

# NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK – LEBANON

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Lebanon plans a comprehensive 8-level national qualifications framework (NQF), covering all types of education and training.

No working group is currently sitting.

Lebanon is between the explorative and design stages.

## 2. NATIONAL CONTEXT

### 2.1 Policy context

For the past four years Lebanon has been assailed by an unprecedented series of humanitarian, political and economic crises, which make sustained education reform unachievable. The Syrian War brought more than 1.5 million refugees into the country, adding to the existing 490,000 Palestinian refugees<sup>1</sup>. Much government business is blocked while the Presidency remains vacant. To date, there has been no satisfactory state response to the 2020 explosions in Beirut's port, which has further undermined public faith in government and public institutions. The outbreak of the Ukraine war increased fuel and other commodity prices and for a period resulted in food shortages.

More than half the country is thought to be below the poverty line. GDP per capita slumped by 36.5% between 2019 and 2021. Unemployment surged from 11.4% in 2018-19 to 29.6% in 2022<sup>2</sup>.

Employment rates have also fallen significantly - in January 2022, the figure was 30.6% of the 15 plus group, compared to 43.4% in 2019<sup>3</sup>. Lebanon's annual rate of inflation was falling at the time of writing but was still high at 70% when estimated in March 2024<sup>4</sup>.

Lebanon's total estimated population increased from 4.9 million in 2010 to 5.6 million in 2021. Refugees account for about 2 of that 5.6 million, the highest such proportion in the world. It is estimated that about 65% of the Syrian arrivals are under 25. Unsurprisingly, the resulting strains on the labour market and education and training provision caused by the influx of refugees provokes tensions between such groups and citizens.

Lebanon is also a country of emigration, and successive generations have seen significant numbers of people, especially the young and better-educated, leave the country, notably to the Gulf states, Australia, Canada, and the USA<sup>5</sup>.

In 2020, COVID and the port explosions struck two further severe blows to the country's education and training system. Authorities established that 163 schools suffered damage from the port blast. Electricity supply is intermittent, water often contaminated, and school and college buildings in poor repair. More than 10% of Lebanese children currently do not have access to education due to economic hardship.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/document-attachments/key-policy-developments-education-training-and-employment-lebanon-2023>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/overview>

<sup>3</sup> ILO, "Lebanon Labour Force Follow-up Survey, January 2022", file:///C:/Users/MGR/Downloads/wcms\_844837%20(1).pdf

<sup>4</sup> <https://tradingeconomics.com/lebanon/inflation-cpi>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-11/etf\\_skills\\_and\\_migration\\_country\\_fiche\\_lebanon\\_2021\\_en\\_0.pdf](https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-11/etf_skills_and_migration_country_fiche_lebanon_2021_en_0.pdf)

## Education and training system and reform

In VET policy broadly, the Directorate General of Vocational and Technical Education (DGVTE) in the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) has the lead and system responsibility, overseeing the vocational schools and institutes, and monitoring private providers. It develops curricula and designs exams.

Public VET schools do not have autonomy on curriculum or pedagogy. At the same time, 60% of vocational schools are private, and these exercise management and financial independence. These providers must, however, enter their students for the state exams and are subject to ministry-imposed quality control.

There are two types of private providers: non-profit and for-profit schools. The non-profit private vocational schools are mainly run by charitable foundations and NGOs. These NGOs are mostly community-based, with strong religious ties. Some private schools date back to the early twentieth century, while NGOs have been active in VET since the early 1950s, even before the creation of the DGVTE. The larger, for-profit, private vocational schools are concentrated in the major cities. Some belong to European or North American networks and provide internationally recognised degrees and other qualifications.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, through the National Vocational Training Centre (NVTC) had offered VET programmes to assist jobseekers in returning to the labour market but has been compelled to suspend its provision due to loss of funds because of the economic crash.

Agricultural programmes provided by public schools come under the mandate of the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA). Specific short vocational training courses, lasting 3 to 9 months, are offered by private and public providers and NGOs.

