

# Collaboration within Lebanese civil society

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*Five white papers that introduce the challenges and the opportunities of civil society organizations and social enterprises working in the fields of media censorship, corruption, the promotion of reading, maternal citizenship, and waste management*

Sharq for Citizen Development  
in partnership with  
the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung

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Konrad  
Adenauer  
Stiftung

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# Enabling discussion

**Peter Rimmele**

Resident Representative in Lebanon, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung

***When civil society actors collaborate strategically to tackle common issues, inclusive solutions are created, pluralistic approaches to problem solving are adopted, and alliances are forged to put the public national interest ahead of sectarian divisions and politically interested disputes***

Freedom, justice and solidarity are the basic principles underlying the work of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS). The KAS is a political foundation, closely associated with the Christian Democratic Union of the Federal Republic of Germany (CDU). Through our office in Lebanon, we work with a variety of partners to assist the political, economic, and social development of the country. We aim to make a sustainable contribution to developing democracy, consolidating the rule of law, promoting values of the social market economy, enabling a constructive dialogue between cultures and religions, and empowering civil society organizations.

Civil society plays a key role in public life. Its multitude of actors represent a unique link between citizens and government, helping make the voices of citizens heard and encouraging people's active participation. Our Lebanon program is thus committed to actively support, facilitate and learn from civil society's work.

As such, partnering with Sharq for Citizen Development on this valuable project has been an important priority of our program this year. We strongly believe that enabling active discussions and, consequently, efficient cooperation amongst civil society organizations and activists is highly important. Thus, when civil society actors collaborate strategically to tackle common issues, inclusive solutions are created, pluralistic approaches to problem solving are adopted, and alliances are forged to put the public national interest ahead of sectarian divisions and politically interested disputes.

Waste management, maternal citizenship, promotion of reading, institutional corruption, and media censorship – Through carefully selected case studies, we hope that the lessons learnt from the enriching discussions that were conducted and the extensive research that was made can be applied practically and transferred to further areas of work where the Lebanese and Arab civil society is active.

By fostering coordination and forging alliances between various associations, civil society organizations become far more efficient in advancing their values and goals effectively, for the benefit of the entire society.

# Promoting collaboration

**Reem Maghribi**

Managing Director, Sharq for Citizen Development

***Establishing and nurturing partnerships takes time and energy, but it also saves time and energy and ensures a stronger, more vibrant, and more expansive results***

Limited resources, limited skills, limited contacts, limited ideas... all people and all organizations have their limitations. When they come together to brainstorm, design and act towards a common goal, the outcomes are therefore more relevant and impactful than when they work alone. And yet, partnership and collaboration between organizations is often sporadic and limited.

Having heard a number of activists in Lebanon talk about “the summer of 2006, when we all came together to work for a common goal,” we set out to understand why that experience hadn’t continued to resonate and to encourage civil society activists and organizations to once again collaborate for a common good.

Our approach has been multi-layered. By bringing together representatives from civil society organizations working in the same field, we hoped to introduce potential partners to one other. By enabling honest discussion about the weaknesses that affect each organization, we aimed to motivate them to channel their strengths into collaborative initiatives. By hosting a panel discussion in which experts and attendees discuss some of the core challenges that both seemingly prevent collaboration but that can also be alleviated by it, we hoped to engage a wider audience. And by publishing some of our findings, we hope to motivate you to seek out opportunities to engage and share and collaborate with others who share your vision and complement your abilities.

Establishing and nurturing partnerships takes time and energy, but it also saves time and energy and ensures stronger, more vibrant, and more expansive results.



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# Media Censorship

BY LEENA SAIDI

# An overview

## **History, Legislature and the Lebanese Social Environment**

### **FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IS GENERALLY ACKNOWLEDGED TO BE A CORNERSTONE OF DEMOCRACY AND CRUCIAL TO THE PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY.**

This freedom is widely protected in international and domestic laws, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 19), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 19), and the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 10).

In many countries this right is not fully realized, for example in countries that restrict instances of expression that is deemed insulting to a ruler, offensive to religion, or disrespectful of national heritage, etc. While some instances of restriction may be tied to established local laws and social norms, others may be the result of the consolidated power of an entrenched regime.

Historically, Lebanon has been widely seen as a relatively liberal center of human rights and freedoms in the Arab world. Freedom of expression is enshrined in the Lebanese Constitution, as well as in the international treaties signed by the country. In practice, however, Lebanese citizens have been dealing with censorship for decades.

Lebanon has repeatedly detained and sometimes even silenced journalists, bloggers, activists and artists in the name of legal justice using obsolete laws that fail to clearly define freedom of expression. For example, Article 13 of the Lebanese Constitution states that “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 shall be guaranteed within the limits established by law.” However, the clause “within the limits established by law” is generic and all-inclusive, as the relevant legal fields include the Penal Code, the Publications Law, and the 1994 Audiovisual Media Law, not to mention the Military

Justice Code. All of which have given officials room to control freedoms of speech and expression.

Even though Lebanon has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 19 that says that all public figures, including heads of state, are legitimately subject to criticism and political opposition), Articles 384, 386, and 388 of the Lebanese Penal Code and Article 187 of the Military Legal Code prohibit not only allegations or affronts against the president or army, but consider these types of expression to be criminally offensive. In 2013, some tweets from political activists offended the President of the Republic, at the time Michel Suleiman. The Twitteratis were sentenced to two months in jail for tweets that the courts deemed “demeaning the president.”

Article 75 of the Press Law, furthermore, prohibits the publishing of news that “contradicts public ethics or is inimical to national or religious feelings or national unity.” As a result, journalists often find it difficult for example to expose any form of corruption without worrying about being legally pursued by displeased powers-that-be. The ambiguous terms used by the above-mentioned legislation in delineating the limitations on freedom of speech serve as a gap through which religious and sectarian institutions, political organizations, and influential parties and individuals – who are not otherwise authorized to censor publications – can block the freedom of expression as a means of protecting their own interests. Ominously, the current media laws are constructed in such a way that makes it impossible for any media outlet to expose any form of corruption in Lebanon, whether proven or not, without risking legal penalties.

As far back as 2009, the Maharat Foundation - in cooperation with MP Ghassan Moukheiber - proposed a draft law that introduces necessary amendments to the current 1962 Press Law, which the foundation views as a violation of the Lebanese

Constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The draft law sought to eliminate the above-mentioned vague stipulations that are being used to stifle freedom of verbal and media expression and quell criticism of the actions or policies of government officials that may currently be considered defamatory.

***By playing a critical role in improving governance and reducing corruption, independent media contribute to increasing economic efficiency and stability and to creating positive social and environmental change***

As long as lawmakers continue to ignore this proposed legislation, journalists, filmmakers, artists, musicians, bloggers and social media users will continue to suffer under Lebanon's current law. At the same time, with the rise of the Internet as a portal for increased intercommunication between citizens, the globalized world has drastically altered the possible effects of government censorship on new media. The simultaneous push of the Internet to directly link people across the globe and allow them to express themselves using websites, blogs and other user-generated new media and the pull of governments to control their respective populations has greatly altered the possible impacts of censorship on a broader audience, which may extend far beyond the sovereign territory of a given regime.

For a long time, Lebanon's diverse media environment, particularly its Internet, was considered free and uncensored. The Internet was a place where Lebanese citizens found a platform not controlled by the authorities, where they enjoyed access to a wide variety of views and perspectives and could freely express themselves as well as conduct campaigns to promote government accountability. Today, online activists, journalists, bloggers, and regular Internet users are being subject to growing pressure by Lebanon's censorship authorities, a process severely affecting

the freedom of expression. With increased demand for civil society participation in regulating the laws, there is an opportunity to deploy national and local efforts aimed at regulating media censorship and enhancing freedom of expression in Lebanon.

### ***Media freedom and democracy***

Independent media have an important role in bringing about good governance — something increasingly demanded by citizens across the globe. People want their voices to be heard, and they want institutions that are transparent, responsive, capable and accountable.

Good governance is all about a society's ability to guarantee the rule of law, free speech, and an open and accountable government. Because freedom of expression enables as many citizens as possible to contribute to (as well as monitor and implement) public decisions on development, it is considered an essential pillar of such governance. Thus, media that are independent across all platforms are important for facilitating good governance, which therefore leads to transparency. Within today's much-broadened media landscape, news still remains a central medium for ongoing public assessment of the activities of governments and other institutions that have an impact on development. Ultimately, a lack of such transparency will only feed corruption, hindering the development process.

By playing a critical role in improving governance and reducing corruption, independent media contribute to increasing economic efficiency and stability and to creating positive social and environmental change. The media provide information to actors throughout society, allowing them to participate in the decisions and debates that shape their lives. Such media monitor the democratic process, which enables citizens to hold their governments and elected officials accountable, a function that the youth of today are particularly keen to enhance.

Information and communication technologies used by the youth sector have been a crucial element in global political movements from the revolution in Ukraine to the Arab Spring. There is a need to ensure that young voices are heard in the development debates. For these reasons and others, independent media — uncensored and enjoying freedom of expression — should be viewed as a desirable development.

# Initiatives and Collaboration

## ***Strengths and weakness of civil society organizations working towards eliminating censorship of the media and promoting freedom of speech***

**THE CIVIL SOCIETY MOVEMENT IN LEBANON IS ONE OF THE MOST ACTIVE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. ALTHOUGH ROOTED IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY, ITS REAL DEVELOPMENT STARTED DURING THE SECOND PART OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.**

The evolution of Lebanese civil society can be divided into four phases, the first of which runs from the Ottoman Empire through the French Mandate and the early years of Independence until 1958. During this time, the 1909 law was employed to organize the increasing number of associations being spontaneously established throughout the country. Most of these had a religious basis and mainly aided the poor and needy.

Non-sectarian associations adopting non-confessional and non-political agendas were established during the second phase, from 1958 and 1975. During the third phase, that of the civil war from 1975 to 1990, civil society became more active in order to counteract the total paralysis of government agencies (although it did so under the shadow of militias, which often had a negative impact on civil society activism). Finally, the fourth phase began with the onset of the postwar era and is still continuing. At present, the continuing ripple effects of deepening globalization have led to the introduction of new principles into Lebanon's civil society, such as participatory democracy, sustainable development, good governance, transparency, and accountability.

Today, with the public's general distrust of political parties and the weakness of Lebanon's state institutions, more is expected from civil society. With the move away from traditional structures and perceptions toward a new vision of Lebanon and its place in the world along with an abolition of the present confessional system, there is an opportunity for civil society to lead the move toward a better-governed Lebanon. The country's history since 2005 demonstrates the emergence of

new circles of political power within the country and reveals changes within the civil society arena. Among them is a growing concern with media censorship and freedom of expression.

### ***Lebanese civil society actors combatting media censorship***

This paper is written within the context of a project that aims to promote and enhance collaboration within social society in Lebanon. To that end, civil society organizations (CSOs) or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in the domains of media freedom and the elimination of censorship were brought together for a roundtable to discuss the opportunities and challenges they face, both in general and in terms of collaboration with other organizations.

Those in attendance at the discussion, hosted by Sharq and KAS, were Ayman Mhanna, executive director of the Samir Kassir Eyes (SKeyes) Center for Media and Cultural Freedom and the Director of the Brussels-based Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD); Mohamad Najem, co-founder of Social Media Exchange (SMEX); Vanessa Bassil, founder and executive director of Media Association for Peace (MAP); May Baaklini, program coordinator and research specialist at the May Chidiac Foundation; and Elham Khannous, project coordinator at MARCH.

Such meetings and discussions among civil society organizations and activists are highly important. This is because strategic collaboration to tackle common problems leads to inclusive solutions, the adoption of pluralistic approaches to problem solving, and the forging of alliances that will put the public national interest ahead of sectarian or politically interested disputes.

The aim of this roundtable was threefold. Firstly, it was an opportunity to meet one another and to learn about our individual projects and missions. Secondly, the participants discussed the issue of media censorship and freedom of expression in Lebanon. And thirdly, they brainstormed about how the individual organizations could collaborate on finding solutions to enforce fundamental rights. In doing so, they set an example for other organizations to follow. “By forging alliances between these organizations and coordinating together, we would be far more efficient in advancing our values effectively,” said Peter Rimmele, KAS Beirut Office resident representative and the director of its Regional of Rule of Law Program Middle East/North Africa, to the attendees at the start of the discussion.

Following is a summary of the key findings of the roundtable with regard to the strengths and weaknesses of civil society actions and the opportunities for and challenges to collaboration among CSOs.

### ***Strengths of civil society actions***

The five organizations that gathered at the media censorship and freedom of expression roundtable want to achieve similar goals: The May Chidiac Foundation believes that it can contribute to fostering freedom of expression by supporting the development of knowledge production industries; at the same time, MARCH is working to create an empowered civil society through freedom of expression itself. In the meantime, SKeyes is eager to defend the rights and freedom of expression of journalists and intellectuals through painstaking monitoring, something on which SMEX also places a high value, along with evaluation. Finally, MAP encourages the media to play an essential role in peace building in conflict and post-conflict areas. Though working under different umbrellas, they share the priority of working toward reducing and ultimately eliminating media censorship.

All the participants agreed that the most successful means of getting journalists and citizens to express their opinions and criticism freely and openly include training, workshops and discussions. This is a strength that all the NGOs present at the workshop have. SMEX organizes the School of Internet Governance with the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). They bring international speakers to Lebanon from tech companies to talk about freedom of expression and human rights issues. This year SMEX organized a three-day symposium on how to counter violent

extremism online and protect free speech at the same time. SKeyes train nascent media outlets on how to develop management plans. The May Chidiac Foundation launched a media institute in 2010 to train journalist how to investigate and how to use ethical approaches and best practices, while MAP runs peace journalism workshops, for example on how the media can play a constructive role in reporting on Syrian refugees.

Generally speaking, for all the NGOs mentioned, awareness is key when it comes to journalists being able to navigate the system to get their point of view across. At the same time, packaging the information in a way that does not add to the already growing political and sectarian tensions in Lebanon is imperative.

“By bringing the idea of peace journalism to Lebanon, I found out that this movement gave hope to the new generation and to the potential journalists,” says Vanessa Bassil, the founder and executive director of MAP. The association organizes yearly workshops with the aim of training journalists to circumvent political and sectarian editorial lines in mainstream media outlets in Lebanon. The assumption here is that teaching journalists to report on conflicts and crises without contributing to their increase is one way of promoting peace through media. For Bassil, journalists are the bridge between two sides of a conflict, but their role is fraught with ambiguity: “The way you are reporting can affect negatively the people who are watching or reading your articles,” she cautions.

In fact, the success of the workshops that Bassil ran (in 2011 and 2012) while she was still a freelance journalist encouraged her to found MAP. Year after year, stories of journalists working and implementing the methods taught at MAP encouraged workshop participants and Bassil herself to continue working along this trajectory.

Another method for peace building through the media is covering positive stories to propagate a constructive peace message. “We really felt that there was a value to all the trainings we did,” says Ayman Mhanna, the director of SKeyes, referring to one of the NGOs objectives, which is to conduct training for journalists based on these monitoring activities. The results of the media monitoring reports that took place over the course of two years, 2014 to 2016 showed that “the number of mistakes per articles dropped, the number of sources per article increased and the diversity of the sources per articles increased.”

MARCH's mission is to empower citizens by informing them about their civil rights. Specifically, the NGO organizes coffee shop discussions with the aim of raising awareness on how Lebanese citizens' rights are being limited and by whom. MARCH reaches out to youth groups in different areas in Lebanon, encouraging discussion participants to share their experiences and discuss them with guest speakers, such as bloggers for example, further encouraging people tell their own stories about media censorship and freedom of expression.

And yet, "as long as we [NGOs and CSOs] exist, it means that we have not entirely succeeded in completing our mission," explains Mhanna. The only sign of success is when they have all closed their shops. That's actually achieving success in the field of freedom of expression. The mere fact that they exist means that success has not been achieved. In his view, that is why we should look at specific individual impact. This psychological method of "picking the lowest hanging fruit," he says, enables him and his coworkers to succeed on the micro level.

### ***Weaknesses of civil society actions***

Even if individuals are made aware of their rights as citizens and journalists, other factors may still instill fear in people and push them towards self-censorship, limiting the freedom of expression through another means.

