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### **CASE STUDY 3**

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Project Title:

RIGHTS BASED ADVOCACY IN LEBANON (2013-2018)

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# **“MY NATIONALITY IS A RIGHT FOR ME AND MY FAMILY”**

## **ADVOCACY CASE STUDY ANALYSIS**

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**COUNTERPART INTERNATIONAL** is a US-based global development organization that has worked in 75 countries during our 55-year existence, administering nearly 500 USG-funded programs valued at more than \$800 million. From 2009 – 2016, Counterpart administered USAID’s Global Civil Society Strengthening Leader with Associates (GCSS-LWA) award. As USAID’s primary civil society strengthening partner, Counterpart managed a consortium of ten partners and implemented 36 associate programs valued at approximately \$350 million in over 60 countries. Through the GCSS-LWA, Counterpart and our partner Management Systems International (MSI) were awarded the BALADI CAP program. Due to its long history in country, MSI assumed an in-country technical implementation role. The program, which started in 2013, had three primary components: Capacity Building Component (CBC), Civic Engagement Initiative (CEI), and the Civic Engagement for Democratic Governance (CEDG) Component. The research, analysis, and reporting conducted through this assignment relates directly to the CEDG component and seeks to provide project partners with strategic insight, learning and recommendations through the completion of BALADI CAP and on future programs of a similar nature.

**BEYOND GROUP** is a mission-driven consulting firm specializing in policy research, public management, capacity development and partnership building. Beyond Group is renowned for its ability to bridge global knowledge with the Arab context, its partnership mindset, and its experiential methodologies. As part of our Policy Research service, Beyond Group undertakes interdisciplinary policy research using frameworks and methodologies tailored for each context and initiative to support policy makers and international agencies in finding viable, innovative and evidence-based solutions to socio-economic problems, and the challenges of governance and development. Using qualitative and quantitative research tools, we conduct policy analysis and evaluation, develop policy solutions, and implement perception studies and impact assessments. Through our Partnership Building services, Beyond Group offers support to design participatory and innovative strategies and tactics to engage stakeholders, be it governments, public institutions, civil society organizations, private sector corporations and communities. Through this engagement we help build partnerships with shared values and purpose, driven by service to lead political, policy and institutional transformations throughout the MENA region.

**CASE STUDIES IN LEBANESE CIVIL SOCIETY ADVOCACY.** Within the framework of the USAID Baladi CAP project, Counterpart International supported a research project on civil society advocacy in Lebanon, with the goal of broadening the democratic space for citizen participation in public affairs by creating platforms for informed public debate and increased citizen engagement outside of sectarian and confessional lines. Selected through an open competition, BRD undertook a mapping of advocacy campaigns in Lebanon 2013-18 and together with Counterpart developed five case studies in an effort to highlight best practices and common factors contributing to civil society advocacy’s success or failure and enhancing an understanding of the needs of CSOs working on advocacy to further advance rights and reform in Lebanon.

All final case studies will be posted on the website of Beyond Group at:

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# CAMPAIGN ISSUE AND CONTEXT

Under the Lebanese Citizenship Law, women are not allowed to pass on citizenship to their foreign spouses or children. However, Article 7 of the Lebanese Constitution specifically states that “All Lebanese are equal under the law, enjoying equal civil and political rights, and performing duties and public responsibility without any discrimination among them.”<sup>1</sup> The Law allows a foreign woman married to a Lebanese man to obtain citizenship after one year and their children have automatic citizenship. However, when a Lebanese woman marries a foreign man, neither her spouse nor her children can become Lebanese citizens<sup>2</sup>.

In Lebanon, discriminatory provisions in the fifteen Personal Status Laws put women at a disadvantage in issues related to marriage, divorce, custody and nationality. Lebanon ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) on April 21, 1997<sup>3</sup>. However, the Lebanese government had several reservations on specific articles, including 1) Nationality Law, 2) equality for women in marriage and its dissolution by giving women equal rights to property accumulated during marriage, and 3) Article 16 on the Civil Status Law, paragraph 1 of Article 29 on conflict resolution<sup>4</sup>. Internationally, three conventions uphold women’s right to nationality: The Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and The Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989<sup>5</sup>. Today, the most commonly used argument from Lebanese policy makers and politicians to argue against the law to pass is the need to maintain a Sectarian balance: the sectarian power-sharing system in Lebanon values more sectarian balance than citizenship rights, and the argument is a constant challenge to the conversation about women’s full rights.

The current Nationality Law (of 1925) indicates that a) every person born of a Lebanese father, b) every person born in the Greater Lebanon territory and did not acquire a foreign nationality upon birth or by affiliation, and c) every person in the Greater Lebanon territory from unknown parents or parents of unknown nationality<sup>6</sup> is considered Lebanese. This excludes persons born of a Lebanese mother and therefore denies women’s right to full citizenship.

Feminists and women’s rights groups have been organizing to tackle this issue since 2000. The campaign, ‘My Nationality Is A Right for Me and My Family’ (referred to in the document as “The Campaign”) was the first to launch in Lebanon in the year 2000, following the establishment of a regional alliance to fight for better citizenship rights for women in the MENA region. Activists and civil society organizations participated in the Campaign, however the “network was not a traditionally hierarchal arrangement. It reconciled the need for leadership with the widespread rejection of hierarchy and authority among movement organizations. As such, the campaign was launched by CRTD/A Collective for Research and Training on Development- Action in 2000 in Lebanon in addition to other Arab countries such as Syria, Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, Algeria, Bahrain and Jordan. As a result, a regional campaign that sought to ensure equality in nationality laws was launched and Lebanon’s campaign “My Nationality Is A Right for Me and My Family” became an official platform for demanding changes and reforms. under the leadership of CRTD.A<sup>7</sup>. The Campaign was launched following The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women CEDAW; a time when donor agencies were highly interested in women’s empowerment projects in the Arab region. Funds from the UN were allocated between 2002 and 2004 to allow the regional campaign coalition to conduct research and analysis on gender inequality in nationality and citizenship laws.

