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# **RIGHTS BASED ADVOCACY IN LEBANON (2013-2018)**

## CHALLENGES, SUCCESSES AND LESSONS LEARNED

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## A. INTRODUCTION

Across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), mass movements and citizen uprisings to demand greater participation in governance and political and socioeconomic reforms have refocused the attention of international organizations and governments on the role of civil society and non-state actors in advancing policy changes and government oversight. Even before the civil war of 1975,<sup>1</sup> Lebanon has been known for its vibrant civil society, which includes a wide spectrum of associations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), not-for-profit organizations, charities, political parties, scouts, sports clubs and others. These organizations have enjoyed significant freedom of assembly and self-organization that is historically unique in the MENA region.

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***The right to form self-organized associations was enshrined in Article 13 of the Lebanese Constitution: “The freedom to express one's opinion orally or in writing, the freedom of the press, the freedom of assembly, and the freedom of association are guaranteed within the limits established by law.”***

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Many CSOs in Lebanon have transitioned from service delivery to development; however, their engagement in advocacy remains limited and restricted by factors internal to the organizations themselves and/or external challenges related to the operating environment. In the 2014 study “Mapping Civil Society Organizations in Lebanon,” an initiative funded by the European Union and conducted by Beyond Reform & Development (BRD), 31 percent of surveyed CSOs defined their function as lobbying and advocacy, whereby they formulate policy solutions and recommend reforms at local and national levels. The study highlighted that most CSOs concentrate their efforts on direct service delivery due to their lack of capacity (internal) and weak governmental response to lobbying and advocacy<sup>2</sup> (external).

The Building Alliances for Local Advancement, Development and Investment – Capacity Building (BALADI CAP) activity – is an initiative funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Counterpart International is the prime recipient of this award and Management Systems International (MSI) is the lead technical partner working in Lebanon. Within the BALADI CAP framework, Counterpart supported a research project on civil society advocacy in Lebanon with the goal of developing learning products that will afford USAID and future implementing and local partners insights into the pressing challenges and opportunities at the nexus of civil society and local governance in the Lebanese context.

The scope of the advocacy case studies aligns with BALADI CAP’s Civic Engagement Initiative (CEI) component, which seeks to broaden the democratic space for citizen participation in public affairs by creating platforms for informed public debate and increased citizen engagement beyond sectarian and confessional lines. The CEI component includes three advocacy issue networks: Governance and Accountability; Human Rights; and Environment Preservation and Solid Waste Management.

Drawing on the CEI of BALADI CAP, the Lebanese firm BRD and Counterpart undertook a mapping of advocacy campaigns active in Lebanon between 2013 and 2018, specifically civil society efforts related to the use of public space, women’s rights to nationality, solid waste management, the rights of people with disabilities, and answers for parents of individuals disappeared during Lebanon’s civil war. As these campaigns include demands for

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<sup>1</sup> Nawaf Salam, “Civil Society in the Arab World,” Harvard Legal Islamic Studies Program (2002): 1-17

<sup>2</sup> The European’s Union’s ENPI/2012/304-556 Programme for Lebanon, “Mapping Civil Society Organizations in Lebanon”, (2014), 47. Developed by Beyond Reform and Development.

government action, transparency, and policy change, governance and accountability is a common thread throughout the case studies. The resulting five studies highlight best practices and common factors contributing to civil society's advocacy successes or shortcomings and enhance an understanding of CSOs' needs while working on advocacy to further advance rights and reform in Lebanon. All final case studies will be posted on the BALADI CAP website (baladicap.com) and the Beyond Group website (beyondgroupconsulting.com).

This exercise explored rights-based advocacy approaches that base the legitimacy of economic, social, cultural, and political rights afforded to Lebanese citizens on the country's affirmation of international conventions and treaties, particularly drawing from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) to ensure citizens' rights are respected. The mapped initiatives under this study focused on one or more rights from the UDHR that are not being respected by the Lebanese government. Although not all of campaigns studied have achieved policy change, it was important to highlight them given their efforts to help raise awareness of these rights and highlight issues for subsequent policy change efforts.

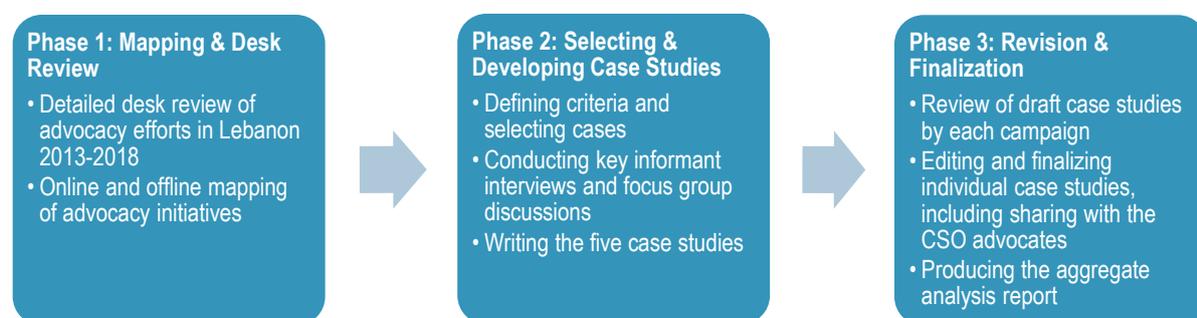
This report presents the aggregate-level key findings of successes, challenges and lessons learned of the five studies, along with recommendations for future interventions for civil society, donors and government.

