

MANAHEL - NOV/DEC 2023

**SYRIA
EDUCATION
PROGRAMME**

LEARNING BULLETIN

This issue focuses on collaborative partnerships designed to help schools get ready for winterisation, and improve child safety and well-being. It focuses, too, on enhancing literacy and numeracy through modifications in the curriculum, empowering communities and increasing sense of ownership through School Committees, and increasing professional capacity of teachers to improve learning outcomes, particularly for children with disabilities and underperforming students.

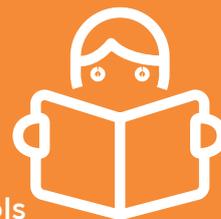
Additionally, Manahel's partner Orange secured winterisation support for the 54 schools across Idlib and Salqin Education Assemblies (EAs). Through dedicated advocacy efforts, Orange successfully secured 44,000 litres of fuel, 10 empty fuel tanks of 1000-litre capacity, and heaters with accompanying accessories. Furthermore, Orange has begun printing literacy and numeracy textbooks with US\$13,000 from its own resources. This investment aims to guarantee the availability of essential learning materials, a critical component in fostering a conducive and enriching learning environment for children.

Effective collaboration with partners secured support for 54 schools

Successful advocacy efforts and effective collaboration with the Education Cluster and the Education Directorates (EDs) in Aleppo and Idlib, have helped to secure over 1,000 recreational kits from the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) by UNICEF/Shafak. Due to be distributed across all 54 Manahel-supported schools, the kits include learning materials and help deliver recreational activities and psychosocial support (PSS) for students encouraging sustained attendance and reducing drop-out rates.

1,000

recreational kits will be distributed across 54 Manahel-supported schools



Key lesson learned

By leveraging a value-for-money approach and engaging in effective coordination with key partners, Manahel has been able to secure significant resources and support for schools without incurring additional costs. This collaborative effort highlights the power of partnerships in driving meaningful change within education, demonstrating our collective commitment to ensuring a brighter future for the children of Aleppo and Idlib.



Enhancing literacy and numeracy: the curriculum evolution

In response to valuable feedback from the EDs, programme partners, and our field team, Manahel decided to modify the remedial literacy and numeracy curriculum. These changes stem from extensive discussions and observations aimed at optimising the learning journey for our students.

Feedback indicated that certain learning units (tracks) were too long, demanding a substantial amount of time for students to transition to the next stage. It also showed that the numeracy curriculum lacked complexity and omitted crucial operations like division and geometry-related components.

Manahel conducted a thorough curriculum analysis, comparing our remedial literacy curriculum with the primary school reading standard. Engaging in discussions with EDs and technical teams, it enabled Manahel to better align the curriculum with students' needs. Final modifications were implemented based on feedback and the refined materials were shared with EDs for broader dissemination.

These modifications aim to create a more responsive and efficient learning environment tailored to the needs of our students.

Key lesson learned

This experience has highlighted the crucial importance of actively listening to feedback and embracing continuous improvement in educational practices. By valuing stakeholders' insights, Manahel recognised the need to adapt and enhance the curriculum.

Empowering communities through School Committees

Significant progress has been made in finalising the Terms of Reference (ToR) for establishing School Community Committees (SCCs) as part of our ongoing efforts to promote participatory decision-making and increase community ownership. These committees coordinate with schools and Safeguarding Officers (SG) on child protection cases, risk identification, school absences and drop outs, as well as coordinating community support for the school.

The process involved collaboration between the Protection Team and EDs in Idlib and Aleppo, through consultations to refine the structure and function of the committees. Recommendations from the EDs emphasised decentralised decision-making and amendments to terminologies, goals, and election mechanisms. Subsequent meetings focused on aligning ToRs with the vision and preferences of the EDs.

School Committees

are crucial platforms for community engagement in school-based educational initiatives.

Workshops will be conducted to present the finalised ToR to EDs and partners in Idlib and Aleppo. Further amendments will be made based on feedback, paving the way for the implementation of SCCs in new schools and the evaluation of those that are already in operation.

Key lesson learned

Although progress has been achieved, challenges persist in fully transitioning SCCs into community-led structures. However, the systematic consultation approach has enabled Manahel to develop a ToR that aligns with the goals and priorities of key stakeholders ensuring their buy-in and fostering ownership and commitment to the future implementation process.