CRTD.A is a non-governmental organization registered in 2003 and based in Beirut, Lebanon. The organization seeks to contribute to building an active and prosperous civil society with justice and equality in laws. CRTD.A is committed to the values of gender equality, acceptance and respect for diversity. It strives to work according to the highest international standards of professionalism that reflect the needs and opportunities posed by the challenges of a changing world.

“On January 19th, 1925, the French High Commissioner issued arrêt  n  15/S, which until today represents the main legal text regulating transmission of citizenship, naturalization and denaturalization in Lebanon. Arr t  15/S was based on the Ottoman nationality law of January 19th, 1869, which created the Ottoman citizenship and was based on the French civil code of 1803.” *EUDO citizenship Observatory, Country Report: Lebanon. September 2012*

In 2000, CRTDA launched and led the first regional campaign on equal nationality rights for women and their families through a series of coordination meetings with regional partners, that resulted in commissioning studies on nationality laws, and came up with the name of the campaign.

<p><b>ADVOCACY ISSUE</b></p>	<p>Under the Lebanese Constitution, women and men have equal rights. However, according to the law, women do not have the right to pass their nationality on to their children or foreign-born husbands. The advocacy campaign that was launched in 2001 is working to change that and amend the laws to grant women the right to pass their nationality to their husbands and children, irrespective of the nationality of their husband, or their sect. The campaign relies on international laws and conventions that uphold the right to nationality (CEDAW, Declaration of Human rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child).</p> <p>The only factor standing between the objectives of the campaign and the implementation of the reforms is the Lebanese complicated political scene and the sectarian pressures.</p>
<p><b>CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting the legitimate right of women to be full citizens</li> <li>• Granting women the right to confer their citizenship to their spouses and children through reforming laws on Nationality in Lebanon and countries participating in the campaign.</li> <li>• Raising awareness on the rights of women as citizens and eliminating all forms of discrimination against them, and lifting the governments’ reservations on CEDAW</li> <li>• Mobilizing interest in women’s right to nationality at all levels: media, politics, academics, political parties until it reaches a national level.</li> <li>• Involving the directly affected individuals in the campaign’s activities</li> <li>• Conducting research and studies relevant to this legitimate demand.</li> </ul>
<p><b>ADVOCACY INTERVENTION</b></p>	<p>To reach its objectives, the campaign included the following interventions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action-Oriented Research that resulted in key findings that helped the team navigate through the campaign.</li> <li>• Awareness raising campaigns in the form of debates, panels, conferences, student engagement, petition signing, legal counseling to women beneficiaries, publishing opinion pieces on recent events and how they affect the Nationality cause in Lebanon, and discussions with MPs and activists.</li> <li>• Lobbying activities that include developing draft laws and participating in parliamentary sessions on women’s issues in addition to lobbying the parliamentarians to try and change their positions regarding women’s right to nationality holding politicians accountable</li> <li>• The Campaign team is successful in coalition-building with national parliamentarians, unions and lawyers and has also submitted reports to CEDAW to increase international pressure on decision-makers. The campaign even appealed to the Arab League to promote Nationality Law reform at the regional inter-governmental level.</li> <li>• The Campaign team was also very adamant, from the beginning, on engaging the Media. They designed training sessions for media representatives and were always mapping out channels on TV, newspapers, radio and online, to engage them in every activity they launch under the campaign.</li> <li>• The Campaign succeeded in garnering support from constituencies. For example, it launched a hotline to assist women married to foreigners with their legal dealings with the relevant ministries. The hotline offers support on issues such as getting a driver’s license, obtaining a residency permit, and understanding a husband’s work options. This hotline is shared over their social media networks and as community members started to know about it, word spread, and people were referring each other to it. Through their services and outreach efforts, constituencies got to meet the Campaign team, work with them and learn about their work</li> </ul>

<b>ADVOCACY RESULTS</b>	<p>In Lebanon, this Campaign has succeeded in getting two legislative proposals adopting its agenda to parliament via parliamentary allies.</p> <p>The campaign has also succeeded in making women’s nationality rights a public opinion issue, and a part of the agenda of several policy makers. They also worked on procedural change such that the one where spouses and children of the concerned women have a courtesy residence permit (for free), and children of Lebanese women are treated on equal basis as Lebanese children in access to public education and government health services.</p> <p>The campaign has succeeded in contributing to intensifying media attention thus positioning the issue in the public spotlight; also the campaign had a big role in mobilizing concerned women and their families as well as the public at large through regional meetings and awareness raising campaigns.</p> <p>The campaign is adamant in exerting pressure to ensure that the discriminatory law is replaced by a gender equitable nationality law.</p>
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From 2006-2008 funding was aimed at designing advocacy strategies at both the country and regional levels<sup>9</sup>. The campaign led by CRTD.A in Lebanon, uses various strategies to lobby decision-makers to make reforms to nationality laws, including public mobilization, campaigning and advocacy tools, political lobbying, media and communication, support to women affected by the current nationality law, training and capacity building and research and knowledge gathering.

Back in 2010, the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities issued a decree granting the husband and children of a Lebanese woman a free courtesy residence (Iqamat Moujamala). This means that families of concerned women have residency of a variable duration; expiry may be linked to a certain date or event and may be renewable in some circumstances. However, the decree was criticized because residency was revocable, required a permit to be renewed, and the General Security could accept or reject the request for permit<sup>9</sup>. No actual reforms have been done to the Nationality Law yet, however, discourse related to the Nationality Law is growing with the efforts done by campaigns such as the one under study.