According to Elham Khannous, project coordinator at MARCH, what people fear most is not the security apparatus. Rather, "it's the businessmen and politicians," she elaborates. Whether one is a journalist or simply a concerned citizen voicing opinions on social media platforms, the consequences of being outspoken often leads to receiving verbal and at times physical threats from businessmen and politicians who perceive themselves as targeted by criticism. As a result, reporters and citizens often resort to self-censorship to avoid receiving physical threats or losing their jobs.

One unfortunate result of self-censorship combined with fear is that it leads to weak journalism. Indeed, in Lebanon there is a lack of investigative journalism when it comes to issues that need in-depth research, says May Baaklini, project coordinator at the May Chidiac Foundation. "We do find headlines related to cheating in ballots for example or fraud, but underneath there's only one small paragraph about it," she explains.

***These organizations depend on private funding, which is scarce, and so allocating time to collaboration means dividing the money further***

Furthermore, every Lebanese media outlet has a particular editorial line, with either a political or sectarian bias, a situation that may not be tenable in the long run. "Not everyone is happy to be working in the current media outlets that we have," says Bassil, adding, "They want to be objective and not have to adhere to political and sectarian agendas."

Additionally, NGOs heavily rely on donations and grants to stay functional. "In a country where the private sector is not producing as many jobs as we want, where jobs in the public sector are scarce, the NGO sector came as a life saver or safety net for so many young people, which means that dependence on donor money is so high," explains Mhanna. Being constantly on the lookout for funding sometimes means that civil society NGOs have to rebrand themselves according to where the donors are willing to put their money. "And often the topics are too general, human rights, governance, CVE," points out Baakini.

In the race to find funding, the fact that it is available more often than not through big international organizations means it is much easier to find success outside of Lebanon, says Mhanna. This in turn ties in to another weakness of working within the NGO world: the lack of appreciation at home. For example, in contrast to prevailing attitudes in Lebanon, Bassil points out that "there hasn't been a single time I've been abroad and had people not appreciate our work: not just support but show appreciation."

In part, the lack of recognition domestically is due to the lack of communication between local organizations working on achieving similar targets. This leads to several setbacks, one of them being the division of funding among NGOs that could potentially collaborate on similar topics, for example, digital rights. "We want to try to focus on our strategic planning," says Mohamad Najem,

co-founder of Social Media Exchange (SMEX), adding, “We want to try to collaborate with people that fit, with SKeyes, with Maharat, with March, and see what we can do together, because we’re all working on the same topic, somehow.”

As a result of these limitations, many believe that change cannot happen through civil society alone, and that the private sector and academia need to be brought on board. “The change will happen by bringing different components to the table, not only civil society organizations, because these groups don’t have the power to change things in the country,” says Mohamad Najem, cofounder of Social Media Exchange (SMEX).

With the prevailing lack of communication between NGOs comes a lack of strategic planning, a weakness that needs to be addressed before civil society can move forward. However, asking the NGOs to coordinate without asking the donors to do so can be a waste of time. Often multiple donors will give towards a certain area of research and leave other areas that are in dire need of focus to stagnate, waiting to erupt in otherwise preventable negative outcomes.

Other weakness can be as small as a private company not knowing how to give in kind instead of in funds for a project that needs equipment. Or it could be that funding is available for media training but the institution that could benefit from it cannot spare the money or the time to send a reporter.

### ***Opportunities for further collaboration***

In 2010-2011 SMEX started focusing on digital rights and the intersection between the Internet and human rights. The organization is now trying to start a core group of Lebanese civil society organizations that will work together focusing on digital rights issues. For now, SMEX is part of a number of networks that are working in this arena, including GFMD, the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX), and APC (Association for Progressive Communication).

Mhanna believes there is plenty of room for cooperation, for example in grant applications, where more than one organization can work together on a particular project. For instance, in 2013 there was a call for proposal from the EU Delegation in Lebanon for a single 500,000 Euro grant to work on freedom of expression in the country. For the first time, SKeyes, Maharat and March applied jointly and got the funding.

In a collaborative outcome to the roundtable session described here, the participants agreed to go ahead and apply for a grant to set up a committee made up of at least the five NGOs/CSOs present - and possibly include others, such as Maharat. The committee would meet monthly to share information and data where appropriate in order plan strategically for funding to be allocated to projects that they jointly deem to be priorities. They would also share a calendar to make sure that workshops, trainings and conferences are spread out over the year to optimize attendance. The idea of a future institute to serve as a cover for training, seminars and workshops was also debated.

### ***Challenges to furthering collaboration***

Through the years, numerous individuals and groups have been victims of attacks against freedom of expression, both in the region and globally. They have been imprisoned, kidnapped, tortured, murdered or have simply seen their work being censored or oppressed. This targeting of freedom of expression has provoked outrage and renewed a fierce defense of individual liberties throughout the world.

The right to speak without censorship or restraint must be protected, because it is essential to challenging authority whether legitimate or illegitimate. Here in Lebanon, there are countless individuals who have also dedicated their lives in the name of freedom of expression and opposition to censorship.

Some of the threats that prevent further collaborations go hand in hand with the weakness and setbacks mentioned previously. For one, funding or lack thereof, is the most prevailing threat. Seeing that these organizations depend on private funding, which is already scarce, allocating time to collaboration and coordination means dividing the money further. “Funding is definitely a crisis,” says Mhanna. The EU, which holds the largest donors for these organizations, is currently prioritizing Strategic Communications in terms of funding. This means that CSOs and NGOs working towards freedom of expression are already struggling in terms of funding to fulfill their mission. Collaboration in these straitened circumstances is problematic.

“There’s also the fact that NGOs in Lebanon are understaffed,” adds Bassil. Collaborating, she says, could mean overworking and would result in underachievement, making time-management another challenge for effective collaboration.

# Case Study: Al-Khatt, Tunisia

**Partnering with local and international organizations to encourage citizen participation and nurture investigative journalism**

THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA CONTINUES TO BE ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST DIFFICULT AND DANGEROUS REGIONS FOR JOURNALISTS, WHO ARE OFTEN TRAPPED BETWEEN RADICAL GROUPS AND GOVERNMENTS THAT BEHAVE IN AN EXTREME FASHION. AND YET, THERE ARE REGIONAL EXAMPLES THAT MAY INSPIRE LEBANESE CSOS AND NGOS ATTEMPTING TO FURTHER THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION.

Inkyfada is a web magazine produced by young independent journalists in Tunisia trying to push investigative journalism to new levels, taking on and breaking the traditional bounds of Tunisian society and politics.

Inkyfada was initiated by Al Khatt, a non-profit association founded in 2013 that works for freedom of the press and expression in Tunisia. Al Khatt is a citizen-oriented NGO that believes in citizens' right to independent, quality and useful information and works on ways to innovate and reinvent the relationship between the creators of informative content and the citizen. It partners with other organizations to create initiatives and tools to encourage citizen participation and easy access to information.

One such initiative saw Al-Khatt partner with Tunisian NGO the African Center for Training Journalists and Communication (CAPJC) to run a two-year program of media training in the country, in partnership with Dutch NGO Free Press Unlimited (FPU) and French media non-profit Canal France International.

Al Khatt also partnered with FPU on a project named StoryMaker, through which fifteen young citizen journalists from across Tunisia were trained over eight days during the World Social Forum 2015 – an annual gathering of NGOs, civil society organizations and activists from across the globe. Just days before the training was scheduled to

start, the Bardo National Museum attack took place killing 22 people. Despite the attacks, thousands of people flew into Tunis to attend and participate in the forum. FPU and Al Khatt also decided to not let terrorism stand in the way and went ahead with the training.

The forum kicked off with an anti-terror march through the city in honor to the museum victims. StoryMaker participants scattered through the crowd interviewing activists and delegates. A group of citizen journalists from France, who are part of a citizen media group called Altermondes, were at the forum and joined the StoryMaker training sessions to learn about how citizen journalists in Tunisia were able to cover issues. A spontaneous discussion between the citizen journalists from Tunisia and those from France highlighted cross-border similarities between the youth community of both countries and asserted the existence of solidarity in the fight against terrorism, no matter the boundaries.

These initiatives all feed into Inkyfada, which was launched in 2014. Cofounder Malek Khadraoui had been editor of with Nawaat.org, an independent collective blog, when Al Khatt turned to the media platform while developing Inkyfada.

Nawaat aims to provide a public platform for Tunisian dissident voices and debates. The blog aggregates articles, visual media and other data from a variety of sources to provide a forum for citizen journalists to express their opinions on current events. During the events leading to the Tunisian Revolution of 2011, Nawaat, launched in 2004, advised Internet users in Tunisia and other Arab nations about the dangers of being identified online and offered advice about circumventing censorship.

Nawaat.org was also a proponent of slowjournalism, part of the slow movement, which appeared in the

***Al-Khatt partners with other organizations to create initiatives and tools to encourage citizen participation and easy access to information***

1980s in response to the stress of modern life, and which aims to slow down the pace of life. In this case, the pace of information. “Slowjournalism is the opposite of breaking news,” says Khadhraoui. “It is a journalism that takes time to reflect on the consequences of the event rather than react immediately.”

Inkyfada.com was born from an overflow of information and a frantic race to the immediacy in which contextualization and analysis disappear, explains Khadhraoui. “Experience has shown that a long, well-constructed and thought-provoking article never dies.”

With that in mind, Inkyfada seeks to promote freedom of the press and of expression in Tunisia. Al Khatt finances Inkyfada through grants and training and production activities, enabling it to remain void of advertisements, as do many of the partners it collaborates with, such as Mediapart.

Inkyfada focuses mainly on Tunisian social issues and promotes investigative subjects, publishing numerous investigations, reports and analyses. It collaborated with Mediapart - a French online investigative and opinion journal created in 2008 by former Le Monde editor Edwy Plenel - in 2015 after

the terrorist attack on Bardo National Museum. Inkyfada, one of the few Tunisian media outlets that practice investigative journalism, published an extensive report about the attack. The same year it also published an analysis of the investigation into the attack on a military bus on Avenue Mohamed V. Both online media platforms were enriched by the collaboration.

In the same year Inkyfada also collaborated with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) to report on Swiss Leaks and publish a list of 256 Tunisians involved in tax fraud. In 2016, the ICIJ again appealed to Inkyfada to help investigate another major tax fraud, the case of the Panama Papers. Again, the journal was able to identify several Tunisians involved. These collaborations highlight the benefits of collaboration between international organizations and local ones, as they enabled more rigorous investigation and reporting. Inkyfada has won several awards for its reporting.

“Journalism in Tunisia is a profession handicapped by the lack of professionalism. Inkyfada was born in reaction to the existing media class,” says Khadhraoui, one of Inkyfada’s founding members. “In the long term, we want to become a reference in the field of investigation, reporting, and long formats in Tunisia and in the region.”

# Appendix

## **An Overview of the Participating Organizations and Further Reading**

### **MARCH**

[www.marchlebanon.org](http://www.marchlebanon.org)

MARCH was founded in 2011 to create an empowered civil society through freedom of expression. MARCH's mission is to educate, motivate and empower citizens to recognize and fight for their basic civil rights, to foster a tolerant open Lebanese society grounded on diversity and equality, and to reach a genuine reconciliation among the country's various constituencies. Committed to civic responsibility and creative thinking, MARCH seeks to encourage in the Lebanese society a more participatory and collaborative community. In its current strategy and projects, March is focusing on fighting for the right to freedom of expression (and fighting censorship), women's rights and diversity, as well as conflict resolution activities.

### **MAP**

[www.facebook.com/MapMediaAssociationForPeace/](https://www.facebook.com/MapMediaAssociationForPeace/)

Media Association for Peace (MAP), founded in 2013, is the first NGO in Lebanon and the MENA region dedicated to the role of media in peace building and conflict transformation. MAP seeks to encourage the media to play an essential role in peace building in conflict and post-conflict areas while enhancing human rights, peace, reconciliation, and social justice in order to reach a less violent world. To achieve this, MAP's mission is to spread, advocate, train, develop, implement and research the concept of Peace Journalism through workshops, seminars, conferences, public debates, projects, and publications, while creating strong support networks in Lebanon, the MENA region, and worldwide.

### **The May Chidiac Foundation**

[www.mcfmi.org](http://www.mcfmi.org)

In association with institutes of higher learning and social affairs, the foundation offers hands-on learning in the areas of media, women's rights, conflict resolution and development. Through its community activities, which range from annual conferences to award ceremonies, the foundation equips individuals with the core principles of human rights and social responsibility, inspiring them to ultimately be a positive influence on their social groups and society at large. Founded in 2009, the foundation believes that it can greatly contribute to making Lebanon a proactive player in the Middle East and the global economy by supporting the development of knowledge production industries. This in turn will lay the necessary groundwork for fostering freedom of expression, human rights, democracy, and good governance.

### **SKeyes**

[www.skeyesmedia.org](http://www.skeyesmedia.org)

The Samir Kassir eyes (SKeyes) Center was established in November 2007 at the initiative of the Samir Kassir Foundation, which was founded following the assassination of Lebanese journalist and historian Samir Kassir in 2005. The center's principal goals are twofold: to monitor violations of freedom of the press and culture on the one hand and defend the rights and freedom of expression of journalists and intellectuals on the other. From its head office in Beirut and through its network of correspondents, SKeyes's activities cover four Middle Eastern countries: Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Jordan. The center's website publishes information and reports on press and cultural freedom in these four countries. Ultimately, SKeyes aims to cover the entire Arab world.

**SMEX**

[www.smex.org](http://www.smex.org)

Social Media Exchange (SMEX) is a media advocacy and development organization with more than twenty years' experience in commercial, development and post-conflict media environments. It addresses urgent needs in the Arab information society through online and offline courses in digital and social media; peer-to-peer learning events; the planning and implementation of advocacy campaigns; Internet policy and digital rights research; and the production and localization of how-to manuals and guides. SMEX works closely with donors and partners to design and implement programs that respond to the region, placing a high value on monitoring and evaluation.

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# Corruption

**BY DANY HADDAD**

*translated from Arabic*

# An overview

## ***Corruption in Lebanon and initiatives aiming to curb it***

**THIS PAPER CONTAINS A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CORRUPTION IN LEBANON: BOTH THE ACTUALITY THEREOF AND ITS EFFECTS. IT ALSO PROVIDES A RUNDOWN OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (CSOS) WORKING ON FIGHTING CORRUPTION, OF THEIR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES, THE EXTENT OF THE COOPERATION BETWEEN THEM AND THE CHALLENGES THAT IMPEDE IT.**

Through the creation of networks, CSOs are able to establish mutual trust and play a more positive role in serving the community, by filling the current gap between State and citizens and safeguarding the rights of citizens to access better public services. When CSOs consolidate efforts they are better able to influence the creation of public policy with the potential to become a stabilizing column of power in society. This paper also includes an overview of the civil society in Tunisia and its efforts to fight corruption there.

### ***Particulars of the Lebanese Case: High Levels of Corruption and a Weak Legal Structure***

Corruption has become the single most defining characteristic of the Lebanese situation, and is rampant at every level: political, economic, social and administrative. According to the 2015 Corruption Perceptions Index published by Transparency International, Lebanon ranks no. 123 among 168 countries worldwide, netting a score of 28 out of a possible 100 (with 100 indicating that a government is entirely free of corruption). Ninety-two percent of Lebanese believe that corruption has increased noticeably over the last twelve months according to the 2016 Global Corruption Barometer, also published by Transparency International. In a 2015 survey carried out by Lebanese NGO Sakker El Dekkene, the Beirut Port came in first as the most corrupt institution, with 93% of those surveyed considering that corruption was either rampant or quite common there, followed by the Directorate of

Land Registration and Cadastre with 86% of those surveyed perceiving it as corrupt, followed by the Internal Security Forces and the Ministry of Finance both scoring 85%, the Traffic Management Authority with 84% while the judiciary came in sixth with 70%. In 2016, the Minister of Economy and Trade, Dr. Alain Hakim, ascertained that corruption costs the Lebanese government 10 billion dollars annually, with 5 billion dollars of those constituting direct losses.

Anti-corruption measures, therefore, can help mitigate some of the losses incurred to the Treasury and to public institutions, which will help increase growth rates and reroute wasted resources into the implementation of vital development projects to serve citizens. This in turn will foster equal growth in the country's different regions, regulating poverty levels and increasing competition between businesses and innovation among citizens. Fighting corruption will also lead to increased foreign investment and job opportunities within the country, as reliable foreign investors are usually seeking to invest in those countries with the lowest levels of corruption.