## B. METHODOLOGY

The study methodology was based on four overarching principles:

- **COMPREHENSIVENESS:** capturing all relevant data, elements and dimensions on advocacy campaigns, lessons learned and best practices.
- **PARTICIPATION:** conducting the research in a participatory and inclusive manner with key advocates to ensure ownership, buy-in and relevance of data collected.
- **MIXED RESEARCH METHODS:** conducting the research through qualitative assessment using desk review, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions.
- **ADVOCATES-FOCUSED:** ensuring focus on the specific needs and requirements of advocates in Lebanon to succeed, which allows for enhanced comprehension of programming recommendations.

The study took place over three phases:



### Phase 1: Mapping and Desk Review

To inform the selection of the advocacy campaigns for study and ensure an adequate understanding of the issues, actors and impacts of advocacy efforts, BRD undertook a

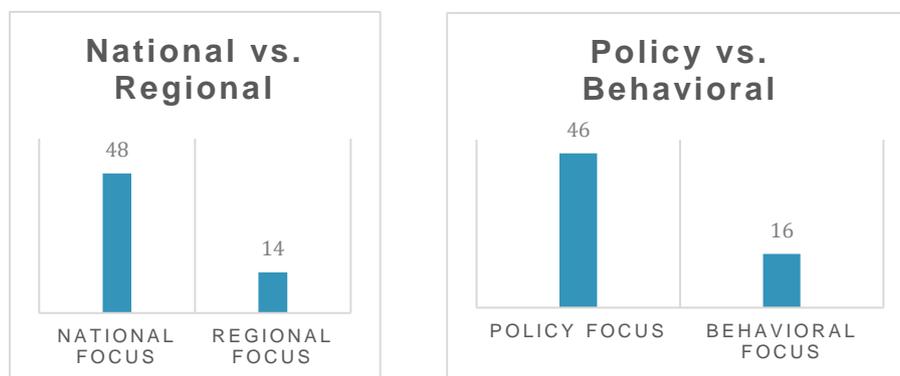
comprehensive review of Lebanese civil society advocacy between 2013 and 2018. This phase included several steps:

1. The team began by conducting online research to compile an initial list of interventions:
  - a) Using the CSO database BRD previously developed, the team sorted organizations by type of intervention: advocacy and lobbying or awareness-raising. This resulted in an initial list of 33 organizations that work at the national level.
  - b) The team conducted a desk review of existing case studies, analytical reports and analysis of advocacy interventions and reviewed donors' and international organizations' websites and development portals to obtain information about their support and details on the campaigns.
2. The team then sent emails to a selection of donors and international organizations that have funded advocacy interventions with a set of questions about the types of campaigns they funded, the focus, partners, duration and status.
3. The research team also contacted individuals and organizations that led less visible campaigns, including conducting several phone calls with NGOs, activists and advocates to ask about tactics used, current status of the campaigns, etc.
4. Finally, the team reviewed national advocacy reports and shadow reports, including the civil society report on the Universal Periodic Review 2015 and interviewed the authors.

Through these various data collection methods, BRD compiled an initial list of 62 interventions mapped according to the following data: intervention title; implementers/lead organizations; donors; date of activity; sector; brief background on the contextual frame; objective; tactics used; current status; stakeholders; organization's mission; and contact details (website, phone number and social media).

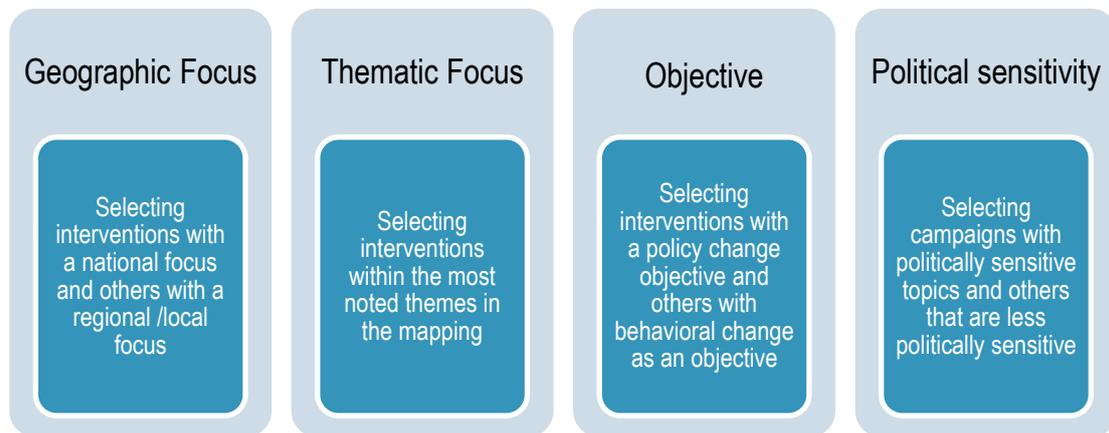
This initial mapping served as the foundation from which the research team captured general trends and selected the five cases for study.