Today, there are at least three legislative proposals for Nationality Law from the government (former deputies and previous ministers) as well as proposals submitted by members of parliament elected in 2018, and the momentum is growing despite the implicit and explicit actions of the current and previous governments to maintain the sectarian balance. Such political arguments within a sectarian power-sharing system undervalue the non-negotiable rights of individuals in the country and place women and their rights at the heart of political negotiations, irrespective of their constitutional right to full emancipation. Ex-foreign Minister Gebran Bassil presented a legislative proposal on March 2018 to amend the Nationality Law such that a woman could confer her nationality to her family except for when she is married to a man from a neighboring State<sup>10</sup>, CRTDA refused the proposal and stood against it<sup>11</sup>.

“Finally, Stop ignoring our righteous demands and drop this deceitful bill that deprives Lebanese women and their families from their legitimate rights!”

Excerpt from the Statement issued by CRTDA and the Lebanese Council Of Women, on March 26 2018, as a response to Minister Bassil’s proposed amendments to the Citizenship Law.

Finally, in addition to CRTDA’s ‘My nationality a right for and my family’, two additional campaigns were created one in 2005 and one in 2007:

- In 2005, the League for Lebanese women in partnership with the Democratic Women’s gathering, launched the ‘My nationality a right for and my children’ where they ask for the nationality rights for women and their children, and not their husbands. Although they are not against passing the nationality the husbands, this campaign focuses on getting big wins first and then asking for more; a strategy and approach that CRTDA had always been against by principle: full emancipation for women.
- In 2007, the UNDP-backed campaign ‘My nationality a right for me and *them*’ was launched by CFUWI who were funded for 2 years and then the funding stopped. The split that was created because of the funding could have been avoided, as it hindered the momentum that CRTDA had been working on for years and changed the focus from community and grassroots national campaign to UN-funded 2-year campaign.

A detailed list of milestones, drafts of legislative proposals, and timeline of events of the campaign are presented in Annex 1.

“In 2009 there was a breakthrough in the Nationality conversation on the national level. Samira Soueidan, a Lebanese mother married to an Egyptian husband, had pled to government institutions for the right to pass her nationality on to her children following the death of her husband in 1991. After several battles with the Lebanese system, in 2009, Chief Judge John Azzi, Judge Rana Havka and Judge Lameis Kazma, issued a court ruling allowing Soueidan the right to give her nationality to her children. The decision drew media attention, especially since this issue had been known across the country since at least 2005. However, the decision was appealed by the Ministry of Justice and the decision was overturned in 2010.

## Activity Analysis

The Campaign has adopted since its inception various strategies to strengthen momentum and ultimately achieve reforms. The team of the campaign has been relentless in capacity building of concerned women and their families, in partnership building, organizing protests and sit-ins, issuing articles, studies, flyers and other publications, launching petitions, appealing to international organizations and institutions for international support (including embassies), designing its own knowledge platform and issuing newsletters about campaign activities. The team has interacted with communities in Lebanon in the form of town meetings and attending public events such as book fairs to speak about the issue. Generally, the campaign’s strategy has been successful in raising the momentum about the need and urgency of this matter, and the only factor standing between the objectives of the campaign and the implementation of the reforms is the Lebanese complicated political scene, the sectarian pressures and the patriarchal culture. The campaign’s allies in Morocco, Egypt and Algeria succeeded in achieving their goals between 2002 and 2007, yet with Lebanon approaching 2020, legislative reforms are yet to be implemented. The following sections include an overview of advocacy strategies implemented by the Nationality Campaign.

## Building an evidence-based case for advocacy

Three studies have been directly published by CRTD.A with the support of Women’s Learning Partnership.

- Arab Women's Right to Nationality Campaign, Legal Study, by Ziad Baroud (2003)<sup>12</sup>
- Arab Women's Right to Nationality Campaign, Sociological Statistical Study, by Kamal Feghali (2002)<sup>13</sup>
- Citizenship and gender, the impact of the rise of extremist Islamist groups, CRDTA (2017)<sup>14</sup>

One of CRTD.A’s core intervention methodology is developing action-oriented research where campaign activities are informed by the results of the research. The research creates and promotes a space where women can be heard, and their experiences shared, and their needs identified.

## Engaging decision-makers and networking

Advocacy in Lebanon is considerably difficult given the political system and the intertwined relationships between politicians and business leaders as well as the sometimes-inaccessible decision-making circles, makes it hard to approach them. To be able to break through these barriers, advocates need to be equipped with the right set of skills and techniques. The campaign, therefore, relied on two strategies when approaching lobbying activities:

- They could either work with a parliament committee that might be created to study the draft law and then transfer to the cabinet once approved,
- Or, work with a minister who would propose a draft law for study directly at a cabinet meeting.

CRTD.A chose to seek both; they worked both with a committee and with a minister. At the same time, they featured the names of the politicians who were against the cause in their offices so that ‘they would never forget their names, faces and statements<sup>15</sup>’. Later, the campaign conducted an analysis of dynamics and benefits of all political blocks, to try and understand each politician’s position.