The weakness of the legal framework and the appropriate mechanisms for implementation are the chief reasons behind corruption in Lebanon. Despite ratifying the United Nations Convention against Corruption in 2009, a legally-binding instrument designed to criminalize and prevent corruption, Lebanon still has no national, comprehensive anti-corruption strategy that would ensure the cooperation of the all the key players on the national level, nor has it yet established a national commission to combat corruption, nor enacted an access to information law or a law to protect whistleblowers. Obstacles have also prevented the country from applying the Illicit Enrichment Law, "which has not been applied, not even once, since it came into effect in 1999," and there is a lack of both human and material

resources at all three regulatory bodies: Central Inspection, the Audit Bureau and the Civil Service Council. Finally, the civil society organizations in Lebanon established to fight corruption have neither a clear strategy nor working plan in place.

***What are the most prominent anti-corruption initiatives in Lebanon and what alliances have they formed?***

The establishment of any organization in Lebanon is administered by a law issued in 1909 and still in use today. Known as the Ottoman Law, it allows for an organization to be established freely without need of a license from the department concerned. The principle of freedom behind this enabling of association is not limited to the period of establishment but to every phase of an organization's existence, for once formed, an organization cannot be dissolved except by ministerial decree. There are currently about 8,300 civil society organizations in Lebanon, a relatively high number per capita. The irony, however, lies in how few organizations have been formed exclusively to combat corruption and which are currently active. Only two organizations work directly on anti-corruption: the Lebanese Transparency Association (LTA) and Sakker El Dekkene (SED). The other organizations do not work exclusively on anti-corruption initiatives but consider it a mission alongside the promotion of sustainable development and democratic values and work on electoral reform. These include: the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE), the Lebanese Center for Active Citizenship (LCAC), the Development for People and Nature Association (DPNA), the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), the Lebanese Development Network (LDN) and Legal Agenda. More recently, a number of civil campaigns made up of large numbers of individual activists have been launched, such as Badna Nhasseb (We demand accountability), You Stink and Beirut Madinati (Beirut, my city), all seeking to put pressure on the government to put an end to corruption, though all these bodies are different in nature from civil society organizations. From amongst all these organizations, two core alliances have emerged with missions to fight corruption and agitate for political reform:

The Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform: Formed in 2006 out of a wide alliance comprising 65 different CSOs, the most important among which are: the Lebanese Transparency Association, the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections, the Lebanese

Physical Handicapped Union, the Permanent Peace Movement, the Lebanese Council of Women, the Arab NGO Network for Development, and Nahwa Al Muwatiniya (Toward citizenship), among others. The Campaign's purpose was to develop the electoral culture; after extensive lobbying, it succeeded in having a number of reforms applied to the parliamentary elections law (25/2008), most notably: the creation of the Supervisory Commission on the Electoral Campaign, the adoption of mechanisms to regulate campaign spending, electoral media and advertising campaigns, as well as permitting the casting of absentee ballots, taking measures to facilitate voting for people with disabilities and holding elections on a single day. The Campaign also made significant headway in helping enshrine the principle of cooperation between public institutions and civil society by taking part in the sessions of the Administration and Justice Committee to debate the parliamentary elections law in 2008, and it also set up a consultation office at the Ministry of Interior during the parliamentary elections period in 2009.

National Network for the Right of Access to Information: Formed in 2008 as a partnership between the Lebanese Transparency Association, the Lebanese Parliamentarians against Corruption, the Association pour la Défense des Droits et des Libertés and in collaboration with the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative in Lebanon. In addition to the founding partners, this Network also included representatives from the Ministry of Justice, the Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform (OMSAR), the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Economy and Trade, the Beirut Bar Association (BBA), the National Audio-Visual Media Council, the Press Syndicate, the Syndicate of Journalists, the Federation of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture in Lebanon, Maharat, Nahwa Al Muwatiniya, Association Libanaise pour l'Education et la Formation (ALEF), and Nahar Ashabab –Youth Shadow Government, the Lebanese Development Network and the Arab Anti-Corruption Organization. The network sought to promote transparency and accountability and to strengthen the rule of law and civic participation. It succeeded in putting together a draft law for the right of access to information in 2009 and another one to protect whistleblowers in 2010, draft laws on which the parliament has yet to vote.

# Initiatives and Collaboration

## *Strengths and weakness of civil society organizations working to combat corruption*

IN ORDER TO ARRIVE AT A MORE FACTUAL AND PRECISE PICTURE OF THE ANTI-CORRUPTION CSOS IN LEBANON, TO BETTER SEE THEIR POINTS OF STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS, THE CHALLENGES TO COOPERATION AND COALITION-BUILDING AND POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES, A NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS WERE CONDUCTED WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM THOSE ORGANIZATIONS, SOME IN PERSON AND SOME OVER EMAIL.

It proved difficult to organize a meeting where everyone could be in the same room together at the same time due to the organizations' many engagements and the impossibility of sending representatives off to all the conferences or seminars to which they might be invited, which served to highlight the problem of understaffing and the lack of a pool of volunteers on which these organizations could rely. Four main themes emerged during the conversations:

### **Points of Strength**

**Extensive experience in civic activism.** The organizations had previously worked on initiatives advocating against corruption and agitating for electoral reform; of note are the Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform launched in 2006 and the National Network for the Right of Access to Information launched in 2008.

**Transparency before donors able to provide financial and material support.** Building mutual trust between both sides helped secure financial support for the organizations, allowing them to implement field projects, carry out a number of studies and establish centers, the most prominent among which is the Lebanese Advocacy and Legal Advice Center, an initiative by LTA launched in 2009 to empower victims and witnesses of corruption in Lebanon, giving them a place to call and get free legal advice on how to deal with the problem.

**Working outside the framework of the current political system.** Civil society is not party to the authorities that run the country, nor do its members have anything personal to gain. CSOs work for the public good, not for personal interest, in contrast to political parties.

**The role CSOs play as an alternative to the government and the political parties in providing services to the public.** Citizens are searching for alternative structures they can turn to instead of the reigning political parties (which they have come to mistrust as a result of the civil war) and which can provide services that the government is unable to provide. Civil society is a microcosm of society at large and understands both a society's problems and the best solutions for them.

**The trust established between citizens and civil society.** One such example of this trust is what happened during the municipal elections in 2016: many citizens made calls to the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections to report complaints (whereby taking such complaints is usually under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities). Likewise, citizens have made repeated calls to the hotline set

**Citizens are searching for alternative structures they can turn to instead of the reigning political parties, which they have come to mistrust**

up by Sakker El Dekkene to report cases of bribery rather than call the Ministry of Economy and Trade's consumer protection hotline.

**Reliance on youth.** Working with young people between the ages of 16 and 30 brings a sense of renewed life and dynamism to the work.

**Lebanon's atmosphere of relative freedom.**

It has helped foster the establishment of new organizations, such as Sakker El Dekkene, and encouraged the launch of a number of civic anti-corruption initiatives such as Badna Nhasseb, You Stink and Beirut Madinati, particularly after the waste-management crisis that began in July 2015 after the closure of the Naameh landfill.

**Increasing awareness among citizens about the evils and ills of corruption.** Much of the credit for this goes to the efforts that civil society has made in this regard, working to spread awareness about the issue over many long years until the fight against corruption has become a priority to the public.

**Points of Weakness**

**Not continuing to evolve strategies on fighting corruption.** For example, the Lebanese Transparency Association is currently developing its earlier strategies – which were directly focused on spreading awareness about the dangers of corruption – and compiling studies consistent with the new developments by turning their focus to fighting corruption within those sectors vital to the public, such as health, justice, customs, waste management, electricity and oil and gas. The new strategy also seeks to evolve a previous understanding of cooperative work, not only between CSOs but also with the private sector and the media.

**Lack of financial resources.** The organizations are not self-financed and rely almost exclusively on private external funding. As such, some have accused them of elitism and of attempting to satisfy donors' priorities rather than seeking to identify citizens' real concerns. In order to avoid this, they must therefore seek sustainable sources of funding.

**Lack of human resources.** Most of the organizations are quite small, and do not manage their administrative and financial affairs in a professional manner. They suffer from a chronic shortage of full-time staff, as young graduates more often choose to seek employment in the private sector. It is therefore up to the organizations to apply principles of good governance internally and organize their

affairs more professionally, particularly on the level of the relationship between the administrative and executive offices. Otherwise there is a risk that the administrative board ends up interfering in all the details of the work being done by the executive office, or conversely, not involving themselves at all and not offering any help in securing sources of funding.

**Inability to consistently mobilize volunteers or supporters at the required level.** The difficulty here is not in attracting young volunteers in the first place, but in keeping them. The reason for this is the nature of the work itself: fighting corruption. Young people are keener to volunteer to work on more "human" issues, such as the environment, human rights, etc. They want to see immediate results to their work, while the fight against corruption is one that requires a lot of time before

***Most of the organizations are quite small, suffer from a chronic shortage of full-time staff, and do not manage their administrative and financial affairs in a professional manner***

the results of the effort become apparent. Still, however, it is up to the organizations to adopt more attractive strategies in order to ensure that the young volunteers remain among their ranks.

**The difficulty of applying the reforms recommended.** In the goal of reform, it is imperative to work directly with public institutions and ministries, and therein lies the difficulty: more often than not these institutions and ministries will afterward refuse to comply with any of the recommendations.

**Obstacles to Cooperation**

**The lack of examples of long-term cooperation and partnerships in the fight against corruption.** The National Network for the Right of Access to Information was at first a positive and encouraging example of partnership. It however, like many other

initiatives, lost its momentum after a while due to a lack of financial support to ensure its continuity and the weakness of the advocacy campaign that accompanied its efforts.

**The competitive relationship between the organizations, with each jockeying to lead the coalition.** Instead of trying to build an anti-corruption coalition with an open and collaborative mindset, the waste-management crisis that began in 2015 really drove home the extent of the conflict between all the recently established CSOs and civic campaigns. They were unable to partner up and join forces to confront the crisis, despite the fact that they all sought to fight against corruption. The protest movement didn't evolve into a coalition but remained a series of attempts to see who would lead.

**No strategy to organize any coalition building.** The absence of any real strategy to organize the protest movement against the waste-management crisis led to its fragmentation and a loss of cohesiveness. It lacked an organizing principle and an action plan to set clear and definite goals. With no coordination between the organizations, no clear list of demands emerged. Instead, demands varied according to the aspirations of each organization whereas it could have been possible to unite the entire protest movement under the anti-corruption banner and later set down a list of cumulative demands for reforms.

***The absence of any real strategy to organize the protest movement against the waste-management crisis led to its fragmentation and a loss of cohesiveness***

### ***Future opportunities for collaboration***

Despite the many obstacles to cooperation and the deficiencies of the organizations working to fight corruption, the current trend is toward building new alliances. The interviews conducted with the representatives revealed the organizations' desire to work together, to build partnerships through developing previous strategies and relying on cooperative work as the new cornerstone of any future movements. They will begin by:

**Building a coalition with a clear strategy and with definite goals, bringing together:** CSOs, civil campaigns, new political parties, the private sector and the media.

**Cooperating within the coalition through accumulating expertise.** Working to identify points in common and determine each partner's strong suits to better integrate the different parties together. The basis for cooperation should be working toward reform, as well as developing those projects implemented by different organizations previously and which proved successful. A balance must be found between each side's strongest suits, with CSOs identifying and helping enact reforms and the civic campaigns and movements lobbying and putting pressure in the right places.

**Establishing a coordinating body between the different members of the coalition.** A coordinating body is imperative to facilitate cooperative work; it acts as a mechanism that encourages trust among the different members and promotes communication between them, helping repair the current situation whereby each entity works alone in the fight against corruption, which is especially true of CSOs. When all sides work together, they are less vulnerable to political pressure and it becomes much harder for the government to interfere.

# Case Study: Tunisia

## *Maintaining influence and impactful presence through expansive collaboration*

**THIS SECTION ATTEMPTS TO ACQUAINT LEBANESE CIVIL SOCIETY WITH THE EXPERIENCE OF THE TUNISIAN ONE IN ITS FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION, TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE TOOLS AND STRATEGIES THAT HAVE BEEN IN USE SINCE 2011.**

Tunisian civil society managed to affirm itself as one of the most instrumental forces in the fight against corruption, and functioned as a partner in the drafting of new laws and constitutions, compelling the regulatory bodies to cooperate with it and not ignore it. This section is not intended to assess the level of corruption in Tunisia nor the reason for its increase, nor will it describe the operation of the regulatory bodies in the country. It is only meant to provide an alternative, transparent approach to civil society mobilization.

There are a number of active anti-corruption organizations currently working in Tunisia, most notably: the Association Tunisienne des Contrôleurs Public (Tunisian association of public auditors), I Watch, Transparency First, the Association Tunisienne De Lutte Contre La Corruption (ATLUC), the Union des Tunisiens Indépendants pour la Liberté (UTIL), ATAC (Tunisians Against Corruption), and Al-Bawsala (the compass). After the revolution, the Ministry of Interior revoked the previous list of conditions NGOs had to fulfill in order to acquire a license, and it became much easier to register new organizations. According to the new law governing associations, Decree no. 88 issued in 2011, the only condition to establishing an NGO is for the organization to declare itself to the Secretary General.

Tunisian civil society relied on a variety of approaches to combat corruption. Coalitions were formed not with the goal of implementing cooperative projects within a specific time frame, but to lobby for the inclusion of anti-corruption measures at the legislative level: in the constitution, the laws and decrees of the country. Perhaps the

most strategic tactic they used was engaging public servants in the establishment of CSOs that aimed to spread a culture of awareness about the dangers of corruption and citizens' right to access information. From this standpoint, we can isolate three important lessons from the experience of Tunisia's civil society that can be used as a model and applied to all countries working on anti-corruption measures:

1. Lobbying for change at the legislative level
2. Networking with public servants through CSOs
3. Creating alliances between different CSOs

### ***One: Lobbying for change at legislative level***

Civil society in Tunisia became more involved in the fight against corruption in 2011. It was a period that witnessed the proliferation of many new organizations – about 1400 – moving civil society actors into a position of prominence within the Instance Nationale de Lutte Contre la Corruption (INLUCC, Tunisia's national anti-corruption authority). By decree, and in addition to its other members, INLUCC must include: “at least seven members from civil society organizations and professional associations with competencies and expertise in matters related to the functions of the commission.” CSOs also receive financial support from INLUCC when they implement anti-corruption projects in accordance with the articles in section 10 of its establishing decree, which insists on: “partnering with members of civil society in the fight against corruption in both the public and the private sector through capacity building for different civil society organizations, especially those that are engaged in the fight against corruption.” In accordance with these responsibilities, INLUCC put out a call in July 2016 for CSOs to pitch their

projects in order to receive funding; ten CSOs met the commission's criteria and were selected.

In addition, civil society played a pivotal role in the drafting of the new constitution, issued on January 26, 2014, making its demands known session by session, article by article, lobbying tirelessly throughout the drafting process. They relied on various strategies in pursuit of this goal, most notably: "relying on uncompromising views and debate positions in our appearances on different TV networks and on the national channels, engaging with people on social media to raise awareness and mobilize support, organizing demonstrations and peaceful protests to communicate the people's demands, reaching out to political parties, public institutions, the government and key decision makers."

**Civil society organizations in Tunisia follow up closely on all the issues that have to do with the fight against corruption in order to remain influential players on the local scene**

The new Tunisian constitution, as a result, contains a number of articles on anti-corruption, integrity, transparency, and the prevention of conflict of interest, such as articles 10 and 15 and article 130, which calls for the formation of the "Good Governance and Anti-Corruption Commission," which acts as an alternative to INLUCC. Finally, Article 139 provides for mechanisms in line with the spirit of local democracy, asking that local authorities "adopt the mechanisms of participatory democracy and the principles of open governance to ensure the broadest participation of citizens and of civil society in the preparation of development programs and land use planning, and follow up on their implementation, in conformity with the law."