Approximately a quarter of upper secondary students in Lebanon pursue VET paths<sup>6</sup>.

Data to support education and training policy, and labour market analysis, is scarce, so making difficult evidence-based policy-making.

In 2021, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) developed a 5-year General Education Plan, 2021-2025, funded by international donors, to address critical education needs for children in response to the crises. Included in the Plan is the Emergency Response Plan (ERP), which aims to ensure that all children complete primary education and have access to secondary school, including VET paths, and onto higher education. An aim of the plan is to build resilience into the education and training system to withstand future shocks.

The National Strategic Framework for VET 2018-2022 (NSF), developed and implemented by the DGVTE, was the main policy document for VET until the current set of crises. It sought to better link VET to labour market needs and to improve collaboration with the private sector and employers in public, private and civil society. However, its implementation was in practice hindered by shortage of funds and the ongoing multiple crises. The DGVTE is currently preparing, with international donor support, an updated NSF, due for launch in 2024, to run to 2029. Its aim is to raise the general quality of VET provision.

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education ran NQF project in 2012 and coordinated the NQF working group. The NQF was piloted in selected sectors, including education, agro-food, health, electrical works, and hospitality. However, apart from the legal act establishing the descriptors for the TVET component of the LNQF, little policy or technical work has been undertaken since.

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<sup>6</sup> [https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020-10/quality\\_assurance\\_in\\_vet\\_lebanon.pdf](https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020-10/quality_assurance_in_vet_lebanon.pdf)

## 2.2 NQF legal basis

No legal act has been adopted which establishes the comprehensive NQF.

However, in 2019 the Minister of Education and Higher Education adopted Decision 374/M/2019, on the VET component of the framework, applying to levels 1-6 of the planned comprehensive LNQF. This decree approved descriptors for the 6 levels under the headings knowledge, skills, competencies, life skills, digital skills, and languages.

Decision 374 also specifies the types of vocational and technical qualification available at each level.

Decision 374, it should be noted, does refer to a "...general framework of qualifications consisting of 8 levels," thus signalling the state's intention to eventually establish a comprehensive NQF.

## 3. NQF OBJECTIVES AND FUNCTIONS

### 3.1 NQF objectives

The LNQF should be able to classify all qualifications issued by the different sectors of the education and training system. In particular, the LNQF should ensure or contribute to:

- a) the description of qualifications in learning outcomes.
- b) transparency and readability of qualifications and their relevance to the labour market.
- c) the recognition of qualifications based on defined competences, whether acquired in formal, non-formal or informal contexts.
- d) the establishment of pathways and mobility between different sectors of the education system.
- e) links to qualifications frameworks of other countries.
- f) development of a comprehensive system of accreditation and quality assurance.
- g) the broader quality of education and training, through identifying the knowledge, skills and competences required of learners.
- h) facilitating recognition of Lebanese qualifications abroad.

### 3.2 NQF functions

As the list of objectives above suggests, Lebanon's planned NQF is intended to better structure and communicate existing qualifications; to contribute to reform of qualifications, so that they are based on learning outcomes, become more transparent, and are more relevant to the labour market; and to raise the quality of qualifications.

Lebanon also wishes to use the framework to make its qualification system more visible.

## 4. LEVELS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND QUALIFICATIONS

### 4.1 NQF structure and level descriptors

An eight-level structure is planned. The NQF is intended to be lifelong learning in scope, covering qualifications from general education, VET, and higher education. Its draft descriptors are knowledge, skills, and competencies. For VET qualifications to be placed at levels 1-6 of the NQF, the approved descriptors are: knowledge, skills, competencies, life skills, digital skills, and languages.

### 4.2 NQF scope and coverage

After lower secondary education, there is a distinction between technical education and vocational education. Curricula and qualifications diverge into two streams.

Vocational education prepares students mainly for manual occupations or careers and/or those requiring narrower knowledge or a more limited range of skills than that needed by technical education graduates. Vocational education is mainly school-based. That said, the DG VTE considers that delivery of part of the curricula within companies is essential for the modernisation of the country's VET system, and indeed some schools already collaborate with employers to offer such placements to their students.