**Figure 1. Types of advocacy interventions by geography and purpose**



## Phase 2: Selection of Case Studies

Based on the results of phase one research and BRD's long experience in advocacy in Lebanon, the team suggested the following criteria for selecting the five case studies:



- **Geographic Focus:** After applying the criteria above, the research team selected five advocacy campaigns from the desk review/mapping for further study, including four that focused on policy change at the national level and one with a local/regional-level focus aimed towards changing local policy. The dynamics differ considerably between the national level stakeholders and policymakers and those at the local level. Although the team initially intended to restrict its research to national level campaigns, BRD and Counterpart ultimately agreed it was important for learning purposes to include at least one local-level campaign as well.
- **Thematic Focus:** The themes and topics of the mapped interventions varied significantly; however, recurring themes focused around environmental preservation, social, economic and women's rights and public space.
- **Objective:** The ultimate objective of advocacy campaigns is to achieve sustainable change, primarily through policy change but also via behavioral change. The initial mapping and previous experiences showed a considerable number of interventions aimed towards behavioral change, which the team included in the selected studies.
- **Political Sensitivity:** While all of the studied campaigns deal with people's rights and are thus political in nature, the Lebanese political context renders some topics more politically sensitive than others. Any topic that influences the delicate sectarian power sharing system among the political elite is significantly more challenging to address. This includes issues surrounding electoral laws, nationality laws, decentralization laws, etc. The dynamics for interventions and campaigns tackling those topics differ from those addressing less politically sensitive issues. It was thus important to study advocacy campaigns working in both of these spaces. The politically sensitive case studies include the Nationality Campaign, Waste Management, and Families of the Kidnapped and Disappeared.

**Other factors taken into consideration when selecting the case studies included:**

- **Level of success:** The research included campaigns that succeeded in achieving their advocacy goal as well as less successful interventions to learn from their challenges.
- **Structure of the campaign:** A balance was struck between advocacy interventions led by coalitions versus less structured campaigns as well as interventions led by informal groups and individual organizations.
- **Funding and resources:** The ease of access to resources influences a campaign's success. The selected campaigns thus included initiatives well-funded by donors as well as those that were self-funded.

## C. Summary of Cases

The research team conducted five case studies from various perspectives, including an overview of the issue, the advocates/implementer, the advocacy strategy (i.e. research, stakeholder engagement, targeting decision-makers, media outreach, etc.), message development, and reflecting on the impact, challenges and lessons learned. The table below summarizes each case, followed by an analysis of common challenges, successes, lessons learned and recommendations for civil society, policymakers and donors going forward.

<b>Case Study 1 assesses four separate campaigns that advocated for citizens' right to access public space and how they subsequently joined forces as the "Lebanon Coast Coalition" to mobilize on a national level.</b>			
<b>Problem</b>	<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Success</b>	<b>Current Status</b>
Beirut's public park had been closed to the public for over 20 years.	<u>Reopening Horsh Beirut:</u> In 2010, Nahnoo (a BALADI CAP sub-grantee) launched a campaign to reopen Horsh Beirut to the public, engaging community members, municipal leaders and the media, and to raise awareness on the importance of public space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Horsh Beirut is now open to the public all week long.</li> <li>• People are aware of their right to have public spaces accessible to all.</li> </ul>	The campaign continues to advocate against the construction of a field hospital within Horsh Beirut and to highlight the environmental and social impact of decreasing the availability of green public spaces in the city.
The last two public access points to the beach in Beirut were being closed by private resorts.	<u>Protecting Dalieh and Ramlet Al Bayda Public Beaches:</u> The campaigns called for providing a safe and clean environment for the visitors of both Dalieh and Ramlet Al Bayda and the preservation and enhancement of the role of Dalieh as an open-access shared space for all city dwellers and visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on campaign efforts, the Minister of Environment announced a draft decree in order to categorize Dalieh as a natural protected area.</li> </ul>	Work in Dalieh is pending the political decision but the coalition is ready to mobilize against the continuation of the project.
The Aadloun coast had been under the threat of being taken over by a private project.	<u>Protecting Aadloun Coast:</u> The campaign called for the protection of the coast and its declaration as a natural reserve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction plans were modified to protect biodiversity and secure the access to the public.</li> </ul>	Aadloun coast is pending the decision of the Ministry of Environment to declare what remains of it as a natural reserve.
A luxury resort was planned to take place over Kfar Aabida's public beach, blocking access to its dwellers.	<u>Save Kfar Aabida:</u> The campaign advocated against the establishment of this resort and protection to the beach as a safe accessible space for all community members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Kfar Aabida the plans were modified as per the recommendations of the environmental experts of the campaign.</li> </ul>	The project is on hold due to political disagreements. The coalition is ready to mobilize again should the work resume.
<b>Case Study 2 reflects on the campaign "Al Harake Barake / Movement is Life" which advocated for employment equity of persons with disabilities in Tripoli.</b>			
<b>Problem</b>	<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Success</b>	<b>Current Status</b>
Several people were injured and disabled as a result of neighborhood conflicts in Tripoli. Many then lost their jobs and source of income. There is a lack of implementation and enforcement of Law 220/2000, which provides the right to work for disabled people, including a 3% quota for private and public institutions.	A group of persons with disabilities, with support from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), advocated for the implementation of employment equity and basic coverage from the National Social Security Fund in line with Law 220/2000 and raised awareness among the disabled community on the law and their right to work.	Through capacity building, outreach to local decision-makers, including the municipality, Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) and the private sector, the campaign raised awareness about the law among private sector companies and built trust among disability stakeholders and the Ministry.	The campaign committee plans to continue its efforts to push forward the agenda with key decision makers, including MOSA and Ministry of Labor (MOL) and stakeholders and intensify efforts with the private sector in light of the new measure taken by the MOL to increase opportunities for Lebanese to find jobs.

