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#### **CASE STUDY 4**

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Project Title:

RIGHTS BASED ADVOCACY IN LEBANON (2013-2018)

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# **THE WASTE MANAGEMENT COALITION IN LEBANON**

## ADVOCACY CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

**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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# WASTE MANAGEMENT COALITION: A SNAPSHOT

<b>ADVOCACY ISSUE</b>	Lebanon's solid waste crisis began in the early 1990s, reached a pinnacle in 2015 and continues today due to successive temporary fixes, emergency plans and a weak integrated policy framework. <b>Established in 2017, the Waste Management Coalition (WMC) is a coalition of civil society activists, experts, non-governmental organizations, and community groups joining forces to address mismanagement in the sector, as well as lobby and campaign for integrated waste management planning at the national and sub-national level.</b>
<b>COALITION'S OBJECTIVES <sup>1</sup></b>	<p><b>At the legislative level:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pressure authorities to abide by and enact international environmental conventions and penalize violations.</li> <li>• Pressure authorities to issue sustainable waste management laws and regulations and set economic incentives that reduce waste generation and increase recycling rates.</li> </ul> <p><b>At the administrative level:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Return to the Ministry of the Environment the solid waste management issues and oversight. The Ministry is responsible for setting general and integrated waste policies, developing environmental projects based on mid-term and long-term action plans, and implementing these plans and monitoring execution; all while applying to a participatory approach.</li> </ul> <p><b>At the technical level:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stop the incinerators' plan to dispose of municipal waste in Lebanon. The Cabinet approved in 2018 the use of incinerators and the Beirut Municipality adopted this as a solution for its municipal waste management.</li> <li>• Advocate for all authorities to set an integrated and comprehensive strategy and plans that reduce waste production, enforce sorting at source and recycling, in compliance with international standards.</li> <li>• Pressure to stop open waste burning, landfilling and dumping without appropriate treatment, particularly in the Costa Brava and Burj Hammoud landfills, which violate all international environmental standards.</li> </ul> <p><b>At the community/social level:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the prevention principle and the culture of reducing, reusing and recycling waste across communities through awareness campaigns.</li> </ul>
<b>ADVOCACY INTERVENTIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand coalition membership to include non-governmental organizations (NGOs), environmental and waste management experts, environmental activists and groups, student bodies, environmental start-ups and enterprises, and community members.</li> <li>• Conduct research and develop informative materials, including leaflets and posters, infographics, and audio-visual materials.</li> <li>• Raise awareness of decision-makers and community members by educating them about the situation and consequences of the proposed plans and informing them about alternative waste management systems and solutions.</li> <li>• Engage directly with decision makers and the media.</li> </ul>
<b>ADVOCACY RESULTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created pressure on the Municipal Board in Beirut to stop the adoption of incinerators as a solution.</li> <li>• A solid waste management law went into effect after approved by the Parliament in 2018; however, not all of the coalition's recommendations were taken into account. In some municipalities, waste management systems are being implemented through privately-run projects (developed and implemented by either NGOs or the private sector) that us better solutions and treatments.</li> <li>• Data around the waste management sector is being collected and archived.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> <https://wmclebanon.org/en/home-ar/en/our-goals/>

# BACKGROUND

Historically, the Lebanese government has failed to find sustainable environmental solutions and waste management plans. They have been adopting landfills as a temporary solution; to make matters worse, they were not using appropriate locations for those landfills. They were instead choosing lands near the sea, the airport, and the habitat such as the Naameh, Burj Hammoud landfills. These solutions are harmful to people's health, lives, environment, and economy.<sup>2</sup>

In the 1990s, the Lebanese government assigned the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) the responsibility of contracting for the management of solid waste in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. In 1994, CDR contracted Sukleen, giving them a monopoly over national collection of waste which in turn is dumped in designated landfills.<sup>3</sup> One of these landfills was the Naameh landfill, designated in 1996 to receive waste from Mount Lebanon and Beirut as a temporary solution; however, the closure of Naameh was postponed several times with the renewal of the Sukleen contract and received approximately 3,000 tons of solid waste from Mount Lebanon and Beirut, twice the amount for which it had been designed. To face the crisis, in 1997 the Ministry of Environment, led by Minister Akram Chehayeb, designed a 7-year emergency plan, to allow time for building a sustainable solution.

