



The Waste Management Coalition in Lebanon

Advocacy Case Study Analysis

Issued November 2020

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COUNTERPART INTERNATIONAL is a U.S.-based NGO working in the international development sector with an annual portfolio of \$65M, primarily funded through awards from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Counterpart works on behalf of the social sector – individuals, organizations and networks around the world who are committed to creating social good. They are counterparts – those striving for more open and participatory government; healthy communities, access to education, natural resource protection and climate resiliency; and improved livelihoods. No matter what sector, or what country, Counterpart is committed to moving the marginalized to full participation in civic life. Only through inclusion will the full potential of a society be realized. Counterpart works with governments, organizations, individuals, foundations, and corporations who are committed to building the capacity of the social sector.

Counterpart is the prime recipient of the USAID-funded Building Alliances for Local Advancement, Development and Investment – Capacity Building (BALADI CAP) activity. Management Systems International (MSI) is the lead technical partner implementing the BALADI CAP activity in Lebanon.

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CASE STUDIES IN LEBANESE CIVIL SOCIETY ADVOCACY

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, BRD and Counterpart mapped 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. Because these campaigns call for government action, transparency, and policy change, governance and accountability are common threads 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).

LEBANON'S WASTE MANAGEMENT COALITION: A SNAPSHOT

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| ADVOCACY ISSUE | <p>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. 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.</p> |
| COALITION'S OBJECTIVES ¹ | <p>At the legislative level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressure authorities to abide by and enact international environmental conventions and penalize violations. • Pressure authorities to enact sustainable waste management laws and regulations and set economic incentives that reduce waste generation and increase recycling rates. <p>At the administrative level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return to the Ministry of the Environment oversight of solid waste management issues 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. <p>At the technical level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop the incinerators' plan to dispose of municipal waste in Lebanon. In 2018, the Cabinet approved the use of incinerators and the Beirut Municipality adopted this as a solution for its municipal waste management. • Advocate for all authorities to set an integrated and comprehensive strategy, establish plans that reduce waste production and enforce sorting at source and recycling, in compliance with international standards. • 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. <p>At the community/social level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the prevention principle and the culture of reducing, reusing and recycling waste across communities through awareness campaigns. |
| ADVOCACY INTERVENTIONS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Conduct research and develop informative materials, including leaflets and posters, infographics, and audio-visual materials. • 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. • Engage directly with decision makers and the media. |
| ADVOCACY RESULTS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created pressure on the Municipal Board in Beirut to stop the adoption of incinerators as a solution. • A solid waste management law went into effect after approval by the Parliament in 2018; however, not all of the coalition's recommendations were considered. In some municipalities, waste management systems are being implemented through privately-run projects (developed and implemented by either NGOs or the private sector) that use better solutions and treatments. • Data around the waste management sector are being collected and archived. |

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

BACKGROUND

Historically, the Lebanese government has failed to find sustainable environmental solutions and develop waste management plans. The government has been using landfills as a temporary solution. To make matters worse, it was not using appropriate locations for those landfills, 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 the economy.²

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 it a monopoly over national collection of waste, which in turn is dumped in designated landfills.³ 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 it received approximately 3,000 tons of solid waste from Mount Lebanon and Beirut, twice the amount for which it had been designed. To address the crisis, in 1997 the Ministry of Environment, led by Minister Akram Chehayeb, designed a seven-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.⁴ The closure of the Naameh landfill sparked a major solid waste crisis in Lebanon, which 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 infighting⁵ and a lack of political consensus over any of the proposed plans or solutions. When Sukleen's contract ended, the company stopped collecting garbage, leading to trash piling up on the streets and sidewalks.⁶ 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 that applied were politically affiliated and connected to politicians in power. Activists accused the companies of colluding on rates and fees⁷; 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.⁸ Waste management responsibilities were assigned to local municipalities and some received sizeable sums of

² Waste Management Coalition experience in advocacy – English: wmclebanon.org

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

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

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

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

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

⁸ 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

money as incentives to accept opening new landfills or reopening existing landfills.⁹ Several entities tried to support the Lebanese government by providing temporary and permanent solutions, such as Germany providing 25 municipalities with quality waste management collection 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 develop 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 driven by 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 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 doorsteps. The movement's proposed solution was to decentralize waste management and treatment and give municipalities the resources they need to manage the problem. Through this suggested solution, the lands, rivers, environment, AND



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

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.