- a) The team of the campaign has been heavily engaged in meetings and conversations with the parliament and ministries. In its newsletters, it shares with the public the numerous meetings it has organized with decision-makers be they deputies, ministers, or influencers like INGOs, embassies and ambassadors, lawyers, other coalitions, etc.
- b) The Campaign team focuses on the Nationality Law in its activities but supports other campaigns with other objectives as well. For example, the team has met and worked with the Lebanese-Palestinian Coalition for the Right to Work, and the national coalition for legislation that protects women from domestic violence, and the family committee within the Bar Union.
- c) The Nationality campaign has succeeded in achieving significant momentum throughout the years. In the 2018 Lebanese parliamentary elections, almost all candidates declared their position vis-à-vis the Nationality Law in their electoral agenda. According to Human Rights Watch, several parliamentary candidates and two major political parties promised to amend Lebanon's nationality Law prior to the 2018 parliamentary elections<sup>16</sup>

Challenges facing the campaign on this level include the following arguments by the politicians:

- The sectarian divide between causes: especially that there are multiple personal status laws for each religious sect in the country,
- Political discourse links women's right to nationality with the naturalization of Palestinian refugees. This 'fear-instigating' strategy separates the cause and shifts the direction of the discourse, and derail efforts of legal reform at the parliamentary levels. To fight these arguments that often distract public opinion, CRTD.A has done a lot of effort to appear on as many news channels, talk shows, use twitter, Facebook and other social media platforms to offer counterarguments and raise awareness on the vague and racist as well as misogynist argument of the Lebanese government.

## Outreach

- a) The campaign has succeeded in building a sustained relationship of trust with mainstream media. Campaign activists have been hosted in several TV and internet TV programs, and all public activities of the campaign have been well covered and attended by the mainstream media. National and international media outlets are consistently present at the campaign's activities and frequently ask for interviews.
- b) The Campaign uses its newsletter (available on CRTD.A's website) (in Arabic) to communicate all updates and events related to the campaign, to the general public. So far, the campaign has issued 10 newsletters, the latest dating January 2019<sup>17</sup>.
- c) The Nationality Campaign also has a dedicated WordPress account, where knowledge is shared based on the firm belief that women are under-informed about the intersection of political rights with their own social and economic situations. This kind of information is contributing to informed debates in Lebanon today; as it provides opinion pieces with arguments and responses as well as analysis on all political issues that intersect with the Nationality right.
- d) The Campaign has accounts on Facebook, Twitter, WordPress, Youtube, Flickr and Storify. The platforms are used for awareness raising, disseminating petitions, calling for action, issuing statements, mobilizing supporters, etc. These accounts are used by the team to keep participating in the public debate around women's nationality rights. The constant activity on these accounts has positioned CRTDA as one of the main sources of information and arguments on the topic. Their coherence and stances with relation to this campaign have not changed in 2001 and they keep framing and designing arguments to bring back this issue to national debates and public opinion.

During the planning phases of each milestone of CRTD.A's work, the team decides together on the best way to approach the government, reach constituents, work with the media, etc. These planning phases have been instrumental in the success of the Campaign. For example, early on, the Campaign engaged media representatives in gender equality trainings. They also focused on designing services to support women married to non-Lebanese husbands (hotline, orientation, support, etc.)





e) Additionally, there have been several studies written about the campaign including the EU, The Kingdom of Netherlands, PhD candidates, Women’s Learning Partnership (WLP), Human Rights Watch, the Century Foundation.

f) he Campaign offers capacity building workshops with journalists and representatives from the media on gender and the Nationality law. This developed into informal partnerships and created a sort of alliance between the media and the campaign team as explained by the interviewees from the campaign.

g) The team is very proactive in issuing statements in response to the efforts, proposals and reforms suggested by parliamentarians, ministers and other agencies such The National Commission for Lebanese Women. The campaign’s objectives are designed such that all Lebanese women can give their nationalities to their husbands and their children, whereas some proposals from the government (namely NCLW) suggest that women should be able to give their nationality, but they offer compromises on the level of the nationality of the husband: i.e. women married to a Palestinian or Syrian, would not be able to pass her nationality – making the conversation about sectarian balance all over again. Gebran Bassil’s law proposal suggests the same as well, where he suggests offering that right to women married to men from specific countries only (namely: Europe and the United States)




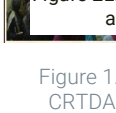
التاريخ	المكان	جمعية عمومية في	
2014/1/16	مركز الخدمات الإيمانية الصرندف - وزارة الشؤون الاجتماعية	الصرندف بالتنسيق مع وزارة الشؤون	
2014/3/20	مركز جمعية المساعدات الشعبية	صبرا جمعية المساعدات الشعبية	
2014/4/10	قاعة نادي شباب العدالة والمستقبل	القاسمية بالتنسيق مع جمعية المساعدات الشعبية	
2014/4/24	قاعة الرشيد	شبرحة	

Figure 1. List of activities conducted by CRTDA as published on their website

The campaign team disapproves these justifications for the following reasons:

**First:** the right of Lebanese men and women to marry is a constitutional right that complies with social life as regulated by constitution. Besides, naturalization is the act of granting the Lebanese nationality to a person who was not born of a Lebanese parent. Moreover, resettlement is an international and political issue that differs greatly from the constitution’s individual rights of citizens.

**Second:** this article deprives a Lebanese man of passing citizenship down to his children if his spouse is from one of the neighboring countries, which is unacceptable since women are calling for equality with men in passing citizenship on to their families, and not depriving them of this right which increases the number of children that can be rendered stateless if the mother’s country does not grant them citizenship.

**Third:** ‘the neighboring countries’ were not clearly specified. This vagueness leaves room for interpretations likely to vary according to the context.

**Fourth:** it discriminates between Lebanese women residing abroad and penalizes those married to people from the neighboring countries and residing in Lebanon, in addition to the discrimination between men themselves. Discrimination is no longer limited to Lebanese men and women; it was expanded to differentiate between a man or a woman married to a foreigner and another whose spouse is from a neighboring country.

**Fifth:** it does not set criteria that allow the differentiation between foreigners who entered Lebanon as refugees or displaced people and the numerous Arabs who entered the country in good faith long ago to reside and to invest, and who happen to be married to Lebanese women. Does the Lebanese government keep records about refugees and displaced people? Should we advise our Arab brothers against marrying Lebanese women?