**Two: Networking with public servants through CSOs**

What distinguishes the Tunisian example is the number of public observer bodies on the scene, including the Observer Commission on

State Property and Land Affairs, the National Observatory of Public Procurements and the Financial Oversight Body, which all came together to form the Association Tunisienne des Contrôleurs Public (ATCP) in 2011. The ATCP aims to support independent public auditors and observers in order to help fight corruption and bribery and to encourage administrative reform. In pursuit of its goals, the ATCP established an extensive network comprising the government, the Cabinet and the media, as well as other partners from Tunisian and international civil society who have permanent standing invitations to take part in any of the ATCP's projects and activities. The ATCP organized over 50 meetings and workshops for over 2,000 auditors and public observers, public servants, journalists and civil society activists to build their capabilities at fighting corruption. Some workshops focused on public procurement, public property and auditing systems in general.

To better promote transparency, the ATCP relied on an exceedingly advanced approach through training organizations on how to lobby for better quality annual audit reports and the adoption of recommendations to improve their quality, thereby enhancing the role that civil society can play in exercising oversight over these public auditory bodies. The great benefit of these training sessions for CSOs became clear when they successfully lobbied to include an item that provides for "reports on behalf of oversight bodies in accordance with professional international standards" under Article 6 of the access to information law issued in 2016. Dr. Chawki Tabib, the president of INLUCC, described one of the aspects of cooperation between the government and the ATCP as putting mechanisms in place to tackle corruption in public procurement, which the numbers indicate as a source of loss of public funds.

**Three: Creating Alliances Between Different CSOs**

Civil society organizations in Tunisia follow up closely on all the issues that have to do with the fight against corruption in order to remain influential players on the local scene. They use coalitions as a means of exerting pressure on the relevant parties in order to shine a light on any errors or abuses by the political authorities or to compel them to join initiatives to enhance transparency. Three coalitions of note are:

1. Tunisian Alliance for Integrity and Transparency (ATIT): Formed in 2012 with support from the United Nations Development Program,

the alliance is made up of: the National Anti-Corruption Commission, Transparency First, ATAC (Tunisians Against Corruption), the Association Tunisienne de Lutte Contre la Corruption, the Center for Citizenship and Democracy, the Tunisian Junior Economic Chamber and the Tunisian Association for Financial Transparency. The Alliance works on fighting corruption in all its forms, basing itself on the principles of integrity and transparency in accordance with international standards. The Alliance has released a lot of information with regards to the appointment of positions within INLUCC and about the importance of enhancing transparency and having citizens be acquainted with the decision-making process. It also organized seminars and information sessions to support Tunisia joining the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative.

2. **Tunisian Open Government Partnership (TnOGP):** Formed in 2014, it brings together thirteen different civil society actors under one alliance: Article 19, ATCP, L'Association des Tunisiens des Grandes Ecoles (ATUGE), Association pour la Culture Numérique Libre (CLibre), Le Labo' Démocratique, I Watch, OGIC, OpenGov.TN, Open Tunisia, Reform, Sawty, ATAC and TANSa. The coalition aims to participate in all the proposed national consultations in order to make recommendations to the government on how to enhance transparency and good governance, especially after Tunisia's accession to the Open Government Partnership (OGP), which the alliance sees as a good opportunity for positive collaboration, also helping provide a framework within which to unite all the actors in Tunisia to build a sustainable foundation for constructive cooperation.

3. **Civil Coalition Against the Bill of Economic and Financial Reconciliation:** Formed in 2015, the Coalition brings together about 30 different organizations, most notably: the Tunisian Judges' Association (AMT), the Tunisian Observatory for the Independence of the Judiciary, the Tunisian Network for Transitional Justice, the Tunisian Independent National Coordination for Transitional Justice, the Civil Pole for Development and Human Rights and the youth group Manich Msamah (I will not forgive). The coalition's aim is to oppose the proposed bill for economic and financial reconciliation, which would suspend any current or future prosecutions of employees or officials involved in corruption or the misuse of public funds so long as the misconduct was not undertaken for their own personal gain. The bill would also revoke any sanctions or prosecution against businessmen or state officials who benefitted personally from corrupt practices or bribes. The Coalition has

***What distinguishes the Tunisian example is the number of public observer bodies on the scene, which all came together in 2011 to form a public association***

so far managed to block the bill from passing and imposed the need to debate it further in the Cabinet.

It must be mentioned, however, that despite building different coalitions, anti-corruption CSOs in Tunisia do not cooperate as extensively as they could in the implementation of joint projects. There are many reasons for this, particularly the fact that the whole experience is still quite new, and that there is a lot of competition between the different organizations. Additionally, most of the members of these organizations are volunteers, not professionals. And so it is rare to find an instance where more than two organizations at a time are working together to implement a joint project. Each organization has its own vision and strategies, and they often disagree on topics of import and priorities. For example, the different coalition members of the Tunisian Alliance for Integrity and Transparency were unable to realize any common anti-corruption initiatives because of disagreements and differences among the various groups. In order to ensure the success and sustainability of any coalition, it is important to decide on shared action plans among the organizations and to divide the labor in accordance with each one's expertise. To facilitate all this, coalitions must adopt internal rules of procedure, and in fact, should not be formed at all by funding bodies unless they are born out of real need.

# Appendix

## **An Overview of the Participating Organizations**

### **The Lebanese Center for Active Citizenship (LCAC)**

[www.lcaclebanon.com](http://www.lcaclebanon.com)

A civil society organization based in Tripoli in North Lebanon and established in 2006, LCAC works to support and promote youth volunteer initiatives and the involvement of citizens in public affairs, as well as to promote democratic values and practices through awareness activities and workshops. One of their most significant anti-corruption initiatives was a campaign called “It’s our right to know.” Targeting citizens in Tripoli and North Lebanon, the campaign sought to drive home the importance of being able to freely access information and that citizens in fact had a right to do so. The center is also part of the National Network for the Right of Access to Information.

### **Lebanese Transparency Association (LTA)**

[www.transparency-lebanon.org](http://www.transparency-lebanon.org)

Founded in 1999, LTA is the Lebanese chapter of Transparency International and the first non-profit organization in Lebanon focused on curbing corruption. The association works to fight corruption in both the public and private sector, and works actively on involving young people in its anti-corruption work. LTA has produced and released a lot of knowledge on the issue of accountability, and it was one of the founders of the civic campaign to reform the electoral law in 2006, of the National Network for the Right of Access to Information in 2008, the Lebanon Anti-Bribery Network in 2010, and it also established the Lebanese Center to Protect Victims of Corruption in 2009 to field citizen’s complaints and reports of corruption.

### **The Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE)**

[www.lade.org.lb](http://www.lade.org.lb)

LADE is a civil society organization founded in 1996, working on advocacy and awareness, seeking to build a democratic society and promote citizenship based on transparency and accountability. LADE aims to pressure decision makers and the political parties to introduce reforms to the political system, to involve citizens in the democratic process and to monitor all forms of electoral procedure and produce detailed reports on their workings. It was one of the founders of the campaign to reform the electoral law in 2006 and has worked on other civic campaigns related to parliamentary and municipal elections.

### **Sakker El Dekkene (SED)**

[www.sakkerha.com](http://www.sakkerha.com)

Founded in 2014, SED is a civil society organization and is one of the most prominent organizations working on fighting corruption in Lebanon. To achieve its goals, SED produces and compiles data related to corruption in all its forms occurring at the level of official Lebanese institutions in order to spread awareness and build a constructive relationship based on integrity between citizen and State. To that end, they innovate reporting tools and apps that enable citizens to report instances of corruption, such as the smartphone app Sakkerha (Shut it down). Since its inception, SED has launched a number of awareness campaigns on the dangers of corruption and several opinion polls on the perceived level of corruption in public institutions.





# Promoting Reading

**BY NAWAL TRABOULSI**

*translated from Arabic*

# An overview

## ***Corruption in Lebanon and initiatives aiming to curb it***

**READING AND CHILDREN'S LITERATURE ARE NOT GENERALLY REGARDED AS PRIORITIES IN LEBANON TODAY, NEITHER BY PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS NOR THE SOCIETY AT LARGE.**

However, at the turn of this century and as a result of a civic campaign that led to the election of new municipal councils after 30 years of stagnation, the society underwent a transformation of sorts as people came together to rebuild the country's educational and cultural infrastructure based on a concept of "reading for all" or "public reading." As such, a number of organizations emerged, with the goal of promoting "public reading," or "outside reading," that is, reading that takes place outside the school curriculum. These organizations, spread out all over the country, undertook to collaborate with the recently-elected municipal councils in 1998, out of a desire to make members of the municipality aware of two important things. Firstly, that the municipality had a role to play in making public libraries available. And second, that the organizations needed to be able to work in tandem with the municipality in order to secure reading rooms or find staff members to help promote reading.

This same period saw a number of publishing initiatives growing out of the private sector, producing children's literature and diverse, high quality and modern publications aimed at youth, while numbers of talented children's lit writers, illustrators and designers graduated into the work force from universities across Lebanon. The organizations, left to their own devices with minimal resources and scarce funding (as they were dependent largely on local financing), found themselves isolated and vulnerable and realized that they had to unite: to pool their efforts and involve public institutions in their work.

The first seminar on public reading was held in December 1999, under the patronage of the French Cultural Center, with an invitation extended to the Ministry of Culture. It was an attempt to involve the Ministry in the effort of promoting reading culture and to unite all the organizations concerned under one roof. Of note is the fact that the French Cultural Center, more than any of the Lebanese public institutions, had a high concentration of actors concerned with promoting reading to the general Lebanese public and who were aware of the importance of fostering a public reading culture along with all of its component parts from book to reader: writers, illustrators, publishers, libraries both public and commercial, as well as teachers and all the organizations involved in the promoting reading.

The first active intervention by the Ministry of Culture took place at the Francophone Summit in 2000, where they pledged funds to support the formation of public libraries at the national level. This was largely thanks to the policy of the Minister of Culture at the time, who acknowledged the efforts of the organizations and worked to unite them in a single network under the Ministry's patronage. He offered them books and training courses, involving some members of the municipality in the effort as well. Thus was born the Centre de lectures et d'Animation Culturelle (CLAC) at the Ministry of Culture, bringing together various actors from concerned civil society organizations and the private sector, as well as librarians, publishers, writers and illustrators. At the national level, the French government also pledged its financial support. Finally, the Anna Lindh Foundation developed a regional program funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), which gave the project a new impetus to focus on Arabic-language reading.

**Organizations needed to be able to work in tandem with the municipality in order to secure reading rooms or find staff members to help promote reading**

That rich and exciting period lasted for about ten years, until 2009, the year in which Beirut was named the Arab capital of culture. At that point, the network comprised all the relevant actors in the book field: the Ministry of Culture, of course, the organizations promoting public reading, professors from the education departments at universities, representatives from the union of children's book publishers, writers, illustrators, publishers etc. After that, public reading witnessed a noticeable decline, and has been in stagnation since. If we suppose that a Minister today might realize the vital necessity of reading to the country's development, he will certainly not have the required budget to invest in it. The Ministry is bloated with an excess of employees, and any budget surplus goes to paying their salaries rather than being invested in developing policies related to books and reading. At the time when the decline began, the government was in the process of being formed and the political parties were fighting over who would take control of the main ministries, and the Ministry of Culture, considered a minor or secondary ministry, was all but forgotten.

The Ministry of Education, for its part, no doubt placed the issue of public reading at the very bottom of its list of priorities, for during all those years that saw some measure of development in the reading culture, the Ministry did not propose a single law or decree to help institutionalize reading in schools. Though the educational curriculum provides for one hour of reading a week in schools, this hour is more often than not used to make up for lost time in other subjects. Additionally, an entirely regressive rule in many schools stalled all efforts to encourage reading by making it impossible for students to borrow books and take them home. That rule stipulated that teachers were personally financially responsible for any lost or damaged books, and so teachers became very reluctant to risk lending books out to students. As a result, all the books donated by the US Agency

for International Development for the "My Arabic Library" project are currently sitting in closed boxes, stacked atop a closet somewhere, far from the children they were intended for.

**Why Read?**

Why is it important for children to read? All the studies and research from the last hundred years on the benefits of reading show that reading is vital to cognitive development, enhancing critical thinking, facilitating the acquisition of skills and allowing us to discover and understand the world around us. This knowledge translated into reforms to the educational system and left its mark on curriculums, at the same time giving rise to a number of specialties: librarians, publishers and writers producing, disseminating and promoting children's literature.

Children learn and develop their mental faculties and critical thinking skills when they read, whether they are reading stories or science books. They enrich their vocabularies and increase their ability to express themselves, and as a result their ability to think and process things becomes richer and more complex. Through reading, children discover new concepts and ideas, expanding their mental horizons, their awareness and understanding of the world in which they live. Reading fosters the values of cooperation and coexistence, facilitates access to information and means of communication. As our societies evolve more into digital communities thanks to digital and social media, it has become vital for everyone to know how to read and write.

Through reading, children, just like adults, come to better understand both themselves and others. This is because reading expands our understanding of the world and teaches us tolerance and empathy towards others. Books allow us to discover other countries, cultures and civilizations, other ways of living. As such, reading improves children's self-confidence and strengthens their sense of self. They come to understand that others think and feel just as they do, that other people are both similar to them in some ways and different from them in others. Books teach us that we are all at once diverse and equal. And through reading, children become aware of their cultural heritage, their human references, and that both of these are collective and common amongst all.

Books teach us to distinguish right from wrong, good from bad. They teach tolerance, providing alternatives to violence and war as a means to solve conflicts, for they give us examples by

which to live, and higher values and ideals with which to approach problems. And if children are introduced to books and reading at a very early age, new dimensions are added to their growth and development. For as a child develops while reading, the community in which the child lives develops alongside.

Here is the text of the IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto from 1994, which upholds all of these points:

*Freedom, prosperity and the development of society and of individuals are fundamental human values. They will only be attained through the ability of well-informed citizens to exercise their democratic rights and to play an active role in society. Constructive participation and the development of democracy depend on satisfactory education as well as on free and unlimited access to knowledge, thought, culture and information.*

*The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups.*

*This Manifesto proclaims UNESCO's belief in the public library as a living force for education, culture and information, and as an essential agent for the fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women.*

*UNESCO therefore encourages national and local governments to support and actively engage in the development of public libraries.*

**Reading expands our understanding of the world and teaches us tolerance and empathy towards others**

# Initiatives and Collaboration

## *Creating networks to promote public reading*

**SIX ORGANIZATIONS DEDICATED EXCLUSIVELY TO THE PROMOTION OF PUBLIC READING WERE INVITED TO A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION TO REFLECT ON AND DISCUSS THE FEASIBILITY OF COLLABORATIVE WORK AMONG DIFFERENT CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS.**

Six organizations concerned with books and reading, invited to think together on the importance and benefits of cooperative work between civil society organizations, as well as reflect on its challenges and weaknesses. For, in order to build any sustainable networks, it is imperative to draw on lessons from lived interventions and real-life examples.

All of these organizations have drafted action plans designed to encourage reading. We all know how exceedingly difficult the work of promoting reading can be, and how easy it is to deviate from one's goals. And we ask ourselves about the purpose or the importance of cooperation with other civil society actors in order to develop a reading culture. Since simply promoting reading requires the efforts of so many different actors, is it possible for libraries to become focal points for events and activities in their communities, their neighborhoods or towns?

The participating organizations all come from different parts of Lebanon. Four of them work in close cooperation with local municipalities. How were the terms of this cooperation defined? Are both partners considered equal? Is this partnership made manifest both on the level of implementing projects and activities as well as funding and financing? Do they cooperate with other institutions? In what domains? Does partnership with the municipality enhance cooperation with other civil society actors or weaken it? And if that isn't the reason for the lackluster cooperation, then what is?

One of the participating libraries is linked to the Safadi Foundation, a private institution. Is this library self-sufficient in its work or does it cooperate with other civil society institutions? How is this partnership made manifest? What is it based on?

Another organization established a library in Beit Mery in the Matn District. Does this organization collaborate with others? Is it isolated from others or open to more collaboration or potential partnerships or participatory work with other civil society organizations?

Finally, there is the special case of the Baakleen Library, which is tied to the Ministry of Culture despite the fact that it was not the Ministry that established it. What place does the library occupy in its social environment; how does it fit in? What sort of partnerships does it engage in with other organizations, if there are indeed such organizations?