Technical education prepares students for science-based careers with an applied or practical orientation. Entrants to such programmes must have studied for not less than nine years in basic general education or have seven years' basic general education in addition to holding the Vocational Brevet (BP) mentioned below.

#### Vocational qualifications

Vocational qualifications are :

- The practical vocational training certificate, which would place at levels 1 to 3 of the planned LNQF.
- the Vocational Brevet/Diploma (Brevet Professionnel, BP). It is awarded to students who have successfully completed the vocational stream in lower secondary/intermediate school. It would place at Level 3 of the planned framework.
- the Secondary Vocational Diploma. Entry to programmes is available to holders of the BP or after obtaining the general intermediate diploma (brevet). It is awarded to candidates on successful completion of a programme of three years of study. It would place at Level 4 of the planned LNQF.
- the Vocational Supervisor's Diploma (Maister). Access is available to people who have pursued one of three routes:
  - those who have two years' work experience. They then study for two years.
  - holders of the baccalauréat technique (BT) who have a minimum of three years' work experience.
  - holders of the general secondary education Baccalaureate, who also have five years' work experience.

This qualification would place at Level 5 of the planned LNQF.

## Technical education qualifications

Qualifications awarded through the technical stream are:

- the Technical Baccalaureate (baccalauréat technique, BT). It is taken by students after the Vocational Brevet/Diploma, or BP, and lasts 3 years. It is awarded to students on successful completion of the technical stream of upper secondary school or technical school. It would be placed at Level 4 of the planned LNQF.

Graduates awarded the baccalauréat technique diploma can directly enter the labour market or access further education, either university or higher technical education. If they opt for the latter course, they can pursue:

- the Higher Technician Diploma (technicien supérieur, TS). It is pursued by people who have already obtained the BT, or the Lebanese Baccalaureate in general secondary education. Programmes last two years. It would be positioned at Level 5 of the proposed NQF.
- the Technical Licence (licence technique, LT). It is available to people who hold the TS diploma. It lasts one year. It would be placed at Level 6 in the proposed framework.
- the Teaching Technical Licence (licence d'enseignement technique or LET). It is taken by:
  - holders of the BT, or the general education Baccalaureate – people from these groups study for 4 years to obtain the LET.
  - by people who have already obtained the TS, who then study 2 years. It would place at Level 6 in the LNQF.

It is possible to transfer from one track to another. Holders of the Secondary Vocational Diploma can access programmes leading to the Technical Baccalaureate after following one year of studies of the required general subjects e.g. maths, sciences, languages.

There are also short training certificates, placed at levels 1 to 3 of the framework.

### Vocational and Technical Education Qualifications Framework and its descriptors

Level	Knowledge	Skills	Competencies	Life skills	Digital skills	Languages
1	Basic knowledge.	Basic skills required for simple practical tasks.	The ability to carry out work in a professional way and under direct supervision. based on safety conditions and respecting the environmental conservation.	Problem solving, cooperation, negotiation, restraint, communication, respect for diversity, empathy and participation.	Using basic mobile applications.	Familiarity with the vocabulary used in the profession to which he/she is prepared for.
2	Basic knowledge of the profession.	Knowledge and practical skills that are necessary to carry out the basic tasks of the profession professionally and according to the safety rules and solving the daily routine by using simple rules and tools.	The ability to carry out professional work according to professional and safety standards and environmental conservation in a structured context and under the supervision of a supervisor but with a certain degree of independence.	Problem solving, cooperation, negotiation, restraint, communication, respect for diversity, empathy and participation.	Using basic mobile applications.	Familiarity with the vocabulary used in the profession to which he/she is prepared for.