**Sixth:** the justifications provided to support the proposal contradict this article that humiliates so many Lebanese women. Besides, the alleged resettlement should not impede the right of women, as full Lebanese citizens, to pass citizenship on to their families.

*Excerpt from the Statement issued by CRTDA and the Lebanese Council Of Women, on March 26 2018, as a response to Minister Bassil’s proposed amendments to the Citizenship Law.*

The campaign also produced several documentaries a short movie about the Nationality law to raise awareness about the issue, and several other short videos that were disseminated in events organized by CRTD.A. They are also available on the Campaign Facebook page, CRTDA website, and YouTube channel<sup>18</sup>.

- But My Mother is Lebanese (August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019)<sup>19</sup>
- Motherland ... Lebanon (2018)<sup>20</sup>
- Koullouna Ili watan (2011)<sup>21</sup> in partnership with the German and Dutch embassies in Lebanon

- Women’s Right to Nationality<sup>22</sup>
- My Child the Foreigner<sup>23</sup> (2003)<sup>1</sup>
- I am Lebanese – (6 testimonials of 6 public figures of concerned women)<sup>24</sup> (2019)

The Campaign formed strategic alliances with Lebanese media channels and developed its own knowledge and dissemination platforms such as a WordPress account and accounts on various social media channels. The media still is a significant ally of the campaign, with consistent attendance to press conferences, sit-ins and protests. Additionally, the campaign organized training workshops on gender equality and citizenship rights for journalists from major Lebanese newspapers. This was a strategic move from the beginning, to garner media support and ensure the messaging and discourse are policy oriented and gender sensitive.

## Citizen and community mobilization

- The Campaign’s team organized and still organizes regional meetings in Lebanon, with concerned women to discuss the current situation, the law, the procedures, etc.
- The team was relentless in reaching out to the public. For example, the team attended as many cultural and social events as possible, including university\student events, and distributed flyers, talked to visitors, etc. to disseminate knowledge, raise awareness and harness support on the Nationality cause for women in Lebanon.
- To increase pressure on decision-makers and gain increased momentum nationally, the campaign organizes sit-ins, the most recent one in March 2019 was organized in Riad Solh Square under the banner ‘Nationality is a sense of belonging and a right for all women’, that aimed at reminding decision-makers of the discrimination that women tolerate in Lebanon. The attendance is high in these sit-ins but according to CRTDA, this sit-in gathered a large number of activists and citizens, but no politician attended the sit-ins; while before the parliamentary elections there was a high participation from politicians in these activities.
- Additionally, the campaign team participate in international women’s day marches and protests and hold banners and posters (Printed and made by hand) asking for women’s full citizenship rights.

Both the CRTD-A and the Lebanese Women Network (LWN) realized that to deal with Lebanon’s political leaders who were deeply patriarchal and anxious about the sectarian balance, they would need powerful backers, a solid base of support, and organizational resources.

The Campaign is active in reaching out to its direct constituency by organizing capacity building trainings on citizenship rights and gender equality, organizing petitions, calling for sit-ins and protests, organizing events on a yearly basis, providing services to their constituency, sharing stories of constituents in their reports and media appearances, etc. The Campaign also organized several public meetings and talks to gather people’s opinions about the issue, they also shared several video testimonials and documentaries over social media and TV networks to raise awareness on the importance of the issue.

The Campaign succeeded in garnering support from constituencies. For example, it launched a hotline to assist women married to foreigners with their legal dealings with the relevant ministries. The hotline offers support on issues such as getting a driver’s license, obtaining a residency permit, and understanding a husband’s work options. This hotline is shared over their social media networks and as community The Campaign succeeded in garnering support from constituencies. For example, it launched a hotline to assist women married to foreigners with their legal dealings with the relevant ministries. The hotline offers support on issues such as getting a driver’s license, obtaining a residency permit, and understanding a husband’s work options. This hotline is shared over their social media networks and as community members started to know about it, word spread, and people were referring each other to it. At a time when the government not only does not regard the right to nationality as a non-negotiable right, it also does not offer orientation or explanations to citizens with relevant questions. And as such, the campaign’s service provision and support for its constituency was instrumental in mobilizing citizens. Through their services and outreach efforts, constituencies got to meet the Campaign team, work with them and learn about their work.

<sup>1</sup> In 2003, the regional network of nationality campaigners prepared the film My Child the Foreigner by Christine Garabedian, where the stories of several families of Arab women married to foreigners are shared and the challenges are highlighted. Reviews suggest that this movie gave a face to the cause, and it was a big breakthrough that it is still used today in universities, schools, educational events, etc.

