In 1994, Lebanon introduced a developed educational plan that aimed to build an integrated educational system, based on specific philosophy and objectives. The general educational curricula in 1997 and the environmental education curricula in 1998 confirmed the importance of sustainable development in general and environmental education in particular. The educational programs were meant to demonstrate competencies, achieve objectives and measure outcomes.

In 2012, the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD) developed the National Strategy for Environmental Education in Lebanon, in cooperation with the Association for Forests, Development and Conservation (AFDC). CERD subsequently developed an environmental education curriculum for each of the first and second cycles of the basic education, and a knowledge guide that included concepts of environmental education and its techniques, in addition to a training document and assessment rubrics in 2014 and the paperless project in 2019.

In 2019, CERD set new standards for school buildings and classroom facilities, which are environmentally friendly and in line with a set of green school directives. CERD also launched the green demonstration project in the teachers’ training center in Jounieh and reparations are underway to spread this project to other regions as well.

In 2018, CERD adopted a plan to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and launched its vision towards Education 2030. This requires transformational approaches and the development of educators’ skills, in addition to the development of partnerships between multiple and diverse stakeholders at the national and international levels to achieve the SDGs, namely those relevant to the environment: Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), Goal 4 (Quality Education), Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), Goal 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), Goal 13 (Climate Change), Goal 14 (Life Below Water), Goal 15 (Life on Land).

The basic approach of CERD to achieve the SDGs by 2030 focuses on the quality of education and providing equal opportunities to enable learners to achieve all goals in a holistic way. This would allow them to become active citizens in the educational learning environment, as well as in the communities in which they live.

Environmental education seeks to enhance the overall individual learning vision within its surroundings at all levels. This requires concerted efforts, which are synchronized and consistent and that promote cooperation and partnership between different sectors including government institutions, public education, vocational education, higher education, parents and non-governmental institutions. This is necessary in order to prepare the learners to meet the requirements of the labor market and to devise effective solutions for environmental problems.

The CERD vision on environmental education is based on three assumptions:

1. Environmental education seeks to ensure people’s well-being and to take care of their mental and physical health. This can be achieved by sensitizing and engaging learners, teachers, parents, society and government (LEPCG) to be responsible for the conservation of nature and increase the opportunities to access it.

2. Environmental education seeks to enhance the power of learners to solve life problems through the attitude of “building the leader within you”. It provides people with the opportunity to explore the natural world and learn from it, and thus enables them to communicate their political voice and to look at matters from different perspectives.

3. Environmental education is best achieved through a triangle of partnership between school, community and government.

Based on these postulates and the belief that advocacy of the local and global environment is a public responsibility, it is imperative to transform environmental education into a culture that is reflected in the basic profile of children. It can then be passed on through socialization, and by integrating it into the general school curricula and extracurricular activities.
Vision and mission

CERD is responsible for the development of educational plans, curricula of public education, publications and educational approaches, in addition to training the workforce in the educational sector. It also handles research and educational statistics, school equipment and building specifications, among others.

CERD’s vision focuses on the integration of environmental education into all the educational system components, in view of achieving a healthy society and a vigorous, open-minded and environmentally minded citizen.

The environmental mission of CERD is developing and updating green strategies for environmental education based on scientific research, as well as developing public education curricula and all supporting educational services to enhance the role of the green school in a flexible and sustainable manner.

This can be achieved through the dissemination of environmental education culture in the community and the development of comprehensive, interactive curricula. It can be additionally supported by extracurricular activities that integrate 21st century skills, lifelong learning for learners and teachers, and that provide quality education services for learners, teachers, parents and the community in order to achieve the desired educational goals.

Through the development of curricula, CERD seeks to develop a green citizen who is committed, an initiator, active, innovative, reflective, a critical thinker, researcher, cooperative, collaborative and an interrogative learner interlinked with his natural environment. This learner’s profile is paired with what the environmental education seeks to achieve: an environmental proficient learner – a citizen who is environmentally knowledgeable and aware, and ultimately ready to translate these qualities into positive behaviour.

Education is the foundation of any development, based on the man’s responsibility as a custodian of natural resources and protector of the environment. For this reason CERD finds it necessary to:

1. Develop the educational curriculum in all its components – including human resources and technical requirements – to be interactive and reflect the needs of the modern age, taking into account the standards of a green culture, green school environment, green society, and green citizen.

2. Develop purposeful programs, specialized training courses, learning guides and resources, and establish environment clubs to support this culture in schools.

3. Develop strategy and standards of the Green School, in cooperation with relevant institutions, to ensure the development of a safe environment that is in harmony with the needs of learners and society.

4. Place special attention to green culture in early childhood education.

5. Expand the experience of the prototype green demonstration room at the Teacher Training Center in Jounieh to other parts of the country.

6. Issue laws and operational decrees to ensure the realization of the above goals.

With the advances in the sustainable development concepts in education, the interconnection between school and the environment is no longer a luxury, but rather an educational necessity that requires a comprehensive approach based on the foundations of sustainability.

This approach involves a package of values, knowledge, skills and attitudes within activities and programs both inside and outside the classrooms, for all learners, families and the school staff. It brings multiple benefits, spanning from physical and psychological health, to the safety of the planet, based on safeguarding natural resources and rationalizing consumption patterns.