***In order to build any sustainable networks, it is imperative to draw on lessons from lived interventions and real-life examples***

***The Rich Potential and Benefits of Networking***

a) The first participatory initiatives between organizations created an awareness that a library's role should be at the very heart of its community, whether neighborhood or village, and this pushed the organizations to establish their first partnerships with local municipalities. In the best-case scenarios, municipalities were responsive and open to the idea, helping establish the library by providing it with the required space and paying librarians' salaries. Rarely did municipalities genuinely participate in setting up cultural activities, however, despite the fact that the dual front of library/city council would create larger opportunities for cooperation with civil society organizations and other institutions within the community.

During this first networking phase, the municipality came to realize that making libraries available to their constituents and giving them a measure of "autonomy" to play their role and provide their services could have a positive impact on the municipality's public image, sometimes leading to re-election. This was in fact the case for most of the public libraries in Lebanon. Out of the six participating organizations, five of them are linked to municipalities.

b) Therefore, based on the above, the first networks that were built between library associations were established right when the libraries were founded. These associations had realized that libraries have general needs and interests in common: the need to undergo training on how best to promote public reading, the need for books, the need for dedicated animators (storytellers, children's theater troupes, etc.). The need, also, for traveling exhibitions and everything required to supply them, etc. So this library network between Lebanon's public libraries established links and shared their experiences, which in turn allowed them to develop their concepts, principles and rules for how best to go about encouraging public reading. The strength of this network was based on common goals and interests, as well as the fact that these networks managed to transcend sectarian differences, bringing together libraries from all parts of Lebanon. The six participating organizations are testament to that: one from Saida, in South Lebanon, one from Al-Nabi Sheeth in the Bekaa, one from Nahr Ibrahim in the Keserwan Valley, one from Beit Mery in the Matn District, one from Baakleen in the Shouf and one from Tripoli in North Lebanon.

c) As children and their parents were the primary audience for the public libraries, the libraries created an extensive network to include nearby schools, providing activities for children and training courses for adults. Necessity drove teachers, students and parents alike to discover the importance of reading, no matter how fun or light it seemed, and how essential it was to education and academic success. The six participating libraries welcomed children accompanied by both parents and teachers. Their doors were open to all, regardless of age, gender, race or religion. In fact, large numbers of library visitors, adults and children, are Syrians. The Nahr Ibrahim library provides special, separate activities for Syrian children, who always express their joy and gratitude at these occasions, as per one of the people in charge at the library.

***The Baakleen library talked about the high turnout of Syrian children, and how its partnership with schools allowed them to receive more Syrian children, while the Saida library stays open until 10pm every night to be able to receive Syrian children who have no place to study at home***

The Beit Mery library works in partnership with a school that receives 90 Lebanese students in the morning and 300 Syrian students in the afternoon. The Baakleen library talked about the high turnout of Syrian children, and how its partnership with schools allowed them to receive more Syrian children, with the attendance of one paving the way for ten or even twenty on the next day. The Saida library stays open until 10pm every night to be able to receive Syrian children or teenagers who have no place to study at home, and even makes special tutors available to them at the library. For public libraries, partnerships with schools are an essential foundation of their work.

d) Blue Mission, a non-profit organization, teamed up with the Saida municipality to establish a library that receives 18,000 unique visitors a year. Blue Mission believes in the cultural enrichment afforded by diversity and exchange. It is a living example of the importance of networking in achieving a library's goals: reading as a goal in itself and reading as a means to develop a variety of cultural activities. For instance, Blue Mission began an initiative that brought together towns of various sectarian affiliations, municipalities of various political affiliations and all their libraries, as well as an audience of diverse nationalities, all in a single network. Additionally, there were other partners involved in the project, both funding bodies and other local NGOs. The initiative, entitled From Village to Village, was in the beginning richly diverse, boldly defying the differences between all its partners, aiming to provide alternatives to violence in conflict resolution and working to promote a culture of peace.

e) Another network, in Baakleen, was born out of the cooperation between the library and an NGO involved in supporting music. After working on a series of activities together, the library established a long-term partnership with the NGO. Given music's calming effect on the psyche, they realized that music could be another element to further enrich both the experience of visiting a library and one's interaction with books.

f) One particularly diverse and fruitful example of networking was raised during the sessions: a partnership initiative between the Lebanese NGO Generis, public libraries, the Beit Mery cultural center and different civil society actors specialized in youth-oriented activities. In adolescence, reading plays a particularly important role in young people's lives as they build their sense of self and develop their personalities; it helps them

name their fears and anxieties and find meaning in their experiences. This initiative aims to help young people build their capacities, to steer them away from possible drug addiction or violence by giving them space where they can dialogue and exchange ideas. This is also done by offering a diverse range of activities revolving around books and to steer young people back toward reading, which is by definition a form of exchange, a way of putting things into language, a relationship with others and a window to understanding the world.

Since their establishment, the public libraries have felt the need to operate within networks of partnership not only with other similar organizations and associations concerned with reading, but with organizations involved in cultural or social activities, as reading is actually a medium that allows you to learn about everything else in the world, a form of knowledge that gives you access to all the knowledge there is.

#### ***Gaps of Activity Within the Networks: Weaknesses and Failings***

a) It had been long assumed by the organizations that partnership with the local municipalities would ensure the sustainability of a public library. But this was not always the case. For it was possible for the partner – the mayor, in this case – to renege on commitments made by his predecessor, to dissolve the partnership and close down the library (as in fact happened with the Batroun library). This is a crucial example of the dangers of creating a network where the partners are not on equal ground. This unequal power relationship between city councils and libraries weakens such networks.

b) Another example of such failure is what befell the Blue Mission's Village to Village initiative in Saida. Here, too, the inequality between the partners threatened to collapse the whole network. For when the funding body refuses to cooperate with a municipality that has a certain sectarian affiliation, the financing is withdrawn and the whole network falls apart. The same thing happens when a municipality with a certain political-sectarian affiliation refuses to cooperate with partners of a different affiliation. Blue Mission aspired to a sustainable, rich and diverse form of partnership based on the principles of exchange and open communication and on a shared vision of social work. But this did not come to pass. The lack of a shared vision on the diversity and richness of such an exchange led to the failure of the partnership. How to tackle a failure that comes from within the network itself?

***Since their establishment, the public libraries have felt the need to operate within networks of partnership not only with other similar organizations and associations concerned with reading, but with organizations involved in cultural or social activities***

c) Networking failures sometimes occur when people are from different nationalities, when parents and their children refuse to participate in activities with Syrian children and adults. In such cases, cooperation becomes impossible when partners do not have a shared vision and common values based on human rights principles, such as tolerance, respect for others, an appreciation of diversity and a rejection of stereotypes and prejudice. The library confronted with this situation finally gave in and segregated its activities, creating similar but separate events for each group, despite knowing that doing so already represented an educational failure.

d) Another example of refusal to cooperate is when a library places the success of its “project” – a poetry evening at the library, for example, or the success of individuals from its team – at the top of its list of priorities rather than having a longer-term ambition to develop the project further, or involve the audience, or create new partnerships, or to further exchange, teamwork and communication. The weakness here is in not being aware of the human, participatory and social dimensions of creating a real network.

One of the points that came up in the discussions, common to all present, often had to do with centralization, and with how the NGOs in the capital, where the offices of the donors are located as well, tended to monopolize both power and money. NGOs based in the capital were able to exert their authority and impose their own interests to the detriment of others’ interests, which allowed them to expand and grow more powerful over time. Funders prefer to continue dealing with experienced institutions – not necessarily proficient in practical, on-the-ground know-how, but in the art of drafting proposals and writing up reports. It has become clear that an NGO with a head office and actors based in Beirut will receive funding to go and implement a project in South Lebanon, while an NGO based in South Lebanon, and in fact closer to and therefore more knowledgeable about the area’s needs, will meet with nothing but neglect.

### ***Future Opportunities for Partnership***

Libraries cannot survive without communicating and engaging with their surrounding communities and with various other sorts of actors. This is true whether the library is deep within an urban neighborhood or in a village or countryside town. The six participating libraries all expressed an urgent need for support from their respective city councils, which are indispensable to their existence,

as the city council is the elected body closest to the citizens. They also stressed the importance of working with schools and partnering up with other different civil society organizations. Given that children are the audience of first priority for libraries’ activities, this necessitates initiating partnerships with schools. And schools are usually quite happy to do so, because the library offers beneficial services both to their students and teaching staff. And libraries also need to forge partnerships with all the institutions and NGOs whose work is related to children, to culture and development, as the field of public reading in fact extends to encompass all fields of knowledge.

The libraries also stressed the importance of having donors that share their vision, values and goals. The Village to Village project run by Blue Mission, for instance, seeks to create a network bringing together people from different villages and of various sects and nationalities. When one of the donors refused to work with a certain municipality due to its sectarian affiliation, Blue Mission circumvented them by going straight to their audience in that area. Thus they showed the donor that social development was the ultimate goal they were working towards, regardless of the sectarian or political affiliation of the municipality in question.

There was also long discussion about Lebanese students’ refusal to participate in activities with Syrian students at one of the public libraries. When the library simply chooses to accept this, it is in fact bowing to the inevitable and acquiescing to the status quo, surrendering to the racist logic of those Lebanese students and their parents. Participants ended up suggesting ways to counter this situation, by organizing group activities such as putting on theater pieces that might showcase the positive qualities of children subject to ostracism and discrimination, for example, picking a child with a beautiful voice and having them sing. Public libraries play pivotal roles in children’s lives and must concern themselves with all aspects of a child’s development: psychological, moral and social. They should lean on other NGOs, as networks and partnerships can help mitigate such problems – for example, reaching out to an NGO dedicated to educational theater, such as the Zokak theater company, which would help limit such conflicts and engage both Syrian and Lebanese children in a group dialogue and projects to discuss discrimination, intolerance and racism, etc.

# Case Study: Syria

## *Maintaining a national network and ensuring mutual protection in times of strife*

THE PUBLIC READING INITIATIVE BEGAN IN EARNEST IN SYRIA THANKS TO THE ANNA LINDH FOUNDATION, WHICH LAUNCHED A PROJECT IN 2007 THAT ESTABLISHED NINE PUBLIC LIBRARIES: FIVE IN AREAS ACROSS SYRIA AND FOUR IN THE SUBURBS AROUND DAMASCUS.

We have no information about what happened to those libraries five years into the fierce war in Syria, but we know that some of the librarians have taken initiatives to receive displaced children and to support them both emotionally and psychologically by giving them access to books and encouraging them to read.

It is virtually impossible to acquire permission to establish a non-governmental organization in Syria, though one of the interlocutors was able to create a structure she called a “civilian solidarity company” which is allowed to work “in accordance with the law” and to receive financial aid. But such an NGO is bound by special conditions: it may not actually operate without protection from a partner of influence in the government, usually religious influence, who can help provide an actual space out of which to operate.

These special NGOs work within a national network whose constituents have been working together for the last five years on relief efforts as much as on educational ones. And this networking activity happens among partners who share the same vision, the same goals, and have mutual trust in one another. This is what ensures protection for all the partners.

Though the need to operate within a network is imposed by the dangerous security situation in the country and happens without any real planning, cooperative work in the educational field has been ongoing for the last six months, and the mutual confidence the partners have in one another pushes them toward innovation, to find new ways

to develop and cooperate. This means that partners must work together to look for funding and to implement joint projects.

***This networking activity happens among partners who share the same vision, the same goals, and have mutual trust in one another.***

***This is what ensures protection for all the partners.***

Working together is a vital necessity in Syria, though as it stands now it cannot serve as a model for public libraries in Lebanon to follow. But it highlights the importance of a cooperative and collaborative spirit in difficult circumstances, in circumstances where life and death actually hang in the balance. In Syria today, there are volunteers risking their lives daily to try and save whatever there is to be saved, to bring reading to children in order to secure a better future.

# Appendix

## **An Overview of the Participating Organizations**

### **Nahr Ibrahim Municipal Public Library – Affiliated with the Ministry of Culture**

Next to St. George Church, Nahr Ibrahim  
Tel: 09/446678

The Nahr Ibrahim Municipal Public Library allows residents to browse or borrow any of the documents in its collection (books, magazines, periodicals, etc.) Entrance is free for all and all are welcome regardless of age, gender, race, nationality, religion or belief.

Services include:

- Motivating children and encouraging their love of reading from an early age
- Encouraging imagination and creativity in children and youth
- Promoting dialogue between cultures and encouraging cultural diversity
- Helping develop information skills and computer literacy

Activities include:

- Intensive courses in both Italian and Spanish with specialized teachers
- Guitar lessons
- One-on-one tutorials in math, physics and chemistry for intermediate students and help preparing for state exams
- One-on-one tutorials in math for final year students doing the social sciences Baccalaureate program and preparation for SE and SV State exams as well as Economics with specialized tutors
- Summer school course (month of August) for elementary and intermediate students
- Special help for students at all levels (elementary, intermediate, secondary and university) on information and research skills in Arabic, French and English
- Arranges visits for public and private schools
- Organizing children's book fairs in Arabic, French and English
- Storytelling hour every Saturday

- Diverse art activities in partnership with [ASSABIL, the network of Lebanese public libraries](#)

### **Baakleen National Library – Affiliated with the Ministry of Culture**

[www.baakleenlibrary.com](http://www.baakleenlibrary.com); Tel: 05/304050

Services include:

Works in cooperation with schools

Activities include:

Part of a network with other local NGOs working on joint activities: Chouf Cedar Reserve, the Peters Foundation, part of the ASSABIL network of Lebanese public libraries.

### **Al-Nabi Sheeth Municipality Public Library – Affiliated with the Ministry of Culture**

[www.nabisheeth.org](http://www.nabisheeth.org)

- Works in partnership with 5 schools in the village.
- Works in partnership with the French Cultural Center in Baalbek.
- Part of the ASSABIL network.
- Works with local organizations: the Women's Commission, the Health Commission.

### **Beit Mery Public Library or the Espace Culturel de Beit-Mery**

Tel: 04/972016; 70/988525

[Facebook: Espace Culturel de Beit-Mery](#)

An initiative by Generis; Founded 1999

In partnership with the French Cultural Center, Beirut

Part of the ASSABIL network

Part of a network with public and private schools

in Beit Mery, the Lebanese Red Cross Youth, the Lebanese Scout Association, etc.

### **Safadi Cultural Center – Al Mouna Library**

Al Maarad, Tripoli

[Facebook: Safadi Cultural Foundation](#)

- Develops and implements new projects to respond to the needs of different sets of beneficiaries.
- Opens up new arenas and potentials for innovation, expression and communication.
- Organizes stand-out cultural events to highlight the best of local, national and global culture.
- Embraces diverse cultural activities and initiatives.

Activities include:

- “Culture for All” program: A program of cultural events and lectures that takes place in rounds, with events on a weekly basis. It aims to create a network between universities and the Foundation by providing a platform for dialogue about different subjects and within different specialties.
- Puts on annual Science Fair in partnership with Balamand University, showcasing fun scientific experiments and technological innovation
- Offers creative writing workshops
- Arranges visits for students from public and private schools
- Offers training, information and resources supporting a sustainable approach to education
- Consistently provides whatever cultural services are available

### **Saida Public Library – An Initiative by Blue Mission**

[Facebook: Safadi Public Library](#)

To realize the library’s goals of creating a network and building bridges of communication, it has partnered up with a number of civil society organizations to implement joint activities:

Civic Support Initiative  
ASSABIL  
French Cultural Center  
Blue Mission  
Sama for Development  
Moubdioun Association  
Wedia  
Follet Destiny  
Saida Al-Qiyam  
Lebanese Red Cross

Goals include:

- To improve, develop and diversify the quality of services at the library to arrive at a safe, secure and

sustainable educational environment

- To promote a spirit of partnership with the local community and its educational institutions by following up on students and motivating them to take part in the Arab Reading Challenge, organized annually by the School of Research Science in Dubai
- To activate community partnerships through membership, volunteer and community work to improve the city

Activities include:

- Building the capacity of the team working in the department of library affairs and strengthening the institution
- Organizing a youth volunteer forum for students from schools and universities, teaching them the responsibilities required to uphold the library’s role as a public space, encouraging the habit of reading and making frequent use of the library
- Special year-round educational activities for children
- Opens after-hours and on holidays to provide more time for study
- Provides activities for all levels

Activities in partnership with other organizations:

- Workshops and training courses
- Art, poetry and story contests
- Games for children
- Storytelling for children
- Establishing a youth club for dialogue
- Math contests
- Tutorials
- Book clubs for adults
- Cinema club
- Math club

Activities organized by other organizations and schools at the library: workshops, lectures, awareness sessions, etc.