Level	Knowledge	Skills	Competencies	Life skills	Digital skills	Languages
3	Realistic knowledge within broad contexts in the field of work and knowledge of the facts, principles, processes and general concepts in the field of the profession practiced.	Cognitive and practical skills required to carry out coordinated tasks according to the correct rules and standards, safety rules and environmental conservation, problem solving based on correct information, selection and application of appropriate methods, tools, information and materials.	The ability to carry out the tasks entrusted to the worker that are required by the occupation and that are related to the standards of occupational safety, environmental conservation and independency in the performance. Taking responsibility for the results of the work entrusted to the worker and adapt his/her own behaviour with the conditions when solving problems with other employees.	Problem solving, critical thinking, cooperation, negotiation, restraint, communication, respect for diversity, empathy and participation.	Using of mobile phones and basic uses of computers, including using properly the information search engines.	Familiarity with a foreign language, especially French or English to acquire technical vocabulary and to ensure communication. In many cases, the English is a must.
4	Realistic knowledge within a wide range of the field of work and knowledge of facts, principles, procedures and general concepts that are related to the profession, which also allows the worker to pursue his studies at the fifth level of learning.	Cognitive and practical skills required to organize and implement activities that apply methods, procedures and instructions for each activity according to the correct rules and standards, safety rules and environmental conservation, and to find solutions to the problems through information, selection and application of appropriate methods, tools, materials and human resources.	The ability to perform tasks independently within the limits of specific instructions or requirements of professional and associated standards, safety standards and environmental conservation within predictable contexts, adapting self-behaviour with situations for solving problems with other workers, supervising the work of others and organizing materials and human resources that are necessary to accomplish the required tasks.	Problem solving, critical thinking, cooperation, negotiation, restraint, communication, respect for diversity, empathy, participation and self-employment.	Using mobile applications and basic computer applications including information search engines, Microsoft Office especially Word and Excel.	Recognize French and English languages to acquire technical vocabulary, communicate and write a simple message or work report. In many cases, the English is a must.
5	Comprehensive and realistic knowledge related to a specific field of work and the comprehension of the limits of these knowledges.	Skills' knowledge and a comprehensive set of practical skills that are required to organize and implement the work, supervise the workers and the distribution of tasks on them, evaluate the results through tools and objective	The ability to exercise management and control in different work situations and tasks assigned to him/her, to face possible alternative changes, to review and develop self-performance, to supervise the accurate application of public and professional safety standards and	Problem solving, critical thinking, cooperation, negotiation, decision making, self-control, communication, respect for diversity, empathy, participation and self-employment	Using mobile applications and basic computer applications, including information search engines, Microsoft Office especially Word, Excel and Power Point.	Advanced knowledge of foreign languages, especially French and English, and the ability to communicate in English and to formulate correspondences and work reports without major language errors.



Level	Knowledge	Skills	Competencies	Life skills	Digital skills	Languages
		indicators in accordance with the rules and the professional standards, the safety rules and the conservation of the environment, and to develop solutions and innovative performances to solve the problems.	environmental conservation.			
6	Advanced knowledge in the field of work that is based on critical understanding of scientific theories and principles.	Advanced knowledge and practical procedure that indicate the distinction and the innovation required to organize and manage the work, evaluate and solve complex and unexpected problems in a specialized range of work.	The ability to manage complex technical or professional activities, to take responsibility, to take decisions in the context of work to solve problems and to adapt the changes based on the application of modern methods, to address situations that cannot be foreseen in advance, to supervise the workers, to assess their performance, to ensure the proper application of public and professional safety standards and environmental protection, to have responsibility and to develop the human resources.	Problem solving, critical thinking, cooperation, negotiation, decision making, self-control, communication, respect for diversity, empathy, participation and self-employment	Using mobile applications and basic computer applications, including information search engines, Microsoft Office, Word-Excel and Power point.	Advanced knowledge of foreign languages, especially French and English, and the ability to communicate in English and to formulate correspondence s and work reports without language errors.

Source: UNICEF and Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

### 4.3 Use and renewal of learning outcomes and standards

There is no definition in law of “qualification”. Qualifications based on learning outcomes have been piloted in construction but otherwise remain, for the most part, inputs-based.

Most qualifications are not unit-based. Only some courses are modular.