Nineteen years of so-called "temporary" usage later, the landfill was closed on July 17, 2015 after several protests by the area's residents and other activists.<sup>4</sup> The closure of the Naameh landfill sparked a major solid waste crisis in Lebanon and it coincided with Sukleen's contract renewal date. The government of Lebanon was unable to agree upon a management plan for its solid waste for many years, due to a lack of funds and political infighting<sup>5</sup> and a lack of political consensus over any of the proposed plans or solutions. When Sukleen's contract ended, they stopped collecting garbage, leading to trash piling up on the streets and sidewalks.<sup>6</sup> To make matters worse, people began burning their garbage, triggering an air quality crisis. In the meantime, the Lebanese government invited different waste management companies to bid on the solid waste contract. Unfortunately, all the companies who applied were politically affiliated and connected to politicians in power. Activists accused the companies of colluding on rates and fees<sup>7</sup>; several campaigns were launched and groups emerged to pressure the government and highlight corruption.



Image 1. Source: CNN River of Trash Chokes Beirut Suburb

Following public pressure from different campaigns, environmental groups and activists, the Lebanese Government decided to cancel all the bids and the Cabinet referred the problem to a designated ministerial committee. In March 2016, the Council of Ministers decided to reopen the Naameh landfill for seven days and open a landfill in Burj Hammoud.<sup>8</sup> Waste management responsibilities were assigned to local municipalities and some received sizeable amounts of incentives in order to accept opening new landfills established or reopening existing landfills.<sup>9</sup> Several entities tried to support the Lebanese Government by providing temporary and permanent solutions, such as Germany providing 25 municipalities with quality waste management equipment. An environmentally-friendly, long-term waste management strategy and plan has yet to be achieved, primarily due to political interests. The most recent solution presented by the government is to bring incinerators to burn a bulk of the waste, but this does not take into account health and environmental impacts.

As explained by a coalition member, opposition to incinerators is two-fold: health and environmental concerns. In brief, the type of waste produced in Lebanon is more suitable for alternative, safer, and more environmentally sustainable solutions; linked to the 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle), the majority of waste produced is organic and recyclable and could be invested back into the economy. At the same time, while burning waste, incinerators emit

<sup>2</sup> Waste Management Coalition experience in advocacy – English: [wmclebanon.org](http://wmclebanon.org)

<sup>3</sup> <https://civilsociety-centre.org/timeliness/4923#event-a-href-sir-sit-naameh-landfill-suspended-after-crackdownsit-in-at-naameh-landfill-suspended-after-crackdown-a>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.lbcgroup.tv/news/d/lebanon-news/213897/minister-mashnouq-naameh-landfill-to-be-closed-on/en>

<sup>5</sup> <https://en.annahar.com/article/841443-lebanons-garbage-problem-no-time-to-waste>

<sup>6</sup> <https://civilsociety-centre.org/timeliness/4923#event-a-href-sir-sit-naameh-landfill-suspended-after-crackdownsit-in-at-naameh-landfill-suspended-after-crackdown-a>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2015/8/26/lebanon-cabinet-fails-on-trash-crisis-amid-new-protests>

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Sep-09/314559-cabinet-session-to-talk-trash-crisis-officer-promotions.ashx?utm\\_source=Magnet&utm\\_medium=Recommended%20Articles%20widget&utm\\_campaign=Magnet%20tools](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Sep-09/314559-cabinet-session-to-talk-trash-crisis-officer-promotions.ashx?utm_source=Magnet&utm_medium=Recommended%20Articles%20widget&utm_campaign=Magnet%20tools)

<sup>9</sup> "One Year On, Lebanon's Waste Management Policies Still Stink" by Jad Chaaban, <https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/featuredArticle.php?id=84>

toxic substances such as dioxins which are harmful to the human body and the environment; Lebanese laboratories are not equipped to track such chemicals, nor does Lebanon have the infrastructure to manage and dispose of the hazardous fly ash produced by incinerators.

The **You Stink** campaign started in early August 2015 as a Lebanese grassroots movement in response to the waste crisis and the government's inability to resolve the problem. The campaign included several individuals concerned about their well-being, especially after they saw garbage piling up right outside their doorstep. The movement's proposed solution was to decentralize waste management and treatment and give municipalities the resources they need to do so. Through this suggested solution, the lands, rivers, environment, residents in the areas will be protected from any harmful and hazardous elements, such as the gas emission from trash burning or the dumps and landfills. In addition, the You Stink campaign also aimed to fight corruption by exposing and holding accountable those who negotiated and agreed to waste management deals with their political allies.