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 other problems, including the poor coverage and quality of basic public services and 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 reached a roadblock.

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، تجمع البيئيين، تجمع الشويفات مدينتنا، منتدى انسان، المرصد الشعبي لمحاربة الفساد، طلعت ريحتكم، صحة ولادنا خط أحمر¹⁰ Today the coalition remains at the forefront of the battle against the

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

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

approval of incinerators, the current solution being proposed by the Lebanese government under the guise of “thermal degradation.”

Coalition formation

The coalition met regularly for one year to set objectives and establish strategy, and to build commitment to the coalition. Members created internal bylaws to strengthen participation, workflow, the recruitment process, and accountability measurement. 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 its 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*¹¹ and *“An Incinerator for Beirut”*¹² – developed by coalition allies which explained the suggested solutions for waste management.

The coalition complemented its online presence by expanding 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 the waste management solutions they would want for their cities.

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 these alternatives with the Ministry of Environment.

In 2019, the coalition developed a document analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the solid waste sector and suggesting priorities for the newly assigned government to address. The document was published online and shared 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 and posting videos, pictures, visuals, and documents on social media 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.

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

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

Community members were invited to participate in protests and demonstrations organized by the coalition in 2019. These events sought to pressure both the national government and municipalities to put the decision for incinerators on hold and discuss and find alternative solutions. The campaigns also shed light on the consequences of the waste crisis, and how it was affecting the health, environment, land and water. The events highlighted how the residues from the dumped waste were getting into the soil and then into ground water – and then into the people through drinking or washing. Similarly, document incidents in the Burj Hammoud landfill of methane gas emissions raising the rates of asthma, cancer, and skin diseases were shared. Students were also invited to participate in the campaign’s activities during the coalition’s 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.

Engaging decision-makers

Informed by a political economy analysis and stakeholder mapping, the coalition has engaged with local and national authorities from its debut, especially after the impact that the protests and the crisis in 2015 had on municipalities. 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 the coalition 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 also that of politicians who reached out to the coalition to become more informed about the situation; this led to more effective engagement and negotiations with some. As part of the coalition’s stakeholder mapping, members 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 decisions. Surprisingly, WMC leaders did manage to convince members in the Beirut Municipal Council to change their “Yes” vote for incinerators to abstentions. The coalition hopes they can convince the majority of the council to vote against the incinerators in the future.

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 of outcomes of each proposed solution with estimates on the cost and budgetary implications for each. They are knowledgeable about the land types and the impacts of incinerators on the water, soil, and air of a specific area. 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 succeeded in increasing public understanding of the issues by producing Arabic-language content, including all research and outreach material.

The coalition has established connections with universities through which it 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 2018¹³ and the other related laws and has subsequently worked on proposing an amendment to the approved solid waste management law. Members reached out to MPs and politicians to lobby them 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. It twice appealed 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, it 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. The coalition participated in several political debates and organized several workshops for journalists and municipalities to raise awareness and implemented a media campaign to inform the public and call for pressuring decision-makers. Through various demonstrations and protests, the coalition maintained trust with the public by being transparent and publishing all minutes and data online.

SUCCESSES

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 to determine the health impacts, 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. 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, raised 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 negative 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 for training and help raising awareness within their districts and towns on waste management.

Media Support: The WMC gained the trust and support of local media, with many of its representatives invited to talk shows to contest solutions proposed by the government, present

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

alternatives and raise awareness. The support also led to live coverage by local TV channels of some of the WMC's interventions and activities. While the media did support its 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 law¹⁴ went into effect, although not as fully suggested by the coalition. The law includes strict measures to be applied to community members, institutions, and industries caught polluting and violating the law. The punishments include fines, imprisonment, and temporary closures of companies or factories. Citizens themselves are acting as “environmental police” as they have 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 violators. One interviewee said: *“The government penalized a woman who threw trash from her car and was filmed on camera, and she was forced to pay fines for her actions.”*

CHALLENGES

Absence of Legal Framework: The lack of an anti-corruption law and 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 decisions regarding incinerators in Beirut, for example. However, little can 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 acting. However, this 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 a voluntary basis and the time and availability of members 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 its work plan according to the current situation and work under pressure to optimize its 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 mobilized community members. 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 requires 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 it could do, the type of events organized, and the media content produced, which was modest

¹⁴ https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/supporting_resources/iswm_law_80_october2018_english.pdf

in comparison to other funded campaigns. At the same time, the coalition could not afford paying media companies and TV stations to reach out to broader audiences and present its 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, as one interviewee explained: *“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 of 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, for example).