**Case Study 3 revisits the efforts of the Waste Management Coalition (WMC) to address Lebanon's garbage crisis by advocating for a national framework for integrated solid waste management.**

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Success</b>	<b>Current Status</b>
Public health and environmental challenges continue to grow due to Lebanon's solid waste crisis, which reached a pinnacle in 2015 and continues today due to successive temporary fixes, emergency plans and a weak policy framework.	A coalition of civil society activists, experts, non-governmental organizations, and community groups joined forces to address mismanagement in the sector, as well as lobby for integrated waste management planning at the national and sub-national level.	WMC's evidenced-based arguments led the Beirut Municipal Council to put on hold a discussion to purchase incinerators and instead conduct additional studies on the health impact, costs and capacities needed for such incinerators. WMC advocacy contributed to the passage of a solid waste management law in 2018, although not all of their recommendations were adopted.	WMC continues to advocate for a comprehensive strategy and plan to address solid waste, presenting solutions and arguments against incinerators and other proposals presented by the government; outlined priorities for reform and raises awareness online and offline across the country.

**Case Study 4 examines the campaign "My Nationality is A Right for Me and My Family" which focuses on legislative reform to enable women to grant nationality to their children and foreign spouses.**

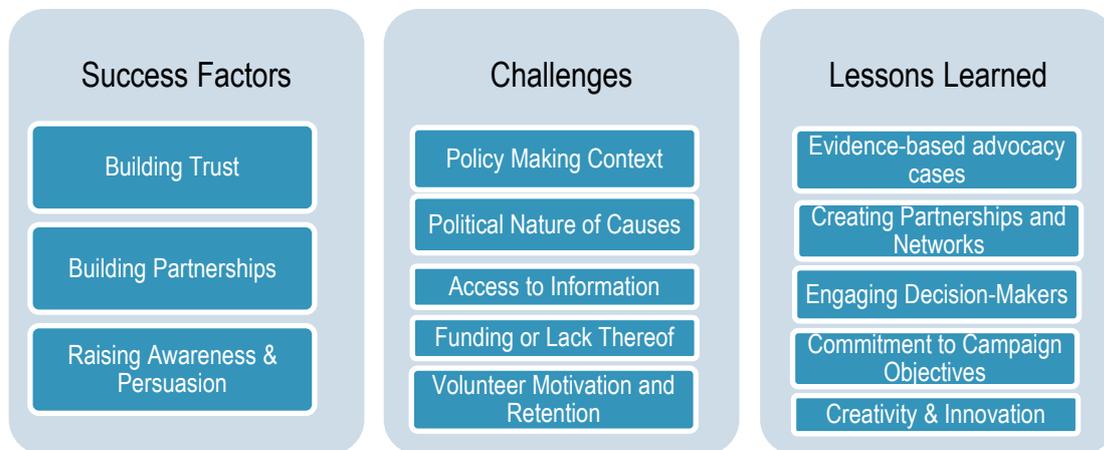
<b>Problem</b>	<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Success</b>	<b>Current Status</b>
Although the Lebanese Constitution states that women and men have equal rights, women do not have the legal right to pass their nationality on to their children or foreign-born spouses. Lebanon's political sectarianism, power dynamics and social norms continue to perpetuate a system that relegates women as second-class citizens.	Since 2001, the campaign has lobbied government and parliament with evidence-based research, policy papers and proposed legislation amendments; built the capacities of concerned women and their families on their rights; organized petitions, protests and sit-ins; mobilized civil society, grassroots communities and international organizations. They launched a hotline to assist women married to foreigners in dealing with ministries; conducted strategic litigation; and implemented a robust media and outreach campaign that continues today.	The campaign has succeeded in putting women's nationality rights on the legislative agenda, in the media and in the public eye. They have contributed to procedural changes that enable children of Lebanese women to be treated on equal basis as Lebanese children in accessing public education and government health services and free residency permits for foreign spouses and children.	The campaign continues to exert pressure on lawmakers to replace this discriminatory law with a gender equitable nationality law that provides Lebanese women equal rights.

