

Education and Learning Opportunities in Syria

INFORMATION PACKAGE

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1. About the Guidance Manual

This comprehensive Information package is designed as a guide for frontline workers supporting Syrian refugee communities. It provides essential information on available education and learning opportunities for children and adolescents in Syria and those returning to Syria, along with detailed enrolment procedures for accessing various educational services.

All materials contained in this guide may be freely used, printed, or copied by organizations working in Syrian refugees' host countries, provided proper attribution is given to UNICEF as the source.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: The information provided in this guide is subject to revision based on updated guidelines from the Ministry of Education. To ensure that you have the most up-to-date information, please scan the QR code below to access the latest version of this document.



2. Key Advocacy Messages

- ➔ **Education is a fundamental right:** Access to education and learning opportunities for everyone (regardless of gender, economic status, physical ability, etc.) is protected by international conventions and national laws.
- ➔ **Education must continue under all circumstances:** Learning must continue uninterrupted under all circumstances.
- ➔ **Education supports holistic development:** Education and learning provide crucial opportunities for children's development of their foundational skills, interpersonal and social skills and positively impacts their overall growth and wellbeing.
- ➔ **School and learning routines promote psychological wellbeing:** The daily structure of attending school or a learning space provides emotional stability and psychosocial benefits that are essential for children's mental health, especially after experiencing displacement or trauma.
- ➔ **Education empowers communities:** Educated populations are better equipped to rebuild communities, participate in civic life, and contribute to sustainable development.
- ➔ **Education provides protection:** School environments offer safe spaces that can protect children from exploitation, child labour, early marriage, and recruitment by armed groups.
- ➔ **Investment in education yields returns:** Every dollar invested in education generates significant returns through improved health outcomes, reduced inequality, and economic growth.
- ➔ **Education fosters resilience:** Quality education helps children and young people develop coping mechanisms and resilience skills necessary to overcome adversity and also fosters social cohesion.

3. Education Opportunities in Syria

3.1 Children enrolled in formal education in a host country

3.1.1 FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEM (CURRICULUM A)

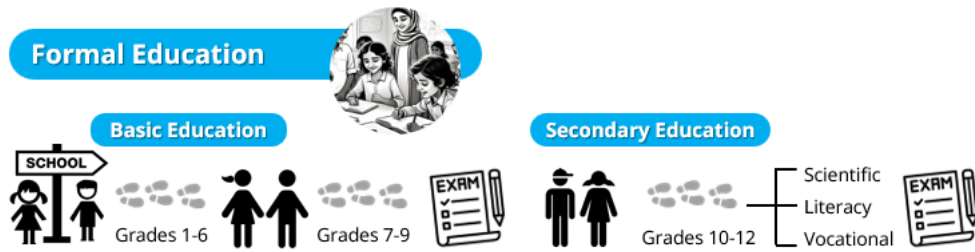
Syria implements a structured 12-year education system consisting of both basic and secondary stages.

Basic education consists of two sequential cycles spanning nine years. The first cycle, primary education (grades 1-6), spans six years, followed by the second cycle, preparatory education (grades 7-9), which lasts for three years. Upon completing basic education in grade 9, all students are required to take the national examination (G9) (the Basic Education Certificate). The results of this exam determine students' eligibility for secondary education pathways. Based on scores, students are then placed in either general secondary education or vocational education tracks.

Secondary education in Syria spans three years (grades 10, 11 and 12) and is offered in either general secondary schools, which provide scientific and literary streams, or in vocational secondary schools. The systematic progression through these educational stages ensures students acquire the essential knowledge and skills in line with Syria's national curriculum standards, preparing them for further academic pursuits at institutes or universities, including graduate studies (Diploma, Master's, Doctorate) or for entering the workforce.

- **General Secondary Education:** Most students in general secondary schools choose between the scientific or literary track based on their preferences, interests, and academic abilities. Upon completing secondary education, students sit for the national comprehensive examination, which serves as a gateway to higher education. The results directly influence university admission options and future career paths.
- **Vocational Secondary Education:** Vocational education in its three branches - industrial, commercial, and women's arts - aims to provide skilled workers who meet labour market demands. Students receive practical training in real work environments through specialized training centres and production workshops associated with vocational schools.
 - Students who have completed basic education or its equivalent are eligible to enter vocational education, according to instructions issued by the relevant minister before each academic year begins.
 - The program lasts three years, from the first to the third year of vocational school.
 - Upon completion, students must sit for a national exam (both practical and theoretical). Successful candidates receive a Vocational Secondary Certificate, which specifies their area of specialization in a standardized format prepared by the Ministry, signed by the relevant minister or their designee, and kept on file at the Ministry.
 - The vocational secondary certificate enables graduates to pursue higher education at universities or technical institutes, subject to the admission standards set by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

- However, the vocational secondary certificate does not authorize its holder to practice a profession independently until they complete the necessary licensing procedures with the relevant authorities.