During 2022 and 2023, UNICEF developed four industrial curricula based on the competency-based training approach for students preparing for the Technical Baccalaureate, plus an associated programme to train teachers in delivering these new curricula. The DGTVE has endorsed the curricula and their conceptual underpinning.

This is an example of how the MEHE, in partnership with the development agencies, has used the NQF to prompt the TVET system to adopt the CBT approach in curricula.

## 4.4 Quality assurance of qualifications

A comprehensive QA system for VET is still lacking, albeit this absence is acknowledged by the new NSF, which calls for a more far-reaching structure and arrangements. Currently, quality assurance in VET is primarily oriented to conducting accreditation of providers against criteria largely about school infrastructure. Improving the quality of provision and of qualifications remains an area that requires further support and action at the national level.

DGTVE develops VET curricula and qualifications and accredits VET providers, public and private. Private providers apply to DGTVE to be licensed - only those assessed by DGTVE as approved against its criteria can offer formal programmes. Private TVET schools are also required to apply the national curricula set by DGTVE, while their students must sit the same national exams as those students in the public VET schools.

The short VET courses mentioned earlier are not systematically regulated.

Competency-based approaches to assessment are not systemically used.

Lebanon does not command a comprehensive data-gathering system for labour market analysis, one consequence of which is that there is not accurate or up to date information to support decisions on programmes and qualifications that would meet labour market and individuals' needs.

A further limitation is the low level or infrequency of employer and trade union involvement in consultations or decisions on education and training. This extends also to assessment and certification, where, an ILO survey suggested, employers feel they lack the training to fulfil this role because the state does not offer such support.

## 5. Institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement

### 5.1 Governance and institutional arrangements for the NQF

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education coordinated the 2012 NQF project and hosted the NQF working group. However, the institutional arrangements proposed by the NQF working group were never officially approved.

### 5.2 Roles and functions of actors and stakeholders

The suspension of work on the NQF has meant that no progress has been made in recent years in identifying or coordinating the stakeholders required to cooperate in its development and implementation. During the earlier NQF project, the NQF working group brought together representatives from the different sectors of the education sector but no other stakeholders such as employers, although invited, participated.

A Higher VET Council, composed of representatives from different ministries and local and economic organisations, was established to provide advice to the MEHE on policies, plans, regulations, and budgets. However, the Council met only twice before its mandate expired.

The planned new NSF, Lebanon's VET strategy, will pursue the first NSF's plan to establish sector skills councils, which would foster engagement of employers in qualification development and other process.

## 6. RECOGNITION AND VALIDATION OF PRIOR LEARNING

### 6.1 Recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning and learning pathways

It is not currently possible to be awarded a formal qualification via validation of nonformal and informal learning. However, VNFIL/RPL would be of great benefit to both citizens and refugees - those with work experience and skills could apply for assessment and certification, while those with more limited experience or relevant skills could, following assessment, be directed to undertake identified complementary or full training.

### 6.2 Credit systems

There is no country-wide VET credit system. However, the Minister of Education issued a decree in 2019 which provides for the adoption of a credit system limited to a few technical institutes in one occupational field, car maintenance and repair.

## 7. NQF IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT

### 7.1. Stage of implementation

The full NQF is not functional yet. However, its VET element at levels 1-6 is formally approved. Lebanon's NQF is between explorative and design phases.

### 7.2 Qualifications databases and registers

There is no national database or register of qualifications.

### 7.3 Career guidance and counselling

Career guidance in Lebanon is recognized as a priority on the government's agenda, actively pursued by ministries, which have sought to engage the relevant stakeholders in education and training, industry and the careers guidance services and professionals themselves.

An ETF regional project, Governance for Employability in the Mediterranean, which included a component on careers guidance in TVET, gave impetus to the provision of guidance in Lebanese schools. Running from 2014-2015, it defined and advised on the role of Guidance Employment Offices (GEOs) in TVET schools. In 2022, the government extended this initiative to general secondary education, starting from grade 8. ETF continues to advise on the establishment and operation of GEOs in both existing and new TVET schools, scaling up the initiative to around 40 schools to date.