**Case Study 5 captures the long-term efforts of the Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and Disappeared.**

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Success</b>	<b>Current Status</b>
Over 17,000 Lebanese and non-Lebanese went missing or were forcibly disappeared during the Lebanese civil war between 1975 and 1990 with little to no information shared about their whereabouts and conditions.	Since 1982, the Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and Disappeared (CFKD) has been advocating for the formation of an official independent and impartial commission to investigate the cases of the forced disappeared and establishment of social protection programs for the parents and families of the disappeared. The committee used a variety of tactics to engage parliamentarians and governmental entities, networking with civil society and media, research and documentation, and mobilizing grassroots in sit-ins, protests, and outreach, including de facto recognition of April 13 <sup>th</sup> as an annual day of remembrance of the civil war.	In 2018, Law No. 105 was passed to create a national independent and impartial commission to investigate the cases of the forcibly disappeared. This emerged from years of advocacy and short-term successes, including the establishment of two national commissions of inquiry (2000 and 2001); subsequent government approval to share the inquiry dossiers to the Committee; and litigation advocacy lodged before the State Shura Council, Lebanon's highest administrative judicial body, which confirmed the families' right to know and right to information in 2014.	Almost 40 years since the campaign started and two years after the passage of Law No. 105/2018, the Government of Lebanon finally appointed the ten members of the National Commission on the Missing, including Wadad Halawani, founder of the Committee.

## D. Summary Analysis: Success Factors, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

Commonalities among the five advocacy case studies include successes that contributed to achieving one or more of the campaign objectives; challenges (internal and/or external) that required campaigns to revise strategies and tactics; and lessons learned that can inform and benefit other civil society activists in their own future advocacy efforts.



### SUCCESS FACTORS

#### **BUILDING TRUST**

Most of the campaigns studied undertook the important effort of building trust with both citizens and the media to gain their support in joining advocacy efforts and activities. It took time to regain this trust given the accumulated disappointments citizens experienced regarding CSOs' ability to impact policy. At the same time, engaging media outlets helped campaigns connect with a wider and diverse audience to deliver their messages, call for action and gain citizens' support. This was particularly noticeable with the Solid Waste Management Coalition, as the media accompanied their activities and interventions during different phases of their work.

#### **BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS STRENGTHENED CAMPAIGNS AND RESULTED IN RESOURCES**

Campaigns achieved more when NGOs and CSOs collaborated and worked collectively rather than as a single organization. Through partnerships, organizations gained resources and benefitted from technical support. Where relevant, they formed coalitions, such as when those working on waste management issues formed the Waste Management Coalition and those working on access to and protection of public beaches worked as the Lebanon Coast Coalition. Partnering with international NGOs also allowed for a wider scope of experience sharing and networking while simultaneously allowing for greater access to funding. In building partnerships, the campaigns connected with and developed alternative funding resources, such as private sector contributions, crowd funding campaigns and individual contributions. This allowed them to expand their outreach plans and better develop their research and documentation as well as capitalize on community resources to design and implement their activities.

#### **RAISING-AWARENESS AND PERSUASION**

While the campaign studied sought policy change, they also aimed to raise awareness among community members around their respective issues as a building block to persuade

decision-makers to take action. While most campaigns did not achieve the latter given the complexity of Lebanon's policymaking process, many succeeded in bringing the issue to the surface and into the public discourse. Both those directly impacted by the campaigns and the broader public are now aware of each of the five campaigns, the causes and issues they address and the role they could play as community members to support rights-based change. Local level initiatives proved slightly more successful in persuading decision-makers to either take action or consider the campaign's suggested alternatives. Specifically, the *Movement is Life* campaign managed to convince certain private sector companies within Tripoli to adopt Law 220/2000 and acknowledge that 3% of employees should be people with disabilities. Campaigns achieved such success by engaging decision-makers at early stages. Moreover, at the local level, the connection between campaigners and decision-makers is less formal, easier to build and more impactful given the smaller scale and scope of change requested as opposed to changing or impacting a national policy.

## **CHALLENGES**

Each of the campaigns faced challenges specific to the nature of the advocacy issue and/or the context and timing of their efforts. However, the campaigns faced common challenges – both internal to their campaigns and external due to the Lebanon's political context and legislative framework. Campaigners did their best to navigate these challenges and respond by revisiting their strategies and tactics in order to continue their advocacy efforts.