# CHALLENGES AND MITIGATION

CHALLENGES	MITIGATION EFFORTS
Lack of national data and statistics on citizenship rights and lack of rights – and their consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducting NGO-funded research and statistics, specifically the two studies of 2002 and 2003 that provide legal insight and data about the nationality issue.</li> <li>• Research on Nationality Laws in Lebanon, by Me Ziad Baroud (2003)</li> <li>• Research on Gender and nationality in Lebanon, Mr. Kamal Feghali (2002)</li> <li>• Citizenship and Gender and the impact of the rise of extremist islamist groups (2017)</li> <li>• The campaign is vocal about the lack of research and is active in sharing what is missing in the literature or data to encourage other NGOs to conduct more research.</li> </ul>
Multiple draft law proposals, lack of one (unified) proposal that is agreed upon by all NGOs and civil society stakeholders	<p>There have been several instances where politicians propose nationality rights for women that restrict who can benefit from the Law, particularly Palestinians married to Lebanese women (the largest refugee population in Lebanon) under the pretext that Lebanon should maintain a sectarian balance. Sunni Palestinian men constitute 38% of non-Lebanese husbands in Lebanon.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This challenge has yet to be mitigated, but there are increasing efforts to raise the bar and be more assertive about the rights of women to pass on their nationality. This was shown when this campaign issued a statement opposing Minister Gebran Bassil's 2018 draft law proposal that granted women the right to pass on their nationality except for when their husbands are from a specific list of countries such as Syria, Yemen, Palestine, etc.</li> <li>• The campaign is also continuing to build partnerships<sup>2</sup> and alliances to achieve the campaign advocacy agenda, including partnerships and coalitions with The Commission of The Status of Women, Equality without reservation, Women Learning partnership and others.</li> </ul>
The sectarian division, the naturalization argument and the personal status law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Lebanon, the personal status Law (family, marriage, custody, etc.) is governed by separate religious courts. The matter affects all feminist initiatives, as women's causes are divided by sect. However, while the nationality issue is not divided legally by sect, it is used as a sectarian strategy that can unbalance the country's demographics. This ultimately leads to constituency's hesitance to support a cause that might create an imbalance.</li> <li>• Additionally in 2011, after the start of the civil war in Syria and when refugees started seeking safety in Lebanon, the campaign was yet again put in a conversation around the broader sectarian political arguments<sup>25</sup>.</li> <li>• In 2012, a draft bill to review Article 4 of the 1925 Nationality Law was presented to the Lebanese Cabinet under the Mikati government. The amendment was not approved under the argument that it would give 'foreigners' the right to gain the Lebanese Nationality. Instead,</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> These partnerships include: The Women Learning Partnerships for Rights, Development and Peace (WLP), the Global Fund for Women, the German, British and Dutch embassies in Lebanon, The Heinrich Boell Foundation, local feminist organizations, community-based organizations across the country, etc.

	<p>the government conducted a procedural reform where foreign husbands would now have easier access to schools and health services.</p>
<p>Two major splits: in 2005, and in 2007: In 2005, a new campaign was launched by – called ‘My nationality, a right for me and my children’, by the League of Lebanese women’s rights</p> <p>There was an internal separation within the movement in 2007<sup>26</sup> when two women’s CSOs left the coalition and launched a separate campaign called ‘My Nationality, A Right for Me and <i>them</i>.’”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The first major split occurred in 2005 after the assassination of Prime Minister Rafic Hariri and eight members of his entourage, which put back the conversation around sectarian balance on the table, and the question of naturalization of husbands was discussed. That’s when the League in partnership with the Women’s Democratic Gathering decided to focus on getting the nationality rights for women and their children only and pushed the full nationality rights to a later stage when the country would be ready. CRTDA refused to diverge the objectives and maintained its position on the rights indicated in CEDAW, where women should have full nationality rights<sup>27</sup>.</li> <li>• The second major split happened in 2007 after the UNDP wanted to launch a new project addressing the Nationality issue in 2007. According to an online report<sup>28</sup>, CRTD.A refused to participate in the UNDP project that sought to reform the Nationality law in Lebanon, because it was identical to other projects that had already been implemented by CRTD.A. The National Committee for the Follow-up on Women’s Issues (CFUWI) then withdrew from the National Campaign coalition and launched UNDP’s campaign with the title: My Nationality Is A Right for Me and <i>them</i>. UNDP stopped the funding 2 years later which further hindered the continuity of these campaigns and harmed their momentum.</li> </ul>

## SUCCESSSES

- **Playing the role of mediators** between concerned Lebanese women and security agencies or individuals. Through the hotline CRTDA has established, the Nationality Campaign engages calls and cases which they help by providing access to data (process of work permits for example), guidance to lawyers, as well as psychosocial support.
- **Providing access to public schools to children of Lebanese mothers married to non-Lebanese fathers.** Following the decision of the Ministry of Education (2014 verbal, 2016 - verbal, 2019 written), to give priority to registering Lebanese students, children of Lebanese mothers and foreign fathers were not allowed to register. However, the Nationality Campaign activists exerted pressure through meetings with the Minister of Education and succeeded in changing the policy and the children are registered similar to Lebanese students.
- **Changing rules and regulations in relation to residency and work permits for foreign husbands and children of Lebanese mothers:** Decree no. 4186 in 2010 gave foreign husbands of Lebanese women and their children 3-year courtesy residency permits without any fees or proof of work. In 2011, under the new labor regulations No.122/1, work permits were granted without the need of a sponsor to non-Lebanese spouses of Lebanese women. In 2012, the ministerial committee granted those families an indefinite residency permit, equal access to education in public schools and state universities, and the right to public healthcare.
- **Putting the nationality law reform on the national agenda:** The Campaign succeeded in putting the nationality law reform on the national agenda at both the political and the religious level.
- **Widening the scope of advocacy from regional to global in 2016 by** co-founding the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights which strengthened the regional network as well as provided additional synergies globally.