Image 2. Protests August 2015 - source: You Stink Facebook Page

By the end of August 2015, more than 100,000 Lebanese citizens took to the streets to protest the government's corruption and mismanagement of the garbage situation. It began as small protest, but soon became an uprising with many protesters calling for a wider political revolution. As the momentum grew bigger and community members and groups from all walks of life joined the campaign, the focus shifted from not only addressing the waste management crisis, but the grievances expanded to include the poor coverage and quality of basic public services and the electricity shortages. This caused some protesters to demand the abolishment of the confessional system in Lebanon and having a new social contract. Subsequently these spontaneous efforts went into a stalemate.

## WASTE MANAGEMENT COALITION

In 2017, the Waste Management Coalition was established, calling for an end to the waste management crisis and development of an integrated, sustainable strategy and plan. WMC members include: [Arab Youth Climate Movement](#), [Cedar Environmental](#), [Beirut Madinati بيروت مدينتي](#), [Operation Big Blue Association](#), [Green area](#), [Diaries of the Ocean](#), [Froz, Chreek](#), [نداء الأرض](#), [تحقق البئبين](#), [تحقق الشوفيات مدينتنا](#), [منتدى انسان](#), [المركز الشعبي لمحاربة الفساد](#), [طلعت ربحتكم](#), [صححة ولادنا](#), [خط أحمر](#).<sup>10</sup> Today the coalition remains at the forefront of the battle against the approval of incinerators, the current solution being proposed by the Lebanese government under the guise of "thermal degradation".

### COALITION FORMATION

They met on a regular basis for one year in order to set their objectives, strategy and commitment to the coalition. They created internal bylaws for the coalition in an effort to strengthen their participation, workflow, recruitment process, and accountability measurements. The coalition included experts in waste management, local NGOs, environmental activists and experts, lawyers, new start-ups and environmental enterprises. The coalition defined an overall strategy to achieve its goals, including amplifying pressure on decision makers, speaking to the grassroots, and presenting evidence-based arguments based on expertise in the field of waste management.

### BUILDING AN EVIDENCE-BASED ADVOCACY CASE

In order to succeed, the coalition members with support from activists, private sector entities, and environmental start-ups, presented evidence-based research highlighting citizens' right to a clean environment. Given that the crisis was at its peak, the coalition collaborated with environmental and waste management experts to prepare their arguments and propose sustainable solutions, capitalizing on the knowledge of these experts rather than undertaking new research. The coalition developed informative materials (leaflets, posters, infographics) which were shared online along with audio-visual materials such as short documentaries — *Zero Waste Lebanon*<sup>11</sup> and *An Incinerator for Beirut*<sup>12</sup> — developed by coalition allies which explained the suggested solutions for waste management.

<sup>10</sup> <https://wmclebanon.org/en/home-ar/en/members/>

<sup>11</sup> A Zero Waste Lebanon <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VC-k7aj2lp0>

<sup>12</sup> An Incinerator for Beirut <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ee88DvyvXQY>

Complementing its online presence, the coalition expanded its presence outside the capital, but at a slow pace due to the lack of human resources and committed volunteers. The coalition benefited from the expertise of its members and supporters by organizing information sessions which helped in disseminating information to community members, allowing them to make informed decision about what waste management solution they would want for their city.

The coalition provided evidence and cost estimates for alternative solutions that could be used instead of incinerators and provided proof that these solutions exist and are possible to implement, sharing with the Ministry of Environment their suggestions and proposals for alternative solutions.

In 2019, they developed a document analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the solid waste sector and suggesting priorities to work on by the newly assigned government. The document was published online and on social media.

## COMMUNICATION AND MOBILIZATION

An interviewee stated, “The trash is being thrown in the sea and sea creatures are consuming that plastic and trash and we are consuming it again; thus, we are consuming our own trash.”

The coalition continues to engage and mobilize members of the larger Lebanese community through word of mouth, different social media platforms by posting videos, pictures, visuals, documents, and boosting the content on these platforms. In addition, the Coalition holds awareness raising sessions in municipalities, schools, and universities to inform the public about the current situation and the alternative waste management systems and solutions.