# Maternal Citizenship

**BY SAADA ALLAW**

*translated from Arabic*

# An overview

## **History, Legislature and the Lebanese Social Environment**

**TO ENJOY THE RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES OF CITIZENSHIP TO A COUNTRY IS NO SMALL DETAIL IN THE SCOPE OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S LIFE. IT IS A RIGHT AS IMPORTANT AS THE RIGHT TO WATER, TO FOOD, TO LIFE.**

In his book, *Jurisprudence on Lebanese Citizenship* (1999), Dr. Akasha Mohammad Abdel Aal defines citizenship as, “a status of a political and legal nature applied to an individual and tying him to a particular country, one of whose requirements is to assign the individual’s legal rights and duties as a member of the international community.” Citizenship, according to Dr. Abdel Aal, naturally contains two presuppositions: that a State will grant it and an individual receive it.

In his 2003 study carried out for the Nationality Campaign in Lebanon (*My Nationality is a Right for Me and My Family*), lawyer and former Minister of Interior Ziad Baroud ascertains that “nationality is a personal status of a political, not civil, nature, mediating an individual’s affiliation to a certain State.” And it is the State, of course, that controls an individual’s right to enjoy the privileges of citizenship, whether it is granted by birth or naturalization; individual desire plays no role in whether or not a person has the right to acquire any nationality.

In Lebanon, as well as a number of other countries, the daily struggle of those classified as “stateless,” or whose status is deemed “under consideration,” or members of any other group whose members hold no nationality, is the best proof of the tremendous impact that not belonging to a State can have on an individual’s life. The smallest example of which is how they are forced to run for cover and hide should they encounter a member of the security forces on the street or at any point as they go about their lives, lest they be arrested for not having identity papers. Children of Lebanese mothers with foreign, that is, non-national fathers, are counted

among those classified as stateless when the father himself is also classified as stateless, or when he is not considered a national of any state under the function of its law.

The children of these Lebanese mothers and non-national fathers are subject to the great injustice of having to live like strangers or exiles in their mother’s country: they are deprived of access to health care and cannot be employed in any of the liberal professions (such as lawyers, engineers and doctors). This even after the recent progress of the last few years, whereby non-national husbands and children have been allowed “courtesy” residence permits and permission to pursue some professions – though still far from all.

### **Particulars of the Lebanese Case**

Distinct political, legal, demographic and sectarian considerations regulate access to nationality in Lebanon. The current nationality law has been in place since the inception of Greater Lebanon, 1925 to be precise, when the High Commissioner issued Decree no. 15 (January 19, 1925), specifying under articles 1, 2 and 10 of the law the ways in which an individual would be granted the right to Lebanese nationality – laws which are sadly still in place to this day.

Based on Decree 1925/15, those considered Lebanese are:

*Every person born of a Lebanese father.*

*Every person born in the Greater Lebanon territory and who did not acquire a foreign nationality upon birth or by affiliation.*

*Every person born in the Greater Lebanon territory of unknown parents or parents of unknown nationality.*

The illegitimate child whose nationality has not been established during his minority shall have the Lebanese nationality if one of his parents in respect of whom affiliation is first established and if the proof of affiliation regarding both the father and the mother results from a single contract or judgment; the child shall acquire the nationality of the father should the latter be Lebanese.

*Every person born on the Greater Lebanon territory of a Lebanese father also born in the said territory and was on November 1914 an Ottoman subject.*

Since the days of the French Mandate and the establishment of Decree no. 1925/15, the legislature in Lebanon has distinguished between “legitimate” and “illegitimate” children, restricting the right to pass on Lebanese nationality to fathers only. Children deemed illegitimate are allowed to inherit nationality from the mother in specific cases only, most notably when the child is born of unknown parents, or when a child’s mother acknowledges her maternity while the child is still a minor and before the father has established paternity, even if the father were a non-national, or when the child is illegitimate with an unknown father (born to a single mother).

By restricting the right to pass on nationality to legitimate children through the paternal bloodline only without any regard for the mother’s nationality, Lebanese law has ensured that a Lebanese woman married to a non-Lebanese national father cannot pass her nationality on to her children (Article 1 of Decree 15/1925).

Lebanon’s refusal to recognize a woman’s right to pass her nationality is only one of many legally enshrined forms of discrimination against women. It is essential to rid the Lebanese legislature of any text that does not guarantee equal rights to women and to purge it of all gender discrimination, in accordance with the spirit of the Lebanese Constitution – which guarantees equal rights between all citizens – as well as with Lebanon’s commitment – as per the preamble added to the constitution after the Taif Accord – to abide by all United Nations charters and conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979). The latter, in Section 2 of Article 9, requires the lifting of all restrictions on a woman being able to pass on her nationality, affirming that a State must grant women rights equal to those enjoyed by men with respect to the nationality of their children. It goes without say that the Nationality Law must be amended in that direction.

### ***The Roots of Discrimination and Discriminatory Legislation***

Maintaining the sectarian and demographic balance was one of the core considerations during the creation of Greater Lebanon in the 1920s. Preserving this balance (which exists in no form today except in the distribution of political positions and employment quotas in accordance with law or custom) is at the top of the list of pretexts used by Lebanese authorities to perpetuate discrimination toward Lebanese women when it comes to their right to pass on their nationality: authorities are perpetually afraid that doing so might result in a disruption of the sectarian balance. Though no more than an assumption, it is dealt with as a given fact that the vast majority of women married to non-nationals are married to Muslims, Sunni Muslims in specific, followed by Shia Muslims, and it is this, they say, that threatens the sectarian balance between Christians and Muslims in the country. Even the Ministerial Committee that was tasked with studying a potential amendment to Lebanon’s Nationality Law resorted to this pretext when the issue was first put before the Cabinet in March 2012. The amendment proposed to allow women to pass their nationality on to their children only (with the exception of women married to Palestinian men), so that their children would be allowed, after reaching majority age, to officially apply for citizenship provided they had been legally residing in Lebanon for at least ten years and had not been convicted of any previous crime.

Made up of seven ministers and headed by Deputy Prime Minister Samir Mouqbel, the Ministerial Committee was commissioned with studying the potential ramifications of such a law and offering their recommendations. The recommendation finally offered by the committee was to reject any amendments to the law (despite the fact that husbands and the children of women married to Palestinian men had been explicitly exempt from the draft text), under the pretext that granting women the right to pass on their nationality would be contrary to the higher interests of the State. The Ministerial Committee cited numbers to show that the majority of Lebanese women who would be affected by the law were married to Arab men (in other words, mostly Muslims), while the women married to Westerners or other non-nationals were a minority in comparison, and that this would result in a disruption of Lebanon’s sectarian and demographic balance.

The second excuse usually given to justify the rejection of making changes to the Nationality Law is Lebanon’s commitment – one enshrined

by the Constitution – not to resettle Palestinian refugees, in line with its ratification of the Arab League Charter that exhorts Arab states not to grant Palestinians citizenship lest they lose their right of return to Palestine. This commitment – not to “resettle” the Palestinians – is then invoked to continue refusing women the right to grant their nationality to their children. There are currently about 500,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, including those who were previously residing in Syria and fled the conflict there.

It must be noted that the issue of a woman’s right to pass on her nationality is not considered, by the majority of the Lebanese, to be of concern to the public at large, as opposed to the issue of domestic violence. It is rather seen as an issue particular only to the case of women married to non-nationals, despite the progress that has been made by civil society organizations to advance the case and to spread public awareness around its importance over nearly twenty years of advocacy, and sixteen years since the launch of the Nationality Campaign (My Nationality is a Right for Me and My Family). Unfortunately, however, the issue has not yet managed to earn broad support from all social segments because of the sensitivity of demographic and sectarian concerns, which have only increased in recent years as the number of Syrian refugees arriving in Lebanon has swelled to about 1.5 million. As such, fears around the “demographic threat” have multiplied, no longer just represented by the Palestinian presence but the Syrian one as well, as per the discourse of the Lebanese authorities, chief among whom is the Minister of Foreign Affairs Gebran Bassil, who has expressed these fears explicitly in more than one official statement.

### ***The Importance of Women Being Granted Full Citizenship Rights***

Children of Lebanese mothers and foreign fathers who reside in Lebanon live in a strange limbo and experience a bitterness compounded by the inability to enjoy any of the citizenship rights and privileges guaranteed for those children born of a Lebanese father. Despite the fact that five years ago, the State finally allowed such families to apply for and receive courtesy residence permits (which have to be renewed every three years), such families are still denied access to many basic rights and services, most important among which is the ability to be employed in a number of professions, including the liberal professions, access to the free healthcare provided by the Ministry of Health, and proper access to public schools, as the priority is reserved for children born of Lebanese

***In its legal discrimination against women, the Lebanese state is in fact violating every international charter and convention that it has ratified***

fathers. These non-national children are also subject to discrimination and a pervasive sense of unfairness that permeates every aspect of their lives, including their educational attainment, their mental health and their ambition to participate in the development of the country in which they have chosen to live and that yet which treats them like strangers. Some do not see the point in education at all given that they are denied the ability to work in many professions, including the specialized liberal professions. Some, particularly those children born to fathers of Arab nationalities, including Palestinians, Syrians, Egyptians and even Iraqis, are subjected to outright discrimination and racism in their daily lives.

On the psychological level they suffer from clear schisms in their identity and sense of belonging: they have chosen, after all, to live in a country that doesn’t acknowledge them as citizens and begrudges them the basic political and legal rights that citizens enjoy.

The women, the mothers, on the other hand, feel utterly powerless. They watch their children suffer, helpless to pass on their nationality and stop that suffering. They also feel discriminated against by their own government: though they themselves have the nationality, they feel like second-class citizens in comparison to Lebanese men.

In its legal discrimination against women, most notably the denial of the basic right to pass on their nationality, the Lebanese state is in fact violating every international charter and convention that it has ratified, including the CEDAW Agreement, though it did make reservations about three articles, among which is section 2 of Article 9, which decrees that a State must guarantee a woman the right to pass her nationality on to her family. As such, Lebanon remains outside the ranks of those nations that apply the requisite international legal standards that guarantee respect for human rights.

# Initiatives and Collaboration

***Strengths and weakness of civil society organizations working towards the introduction of legislation to enable mothers to pass on their Lebanese nationality to their children***

THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS ARE THE RESULT OF A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION HELD IN NOVEMBER 2016 WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM FOUR ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE IN THE DOMAIN OF MATERNAL CITIZENSHIP AND AN INTERVIEW WITH A FIFTH.

Among the organizations represented at the roundtable was the Collective for Research and Training on Development-Action (CRTD.A). The non-profit organization, which was established in 2000, is behind the Nationality Campaign (My Nationality is a Right for Me and My Family), the core organization working on the issue of maternal citizenship in Lebanon.

Also present was a representative from the Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering (RDFL), which has a long history of feminist activism and advocacy on the nationality issue; a representative of the “My Nationality is My Dignity” campaign, launched by Maseer and established five years ago to help all those who are classified as stateless, as well as the non-national children of Lebanese women married to foreigners; and Hayat Mirshad, co-founder of the youth-led feminist organization FE-MALE, which works on a number of women’s rights issues including the right to pass on nationality.

An interview with The National Commission for Lebanese Women also contributed to this report. The Commission was established in 1998 as an official body under the Presidency of the Cabinet in order to serve as a link between civil society and the Lebanese government on women’s issues. The Commission is the only body to have submitted a draft law before the Cabinet, the first of its kind, which would allow women to pass on their nationality.

## ***Projects Carried Out by the Participating Organizations***

None of the organizations had worked on an officially recognized campaign pertaining to women’s nationality rights except for CRTD.A, which launched the Nationality Campaign in 2000. Since then, the Campaign has championed the cause through numerous activities and carried out two studies on the subject. The first is a legal study, which looks carefully at the content and context of the nationality law and the amendments required, while the second examines the demographic and social reasons that have so far prevented this right from being extended to women (links to these two studies can be found in the appendix).

Though in all the years of its advocacy it has not yet managed to secure the right of women to pass on their nationality, the Nationality Campaign has nevertheless made significant strides by helping secure official residency permits for the non-national children and husbands of Lebanese women. The Campaign was also careful not to compromise on or fracture the issue: its pursuit of the residency permits was undertaken as part of its essential work toward eventually securing women the right to pass on nationality.

The National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) also implemented some programs, most notably carrying out a study that, “sought to investigate the underlying problem behind the lack of any attempts to combat the problem of discrimination against women, both historically and currently, and examined the data connected to the right to pass nationality, including looking at the original content of the law and comparing the situation in Lebanon with that of other countries,” as per what Jumana Mufarej, the executive director, said during the meeting conducted with her.

None of the other organizations – RDFL, Maseer (My Nationality is My Dignity) and FE-MALE – had launched any official or specific campaign on nationality rights, but RDFL and FE-MALE campaigned alongside CRTD.A, participating in the activities organized by the Nationality Campaign, working on raising awareness and other forms of advocacy, as well as supporting the cause through media appearances and social media campaigns.

My Nationality is My Dignity, on the other hand, launched no specific awareness campaigns or otherwise, but worked instead on helping those non-national children through their daily struggles, both personal and legal, and offered aid as well to those classified as stateless or those whose status was “under consideration.”

### **Working Together**

The fight for the recognition of a Lebanese woman’s right to pass on her nationality does not have a history as long as some of the other women’s rights issues in the country; there has not been any one organization working exclusively on it until CRTD.A launched the Nationality Campaign in 2000. Historically, however, it has emerged organically as part of a list of legitimate feminist demands to secure equal rights for women in Lebanon. Other organizations have fought for and supported the cause alongside their own issues, either by participating in the Campaign or by launching smaller side-projects, but they never gained the force of a full-out campaign. These projects could be classified mostly as advocacy initiatives to raise awareness about the issue, to drive home the importance of a woman having the right to pass on her nationality as well as the legal discrimination that works against that right. Organizations brought up the issue through traditional media and social media campaigns, by talking about it on the feminist podcast created and hosted by FE-MALE called “Sharika wa Lakin” (A Partner But) and on the web pages and social media accounts of organizations allied with the cause, such as RDFL.

Between RDFL and My Nationality is a Right for Me and My Family, talk revolved around the organization and coordination of advocacy projects and awareness-raising activities: in schools and universities, through seminars open to the public and through sit-ins and protests, while representatives from the Nationality Campaign and FE-MALE discussed media advocacy strategies and how best to coordinate on campaign activities. Both RDFL and FE-MALE agreed that there was no need for them to launch their own campaigns or specific

projects to work on the nationality issue as there was an official one (My Nationality is a Right for Me and My Family) that already existed.

Any coordination that took place between the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) and the other participating organizations was limited to partnership within the framework of the Nationality Campaign, “as,” explained Mufarej, the executive director of NCLW, “they are the only organization (through CRTD.A) working on the nationality issue.”

### **Goals**

The two sessions that were held with the organizations working on or advocating for the nationality cause aimed to try and get a sense of the extent of the cooperation between these organizations: the pros and outcomes of it when it happens, the obstacles and impediments, if any, that prevent it from happening, and how best to encourage and galvanize it. As such there was extensive discussion about those programs that involved a lot of cooperation and the ensuing results, and dialogue about the weak points and how best to address them.

### **Points of Strength**

Through their Nationality Campaign, CRTD.A has made many important strides in the fight to give Lebanese women the right to pass on their nationality to their families. They have created networks with other advocacy organizations and consolidated those relationships through cooperation on different activities or strategizing sessions. “We would meet to consult with our partners to plot out the required steps and the most strategic way to go about them,” explained Karima Chebbo, a representative of the campaign.

***This campaign network has held a regional meeting every six months to evaluate their work and put new plans and strategies in place***

The most important of these achievements was the successful lobbying for free residence permits for the husbands and children of Lebanese women married to non-nationals, renewable every three years, and permission for them to seek employment in different domains, with the exception of the liberal professions (forbidden to Palestinians as well). Last, but certainly not least, was the draft of the new nationality law that was presented before the Cabinet in coordination with the National Commission for Lebanese Women.

The nationality campaign is also part of a regional network that includes six Arab countries in total, all working on the same campaign under the same name, most of which have managed to achieve more successes than those achieved by Lebanon. In some of those Arab countries, women have now won the right to pass their nationalities on to their families – their children and their husbands – while the same cannot be said of Lebanon. This campaign network has held a regional meeting every six months to evaluate their work and put new plans and strategies in place.