# LESSONS LEARNED

- **Finding windows of opportunity:** Choosing the right time, right political frame and the right language to demand your rights is essential, especially in Lebanon given the unsettling and constantly changing political power games and challenges. Starting the campaign after CEDAW and at a time when donor agencies were interested in supporting initiatives around women's rights was key. The campaign receives ongoing support from international NGOs, including the Women's Learning Partnership and collaborates with other regional gender equality platforms, through the network of which it is part.
- **Commitment to achieving campaign objectives:** Women in the campaign are not only those who are married to a non-Lebanese. On the contrary, the campaign managed to expand its network of supporters to include a wide range of men and women who believe in the cause which allowed for more voices to be heard and a stronger group on the ground.
- **Partnering with the media:** It is necessary to proactively engage the media. Not only should the campaign extend invitations to formal events and activities, but they should also keep the media informed about all news and updates on the cause and issue. Engaging media in trainings on gender and rights enhanced the quality of coverage on the issues.
- **Influencing donor agendas:** In some cases, it is difficult to influence donor agendas given that they have their own strategies and need to respond to their donors. As much as possible, it is important to minimize duplication in the event where full coordination is not possible. Donor agencies and INGOs must be able to help unify civil society instead of creating divisions and fund duplications of campaigns and initiatives (for example, the UNDP incident in 2007 that resulted in a large and unnecessary split).
- **Building Coalitions:** Being part of a global and regional coalition working on the same cause is very beneficial as it allows access to resources, both human and financial, in addition to experiences and lessons learned. Regional networking has allowed for the sharing of information on areas of opportunity, overcoming obstacles, and improving strategic planning of campaigns tailored to unique national contexts. Successful law reform in certain countries in the region has helped promote further reform in neighboring countries. At the same time, local coalitions are always a challenge as they usually include several groups or NGOs competing over funds and egos.
- **Generating and compiling information:** No campaign is successful if it is not supported by data, numbers, stories, and anecdotes. The initial phase of any campaign is essential in creating an overarching understanding of the issue through comprehensive reviews of the country's nationality law and how it is applied in practice. Informed research-based advocacy involves using that data to compare and contextualize for the situation in Lebanon.

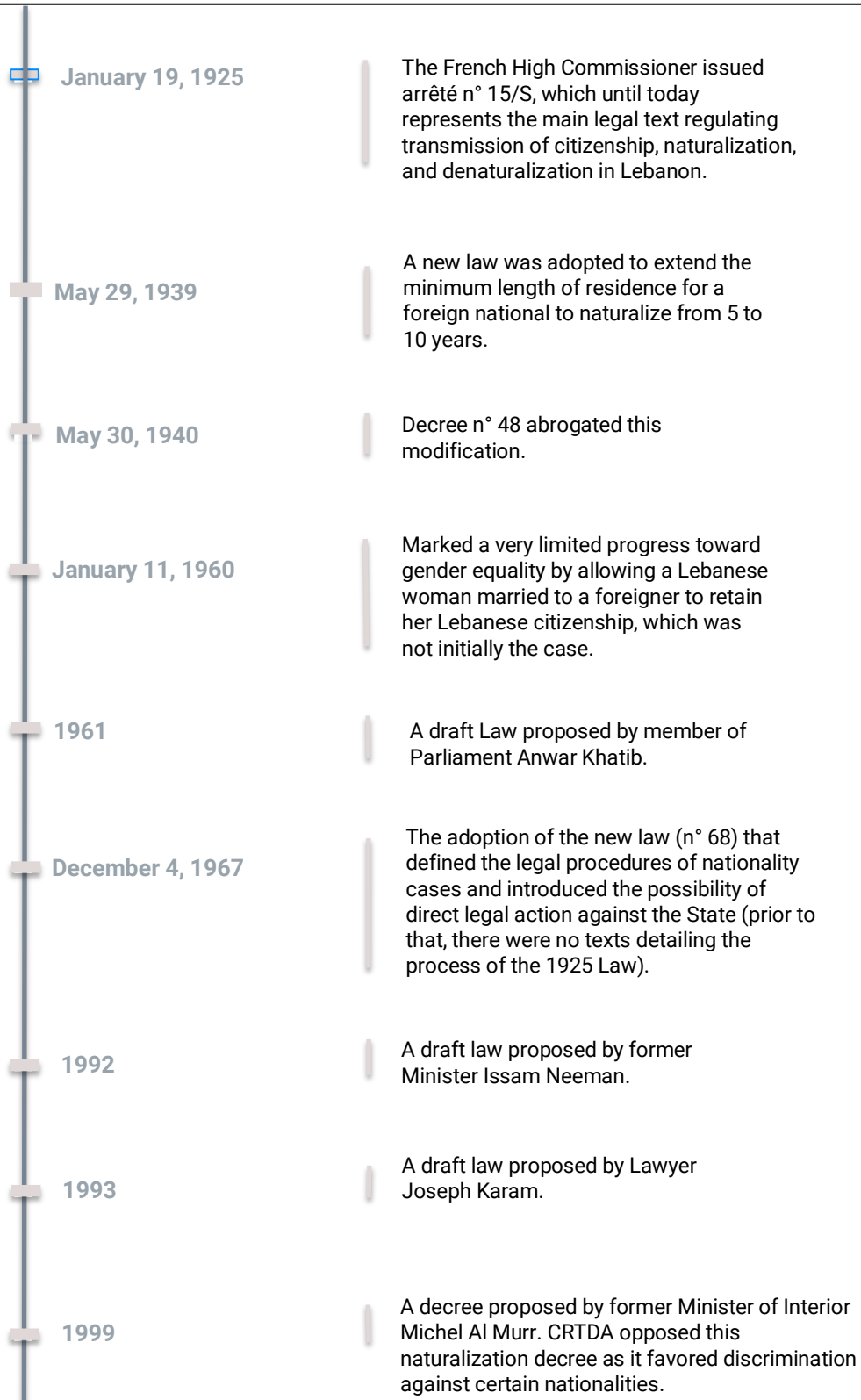
# THE WAY FORWARD

In 2020, CRTD.A continues to advocate and campaign for the nationality law reform by the parliament that ensure equal rights for women to convey their nationality to their spouses and children. CRTDA continues to assist women with specific questions and legal advice and ensures access to public education and governmental health services. As the issue is highly political, the Nationality Campaign continues to present the necessary evidence on how the adoption of such a law will positively impact many families.