Community members were invited to participate in protests and demonstrations that were organized by the coalition in 2019 to put pressure on both the national government and municipalities, and to put the decision for incinerators on hold and discuss and find alternative solutions. Furthermore, the campaigns were shedding light on the consequences of the waste crisis, and how it is affecting the health, environment, land and water by explaining cases such as the residues from the waste dumped getting into the soil and from it to ground water, which in turn gets to the people through drinking or washing. In addition, there were incidents documented in Burj Hammoud landfill of methane gas emissions raising the rates of asthma, cancer, and skin diseases. Students were also invited to participate in the campaign’s activities as the coalition conducted visits to universities and schools across the country to reach out to the younger generation and their parents. The coalition utilized traditional advocacy and community mobilization tactics, gaining support of community members in and outside of Beirut.



The Coalition succeeded in increasing public understanding of the issues by producing Arabic-language content, including all research and outreach material.

## ENGAGING DECISION-MAKERS

Informed by a political economy analysis and stakeholder mapping, the coalition has engaged with local and national authorities from the start of the campaign, especially after the impact that the protests and the crisis in 2015 had on municipalities. In order to capitalize on existing efforts and to support decision-makers who are against incinerators, the coalition has coordinated and engaged with members of the Parliament since the beginning to ensure their buy-in and support. This coordination allowed them to share resources and exchange data with both the MPs and their advisors. Coalition members demonstrated their technical expertise in media and public appearances, gaining not only public trust but that of politicians who reached out to the coalition to become more informed about the situation and leading to more effective engagement and negotiations with some. As part of the coalition’s stakeholder mapping, they engaged with religious leaders to help them raise awareness through their meetings, places of worship, and schools, a very effective tactic that allowed the coalition to reach a wider audience.

There is no doubt that it is difficult to convince decision makers (both in the parliament and municipal councils) who are politically affiliated and are accountable for their party’s decision. Surprisingly, WMC leaders did manage to convince members in the Beirut Municipal Council to change their “Yes” vote for incinerators to abstaining from the vote. The coalition hopes they can convince the majority of the council to vote against the incinerators next time.

## TECHNICAL KNOW-HOW

The majority of individuals and the active members in the coalition are experts in the field of solid waste management. They know the consequences and adverse public health outcomes of the waste crisis, the various solutions that exist, and the result of each proposed solution with estimates on the cost and budgetary implications for each. They are knowledgeable about the land types and what it means for the water, soil, and air of a specific area should an incinerator be implemented. Members include not only environmental and waste management experts, but

also health and water experts who have been contributing information to help build the advocacy case.

In addition, a relative number of individuals and stakeholders who do not have a background in the field did become involved or wanted to learn more; some were self-taught, did their own in-depth research and studies on the sector, while others preferred to get a new education in waste management, or benefited from the Coalition's information sessions and outreach materials.

The coalition has established connections with universities through which they received specific data, laboratory tests and research material. *"Such partnerships with academic institutions strengthen the coalition, and shows the serious work being put behind every publication"* said one interviewee. The coalition not only managed to bring together human resources, but also material resources. Its members managed to ensure notable amounts of funding for activities, events, research, and communication material from individuals who contributed small amounts of money.

## LEGAL ASPECT

The Coalition reviewed and commented on the proposed integrated solid waste management law prior to its passage in 2018<sup>13</sup> and the other related laws, and has subsequently worked on proposing an amendment to the approved solid waste management law. They reached out to MPs and politicians to lobby with them in order to pressure other decision-makers.

Together with its network of lawyers, experts and stakeholders in the field, WMC has been able to influence some governmental decisions and actions related to solid waste management. They appealed twice on the Council of Ministers' waste management decisions at the State Shura Council and directed official warnings to the Members of Beirut Municipal Council through a Notary Public around the incinerators' decision. Furthermore, they sent letters to the Ministry of Environment to request Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) and monitoring results for incinerators and landfills and assisted citizens to file complaints to the Ministry of Environment regarding open waste burning.