Process of enrolment:

According to official directives from the Syrian Ministry of Education (MoE), the enrolment procedure for Syrian refugee students wishing to return varies based on their current country of residence and educational documentation they possess.

1) Before Leaving Your Host Country

- ✓ **Obtain your education transcript** that shows the successful completion of your last educational level that you attended, including a stamped and certified certificate that outlines your academic achievements from the educational provider (school or organization).
- ✓ **Certify the transcript** through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in your country of residence.
- ✓ **Obtain certification** from the Syrian Embassy or diplomatic mission in your country of residence.

2) Upon Arrival in Syria

- ✓ **Certify all documents** through the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates in Damascus.
- ✓ **Submit the Family Booklet** or an extract family certificate from the civil registry.
- ✓ **Obtain a medical report** from the school health department.

3) Final Step

- ✓ Submit all required documents to the Directorate of Education in the governorate where your family will be residing.
Registration method with official educational documents: Required documents should be submitted directly to the school and include:
 1. School registration application.
 2. A commitment from the guardian to continue sending the child to school until the completion of basic education.
 3. A copy of the civil registry entry (birth certificate).
 4. A copy of the page showing the father, mother, and child in the Family Booklet.
 5. A copy of the guardian's personal ID card +3 personal photos of the student.
 6. A health card from the school health clinic.

What happens next?

- ➔ **Evaluation of Academic Records:** Students holding properly endorsed and certified academic transcripts will have their records reviewed and evaluated by the School Administrative Committee.
- ➔ **Grade Placement:** Following assessment, students will be placed in the appropriate grade level at the school nearest to their place of residence.
- ➔ **Requirement for Free Candidates for the Grade 9 Examination:** Students applying independently (not through school) to sit for the national Grade 9 Basic Education Certificate Examination must present a certificate proving successful completion of Grade 6.
- ➔ **Assessment for Students with Grade 9 Transcripts:** Students with endorsed and certified Grade 9 transcripts must pass a standardized two-subject assessment.

- ➔ Placement in Grade 10 and Above: Placement into Grade 10 or higher will be determined based on the evaluation of the transcript and the results of the assessment. Requirement for Free Candidates for Grade 12 Examination: Students applying independently (not through a school) to sit for the national Grade 12 Secondary Education Certificate Examination must pass the qualifying examination.

Conditions and Procedures for Equivalency of School Certificates for Syrian Students Residing Abroad Who Wish to Continue Their Studies in the Syrian Arab Republic
(According to the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education)

Conditions for Equivalency of Basic Education Certificates (Grades 1 to 8):

- If you hold a Basic Education Certificate for any grade (Grade 1 to Grade 8) from a host country, you must submit an official transcript for the last grade you attended, indicating successful completion, along with the grades for the subjects studied. The transcript must be duly certified by the issuing institution, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the host country, and the Syrian Embassy or diplomatic mission in that country. A certified copy must also be authenticated by the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates.
- The above documents must be accompanied by a copy of the family booklet and a medical report issued by the School Health Directorate in the Syrian Arab Republic, to be submitted to the Directorate of Education in the governorate where you wish to reside. If the Family Booklet is unavailable, an individual civil status record will be accepted.
- If you are unable to provide the required authenticated documents, you will need to undergo a placement test to determine your appropriate grade level based on your age.
- There are no registration fees in public schools, except for the cost of the school ID card and related stamps (financial and teachers' syndicate stamps).

Conditions for Equivalency of the Basic Education Completion Certificate (Grade 9):

- If you hold a Basic Education Completion Certificate (Grade 9) or an equivalent certificate (if provided by a host country), or a certificate showing successful completion of Grade 9, you must submit it along with a transcript indicating the subjects studied and the corresponding grades. The certificate must be authenticated by the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates in Damascus. The Directorate of Education will then forward the full set of original documents to the School Documentation Committee at the Directorate of Examinations at the Ministry of Education for equivalency processing.
- The above documents must be accompanied by a copy of the Family Booklet and a medical report issued by the School Health Directorate in Syria, to be submitted to the Directorate of Education in the governorate where you wish to reside. If the Family Booklet is unavailable, an individual civil status record will be accepted.
- You will be required to sit for an equivalency test aligned with the Basic Education Certificate issued in the Syrian Arab Republic, based on the decision of the Equivalency Committee at the Ministry of Education.
- There are no fees for the equivalency process of the Basic Education Certificate.