### **COMPLEXITY OF POLICY MAKING IN LEBANON**

Several factors hinder the effectiveness of the policymaking process in Lebanon, primarily the sectarian, partisan and fragmented nature of the socio-political power groups that form the legislative and executive governing bodies. It was challenging for some advocates to understand the linkages and networks between the different actors and decision-makers (members of municipalities, mayors, members of Parliament, influential political figures, religious men, etc.), or to find common ground between them in order to work collectively and influence policy change. Hence, advocates spent significant time and effort trying to understand the political dynamics, prerogatives and authorities among stakeholders - both governmental and non-governmental - with varying political influence.

While each campaign faced this challenge, the advocates working on nationality grappled with this issue more than others, as the conversations around Lebanon's nationality law have been ongoing for the past 15 years and, with every milestone, the campaigners encounter different complexities in the policy making process, such as the change in political powers after elections, one political camp revoking the conversations or advancements pushed for by others, interventions from religious figures to delay legislation discussions or postpone or amend suggested reforms. The campaigners closely assessed the situation to better understand religious figures' motivations for intervening in policy making, ultimately learning that the reasons related to confessional and sectarian gains, as the nationality case study highlights.

### **POLITICAL NATURE OF THE CAUSES**

Each of the campaigns focused on advancing rights violated by Lebanon's confessional political system, a structure built to ensure the longevity of clientelism and sectarianism. This system has redefined the primary purpose of politics to be the division of the state's resources, and economic gains, protecting mutual political gains and favoring private interest over public interest. As a result, many campaigns faced new obstacles each time they advanced towards impacting public policy, finding themselves dealing with another political challenge. The Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and Disappeared has struggled while maneuvering around the political challenges, especially as its cause – finding answers for families of those disappeared during Lebanon's 15 year civil war – implicates political parties and leaders, the former combatants who now lead Lebanon's legislative, executive, and judicial branches. Unearthing information linked to those kidnapped during the war will

expose the political parties. This effort will take years to be successful, if ever.

### **ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

Although the Lebanese parliament passed the Access to Information Law in 2016, the law has yet to be properly implemented. Advocates thus faced significant challenges to accessing official information from the government related to their advocacy issues. Instead, activists have relied on friends and allies within public institutions to informally share information, which, in some cases, risks “de-legitimizing” the campaign since they could not officially go “on record” or reference their source of information. Nearly all five campaigns resorted to the same tactic to collect information – each to varying degrees - through ministries, municipalities and the parliament. The lack of public information, specifically reliable data, statistics and numbers that could illustrate how policies are impacting people’s lives, limited advocates’ ability to build strong evidence-based advocacy cases. In turn, they conducted their own research with their own limited resources in order to support and enhance their arguments for change.

### **FUNDING OR THE LACK THEREOF**

Campaigns proved extremely resourceful in their advocacy efforts, motivated by their causes and personal commitments to achieving change. The campaigns that received international donor funding benefited from both technical and financial resources but faced challenges as they sought to prove the donor’s agenda did not influence their campaign. Where funding was lacking, advocates struggled to retain volunteers, carry out activities with a limited budget and sustain their efforts. In certain cases, this limited their capacity for outreach, creative activities, access to in-depth research or their ability to create convincing media material, as was the case with the Waste Management Coalition. While four of the campaigns accepted donor funds, both in-kind and financial, to sponsor their activities, the CFKD, which did not receive donor funding, capped the amount of donations it could receive from individuals to avoid contributors’ having an upper hand in the campaign’s decisions or work process. All of the campaigns studied managed to push forward their issues and agenda; however, they all noted that funding is essential for advocacy efforts to continue with the strong momentum needed to achieve the planned and desired impact.

### **VOLUNTEER MOTIVATION AND RETENTION**

In order to succeed, a campaign requires human resources and community members mobilized around it. Given the harsh and complex political and economic environment in Lebanon, it was difficult for campaigns and coalitions to retain volunteers, as many stopped showing up to events or activities once they found a permanent job. For others, they lost interest or hope as impacting policies in Lebanon takes several years.

### **FRAGMENTATION OF EFFORTS**

Advocacy to impact policies takes significant time and effort as well as a range of human, financial and material resources. While some CSOs have realized the benefits and gains from forming coalitions or building on previous experiences of other organizations, some still struggled with fragmentation of efforts. In certain cases, this fragmentation weakened the position of CSOs in front of decision makers who often asked them to align their objectives and demands and led to a waste in available resources and duplication of efforts.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

Each of the individual case studies includes a set of lessons learned, some of which are specific to the campaign’s advocacy experience. Common lessons learned that spanned across the campaigns include:

### **BUILDING EVIDENCE-BASED ADVOCACY CASES**

Groups have found that allocating time to conduct in-depth research around their advocacy issue and accessing the right resources to obtain needed information helped them build

strong arguments to defend their objectives and gain credibility among not only lawmakers and politicians but also among citizens. To do so, advocates engaged experts in legal or human rights issues to provide stakeholders (advocates, citizens, decision makers and the media) accurate and necessary information to make informed decisions.