In addition, the Coalition sent letters to the companies who were shortlisted to apply for the tender of Beirut Incinerator and to international organizations to advocate against utilizing incinerators in the country. They participated in several political debates and organized several workshops for journalists and municipalities to raise their awareness and implemented a media campaign to attract the public and inform them and pressuring decision-makers. Through various demonstrations and protests they maintained trust with the public by being transparent and publishing all minutes and data online.

# REFLECTIONS

## SUCCESSSES

**Persuading decision makers:** With strong arguments and facts backed by extensive research, WMC succeeded in creating pressure on the Beirut Municipal Council to put the discussion to purchase incinerators on hold until further studies are conducted to determine the health impact, the costs, and the capacity needed of such incinerators. As it was stated in an interview with a member of the coalition, the Coalition persuaded at least five members to change their decision and abstain from voting in favor of purchasing the incinerators in the last municipal meeting. At the same time, the coalition continues to call on decision makers to maintain a clean and livable environment in the area planned for the incinerators.

**Awareness Raised:** WMC, along with other campaign groups, managed to raise awareness among the general public across Lebanon on the negative impact of the lack of a national waste management strategy and action plan. More importantly, people are now aware of the side effects of incinerators on their health and environment. This motivated community members to join efforts with activists to increase the pressure on decision makers. This was achieved through workshops and press conferences in addition to capitalizing on the use of both social and traditional media. This in turn has led several municipalities to reach out to experts to train them and help them raise awareness within their districts and towns on waste management.

**Media Support:** It was noticeable that the WMC gained the trust and support of local media as many of its representatives were invited to talk shows to contest solutions proposed by the government, present alternatives and

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/featuredArticle.php?id=191>

raise awareness. The support they gained was also translated in live coverage by local TV channels of some of their interventions and activities. While the media did support their cause, it is also important to mention that the coalition was not able to develop media material that would have been used by these channels due to a lack of funding as explained in challenges below.

**Law enforcement:** Sample success stories started to appear as the waste management law<sup>14</sup> went into effect, although not as fully suggested by the coalition. The law includes strict measures to be put on community members, institutions, and industries who are caught polluting and violating the law such as fines. The punishments vary between paying fines, going to prison, or temporary closing down the company or factory. Citizens are themselves acting as “environmental police” as they started taking videos of violations on their phones, posting them on social media and tagging the Internal Security Forces who in turn issue tickets against these people. One interviewee said: *“The government penalized a woman who threw trash from her car and was filmed on camera, she was forced to pay fines for her actions.”*

## CHALLENGES

**Absence of Legal Framework:** The absence of an anti-corruption law, a whistleblower protection law, and the absence of proper implementation and monitoring mechanisms of the environment protection law have all adversely impacted the success of the coalition’s progress. Interviewees cited examples of how corruption has prevailed throughout the years, linked to the process of finding solutions and proposed alternatives), misconduct in procurement, guidelines, and decision regarding incinerators in Beirut for example. However little could be done without a legal framework to hold officials accountable or to ensure that proper policies and procedures are put in place to provide for a healthy and clean environment for all community members.

**Managing the Growth of the Coalition** Similar to other coalitions, the waste management coalition still faces coordination and leadership challenges. Members of the coalition come from different backgrounds and are not necessarily equipped to manage big coalitions and coordinate between different entities, they did however, develop and learn such skills on an ad-hoc basis and by taking action. This however, weakened the overall management and orientation of the coalition. Moreover, conflicting points of view of some of the coalition’s factions surfaced on occasion, leading to tension in some cases and withdrawal of some members in other cases. In addition to this, the coalition is fully operated on voluntary basis, the time and availability of whom was a challenge during important milestones.

**Lack of Strategy and Action Plan:** Due to the lack of available information provided by the government, it was hard to set the action plan and strategy for the campaigns and for other interventions. The coalition learned to adapt and amend their work plan according to the current situation and work under pressure to optimize their impact. *“With a longer-term strategy and more clarity, the coalition would achieve more impact”* commented an interviewee.

**Volunteer Motivation and Retention:** Any campaign to succeed requires human resources and community members mobilized around it. Given the harsh political and economic situation in the country, it is hard for campaigns and coalitions to retain volunteers. Many stop showing up to events and activities as soon as they find a job while others lose hope quickly and stop attending meetings and activities. It is important for campaigners to understand that in a difficult political context such as Lebanon, advocacy work takes years and needs significant perseverance to succeed.

