacement Project

Let's start from the beginning - what sparked the need for this project, and what were the main drivers behind its launch?

Juan Gabriel Wells, IRC Country Director:

"The Leadership for Learning Through Displacement project was conceived as a strategic response to severe educational challenges in Lebanon caused by compounding crises, such as the economic collapse, governance shortcomings and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The program prioritizes delivering quality, inclusive education to vulnerable children, particularly in North Lebanon and Akkar, where many students face significant barriers to accessing and succeeding in education. Furthermore, the initiative is committed to fostering enduring systemic improvements by enhancing the skills of local partners and teachers. By addressing both immediate needs and long-term development, it has contributed to fortifying Lebanon's education landscape to better serve all children."

Janine Weber-el Meouchy, TFL Executive Director:

"The Leadership for Learning Through Displacement project was initiated to address the urgent educational gaps caused by Lebanon's multiple crises. Our commitment at TFL goes beyond addressing immediate educational needs; it's about ensuring that vulnerable children have the tools to overcome the challenges they face, from trauma to lack of resources. This project is necessary not only to provide educational access but also to ensure that this education is relevant and meaningful, helping children heal and regain hope amid ongoing uncertainty.

This collaboration helped TFL recruit and develop Fellows to have a positive impact on displaced children and youth growing up today. The project also supported the Fellows to become agents of long-term change who, working with many others, can ensure that systems are oriented to meeting the needs of displaced children and youth.

Across the Teach For All network, local partners like ourselves have proven the immediate impact and lasting systemic effects of our approach to developing outstanding, diverse teachers and leaders committed to ensuring all children thrive and develop as leaders who can shape a better future."

Benefits at Different Levels: Fellows, Non-TFL Teachers, and Alumni

Looking at the different groups involved - students, fellows, public school teachers, and alumni - what would you say have been the most meaningful outcomes for each of them?

IRC Country Director:

“The teacher training offered by the IRC significantly enhanced the Fellows’ expertise in key areas essential for fostering safe and supportive classroom environments for students. Topics such as Healing Classrooms, Positive Discipline, Social and Emotional Learning, Inclusion, Universal Design Learning, Inquiry-based Learning and Child Protection were covered extensively. The sessions equipped Fellows with the tools to address both emergency situations and everyday challenges.

Additionally, this collaboration allowed us to share vital pedagogical strategies with hundreds of teachers throughout Lebanon, creating a ripple effect that strengthened the overall quality of teaching and learning. This initiative has laid a robust foundation for continuous improvements within the country’s education system.”

TFL Executive Director:

“At the heart of TFL’s work is the core belief that every child deserves to feel safe, seen, and supported – especially in times of crisis. In partnership with the IRC, we developed a ‘student well-being’ assessment tool, rooted in their Healing Classrooms framework, enabling us to better understand the social and emotional climate in our schools.

*The results speak to the deep impact our Fellows are having on children across Lebanon. For example, by **May 2024**, **82%** of surveyed students reported **‘always feeling safe in their classrooms’**, and **83%** felt **‘they could turn to their teachers for support’**—a powerful sign of emotional security and trust. **More than 80%** felt **‘comfortable asking questions’**, showing growing intellectual engagement and confidence.*

***While 64%** felt **“a strong sense of structure and control in their school routine”**, and a smaller group of students continue to need targeted support—insights that now guide our programmatic design choices.*

The academic results also affirm the program's impact: Our Fellows' support has contributed to noticeable academic growth, with students showing increased engagement, participation, and mastery of key concepts.

For our Fellows, this collaboration has been an invaluable opportunity for professional growth in the education sector, particularly within emergency contexts. They each gained hands-on experience in delivering trauma-sensitive education under challenging conditions. They learned how to support children not only academically, but also emotionally—a core competency for teaching in crises.

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Cohort 15 TFL Fellow, Ghaythaa Obeid, shared, “The inclusive education workshop ignited my passion for equity and social justice in education. Witnessing educators transcend perceived limitations inspired me to create a more inclusive classroom.”

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Beyond benefiting TFL Fellows, many Lebanese public school educators gained access to essential tools and methodologies from the Healing Classrooms approach, which they are now able to apply in their own classrooms to support students' well-being and resilience.

Together, these educators reached approximately 25,000 students across Lebanon in the academic year of 2023–2024 alone, fostering safe and supportive learning environments in a time of heightened vulnerability.