Conditions for Equivalency of Secondary Education Certificates (Grades 10 and 11):

- You must submit an official school document indicating the result (pass or fail) of the last grade attended in secondary education, along with your Basic Education Certificate or your Grade 9 success certificate.
- The above documents must be accompanied by a certified copy of an individual civil status record or personal ID, and a medical report from the School Health Directorate in Syria, to be submitted to the Directorate of Education in the governorate where you wish to reside.
- There are no registration fees in public schools, except for the cost of the school ID card and related stamps (financial and teachers' syndicate stamps).

Conditions for Equivalency of the Secondary Education Completion Certificate (Grade 12/Baccalaureate):

- If you hold a Secondary Education Completion Certificate (Grade 12) and wish to register at a Syrian university, you must submit the secondary certificate, including a detailed transcript (stating "pass" where applicable), and a record of your secondary school progression, showing the subjects studied and grades for each year of secondary school. You must also provide your Basic Education Certificate (Grade 9).
- All documents must be properly certified by the issuing institution, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the host country, and the Syrian Embassy or diplomatic mission in that country.
- You must submit the documents to the relevant authorities, who will forward them to the Certificate Equivalency Department at the Ministry of Education in Damascus for the equivalency process.
- Equivalency for Syrian students will be processed before verification of the information stated in the certificate.
- The equivalency fee for the Secondary Education Certificate for Syrian students is **25,000 Syrian Pounds (SYP)**, after verifying the certificate's authenticity, in addition to a **50,000 SYP** fee for any complementary subject exams needed for certificates issued based on foreign educational curricula.
- The equivalency fee for the Secondary Education Certificate for non-Syrian students is **150 USD**, and equivalency will proceed after verifying the information contained in the certificate.
- Any document issued outside the Syrian Arab Republic must be certified by the issuing institution, the Syrian Embassy in the host country, and the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, or by any entity accredited by the Ministry.

Special Circumstances

If You Have No Documents:

- You may need to take a placement test to assess your academic knowledge and determine the appropriate grade level based on your age and educational background.

If You Submit Incomplete Documents:

- You may be conditionally accepted by the Directorate of Education for a period of two months, based on your most recent school document or a copy of it from the previous academic year. This acceptance allows you temporary enrolment while you work on completing and authenticating your documents.
- This conditional acceptance may be extended once by the Directorate of Education within the same academic year.

- If you are unable to provide the duly authenticated documents within this period, your case will be referred to the School Documents Committee at the Directorate of Examinations in the Ministry of Education for a decision regarding your continued enrolment.

Registration Procedure When No Official Documents Are Available:

1. For Basic Education (Grades 1 to 9):

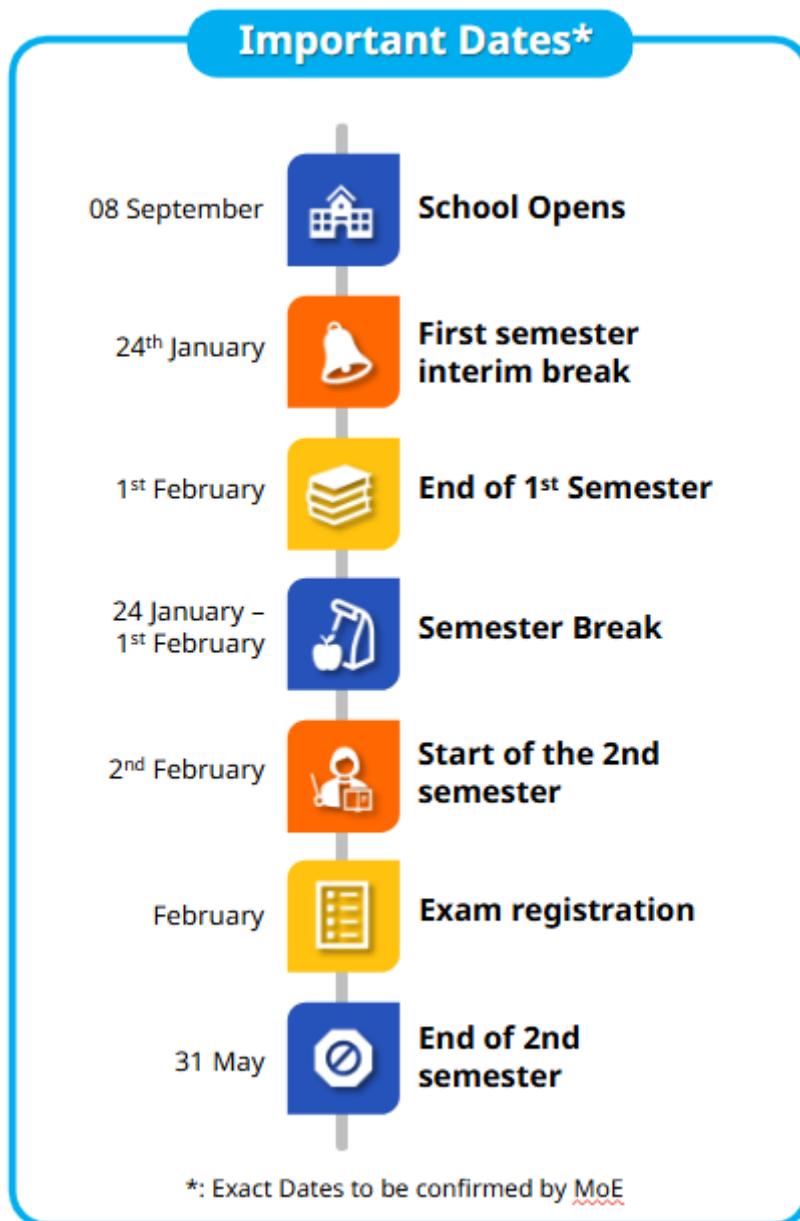
- A knowledge assessment (placement test) will be conducted for the student at the school where enrolment is desired.
- The results of the placement test must be certified by the Directorate of Education (Department of Basic Education) to determine appropriate grade placement.
- The placement test results must be submitted along with an official letter from the Directorate of Education, a copy of the Family Booklet, and a medical report from the School Health Directorate.
- In case the Family Booklet is not available, an individual civil status record will be accepted.

2. For Secondary Education:

- A copy of the Basic Education Certificate must be obtained from the Directorate of Education (Examinations Department) and attached along with any documents proving your enrolment or studies in the secondary education stage.

If Your Previous Education Was Not in Arabic:

- Contact the Certificate Equivalency Department at the Ministry of Education during January, July, or October.
Register for the certificate Equivalency Examination, which is administered in February, August, or November.
- You will be required to sit for complementary subject examinations in Arabic Language and Social Studies (History and Geography).

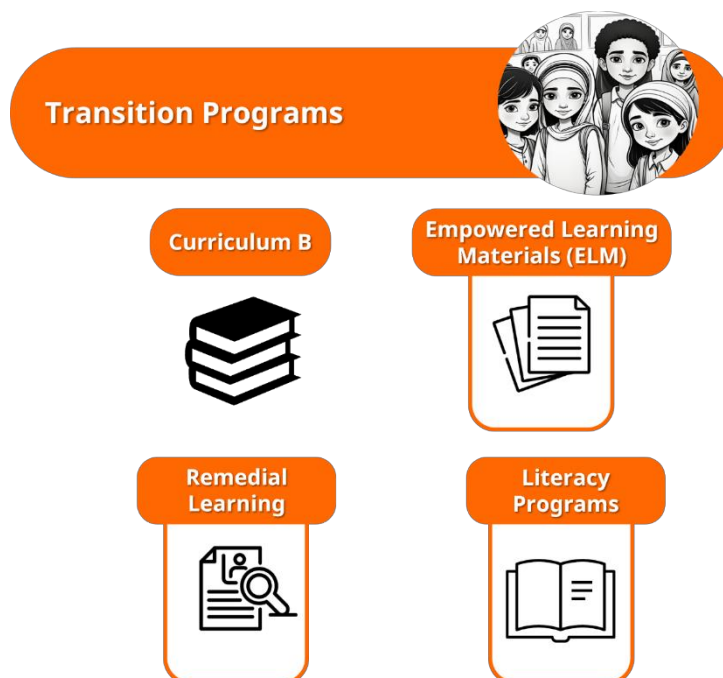


3.2 Children Who are Out of School or at Risk of Dropout

To ensure the continuity of learning and reintegration of students into the formal education system, a range of educational opportunities are available to meet the needs of children and adolescents who are out of school or at risk of dropping out. These opportunities are also available for children and adolescents who require support as they transition from education systems in host countries into the formal education system in Syria.