**Lack of Funding:** To sustain itself thus far, the coalition has relied on internal funding through its members in addition to organizing fundraising events. The coalition chose not to accept external funding in order to avoid being politically tagged. However, this limited how much they could do, the type of events organized, and the media content produced which was modest in comparison to other funded campaigns. At the same time, they could not afford paying media companies and TV stations to reach out to larger audience and present their arguments. This also impacted the management and coordination of the day to day tasks and work of the coalition as most of its members were volunteers who had full-time jobs.

**Resistance from Some Community Members:** Although many community members are involved in the campaign and awareness is increasing, resistance of some continues to pose certain challenges. This resistance is a result of several factors explains one interview: *“Some are linked to the fact that there are blind political affiliations and people would believe what the leaders of the political party are saying is correct and would then support the establishment on incinerators irrespective of their impact, while others have lost hope in any change possible in the country and would rather remain silent and ‘fence-sitters’ rather than advocate with the coalition.”* This is mainly due to the absence of policies by the government that cater to the well-being of community members, as they have witnessed many temporary solutions by the government that lasted years (temporary landfills that turned into permanent ones as an example).

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<sup>14</sup> [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/supporting\\_resources/iswm\\_law\\_80\\_october2018\\_english.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/supporting_resources/iswm_law_80_october2018_english.pdf)



# LESSONS LEARNED

**Bringing Experts on Board:** Having experts in the sector who are part of the coalition is essential, since they are able to direct and set the work plan in a way that benefits the whole. Their role is crucial in providing everyone (advocates, citizens, decision makers, and the media) with the right and necessary information for them to make informed decision.

**Being Opportunistic:** Building on the momentum from 2015, the wide network of people created and the relations with new elected officials has all come in handy when the coalition was formed. The coalition team used an appreciative inquiry approach to analyze what was working well, why was it working well, and did more of it. For example, the coalition expanded its presence in the villages and towns to coordinate better with some of the key municipalities who were on their side and supported their demands.

**Forming a Comprehensive and Inclusive Coalition:** Joining all the activists, who share the same objectives and goals together as a coalition to campaign is essential despite differences between them in terms of organizational affiliations, backgrounds, personalities, regional focus, etc. They were able to present a unified image to members of the Lebanese community, impose more pressure on the government and have more impact. The WMC presented itself as a strong group of activists, academics, researchers, environmentalists and others who joined efforts to stop the crimes being made against the Lebanese citizens through haphazard waste management solutions.

**Being Personal:** It is important to connect personally with the people the coalition is trying to attract through its ongoing campaigns. The issue at hand might not seem of utmost importance to citizens who are living under dire economic situations facing daily challenges at the socio-economic level, it is therefore important to explain how this crisis still touches on their day to day well-being that it is equally important for them and their children. This is not easy, given not only the socio-economic situation but also the political affiliation of many.

**Being Proactive, not Simply Reactive:** Ironically the coalition members emerged in response to the 2015 crisis, but the WMC decided to be proactive in advocating for a long-term strategy and waste management plan. The events in the country and the changing positions of politicians discussing this issue has delayed the finalization of a comprehensive strategy. Many agreed to the need to be proactive and act in anticipation of what the results of a municipal meeting might be, or what the decision of a ministerial committee might show, plan different scenarios and set plans accordingly.