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 decisions.

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 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 and how 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: Although the coalition emerged in response to the 2015 crisis, members decided to adopt a proactive approach in advocating for a long-term strategy and waste management plan. Events in the country and the changing positions of politicians discussing the issue have delayed the finalization of a comprehensive strategy. Many agreed on the need to be proactive and act in anticipation of municipal meeting decisions, or those of ministerial committees and plan for different scenarios.

Engaging the Municipalities More Effectively: Several interviewees highlighted the point that most of their efforts gained traction 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 its 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. The coalition 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

TIMELINE: SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Naameh landfill designated
The Lebanese government designates the Naameh landfill for Beirut and Mount Lebanon as a temporary solution. However, the landfill closure was repeatedly postponed with every Sukleen contract renewal.

Summer of protests
Protests continue across the country. Activists dump trash in front of Ministry of Environment.
Protests turn violent as police disperse crowds with tear gas and water cannons.
Thousands protest against corrupt politicians for not solving the waste crisis.
Protests continue across the country through October against attempts to open new landfills in different areas.

Coalition forms
Waste management coalition formed, bringing You Stink members together with other environmental and waste management activists and experts.

Events build awareness, apply pressure
Waste management coalition organizes an event to demand proper waste management in Lebanon.
Coalition organizes meet-up.
Coalition organizes national campaign to clean the Lebanese beach and sea and organizes protest against the incinerators in Beirut. "Your incinerators, our graveyard, stop incinerators in Beirut."
Coalition organizes protest to stop the parliament from voting for waste management law, in Riad El Solh square.

Coalition organizes several talks and protests raise awareness of the importance of a waste management process oriented towards citizen health and the environment, how to manage the waste at source, consequences of using incinerators, etc.

1990

Landfills as temporary solutions

In the 1990s, instead of providing sustainable environmental solutions for solid waste management, the Government of Lebanon offers landfills as temporary solutions. The government assigned the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) responsible for contracting the solid waste management in Beirut and Mount Lebanon.

1994

Government contract with Sukleen

The Lebanese Council for Development and Reconstruction contracts Sukleen instead of municipalities to collect waste in designated areas. Waste piles up because Sukleen sends 90% of waste to landfills instead of recycling, mixing normal waste with dangerous waste.

1996

1997

7-year plan designed

The Ministry of Environment designs a 7-year plan to allow time for building sustainable solutions.



2015

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

2016

JANUARY

2017

AUGUST

2018

JANUARY

MARCH

JULY

SEPTEMBER

2019

APRIL
to
SEPTEMBER

JULY

"Temporary" Naameh landfill closes

19 years after "temporary" use, the Naameh landfill closes after several protests by the area's residents and other activists. The closure of the Naameh landfill sparks a major solid waste crisis in Lebanon and coincides with Sukleen's contract end date.

A series of sit-ins in Riad el Solh square in Beirut, in Nabatieh, Naameh and other areas of Lebanon to demand the government address the waste crisis after ending Sukleen contract.

You Stink campaign started.

Protests continue, several protestors held by Internal Security Forces.

Protestors file complaint against Minister of Environment.

Naameh landfill officially closes.

Waste management coalition officially launched.

Director General of Ministry of Environment engaged. Coalition organizes event to protest the failed attempts of government to resolve waste management problems in Lebanon.

Coalition organizes "Efficiently Designing Awareness Campaigns" to expand outreach.

Coalition organizes an event to protest implementation of incinerators in front of Beirut Municipality.

Zero Waste Lebanon hosts coalition's documentary screenings, discussion of challenges of incinerators and alternative solutions.

Coalition organizes sit-in to reject incinerators at Beirut Municipality. Several Municipal Council members abstain leading to no decision taken.