


THE CHALLENGING PATH OF
REFORMS IN LEBANON

**ENVIRONMENTAL RECOVERY AND REFORMS
UNDER THE 3RF: A STEP FORWARD IN
ADDRESSING URGENT ISSUES**





This report is part of a series of reports produced by Maharat Foundation to track the progress of reforms highlighted in the Lebanon Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF) which is part of a comprehensive response to the massive explosion on the Port of Beirut on August 4, 2020, launched by the European Union (EU), the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank Group (WBG).

INTRODUCTION TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL SECTOR IN LEBANON AND THE 3RF POLICY DIALOGUE WITHIN THE UNSCDF PLANET RESULTS GROUP

As Lebanon faces crises on all fronts, effective management of chemicals and solid waste has become a significant concern. Addressing these issues is crucial for protecting human health, preserving the environment, and achieving sustainable development.

However, environmental governance in Lebanon has been overlooked for a long time and needs a comprehensive, long-term strategic plan. Furthermore, the enforcement and monitoring of environmental regulations remains very weak. In this context, and to enhance discussions related to the sector's reforms, environmental priorities are being discussed in accordance with the 3RF principle of inclusive dialogue within the forum of the "Planet Results Group", which is a coordination forum linked to the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). It is worth noting that the UNSCDF Planet Results Group replaced the 3RF Environment Working Group, as folding this working group into a UN-led coordination mechanism was deemed more suitable.

The environmental priorities discussed within this group are part of the 3RF specific reform priorities that were identified through an inclusive process led by the Government of Lebanon, civil society, and the international community. Progress on these reforms is essential in order to unlock investments in the reconstruction of critical assets, services and infrastructure.

2-OVERVIEW OF THE 3RF PROGRESS IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL SECTOR IN LEBANON

The UNSDCF Planet Results Group comprises various stakeholders, including the Ministry of Environment, the European Union (EU), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the World Health Organization, the World Bank, among other organizations. The aim was to set the path for necessary environmental reforms, striving for improved governance in this sector.


The UNSDCF Planet Results Group defined two priorities for 2023: the first involves developing a framework for chemical management, and the second relates to policies linked to tariff restructuring at the Ministry of Environment on solid waste (cost recovery).

In July 2023, the UNSDCF Planet Results Group held its first 3RF-style meeting to discuss the proposed roadmap towards national chemical management. It is worth mentioning that participants' input during the meeting led to the revision of the project's concept note by UNEP. This project titled "National Chemical Management Programme for the Republic of Lebanon" aims to assist Lebanese authorities in the creation of a comprehensive national chemical management programme. This programme will ensure the environmentally sound management of chemicals throughout Lebanon in a coordinated and integrated manner.

The project is divided into two main phases, with a timeline of 18 to 24 months. The first phase involves conducting an in-depth analysis of the current chemical management practices and systems within the country while the second phase focuses on formulating a national programme designed to promote environmentally sound chemical management.

According to the concept note of the project, the program will include the following activities:

Activity 1: The first activity involves establishing a team of stakeholders concerned with chemical management to "leverage their collective expertise and insights to guide and direct the development of a robust national plan for chemical management". This team would shape the strategies, policies, and measures outlined in the national plan, ensuring that various challenges and priorities related to chemical safety in Lebanon are effectively addressed.



Activity 2: The second activity focuses on conducting a situation analysis on the current chemicals management practices and systems in Lebanon. It is a “crucial phase that not only provides a clear understanding of the current chemical management practices in Lebanon but also sets the stage for the subsequent development of a tailored national chemical safety programme”.


Activity 3: This activity involves developing a national programme for chemical management in Lebanon based on the insights and findings derived from the analysis conducted in the second activity.

Activity 4: This activity focuses on a capacity building training programme for Customs and Border Enforcement Officers in Lebanon which “represents a proactive and strategic step in strengthening the country's ability to manage hazardous waste movement effectively and combat illegal trafficking. By imparting specialized knowledge and skills and aligning with international agreements, this initiative aims to promote a safer, more responsible, and environmentally sound approach to hazardous waste management and control”.

According to the concept note, this project will play a key role in rebuilding public trust in government institutions by promoting transparency and accountability in governance. This will, in turn, bolster an inclusive recovery process.