The work being undertaken by the Nationality Campaign focuses on “eliminating the discrimination against women in the nationality law and giving women equal status to the one enjoyed by men,” explained Chebbo. Studies were carried out to evaluate the legal, social and actual realities of the situation, the obstacles standing in the way of ending discrimination against women, and to survey the number of Lebanese women married to non-nationals, as there was an absence of any official numbers and statistics. This, despite the fact that the Ministerial Committee tasked with studying the draft of the new nationality law (and who ultimately denied women their nationality rights) mentioned that there were around 370,000 people who would benefit from the new law, all of them the children of Lebanese women married to non-nationals and who the Committee was able to survey.

The Nationality Campaign is trying to turn the nationality issue over to the court of public opinion, to turn it into a shared issue, “which we have succeeded in doing,” affirmed Chebbo. The facts on the ground, however, indicate that it is the women directly affected by this issue who are the main drivers of the campaign (which in turn depends on their support and offers support of its own when they have problems) as well as some of the other advocacy organizations. And yet in fact it seems that throughout the course of this struggle and campaign so far, and despite all the advocacy work and the participatory activities, the cause has not

yet managed to capture public attention enough to become a shared issue. This is through no failure on the part of the campaigners to publicize the issue or create awareness about the discrimination against Lebanese women inherent in the existing law, but because the majority of Lebanese people continue to see the issue as one that only affects women married to non-nationals and therefore has nothing to do with them. There is also the matter of the extreme sensitivity of the issue for those among the wider public, people who are not part of the bubble of civic activism, rights advocacy and the principled commitment to human rights causes regardless of the beneficiaries.

RDFL has implemented a number of activities and projects designed to advocate and raise awareness on the issue of the nationality law in each of its six branches throughout Lebanon as well as in schools and universities. “I think we’ve done more awareness-raising and seminars than the Campaign itself,” said Caroline Sukkar, a representative from the organization. RDFL coordinates and cooperates closely with the Campaign, “but we would never launch a campaign of our own, because that would be in really bad form, to create our own campaign while there’s an official one underway entirely dedicated to the issue,” said Sukkar.

Since the nationality campaign’s platform and demands are fully in line with what RDFL and FE-MALE would wish to see happen on the issue, FE-MALE, which works on feminist media advocacy, uses its media presence to drum up support for the cause and also participates, alongside RDFL, its members and its volunteers, in campaign activities, including protests and other forms of activism. “There’s no need for us to plan our own projects or programs,” says FE-MALE’s co-founder, Hayat Mirshad. “We’re happy to just keep advocating.”

It’s true that My Nationality is My Dignity, which grew out of Maseer, “has no project or program especially geared toward the issue of a woman’s right to pass her nationality on to her family, but the organization focuses all its work on helping those most directly affected by the issue,” explained a representative from the organization. “We work with the children of Lebanese women married to non-nationals, with those classified as stateless and those whose status is “under consideration,” helping them through their legal and daily struggles, and we do all this without any sort of funding whatsoever, paying everything out of our own pockets.”

Neither Maseer nor its My Nationality is My Dignity campaign were invited to participate

in the Nationality Campaign's activities or its coordination meetings, "We feel rejected," said the aforementioned representative.

### **Weaknesses and Challenges**

There is no larger coalition working toward the goal of securing nationality rights for Lebanese women, and the reason for this is that the issue itself has not managed to galvanize the same sort of public momentum or support as, for example, the issue of domestic violence against women, despite the fact that there are a large number of organizations working for the cause. There are no programs or projects exclusively dedicated to the issue with the exception of everything that falls under the umbrella of the Nationality Campaign, and the advocacy and work to raise awareness and publicize the issue being undertaken by some organizations, including FE-MALE's media advocacy. A large swathe of civil society activists certainly feel concerned with and dedicated to the cause, but they remain a minority compared to the vast majority of the Lebanese public.

The reason the nationality issue hasn't gained as much public traction as the issue of domestic violence is because of the relatively small number of people it seems to affect. The public sees it as an issue affecting only those families made up of a Lebanese mother married to a non-national husband, and therefore not one that affects all Lebanese women. Whereas a great number of Lebanese women have been victims of some form of domestic violence: wives, daughters, mothers and sisters. And those who have not been directly subjected to violence know someone who has, a relative or neighbor or friend. It is common knowledge that people feel much more strongly about issues that affect them directly.

There is also the fact that the nationality issue hits at a very particular and sensitive nerve center of Lebanese society: the question of the country's demographic and sectarian balance. The Christians, already fearful of becoming a minority, are afraid that the passing of a new nationality law will mean that far more Muslims will become naturalized since the vast majority of women married to non-nationals are married to Muslim non-nationals, as per the Ministerial Committee who studied the issue. Add to that the prevailing Lebanese "racism" toward the Palestinians and Syrians in the country as the number of Syrian refugees alone today has risen to about one and a half-million. Lebanese of the Druze sect also feel unconcerned with the nationality issue, as their women do not generally

**The issue of maternal citizenship has not managed to galvanize the same sort of public momentum or support as, for example, the issue of domestic violence against women**

marry outside of their sect, and so they are largely unaffected by it. Sensitivity to the issue also extends to the country's Muslim community, since the numbers indicate that the majority who might become naturalized would be Sunni, and not Shia, Muslims. And so none of the Lebanese sectarian communities, with the exception of the Sunnis, have a particular interest in changing the nationality law. All of this in addition to the patriarchal attitudes entrenched within the society, which generally does not recognize women's equal rights or prioritize any issues to do with women.

This is why it is so important that there be cooperation between all the civil society organizations working on the nationality issue. So far there seems to be quite a way to go, given the small number of organizations working and advocating for the cause, the reason for which is the aforementioned sensitivity of the issue, as well as the conviction many feel in the futility of the struggle, given the absence of a civil state in Lebanon or any unified civil laws governing personal status, and given the all-encompassing web of the country's sectarian system, in which all things are entangled.

And so it seems cooperation is limited to some organizations advocating for the Campaign or participating in its activities by sending a symbolic number of representatives to take part (two or three volunteers in the best case scenario), or organizing seminars in this school or that university, or performing media advocacy by talking about the issue in traditional media or social media or on websites.

The fundamental weakness, however, in the network of cooperation, is that there is sometimes a lack of alignment in goals and vision. The National CEDAW Committee's vision for example, focuses on

demanding that women be allowed to pass on their nationality to their children, but not their husbands as well. This clashes with what the Nationality Campaign is trying to achieve, along with RDFL and FE-MALE, by demanding that a woman be given the right to pass on her nationality to the entirety of her immediate family: children and husband. And thus, this fundamental conflict in vision impedes the cooperation, partnership and networking necessary to turn the struggle into a common cause, as all the representatives from the three aforementioned organizations affirmed. “There is no way,” they said, “that we can cooperate with anyone who is compromising the issue and its demands.”

My Nationality is My Dignity, along with its parent organization, Maseer, found no response to their attempts to cooperate with the other organizations, as their representative said in both of the sessions. “We felt rejected,” she affirmed repeatedly.

An organization’s transparency and uprightness in terms of the cause was an essential concern in terms of other organizations being willing to cooperate with them or not. “There are some organizations,” said Karima Chebbo, “about whose transparency we have definite reservations.”

***“There is a lack of coordination and an inability to develop cohesive ideas. And there’s a disagreement on priorities, such whether it is important to fight to be able to naturalize children alone, or children and husbands together?”***

### ***The Fundamentals of Cooperation***

Agreement on vision and tactics were of utmost concern when deciding whether to cooperate or not. “To cooperate with another organization,” said Caroline Sukkar, “we need to have a common vision, both on our strategies and the fact that the issue should not be fragmented or compromised.”

Hayat Mirshad agreed: “When a certain organization decides to compromise on the demands, and another wants to work on it as one unified goal,

then why should I work with those who are looking to compromise?”

As did Karima Chebbo: “We will struggle and cooperate with those who align with our demands. Why would we work with another organization willing to compromise on its platform and make concessions that we’re not willing to make? Or an organization that’s implementing activities in parallel with ours and at the same time?”

While My Nationality is My Dignity found itself rejected and unwelcome: “We tried,” said their representative, “but there was no one willing to work with us.”

As far as the National Commission for Lebanese Women were concerned, there were no obstacles to cooperation. “But,” explained Jumana Mufarej, “there is a lack of coordination and an inability to develop cohesive ideas. And there’s a disagreement on priorities, such as whether it is important to fight to be able to naturalize children alone, or children and husbands together?” She affirmed that NCLW believes that “children are the priority.” NCLW also believes that the Syrian presence in Lebanon has complicated the issue, given the tensions it has brought to the surface in Lebanon. Cooperation must stem from “a cohesive understanding and list of demands,” and be based “on coordination and advocacy.” And yet what we have today, continued Mufarej, “are different organizations all carrying their own banners and getting support from other organizations. Finding common understanding on this issue isn’t easy.”

## Case Study: Egypt

***How cooperation led to a long awaited change in legislation that allows women to pass on their nationality to their husbands and children***

**AFTER DECADES OF STRUGGLE, EGYPTIAN WOMEN NOW HAVE THE RIGHT TO PASS ON THEIR NATIONALITY TO THEIR HUSBAND AND CHILDREN, WITHOUT EXCEPTION.**

The denial of a Egyptian women's rights to pass on their nationality to their children was not just a violation of their rights to be treated equally. Their children had also been denied all the rights and privileges that come with citizenship, including residency and free education and healthcare.

According to Mervat Abu Teeg, a lawyer and the director of Ummi (My Mother), the government often deported the children of Egyptian women married to non-nationals, treating them like unwanted strangers. Ummi is one of the organizations at the forefront of the fight to award women the right to pass on their nationality, as well as one of the regional partners in the Nationality Campaign that was originally launched in Lebanon.

The privileges enjoyed by foreigners in Egypt up until the 1950s were of prime concern to Egyptian legislators, who therefore attempted to enshrine legal protection for Egyptian men. Up until the 1950s, non-national women married to Egyptian men were able to leave Egypt with their children, who automatically inherited their mother's nationality. A law was therefore drafted to grant the Egyptian nationality to the children of Egyptian men only, restricting citizenship to the paternal line and disregarding the maternal one. The law automatically granted the Egyptian nationality to the children of Egyptian men regardless of where they were born and regardless of the nationality of the mother. Law 29, issued in 1975, enshrined the inequality between men and women and enshrined the legal discrimination against women by denying them the same right that men enjoyed: to pass their nationality on to their children. As such, upending that law became one of the main goals of the feminist movement in the country, though the issue

remained hidden "beneath the surface" up until the 1980s. Abu Teeg affirmed that until the 1950s, the vast majority of people married to non-nationals in Egypt were men.

Egyptian women remained subject to this punishing legislature, whose one exception – nevertheless still connected to the same paternal "blood rights" – was that a woman could pass her nationality to her child only in the case where the father was unknown, regardless of where the child was born. Law no. 26, issued in 1975 came to replace law no. 160, issued in 1951, setting even more stringent conditions for Egyptian women to be able to pass on their nationalities. As per the latter law, the only circumstances where such a thing was permissible was when:

1. The child was born in Egypt.
2. The father was either unknown or stateless or was unable to prove paternity by law.

This tendency in the Egyptian legislature was in line with the laws in place in the majority of the Arab countries, which also only granted exceptions that allowed women to pass on their nationalities when the child's father was either unknown or stateless.

When those personal status laws legislating nationality and citizenship reverted to a secular basis, Abu Teeg realized that Islam, contrary to the speculation of many in the Arab world, was in fact not the culprit, and that the discrimination against women enshrined in the nationality law was not in fact based in religion. The proof of this was the case of Sudan, an officially Islamic country, which in 1998 granted Sudanese women the right to pass their nationality on to their children.

Despite the fact that Egypt is one of those countries whose successive constitutions (the most recent one having gone into effect on June 30, 2014) are

considered to be mostly based on Islamic law, no one was ever able to give the nationality campaign in Egypt any clear religious substantiation to justify the continued discrimination against women when it came to the nationality law.

**Cooperation between organizations and individual activists working on securing equal nationality rights for women was the fundamental reason behind their eventual success**

Instead, the justifications they used ranged from the country's population density – arguing that giving women the right to pass on their nationality would only compound the population problem – to the need to maintain national security, to the economic situation in the country, and finally the fact that an Egyptian woman who married a non-national had actually consented that her children should be denied an Egyptian nationality as the law was well-known. The feminist movement in Egyptian thus began working on the issue by conducting a study on the discriminatory laws against women, choosing to focus on the nationality law and bolstering their arguments with the provisions of the Egyptian constitution, international laws and conventions, and the counsel of the Arab Lawyers' Union. Those who worked on the issue were consistently confronted by the prevailing outlook toward foreigners in Egypt, who were, according to Abu Teeg, "those who came to us as colonizers, who didn't speak our language or abide by our religion."

As the economy opened and more Egyptian workers emigrated abroad and the number of Egyptian women married to non-nationals increased, unaware of the suffering that would issue from their decision, it became imperative to solve their dilemma, to decrease the burden that fell on their shoulders and the shoulders of their children.

Through the course of this struggle, the feminist movement managed to wrest a decision from the Minister of Education that allowed these non-national children access to education, but the decision was not only conditional, but also nothing

more than words on paper, making clearer than ever the importance of continuing to fight until the discriminatory law was fully overturned. The individuals and organizations engaged in the struggle continued to use the suffering of these women and their children as the basis of their argument, along with the Egyptian constitution, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and other international conventions, especially after the Beijing Conference of 1995. The campaign also stressed the idea that equality and non-discrimination were at the heart of Islam's tenets.

**Cooperation and the Consolidation of Goals and Efforts**

The emergence of a number of human rights organizations in Egypt in the mid-1990s helped concentrate efforts and truly embark on the logistical work required to ensure that women were granted full nationality rights. The Nationality Law Campaign, one of many campaigns advocating for change, raised the idea that, taking into consideration the reality in the country and the previous efforts that had been made, their demands ought to be limited to allowing women to pass on their nationality to their children only as a first step.

After putting together a field study documenting the various hardships faced by those affected by the discriminatory law, and another, in-depth study of the legislature, an official Egyptian coalition was established in 1997. It brought together individual activists as well as organizations under one umbrella called the CEDAW Coalition, placing the nationality law as one of their central concerns, which they campaigned for under the slogan "The Right to Pass on Nationality for the Arab Woman," which later became "My Nationality is a Right for Me and My Family."

**Lessons Learned**

Abu Teeg affirms that the cooperation between organizations and individual activists working on securing equal nationality rights for women was the fundamental reason behind their eventual success. The cooperation itself was based on a mutual agreement on both goals and strategy, consolidating their struggle. The most important steps they followed were:

1. Beginning at the point where previous efforts had ended; therefore first analyzing and evaluating those previous efforts, identifying

the reasons behind any successes or failures by involving those same actors, taking their opinions on how best to build on what they had done and leaning on them as a fundamental source of support during the campaign.

2. Trying to integrate and standardize all efforts as much as possible and taking utmost care to safeguard and maintain cooperation.
3. Engaging those groups targeted by the campaign as allies or attempting to recruit opponents.
4. Engaging those groups who would benefit directly from the new law and involving them as an essential part of the campaign.
5. Tirelessly following up on everything being said about the case and formulating responses aligned with a rights-based approach if the comments were antagonistic or using them as material to shore up the campaign if they were supportive.
6. Not believing empty promises and not only refusing to accept partial solutions but exposing them for what they are to the court of public opinion.
7. Using the media to influence public opinion and trying to win them over as allies to the cause.
8. Establishing alliances as widely as possible and training and developing the core campaign team, identifying their experience and skills in order to distribute roles in such a way that maximizes effectiveness.
9. Taking care to maintain a calm – but efficient – work environment.
10. Using all legitimate legal channels and knocking on every door.
11. Performing periodic evaluations and correcting course if need be.
12. Not neglecting partners: keeping them updated on all the core team's activities and engaging them in every phase of planning and implementation to do with the campaign.
13. Adopting a rights-based approach within the framework of full citizenship rights for Egyptian women, focusing on the issue of gender discrimination and unequal rights and the extent

of its violation of citizenship rights according to the Egyptian constitution and the international conventions the country had signed.