Available Educational Opportunities:

1. **Formal Regular Education:** For children who have a learning loss of less than two academic years and whose age corresponds to the official age range for each grade level according to the school year regulations.
2. **Accelerated Formal Education (Curriculum B Program):** For children who have a learning loss of more than two academic years and are between the ages of 8 and 15 years old.
3. **Non-Formal Education (Empowered Learning Materials- ELM):** In cases where formal education opportunities are not available, this program supports children of all ages between 6 and 18 years old.
4. **Remedial Education:** A supportive program to bridge educational gaps within the formal education system. Several remedial programs are offered by community-based organizations, including programs to strengthen basic literacy and numeracy skills.
5. **Literacy Programs:** Literacy programs for young people over 15 years old and adults, implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture.



3.2.1 FORMAL SCHOOL

If the learning loss is less than two academic years and the child's age aligns with the age range specified for each grade level for the relevant school year.

See the information provided above.

3.2.2 CURRICULUM B

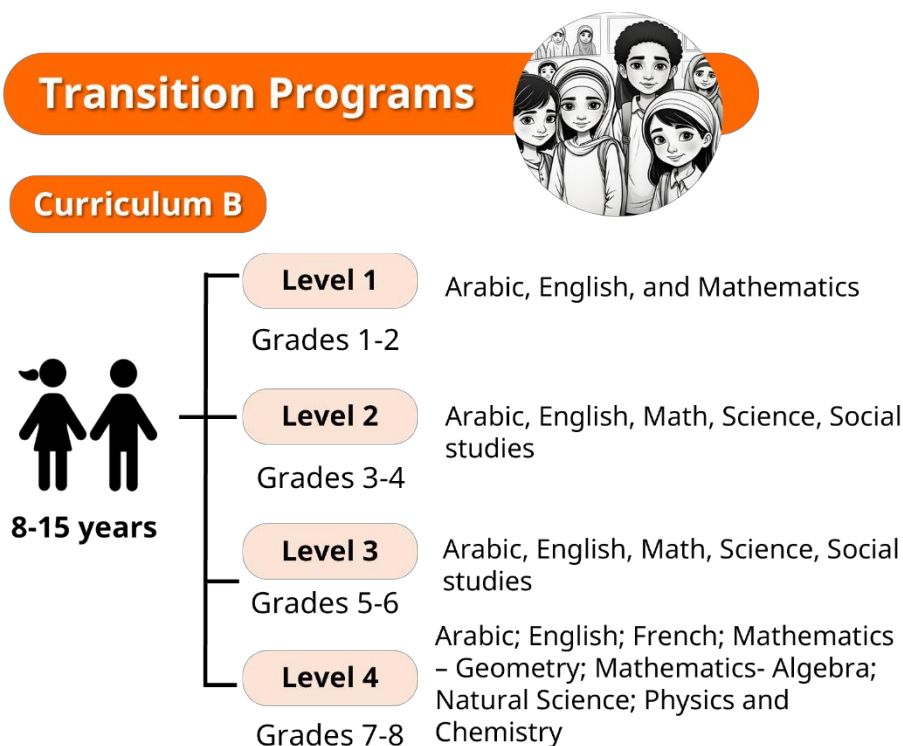
An accredited accelerated learning programme developed by the Ministry of Education and implemented by the Directorates of Education according to the Ministry's plan. The programme is designed for children and adolescents aged between 8 to 15 who have been out of formal education for more than two academic years, whether they dropped out or never enrolled in school. It aims to bridge their learning gaps, catchup with their peers and equip out-of-school children with the basic knowledge and skills needed to participate in national exams and transition into the formal education system.

The programme compresses two academic years into one, allowing students to fast-track their learning. Curriculum B is structured into four levels, each level covering two grades over one academic year:

1. **Level 1:** Grades 1 and 2
2. **Level 2:** Grades 3 and 4
3. **Level 3:** Grades 5 and 6

Upon successful completion of this level, students may sit for the Basic Education Certificate Examination as independent candidates, provided they meet the required age criteria as outlined in the examination regulations.

4. **Level 4:** Grades 7 and 8



Curriculum Content: The programme covers all core academic subjects, in addition to Art Education, Music, Physical Education, Psychosocial Support, Life Skills activities, and relevant recreational and educational activities across all four levels.