Moreover, as part of the 3RF efforts to address environmental issues in Lebanon, the Lebanon Financing Facility (LFF), a group of trusted donors, announced in 2022 the funding of a \$10 million grant to support Beirut's environmental recovery efforts and solid waste management, following the port explosion, in a project titled “The Beirut Critical Environment Recovery, Restoration and Waste Management Program”, signed between the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

On April 5, 2024, during an event organized by the Ministry of Environment and UNDP in Mer'ab-Karantina, it was announced that the rehabilitation of the Karantina Sorting Facility (KSF) will soon begin as part of the Beirut Critical Environment Recovery, Restoration and Waste Management Program, with a completion timeframe of 12 months, aiming to effectively serve the city of Beirut and the Matn Caza region.



After the Port of Beirut explosion on August 4, 2020, both the Karantina Solid Waste Sorting Facility and the Coral Composting Facility in the Bourj Hammoud area suffered substantial damage. These facilities are critical components of the solid waste management system serving Beirut and its surrounding areas. Restoring them is essential for sorting and recycling waste, promoting sustainable environmental practices, and reducing the volume of waste that ends up in landfills.

In this regard, the Minister of Environment of Lebanon, Dr. Nasser Yassine underscored the importance of launching the rehabilitation works of the sorting facility in Karantina, stating that:

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This facility will accommodate the sorting of 1000 tons of waste per day from the city of Beirut and the Metn district, marking a crucial milestone in integrated solid waste management in Beirut.

DR. NASSER YASSINE
The Minister of Environment of Lebanon

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3-CHALLENGES TO 3RF PROGRESS IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL SECTOR:

- **Lack of progress in the National Chemical Management Programme:** Although the programme was presented, there's been no advancement so far, despite its importance to ensure the environmentally sound management of chemicals throughout Lebanon in a coordinated and integrated manner.
- **Conflicting recommendations from ministries:** During a meeting of the UNSDCF Planet Results Group where the National Chemical Management Programme was discussed, the Ministry of Environment noted that different ministries regulate different chemicals linked to their sector, leading to loopholes due to conflicting recommendations from different ministries.
- **Institutional paralysis:** The presidential vacuum and the subsequent institutional paralysis, along with the absence of a fully-functioning government to pass necessary decrees, pose a major challenge across all sectors. This situation negatively impacts the implementation of programmes.
- **Delay in the rehabilitation of solid waste facilities within the Beirut Critical Environment Recovery, Restoration, and Waste Management Program:** Several challenges facing this project were mentioned in the [LFF annual progress report 2022](#), one of which is the need to rehabilitate facilities designated for solid waste expeditiously. The work was expected to begin in August or September 2023, but this did not take place. Instead, on April 5, 2024, it was announced that the rehabilitation of the Karantina solid waste sorting facility would start soon, with an expected completion within 12 months.
- **Insufficient response from bidders/contractors:** The Beirut Critical Environment Recovery, Restoration, and Waste Management Program may face a lack of sufficient response from bidders due to the economic situation in Lebanon. This could impact the timely completion of activities related to the development of an asbestos waste contaminated disposal site and rehabilitation of Cora/Karantina waste management facilities.



4-RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Timely implementation of the National Chemical Safety Programme for Lebanon: The project should be implemented within the predetermined timeline with the aim of ensuring the environmentally sound management of chemicals throughout Lebanon in a coordinated and integrated manner, given the risks they pose to human health and the environment.
- Lebanon should ensure compliance with its obligations under chemical-related conventions, including the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal and the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade.
- The Beirut Critical Environment Recovery, Restoration, and Waste Management Program should be implemented expeditiously, with no further delays, given the need to address urgent and critical environmental issues for a sustainable environmental recovery.
- Civil Society Engagement: Ensure active participation of civil society organizations in monitoring the enforcement of laws and providing necessary recommendations, by strengthening environmental oversight and promoting the principle of accountability.
- Fully functioning Institutions: It is crucial for Lebanon to have fully functioning institutions. This can be achieved through the election of a president and the formation of a government which will be capable of coordinating with stakeholders to implement the required reforms.