### **BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORKS**

Chances of impacting government decisions and policymaking increased when campaigns were open to combining efforts with different initiatives and forming a coalition around shared objectives and goals. Coalitions allowed advocates to access resources (both human and financial) and share experiences, information and strategy. While the coalitions included in this study succeeded in agreeing on a common objective and activities, they highlighted the need to focus on coalition management issues primarily linked to managing their resources, identifying spokespersons and agreeing on common messaging.

### **ENGAGING DECISION-MAKERS**

To inform and adapt interventions and strategies for engagement, advocates found it essential to map potential allies and decision-makers and their positions before engaging them. Building partnerships with key stakeholders early in the process increased the chances of realizing objectives and impacting policy change. In addition, it was important for advocates to find windows of opportunity, such as an upcoming elections, a decision-maker's stated commitment during a townhall meeting or leadership transitions, such as the appointment of the new governor of Beirut. Choosing the right time, political moment and language to demand rights was essential, especially given the changing political power dynamics and context of Lebanon.

### **COMMITMENT TO ACHIEVING CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES**

Despite the wide range of issues and timeline of the advocacy campaigns studied (i.e. Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and Disappeared has been advocating for the past 37 years while the Movement is Life campaign has been running for three years), there is a general perception that advocacy efforts take significant time and effort if they aim to impact a policy. As a result, it was important for advocates to maintain morale and the campaign team's belief that they can and will achieve change and focus on the primary reasons for why they started their campaign.

### **INTRODUCING CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION**

Using creative tools and innovative actions to engage people from different backgrounds allowed the campaigns to impact more members of the community and raise awareness among a wider audience, such as individuals who don't have access to social media but could be targeted through TV spotlights. Engaging students, neighbors and locals to tell stories, organize guided tours and share anecdotes created rapport among people.

## **E. Recommendations**

Lebanese activists continue leading advocacy campaigns with persistence to impact local and national policies and preserve citizens' rights despite recurring and various setbacks, including, but not limited to, the complexity of the policy making process (bureaucratic processes and political strife among law makers), the fragmentation and duplication of efforts and socio-political and economic issues that divert the general public's attention away from the advocacy issues and overshadow the campaigns' momentum.

The practices and trends in advocacy work analyzed here demonstrate that CSOs and coalitions have capitalized on the lessons they have learned from previous experiences to contribute to change and achieve successes on certain issues. At the same time, the culmination of these efforts has raised awareness among community members on their

rights, the importance of their involvement and the critical need of access to information. Based on the five case studies, below are key recommendations for CSOs, donor agencies and policy makers to help push forward advocacy impact on policy making in Lebanon:

RECOMMENDATIONS		
CSOs	POLICY MAKERS	DONORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain relevance to socio-economic wellbeing</li> <li>• DIVERSIFY SKILLS AND CAPACITIES WITHIN THE CAMPAIGN TEAM</li> <li>• Leverage resources and join efforts</li> <li>• Capitalize on media interest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build trust with the community members</li> <li>• Take action on adopted policies</li> <li>• Enhance their own technical capacity and that of their teams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance CSOs' capacity in advocacy</li> <li>• Strengthen CSOs' capacity in policy analysis and recommendations</li> <li>• Foster engagement between policymakers and advocates</li> <li>• Improve funding mechanisms and diversification of resources for CSOs</li> <li>• Program around current needs and pressing issues</li> </ul>

## CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

### MAINTAIN RELEVANCE TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC WELLBEING

As Lebanon is witnessing the most pressing socio-economic crisis in its history, it is critical to focus advocacy campaigns on issues impacting people's socio-economic needs. Campaigners should highlight how their advocacy issues relate to what people are living through or how addressing these issues would positively impact people's wellbeing by:

- Designing policy solutions that answer issues from a socio-economic perspective;
- Highlighting how adopting the suggested policies would save governmental spending and help allocate funds for social protection and economic development;
- Bring sociologists and economists on board to work with the advocacy team;
- Analyzing the economic impact of the absence of certain policies linked to campaign's goals.

### DIVERSIFY SKILLS AND CAPACITIES WITHIN THE CAMPAIGN TEAM

Within a complex political and policymaking system, CSOs have faced difficulties to break through sectarian and confessional walls. Therefore, having a diverse skill- set will help the team:

- Maneuver through political and power dynamics with the support of politically savvy individuals;
- Develop evidence-based cases with the support of legal and policy experts;
- Understand issues by capitalizing on experts in the issues a campaign is advocating.

### LEVERAGING RESOURCES AND JOINING EFFORTS

CSOs can learn from previous experiences and leverage resources through:

- Sharing a legal support unit or a research unit to develop in-depth evidence-based cases;
- Joining existing or forming new coalitions and networks to pressure policy makers to adopt socio-economic policies that would help push forward each of the other issues;
- Following policies through to implementation and not only legislation; coalitions put significant effort into making a policy reach the parliament and then pushing for its translation into law. However, very few follow up to advocate for legislation implementation after its approval, and as a result not all laws see sound application. Coalitions should thus continue their advocacy beyond legislation approval and push for its implementation to ensure their stated goals are achieved.