Empowering education staff for inclusive learning

During November and December, Manahel focused on the professional capacity of education staff to improve learning outcomes, particularly for children with disabilities and underperforming students. Initiatives involved promoting the use of Special Education Learning Circles, regular Learning Circles and Teacher Cards.

Special Education Learning Circles equip educators with tools to create inclusive environments, addressing diverse student needs. In December, the inaugural 'Attention Deficit' circle session engaged 36 teachers (30 females and 6 males), covering benchmarks for early intervention, symptoms, environmental factors, and behaviour modification strategies related to Attention-Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Manahel collaborated with partners and educational directors to identify key competencies for teacher development. The goal is to enhance professional growth and effectiveness designed to fostering an environment conducive to better learning outcomes. These competencies have been integrated into the Learning Circles and aligned with the Teacher Competency Framework.

Teacher Cards, disseminated bi-weekly via WhatsApp, have also played an important role in strengthening teacher professional development. The cards enhance teachers' knowledge on topics like fostering belonging, utilising stories for language skills, homework monitoring, and managing student styles. This cost-efficient practice reaches teachers across all education assemblies, regardless of whether the schools are supported.



Strengthening child safety through collaborative partnerships

Our partner organisations completed community projects in 131 schools across Idlib and Aleppo EDs in a joint effort to enhance child safety and well-being. Syria Relief and Takaful Al Sham led infrastructure improvements in 67 and 64 schools respectively, enhancing sanitation facilities and addressing crucial post-earthquake repairs. In December 2023, our Protection Team worked in collaboration with NGOs and the humanitarian organisation Child Houses to benefit a total of 64 people by providing US\$ 4,435 worth of medical support: hearing aids, glasses, shoes and wheelchairs.

Likewise, collaboration between the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Shafak, HYA -Amal and Hand in Hand enabled more impairment cases to be handled, while the German-Syrian Association (DSV) provided training for educators and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) services.

Following the October shelling incident at Manahel-supported school Ajeal, IRC and our team conducted four psychological First Aid sessions to support children who lost peers. Our partnership with IRC extended beyond MHPSS sessions, with Manahel providing immediate support – we visited the school and provided humanitarian assistance to the families affected by the incident.

Additionally, in partnership with IRC, we are preparing training sessions on Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Emergencies and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) for our field team, Protection and SG instructors and protection coaches from partner organisations.

Key lesson learned

By taking diversity into account, tailoring professional development, fostering collaboration and promoting continuous learning, Manahel empowers education staff and strengthens educational institutions so they can effectively create inclusive environments for students with diverse capabilities. Proactive and collaborative approaches play a key role in enhancing professional capacity and improving learning outcomes.

The IRC curriculum for SEL has been designed for implementation in challenging and traumatic conditions and equips students with crucial skills such as the emotional resilience needed to help cope with stress and uncertainty. As well as improving academic performance, SEL fosters positive social skills, teamwork, and effective communication, creating a supportive and cohesive learning environment. Beyond the classroom, SEL promotes other life skills such as decision-making and problem-solving, preparing students to overcome challenges, now and in the future.

Plans for next months	
1	Launch of the Syria Education Programme (SEP) II - Manahel and its Knowledge Hub
2	Establishment of new School Committees and renewal of existing committees in cooperation with EDs
3	Implementation of Social Emotional Learning training for protection instructors
4	Host Partnership Governance Workshop with Manahel's partner organisations.

Key lesson learned

Many organisations aiming to support school children encounter challenges with permissions and activity approvals as the ED often requires logistical gaps to be addressed before implementation. However, fulfilling these requirements can be difficult due to fixed programmatic plans. To prevent the waste of such efforts, our field team has learned to work proactively as a bridge, facilitating access to schools. Manahel recognises that continued collaboration is essential to promote holistic well-being, ensuring a synergistic response for school children.

Manahel, which in Arabic means ‘fountains’ – of hope, of knowledge, and of life -, is the northwest component of the UK aid-funded Syria Education Programme (SEP). Delivered by Chemonics UK, Manahel provides access to safe, inclusive, and quality learning opportunities for children in Northwest Syria. It impacted more than 600,000 children over the first phase of the programme (2018-2023) and a second phase runs from 2024-2027.