The ripple effect has been further strengthened by TFL's network of alumni, whose involvement in Community Service projects greatly extended the impact of this partnership. **Six alumni implemented Community Service projects centered around the theme of Education in Emergencies in South Lebanon, Beirut & Bekaa regions.**

The projects addressed educational needs in crisis-affected areas, and **collectively reached 130 teachers and 66 students.** The continued engagement of TFL's alumni in the broader education ecosystem is an inspiring example of their ongoing leadership and support in communities across Lebanon.

TFL's work offers crisis-affected communities more than the usual short-term solutions. We foster sustainable, long-term impact by empowering teachers, equipping communities, and supporting children to thrive—even in the most uncertain and fragile circumstances.”

The Benefits of the TFL and IRC Partnership

From your perspective, what have been some of the standout benefits of the partnership between TFL and IRC?

IRC Country Director:

“We firmly believe that collaborations between local organizations with strong community ties and global organizations with extensive experience lead to impactful, far-reaching outcomes. This partnership significantly improved education for over 4,000 vulnerable children across Lebanon.

By blending IRC’s global experience in emergency education with TFL’s deep-rooted local connections, we made a real difference! Beyond addressing immediate needs, this partnership focused on long-term change by equipping educators with skills and resources that will continue to benefit Lebanon’s education system long after the project ends.”

TFL Executive Director:

“The partnership between the IRC and TFL has proven to be such an essential collaboration, combining IRC’s global expertise in Education in Emergencies with TFL’s deep local knowledge and understanding of Lebanon’s educational landscape. We have been able to create a locally-rooted, and globally-informed vision for catalyzing the systemic and cultural changes necessary to ensure the needs of future generations of displaced children and youth are met.

This partnership also enabled us to create an environment where our Fellows could thrive in delivering quality education to children in crisis. Furthermore, by working alongside IRC, TFL was able to strengthen its internal capacity in delivering trauma-informed education and deepen its understanding of emergency teaching strategies.

We also extend our gratitude to Teach For All, whose support and funding played a pivotal role in making this collaboration possible. Their belief in this initiative allowed us to reach directly over 4,000 students and ensure that the teacher training, students' learning, and community support provided are not only impactful in the short term, but have a lasting effect within Lebanon's education system."

Future Prospects and Sustainable Impact

Looking ahead - what's next for the collaboration between IRC and TFL?

IRC Country Director:

"This project underscored the importance of aligning teacher training content with practical needs of educators, emphasizing actionable strategies that can be readily applied in classrooms. The lessons gathered from this initiative will undoubtedly enhance future IRC projects, and we deeply value the experience.

The IRC remains open to exploring future collaboration opportunities with TFL that leverage the strengths of both organizations, ensuring lasting improvements to Lebanon's education system."

TFL Executive Director:

"For TFL, the project has strengthened our ability to integrate EiE strategies into our core programs, laying the foundation for us to readily address future crises more effectively. The teacher training and classroom methodologies introduced through the partnership have now become part of our institutional knowledge, which we continue to apply in all our classrooms. TFL is excited to keep in close touch with the IRC to see how we can collectively continue improving the education system across Lebanon."

Conclusion and What's Next

The Leadership for *Learning Through Displacement* project has been an ongoing effort to support education in some of Lebanon's most vulnerable communities. Despite the country's complex and evolving crises, the project has adapted to challenges by equipping educators with the skills needed to teach in emergencies, strengthening partnerships, and working toward sustainability.

Through collaboration between Teach For Lebanon, the International Rescue Committee, and Teach For All, we have made significant strides in addressing the urgent educational needs of students in crisis-affected communities.

Together we were able to identify and respond to barriers currently faced by displaced children and youth, and increase opportunities for displaced children to express their own leadership and self-determination. We worked with many stakeholders, including families and community leaders, to create a shared vision for meeting the needs of displaced children and youth across Lebanon.

We've developed agents of long-term change who, by working with many others, can ensure that systems are oriented to meeting the needs of displaced children and youth in Lebanon. In light of the recent escalation of conflict, education is now in a state of emergency across Lebanon, affecting students and schools in all regions, including the South.

Teach For Lebanon is integrating emergency education approaches into the training of all Fellows, recognizing that the current crisis touches every child and classroom. This ensures that Fellows are prepared not only to deliver academic content but also to support the emotional and psychosocial well-being of their students—an essential competency in today's Lebanon.

As we expand our work, the tools and insights gained through our partnership with the International Rescue Committee are being shared with Fellows on the ground, empowering them to provide safe, inclusive, and healing-centered learning environments. While progress has been made, much remains to be done.

As we move forward, we remain committed to refining our approach, learning from experience, and working alongside educators and communities to ensure every child has access to quality education - even in times of crisis.



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