- Capitalizing on the high sense of citizenship and activism that surfaced during the October 17<sup>th</sup> revolution onwards to pressure Members of Parliaments to adopt suggested policies.

### **CAPITALIZE ON MEDIA INTEREST**

Media not only shapes the public's opinion of an issue but also influences which issues decision-makers prioritize on their agenda. While acknowledging the political affiliation and interests of most media outlets in Lebanon, it is worthwhile to find ways to involve them and ensure they understand advocacy campaigns' objectives by:

- Engaging the media in meetings and planning sessions;
- Seeking their insight and opinion;
- Asking a media anchor to provide communications and message design training.

## **POLICY MAKERS**

### **BUILD TRUST WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS**

- Design and enhance communications tools with community members to share information, gather input and opinions on issues and determine priorities and needs accordingly;
- Formalize relationships with CSOs as key players in policy design and reform by establishing a civil society unit within ministries or the parliament;
- Practice participatory governance through engaging regularly with interest groups and community members.

### **TAKE ACTION ON ADOPTED POLICIES**

- Issue implementation decrees for laws and policies that were passed or adopted and follow through on their implementation (for example, the Access to Information law, national committee to combat corruption, national committee of the cases of kidnapped and forced disappearance, Law 220/2000, etc.).
- Share information related to the progress or hindrances on issues of importance to the public;
- Push forward towards decentralization so more decisions are taken at the local level by municipalities.

### **ENHANCE TECHNICAL CAPACITY**

Decision-makers ought to design targeted technical assistance interventions to build the capacity of public officials and employees on:

- Policy making and development;
- Technology and technological platforms to engage citizens;
- The importance of community engagement and participatory governance;
- Subject matter technical assistance based on the suggested policies or surfacing public issues.

## **DONORS**

### **ENHANCE CSO CAPACITY IN ADVOCACY**

- Assess existing programs, their targets, focus, tools presented, their providers (international donors, INGOs, local NGOs, etc.) and the challenges they face;
- Work with capacity building trainers or organizations to enhance the quality and content of the capacity building programs in line with today's innovation and technology in advocacy;

- Design trainings based on the case studies analyzed;
- Support CSOs in leveraging resources and establishing linkages with existing research units/universities to provide data support to CSOs and campaigns.

### **STRENGTHEN CSO CAPACITY IN POLICY ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION**

- Build the capacity of CSOs to understand the policy making process in Lebanon;
- Design infographics or interactive material on the different routes a policy suggestion could take and how to handle each route;
- Support CSOs (or coalitions) through establishing legal and research units to serve different campaigns when designing and implementing their advocacy plans;
- Encourage decision-makers to issue implementation decrees and put into action the Access to Information law highlighting Lebanon's commitments to the international community.
- Equip CSOs with the needed skills to run political economy and local systems analysis in order to better understand relations between key political players and how these relationships inform and impact their actions and decisions.

### **FOSTER ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN POLICY MAKERS AND ADVOCATES**

- Enhance communication networks between policy makers and advocates through online platforms, websites and different forums;
- Encourage policy dialogue at the local and national level through townhall meetings, opening policy discussion sessions open to the public, etc.;
- Train local and national policy makers on participatory public policy making and the rights-based approach;
- Establish advocacy units within the parliament to provide policy makers with access to citizen representatives (from the CSOs) and experts on specific policy issues.

### **IMPROVE FUNDING MECHANISMS AND DIVERSIFICATION OF RESOURCES FOR CSOS**

- Provide funding for CSOs along with capacity building so they can put into practice the skills they gained and apply the tools they engaged;
- Enhance the capacity of CSOs to raise funds so they can move beyond donor reliance through different resource mobilization tools;
- Support CSOs through technology; such as the provision of tablets so they can collect data and save time on data entry, equipping them with certain software that allows them to visualize their data for better usage during outreach, supporting initiatives that design and develop platforms for law monitoring and so forth.
- Provide long term unsolicited funding to advocacy campaigns to ensure their sustainability given the lengthy process to impact policies in Lebanon;
- Coordinate amongst different donor agencies and between them and CSOs to avoid reinventing the wheel. Partners should capitalize on each other's work and ensure that the priorities of citizens and the government are brought together.

### **PROGRAM AROUND CURRENT NEEDS AND PRESSING ISSUES**

- Support initiatives aimed towards responding to pressing economic needs in Lebanon: establishing social groceries, supporting Nano, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (NMSMEs) and Social Enterprises, supporting alternative funding mechanisms and avenues;
- Support campaigns working towards achieving financial justice for citizens whose money is stuck in the banks;
- Work closely with policy researchers looking into policy solutions for the current social and economic problems;
- Support existing efforts aiming at establishing National Social Protection.