14. Using international jurisprudence and studying the example of European countries that have managed to establish equality between men and women in this regard. How were women in those countries able to gain the full rights and privileges of citizenship?
15. Emphasizing teamwork by recruiting new supporters, whether by approaching local organizations interested in the campaign or important public figures: ministers and people working in the media.
16. Having everyone contribute their ideas as to what form the campaign should take enables us to better reach our final objective: to secure a woman's right to pass her nationality on to her children.
17. Dialoguing with decision-makers and members of the cabinet to introduce them to the extent of the problem and the extent of the violation of Egyptian women's citizenship rights.
18. Taking advantage of every opportunity, among them any and all local or international public events to publicize the campaign, particularly when those events had to do with women's or human rights, bringing the issue up through discussion and the dissemination of printed material, such as posters.
19. Using every avenue possible to put pressure on cabinet members to support the cause officially in the cabinet, to have it be part of their election platform.
20. Keeping abreast of citizens' public awareness on the matter.

After emphasizing the importance of cooperation and coordination between all of those parties working on the campaign, Abu Teeg explains the various amendments made to the nationality law: one in 2004, another in 2011 after the January 25 Revolution and finally a full amendment after the June 30 Revolution in 2013, as part of the new Egyptian constitution. Egyptian women now have the right to pass on their nationality to their entire family, husband and children, without exception, with Palestinians also included.

# Appendix

## **An Overview of the Participating Organizations**

### **Nationality Campaign**

[www.nationalitycampaign.wordpress.com](http://www.nationalitycampaign.wordpress.com)

The Nationality Campaign – My Nationality is a Right for Me and My Family – grew out of the Collective for Research and Training on Development-Action in the year 2000. It is the first organization to work on securing citizenship rights for women. The organization works on overturning the legal discrimination against women in the nationality law, attempting to secure a woman’s right to pass her nationality on to her family. It accepts no compromise on the issue, but works on an integrated list of demands that has as its end result full gender equality when it comes to the nationality law, maintaining that women should be allowed to pass on their nationality to their entire immediate family, children and husband alike.

The Campaign works within a network of local and regional organizations and has branches in six Arab countries in total.

### **My Nationality is My Dignity**

[Facebook: MyNationalityMydignity](https://www.facebook.com/MyNationalityMydignity)

The group grew out of the Maseer organization in 2011, working with people who have precarious personal status under Lebanese law: either categorized as stateless, classified as “under consideration,” or the children of Lebanese women married to non-nationals. The organization has no projects or program of demands, as it has been unable to secure any funding. Its activities are limited to offering help and support, both legal and personal, to their target group. Most of the people working in the organization are themselves directly affected by the issue.

### **The National Commission for Lebanese Women**

[Facebook: National Commission For Lebanese Women NCLW](https://www.facebook.com/NationalCommissionForLebaneseWomenNCLW)

The National Commission for Lebanese Women was established in 1998 at the Prime Ministry, after it was first formed as a committee to prepare for and then follow up on the implementation of the Beijing Conference. It is the official national mechanism responsible for realizing women’s advancement and gender equality in Lebanon, coordinating and establishing connections and links with the different public administrations, civil and non-governmental institutions, and Arab and international organizations, implementing projects and setting strategies with the aim of promoting the condition of Lebanese women. It prepares Lebanon’s yearly report for the CEDAW Committee, providing updates on the advancements of women’s issues in the country.

### **The Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering**

[www.rdfwomen.org](http://www.rdfwomen.org)

The Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering is a secular feminist organization established in 1976 that currently has six branches across Lebanon. The organization operates under feminist principles, working on women’s rights issues such as overturning discrimination in accordance with the tenets of the CEDAW, and takes part in campaigns aimed at combatting violence against women, at overturning the nationality law, promoting women’s political participation and their legal literacy. The organization is currently working on the campaign to abolish underage marriage.

RDFL is part of a network of other local, regional and international organizations. It employs about fifty people working both part-time and full-time as well as about 300 volunteers.

**FE-MALE**

[www.fe-male.org](http://www.fe-male.org)

Established in 2012, FE-MALE defines itself as “a modern, youth-led feminist organization.” Most of its members are volunteers and have experience in feminist activism as well as working in the media. Its work is focused primarily on three issues:

1. Supporting women’s issues through traditional and social media advocacy. It launched a podcast entitled “Sharika wa Lakin” (A Partner But) which later became a website.
2. Empowering a new generation of young feminists who will bring new blood and new life to the feminist struggle.
3. Working on challenging the stereotypical images of women promoted by the media.

**Research papers on gender and nationality in Lebanon and the Arab world can be read at**

<http://crt-da.org.lb>





# Waste Management

BY AYA IBRAHIM

# An overview

## ***A brief history of and introduction to legislation and initiatives related to solid waste management in Lebanon***

**THERE IS AN ABSENCE OF SPECIFIC LEGISLATIVE CONTENT THAT ADDRESSES SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT (SWM) IN LEBANON, DESPITE THE PRESENCE OF GENERAL GUIDELINES AND BRIEF TEXTS THAT TARGET THIS TOPIC.**

The main and most known legal instrument in this sector is Decree 8735/1974, which assigns the responsibility of SWM to the municipalities, under the command of Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MoIM). Decree 9093/2002 deals with providing funding and financial incentives for municipalities to accommodate waste management facilities, such as; sanitary landfill, incinerator, etc.

Other key legal instruments are Law 216/1993, which authorizes the Ministry of Environment (MoE) to assess sources of solid waste generation, and Law 444/2002, which includes the standards for landfills and promotes recycling. There is also presently a draft law for integrated solid waste management, which despite being approved in 2012 by the Council of Ministers (CoM), is still under review by parliament.

Enforcement of these legal instruments is however poor, for which overlaps in distribution of responsibilities among the different parties is partly to blame. This, in addition to political interference, mismanagement and disorganization, have resulted in inefficient waste management in Lebanon.

### ***A history of the problem***

Solid waste management practices and facilities vary across the country. They include sorting facilities, composting plants, and a sanitary landfill, where primitive collection practices and open dumps are still evident.

The evolution of solid waste management in Beirut and Mount Lebanon are however exceptional. In 1997, and in consultation with MoE, the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) - a governmental organization established in 1977 - adopted an Integrated Solid Waste Management plan for Beirut and Mount Lebanon upon the closure of the Burj Hammoud landfill. The plan comprised several facilities, including sorting and processing facilities, a warehouse for storing recyclables, a composting plant for organic waste, and two landfills for waste in Naameh and Bsalim.

Despite the grand plans, operational challenges and a continuous increase in the amount of generated waste resulted in the disposal of over 85 percent of municipal solid waste at the Naameh sanitary landfill.

The capacity of the landfill was soon fully exploited but the government extended its lifespan regardless without proper planning. Demands by local residents and civil society actors led to the closure of the landfill in July 2015, whereafter waste could be seen in open dumps that were being burned and overflowing on streets and rivers across the region. The problem has not yet been satisfactorily addressed and the country and its citizens continue to suffer from the lack of comprehensive and central waste management strategy.

***Solid waste management is a multidimensional issue that integrates political, social, economic, and environmental aspects.***

***The development of much needed policies requires an integrative approach in which all beneficiaries are stakeholders and participants, including, and perhaps most importantly, the private sector, civil society actors and citizens.***

***The importance of effective waste management policies***

Solid waste management is a multidimensional issue that integrates political, social, economic, and environmental aspects. Policy and legislation are key to addressing SWM in any country, but conflict within the Lebanese political system, among others factors, is preventing the efficient development and implementation of an effective strategy.

Effective waste management policies incorporate (i) a straightforward, transparent, and enforced legal and regulatory framework; (ii) proper and clear distribution of responsibilities, authority and funds among involved governmental parties; (iii) an organizational structure that identifies roles of other involved parties (including the private sector); and (iv) a stable forum for public participation and involvement.

As such, the development of such policies requires an integrative approach in which all beneficiaries are stakeholders and participants, including, and perhaps most importantly, the private sector, civil society actors and citizens.

# Initiatives and Collaboration

## **Strengths and weakness of civil society organizations and social enterprises working in the field of solid waste management**

**CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS PLAYED A CRUCIAL ROLE IN THE CLOSURE OF NAAMEH LANDFILL. OVER 60 ENVIRONMENTAL CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS (CSOS), ASSOCIATIONS, AND GROUPS MOBILIZED TOGETHER TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE MUNICIPALITY AND GOVERNMENT. THIS WAS AN EXAMPLE OF STRONG AND EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION.**

Ultimately however civil society actors cannot solve the overarching problem of poor waste management in the country, as it is not equipped with the expertise to do so. As such, collaboration needs to extend beyond civil society to also include the private sector, particularly social enterprises. A number of small to medium enterprises focused on social impact are now active in the field of solid waste management in Lebanon.

### **Lebanese civil society actors active in the field of solid waste management**

Representatives of non-profit organizations and social enterprises came together for a roundtable to engage in the issue of waste management in Lebanon. The main goals of the roundtable were the promotion of discussion among these organizations and enterprises and the identification of possible collaborative initiatives between them.

Representatives from non-government organizations Green Line, TERRE Liban and UNEP affiliated AEAPL and social enterprises Cedar Environmental, Recycle Beirut, and Zero Waste Act participated in the roundtable and subsequent discussions.

Following is a summary of the key findings of those discussions with regard to the strengths and weaknesses of initiatives by CSOs and social enterprises and the opportunities for and challenges to collaboration between them.

### **Strengths of civil society actions**

The major strength that was highlighted by the different representatives is the power of civil society to reach the public and raise awareness among them. This point was greatly emphasized by Ghada Haidar of the Green Line who stated “the main role of NGOs is to spread awareness in the community in order to influence individual behavior.” The importance of promoting habits that reduce waste generation was also highlighted, with the use of cloth bags during shopping presented as a prime example.

Just as civil society actors have a duty and ability to enhance pro-active approaches in the public sphere, so too do social enterprises. Zero Waste Act, for example, target schools as part of the first phase of their waste management initiatives, in a bid to promote recycling and influence behavior across the family.

Among the core strengths of civil society initiatives in the domain of waste management in Lebanon is the availability of funds. International donors with a strong interest in environmental protection provide CSOs with financial stability and the capacity to host large-scale plans and projects in the SWM sector. As such, CSOs are the bridge that can reach

***The need for collaboration among and between the various parties is not only self-evident but essential for long-term prosperity***

out to and benefit from the funds, expertise and assistance of international organizations and to social enterprises that possess the technical knowledge and local operational expertise. This serves heavily to promote collaboration among and between CSOs and social enterprises.

Arguably the most successful collaboration among civil society actors resulted in the closure of Naameh landfill, which engaged over 60 CSOs and thousands of community activists. Such successes should encourage future collaboration.

### ***Weaknesses of civil society actions***

Despite the plethora of CSOs active in the field of waste management, collaboration remains limited and organizations and associations maintain a preference for working alone. This, it was suggested, is the result of unsuccessful attempts at partnership that failed due to a lack of commitment or dedication by partners or a conflict of interest.

TERRE Liban explained their preference for working solo by detailing an experience with a partner that had negative repercussions not only to the project they were collaborating on but also to the image of the organization. Thereafter, TERRE Liban avoided partnerships for fear of experiencing similar consequences.

Miscommunication and mismanagement between project partners was also cited as a source of frustration and cause for resistance to collaboration. Social enterprise Zero Waste Act recalled a former partnership with a CSO. The joint project aimed to raise awareness among citizens about the importance of sorting waste at the source but, said the company, poor partner communication resulted in confusion among the target audience.

CSOs active in waste management also shy away from collaboration as a result of a competitiveness, with some noting honestly that they prefer to retain full credit and benefits associated with a successfully executed project.

### ***Opportunities for further collaboration***

Despite the weaknesses, or in fact as a result of them, there is great opportunity for collaboration among and between CSOs and social enterprises. Symbiotic cooperation between CSOs with different weaknesses and strengths can ensure successful implementation of complex programs, as the weaknesses of one can be found in the strengths

## ***Miscommunication and mismanagement between project partners is a source of frustration and cause for resistance to collaboration***

of another. Such collaborations, all agreed, would ultimately strengthen each CSO individually and the progress of waste management initiatives collectively.

CSOs were identified as an important and opportune bridge that connects donors, enterprises, the public and government agencies. As such they play a key role in addressing the needs and interests of each while also engaging them and benefiting from the expertise and resources each has to offer. CSOs can reach out to donors for financial support, and the public and politicians to influence habits and policy, but they lack the technical knowledge required. The government and municipalities meanwhile control policy but lack operational capacity, while the private sector excels technically but struggles financially.

The need for collaboration among and between these various parties is therefore not only self-evident but essential for long-term prosperity. The force at the center of such collaboration must be, for reasons previously mentioned, civil society organizations. But collaborating between themselves first they strengthen their visibility and power and as a result their ability to successfully instigate and manage wider partnerships that include private and government agencies.

# Case Study: Spirit of Youth, Egypt

***Working directly with garbage collectors to tackle solid waste management in the capital***

**THE SPIRIT OF YOUTH ASSOCIATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICE IN EGYPT HAS BUILT ONE OF THE LARGEST COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITIES IN THE WORLD TO TACKLE SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT IN THE CAPITAL.**

SOY works with a large community of garbage collectors and collaborates with other CSOs and private sector companies to advocate for the community's integration into the formal sector of solid waste management.

They also educate and empower youth through learning opportunities related to sustaining entrepreneurial recycling businesses in an effort to improve and formalize the haphazard nature of recycling currently adopted by most in the community.

***By collaborating with other organizations and with public and private sector actors, SOY was able to develop a comprehensive integrated solid waste management plan that is now being examined by the government***

By collaborating with other organizations and with public and private sector actors, SOY was able to develop a comprehensive integrated solid waste management plan to serve the greater Cairo area that is now being examined by the government.

SOY's success to date relies primarily on its focus on and dedication to engaging with and nurturing the existing local community of garbage collectors. By enhancing their skills and offering them opportunities, they were able to gain their trust and work collaboratively to develop a strategic plan that integrated the existing community.

Additionally, by engaging partners with unique expertise and resources, and enabling each to take on a role and responsibility for which they were suited, they were able to develop effective collaborative initiatives. This, say their representatives, is made possible through thorough examination, planning, execution and revision at each step of every initiative. By utilizing a network of public and private partners, they have been able to consider and plan for various external considerations in advance and develop and execute a long-term strategic plan step-by-step.

# Appendix

## **An Overview of the Participating Organizations and Further Reading**

### **Cedar Environmental**

info@cedarenv.com | [www.cedarenv.com](http://www.cedarenv.com)

Established in 1999 to put dynamic composting technology to use in the treatment of municipal solid waste, this social enterprise's mission is to treat such waste in an environmentally-safe manner. They utilize advanced technologies based on research and development undertaken in the USA.

### **Green Line**

greenline@greenline.org.lb | [www.greenline.me.uk](http://www.greenline.me.uk)

Founded in 1991, this non-profit organization aims to expose environmental threats, popularize environmental awareness, and contribute towards a scientific framework for sustainable environmental management policies. Green Line seeks to induce reform through change in community thinking and behavior.

### **Recycle Beirut**

recyclebeirut@gmail.com | [www.recyclebeirut.com](http://www.recyclebeirut.com)

A social business working to create jobs in the recycling sector and promote recycling and composting in Beirut and its suburbs, Recycle Beirut aims to clean the country by supporting green economy while also creating jobs for nationals and refugees.

### **TERRE Liban**

info@terreliban.org | [www.terreliban.org](http://www.terreliban.org)

An active association since 1994, TERRE Liban aims to educate Lebanese youth in the principles of public health and sustainable development and promote the importance of peace education and the preservation of natural resources.

### **Zero Waste Act**

info@zerowasteact.com | [www.zerowasteact.com](http://www.zerowasteact.com)

This initiative by Contra International aims at minimizing waste haphazard disposal and has actively engaged in solutions to improve solid waste disposal and lessen demand for natural resources. They also help schools to develop waste management programs that include recycling.

### **Association for Environment & Agriculture Protection in Lebanon, UNEP**

ali.yaacoub@unep.org | [www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org)

A national organization without external affiliation, AEAPL works on initiatives related to bettering the environment as well community development and agriculture, through training and project implementation.

### **Further Reading**

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**sharq**

SHARQ FOR CITIZEN DEVELOPMENT  
[www.sharq.org](http://www.sharq.org)



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[www.kas.de/libanon](http://www.kas.de/libanon)