Process of Enrolment

- ✓ Once you arrive in Syria, approach the Directorate of Education of the governorate where your family is residing, bringing your Family Booklet or an extract of the civil registry.
- ✓ Your child's file will be assessed based on their competency and age.
- ✓ Your child will then be placed in the appropriate level.

Enrollment in the official accelerated curriculum (Curriculum B) follows the same procedures as those for enrollment in the regular formal education system, with specific considerations for Curriculum B students:

- The ages of Curriculum B students are determined according to the annual enrolment and admission guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education.
- Illiterate children who are eight years of age are directly accepted into Level 1 of Curriculum B.
- Children who have dropped out of school or have been out of education for two or more academic years are re-enrolled as Curriculum B students after undergoing a knowledge assessment using the official placement test form recognized by the Ministry of Education. This assessment is conducted by a school committee consisting of at least one teacher and the school principal, to determine which of the four levels the child should be placed in.
- A Curriculum B student can return to the regular formal (non-accelerated) education system once their academic level becomes compatible with their chronological age, considering any years of repetition if applicable.
- At the end of the school year, a student's success or failure is determined based on their performance at the level rather than the grade.

3.2.3 EMPOWERED LEARNING MATERIAL (ELM)

Empowered Learning Material (ELM) is a non-formal educational programme based on interactive activities, designed for out-of-school children and adolescents aged between 8 and 18 years old. It aims to bridge their learning gaps, support their preparation for school examinations, and ensure their later integration into formal education services.

The programme offers active and interactive academic content fully aligned with the Syrian national curriculum. It covers core subjects such as Arabic, English, French, Math and General Science (Natural Sciences, Physics, and Chemistry).

The ELM programme is implemented in non-formal education learning centres, where the education level of children and adolescents is determined based on the results of a placement assessment form. Learners are then placed in one of nine grade levels

according to their assessment results. They attend sessions for an average of 24 weeks per grade level.

Content:

- 57 textbooks are available across all grade levels and subjects, as detailed in the table below.

Grade	Subjects	# of books
1	Arabic (part 1 & 2); Math (Part 1 & 2); Science and English	6
2	Arabic (part 1 & 2); Math (Part 1 & 2); Science and English	6
3	Arabic (part 1 & 2); Math (Part 1 & 2); Science and English	6
4	Arabic (part 1 & 2); Math (Part 1 & 2); Science and English	6
5	Arabic (part 1 & 2); Math (Part 1 & 2); Science and English	6
6	Arabic (part 1 & 2); Math (Part 1 & 2); Science and English	6
7	Arabic; English; French; Math – Geometry; Math- Algebra; Natural Science; Physics and Chemistry	7
8	Arabic; English; French; Math – Geometry; Math- Algebra; Natural Science; Physics and Chemistry	7
9	Arabic; English; French; Math – Geometry; Math- Algebra; Natural Science; Physics and Chemistry	7
Total number of books		57

- 9 Guides on How Do I Learn? A Guide for Each Grade
- The "How Do I Learn?" guide is based on self-learning strategies aimed at empowering learners to manage their studies independently, enhancing their critical thinking, analysis, and planning skills to organize and absorb information more effectively. To make learning more interesting and adapted to the needs of each learner, the guide offers interactive strategies based on experience, practical application, self-assessment, and reflection on learning, allowing learners to track their progress and continuously develop their skills.
- The guide also outlines, according to the presentation, the basic skills needed for learners to succeed in self-learning, such as time management, focus, and effective summarization. In addition, the guide provides modern tools and techniques to improve skills in reading, memorization, smart studying, writing, listening, note-taking, and exam management, which helps raise the level of academic achievement. Among the methods used are organizing information through mind maps and diagrams, which greatly contribute to enhancing understanding and memory, making the learning process more efficient and smooth.

3.2.4 REMEDIAL LEARNING

The MOE, NGOs, community-based organizations and United Nations agencies provide remedial education and accelerated learning courses in safe and conducive learning

environments, both inside and outside of schools. These programmes are for children and adolescents who either wish to transition to formal education, or those already enrolled in formal schools from grades 1 to 12 and who need additional academic support. The programmes also provide assistance to students who wish to take the official exams for basic and secondary education.

The remedial and accelerated learning courses align with the national curriculum. These courses are focused on essential subjects such as languages (Arabic, English and French), math, science, physics, chemistry and the core subjects of secondary education (literary track).

Additionally, foundational sessions are offered for children under 15 who are illiterate and lack basic arithmetic skills. These sessions aim to support literacy and numeracy and are provided by local community organizations with the support of UN agencies and donors.

4. PRINTABLE BROCHURES