The support of the DGVTE has been instrumental in scaling up this initiative nationally within TVET and developing a system that is now being adapted for general education. In general education, the ETF is closely cooperating with Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE)/ Department of Orientation and Guidance (DOPS) to implement relevant orientation activities at both the school and system levels. This includes developing a Manual for Career Guidance Officers (CGOs), based on the

2020 Manual for GEOs in TVET, and conducting capacity-building actions to establish career and counselling functions at the school level.

The initiative in general education continues through the EU-funded Technical Assistance to MEHE, implemented by GIZ<sup>7</sup>, a German development agency, building on the groundwork laid by ETF.

Additionally, organizations such as UNICEF, ICED<sup>8</sup>, Italian Cooperation and USAID support career guidance and counselling through projects and initiatives involving both formal and informal TVET schools, as well as state schools.

## 7.4 Recognition of foreign qualifications

A specialized committee in the DGVTE determines equivalence of diplomas and certificates obtained abroad with Lebanese qualifications.

Systematic processes for recognition of displaced persons and refugees' formal qualifications and application of equivalence procedures would support their integration into the labour market. Likewise, the country could recognise the foreign qualifications obtained abroad by returning Lebanese citizens.

## 8. REFERENCING TO REGIONAL FRAMEWORK / OTHER FRAMEWORKS

### 8.1 Referencing to regional frameworks

Lebanon is not a member of any regional qualifications framework (RQF).

### 8.2 International donor support

As stated earlier, international donors are supporting the MEHE's new general education plan, which seeks to raise the quality of education, including VET, and to develop the system so that it is robust enough to withstand future shocks. The EU's contribution will be E3.6m from 2023 to 2027. ETF has advised on development of the DGTVE's new National Strategic Framework (NSF) in VET, to run 2024-29.

Lebanon participates in ETF's Forum for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training.

ILO has a regional office in Beirut and is active in skills development via many projects and initiatives.

GIZ has implemented numerous VET projects in Lebanon, addressing the quality and attractiveness of TVET, the modernization of TVET curricula, especially in the construction sector, and promoting employability.

UNICEF has been active in VET cooperation since 2016, implementing numerous programmes, including non-formal TVET through support for short-term VET courses. UNICEF worked with national authorities to develop the VET component of the LNQF, including the descriptors.

Other donors such as USAID, the Netherlands, Agence Française de Développement and others, are active in the country in the field of education, to support, variously, refugees and vulnerable local communities and enhance employability.

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<sup>7</sup> See Abbreviations section.

<sup>8</sup> See Abbreviations section.

## 9. REFLECTIONS AND PLANS

Despite the efforts of the international community and the efforts of the national authorities, the current conditions inhibit serious progress in developing the full NQF. Updating existing, or developing new, qualifications, is hindered by limited labour market data and the low level of engagement of stakeholders in the education and training system. A VNFIL system would especially benefit refugees.

## ABBREVIATIONS

BP	Brevet Professionnel (Vocational Brevet)
BT	Baccalauréat technique (Technical Baccalaureate)
CBT	Competency-based training
CGOs	Careers Guidance Officers
DGVTE/DGTVET	Directorate General of Vocational and Technical Education
DACUM	Developing a Curriculum
DOPS	Department of Orientation and Guidance
ETF	European Training Foundation
ETF-GEMM	European Training Foundation Governance for Employability in the Mediterranean (ETF project)
EU	European Union
GEO	Guidance Employment Offices
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
ICED	Institut Européen de Coopération et de Développement
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
LET	Licence d'enseignement technique, (Teaching Technical Licence)
LNQF	Lebanese National Qualifications Framework
LT	Licence technique (Technical Licence)
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE)
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
NCVT	National Centre for Vocational Training
NEO	National Employment Office
NTITE	National Training Institution for Technical Education
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSF	National Strategic Framework for action, TVET 2018-2022
RQF	Regional Qualifications Framework
TS	Technicien supérieur (Higher Technician Diploma)
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)
TVET QF	Technical and Vocational Education and Training Framework.
UNICEF	United Nations Children's' Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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