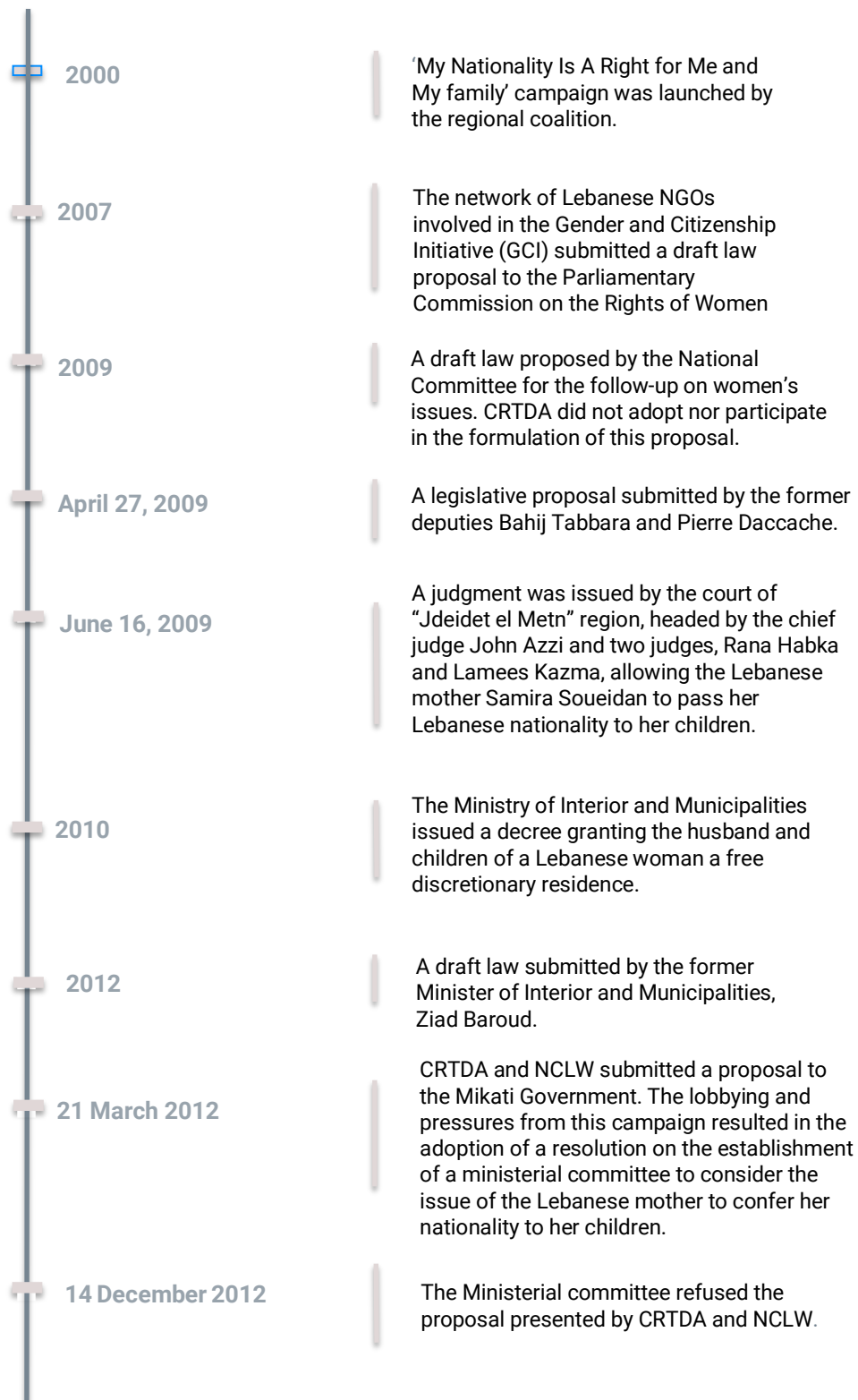
Activists of the campaign continue their meetings and discussions with MPs and ministers and other decision-makers in addition to other stakeholders and are continuing coordination with the regional and global network to share lessons learned, tips, and information. The team is currently working on organizing a national conference that aims at disseminating and discussing the findings from the Comparative study of the Lebanese Nationality Legislative Proposals, with key stakeholders including civil society activists, NGOs, Media representatives and policymakers.

# ANNEX I

'After we reviewed all the proposals and suggestions presented by previous parliamentarians, ministers and heads of the Republic, we realized that most of these proposals address only part of the nationality issues: The reforms are time-bound (like Minister Michel Murr's 1999 decree) and target specific persons. Additionally, we realized that most of the reforms are discriminatory towards specific nationalities. As such, the team decided to launch a study that looks at the dysfunctions of previous proposals, and that offers recommendations for amendments that ensure women get their right to pass their nationality.' *From an interview with the executive director of the Campaign*









# ENDNOTES

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- <sup>5</sup> The Nationality Campaign, 'About the campaign', official website: <https://nationalitycampaign.wordpress.com/>
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- <sup>17</sup> CRTDA official website, 'Nationality Campaign', Newsletters. <https://crt-da.org.lb/newsletter/157>
- <sup>18</sup> CRTDA official website, 'Nationality campaign', and YouTube Channel: My nationality – Jinsiyati
- <sup>19</sup> CRTDA , 'But my mother is Lebanese', Video added on Youtube on August 9 2019. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwb\\_RcS4iqE&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR01m6fp6VIQxphB10b39cwzlh1HxDHJh0xObmuc9dOjfZl8z13Sd\\_iPv0M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwb_RcS4iqE&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR01m6fp6VIQxphB10b39cwzlh1HxDHJh0xObmuc9dOjfZl8z13Sd_iPv0M)
- <sup>20</sup> Facebook, The Lebanese Women's Right to Nationality and full citizenship, October 2018, [https://m.facebook.com/jinsiyati/videos/2195774737372512/?refsrc=http%3A%2F%2Fcrt-da.org.lb%2Fnode%2F16252&\\_rdr](https://m.facebook.com/jinsiyati/videos/2195774737372512/?refsrc=http%3A%2F%2Fcrt-da.org.lb%2Fnode%2F16252&_rdr)
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