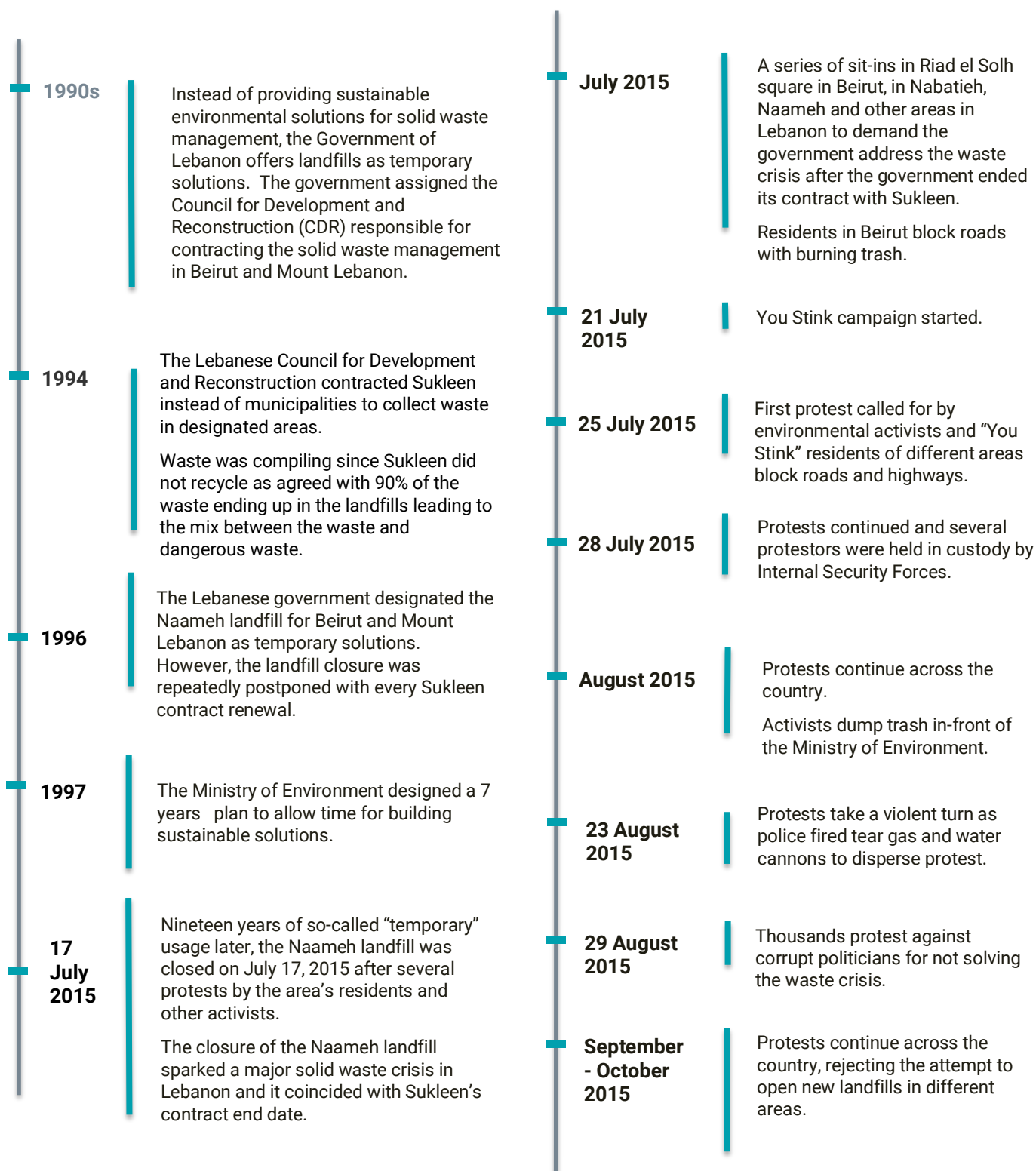
**Engaging the Municipalities More Effectively:** Several interviewees highlighted the point that most of their efforts are important to a certain extent especially as the discussion on incinerators is taking on a greater significance. With that in mind, it is important to keep the momentum, support, and connection with the local municipalities as strong allies against any waste management plan that does not address the impact of the waste crisis on the environment and the health of the citizens. Focusing on the capital will eventually lead to a disconnection with the others.

**Securing More Time and Commitment from Core Leaders:** A coalition such as WMC would benefit from having full-time members responsible to follow-up on their strategy and work plan to make sure that they are covering everything needed, engaging every stakeholder they mapped, keeping track and archiving notes, incidents, media coverage, reactions to and replies from decision makers, etc. This person or team would also be dedicated to managing and coordinating between the different entities, groups and individuals engaged in this coalition.

# THE WAY FORWARD

The WMC continues its efforts to advocate for a comprehensive strategy and plan to address solid waste, presenting solutions and arguments against incinerators and other proposals presented by the Lebanese government. They prepared a document setting the priorities for waste management during the coming period and published it online and on social media. Meanwhile, awareness raising activities continue in different regions, on social media, and among environmental circles. However, given the October 2019 uprising, the subsequent cabinet change, and COVID-19 crisis, the issue of resolving the solid waste management situation is in question... five years on from the events of 2015.

# ANNEX I: SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT TIMELINE



# SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT TIMELINE (CONTINUED)

