



**Jordan Position Paper on the  
Beijing+20 review and appraisal process**

February 2015





## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Jordan Position Paper on the Beijing+20 review and appraisal process has been prepared by the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) with the support of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The Position Paper captures the outcomes of a comprehensive national consultation process supported by a dedicated UN joint programme titled 'Realizing Beijing+20 in Jordan: Women in Action!', launched on 22 May 2014 with a message from Her Royal Highness Princess Basma bint Talal.

Within this framework, 24 consultations events were organized and undertaken across Jordan's 12 Governorates, covering all 12 Areas of Concern of the Beijing Platform For Action. More than 1,085 people (approximately 80% were women) from different constituencies contributed to this national dialogue, sharing their reflections and recommendations on key issues affecting women, including poverty, violence against women, education, health, and socioeconomic issues that prevent women from fully realizing their rights. The process was supported by an ad hoc national advocacy campaign, reaching a peak of around 30,000<sup>1</sup> users engaged weekly on social media channels and in collaboration with The Jordan Times, the main national media partner. The enthusiastic and passionate social mobilization inspired by the Beijing+20 process contributed to creating a new momentum for the women's movements in the Kingdom, placing gender equality, women's and girls' rights and women's and girls's empowerment at the heart of national future development frameworks as means for achieving peace and security, human rights, and sustainable development.



**اللجنة الوطنية الأردنية لشؤون المرأة**  
The Jordanian National Commission for Women

1. 35% of girls, 27% of boys, 21% of women, 17% of men.

## 2. PREAMBLE

Jordan regards conventions, declarations and international conferences relating to women rights and protection and their outcomes as a global framework for the protection and maintenance of women's human rights; They take effect in the Kingdom once ratified and published in the official gazette, as settled upon by the decisions of the Supreme (Cassation) Court (e.g. 818/2003; 1830/2005), which regarded ratified international conventions as superior to national laws. In doing this, Jordan has taken practical necessary measures to put the provisions of these international commitments into effect at the legislation, planning and policy making levels. As examples, Jordan has adopted temporary affirmative measures to protect women from different forms of discrimination in areas such as the employment, political participation and public life. Moreover, Jordan is committed to the implementation of related-reform processes and equality focused development programs despite local, regional and international challenges.

Since its endorsement, Jordan has worked to fulfil its obligations towards the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and has achieved significant progress in the twelve Areas of Concern, which have been documented in four reports, prepared in a participatory manner with the civil society, since 1995<sup>2</sup>. The Kingdom has also ratified several international conventions, which represent the backbone of human rights commitments and works to meet its international obligations to submit periodic reports in a timely manner to the treaty's committees at the United Nations such as UPR, CEDAW and CRC. In 2012, the government has accepted and facilitated the visit the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, and committed itself to the considerations of her report<sup>3</sup> and responding to her recommendations as part of its commitment and efforts to combat gender based violence (GBV).

2. These are: Beijing +5: Further Actions and Initiatives to Implement the Beijing Platform for Action, 2000; Beijing +10: Women Status Report in the light of the Implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform, 2005; Jordan National Report on Progress towards the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform: Beijing +15, 2010; Jordan National Report on Progress towards the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform Beijing +20, 2014.

3. Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Rashida Manjoo Addendum, "Mission to Jordan" [ [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A-HRC-20-16-Add1\\_en\\_0.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A-HRC-20-16-Add1_en_0.pdf) ]

The 59<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women comes at a time when regional events are casting a shadow over the region in general and Jordan in particular as it faces many challenges to respond to increasing population and security needs and maintain its social, economic and political progress achieved over the past two decades. The political instability and insecurity of neighbouring countries has resulted with new waves of refugees received by Jordan, estimated at around 1.4 million Syrian refugees (612K registered by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), 650K unregistered) according to the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC). Such surges in population pose deep challenges to Kingdom's development efforts and have implications on national priorities; in addition to the high financial cost and unprecedented pressure on the general budget, national infrastructure, and natural and economic resources. Within this context, the Government of Jordan is shouldering increased financial and non-financial burdens to maintain the quality of services provided to its population, particularly those related to education, health, municipal waste and justice - especially in the border areas. In addition, the Kingdom is facing pressures due to increased competition within a limited job market, combined with the growth in the informal sector, which is more accessible to the refugees. This is affecting survival and coping mechanisms for many Jordanian in the host communities, especially women.

Furthermore, women status, and in many cases within the region, security and life, are being threatened by the spread of extremist and exclusionary ideology. While this has resulted in women being subjected to various forms of violence in countries such as Syria and Iraq, the entire system of thought is being spread through social media and by extremist members of the society within Jordan, which is now threatening the status of women in Jordan and undermining their achievements since the founding of the Kingdom.

### 3. EFFORTS TOWARDS PROGRESSING GENDER EQUALITY IN JORDAN

Since 1996, the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) has been preparing and updating the Jordanian National Strategy for Women in a participatory approach. In 2012, His Majesty the King launched a series of discussion papers which stressed the principle of gender equality and the importance of women's role in achieving sustainable development, considering them, as active citizens, an integral part of the reform, development and change towards a better future in Jordan.

Building on this, and as part of JNCW efforts to increase women participation in political life, a National Coalition was formed in 2012 to support the political participation of women and it adopted a strategy for the years 2012-2017 with a focus on providing support and capacity building to women candidates during the parliamentary elections and local councils election in 2013. Complementing this, in January 2013, the Cabinet endorsed the Jordanian National Strategy for Women for 2013-2017.

At the macro level, under the initiative of His Majesty the King, the Jordan's Executive Development Program (2011-2013) included targets to improve the quality of health care services – a key gender need in Jordan. The Executive Plan submitted by the Government of Jordan for the years 2013-2016 include the development and review of school curricula and textbooks to respond to the changing needs of the individual and society at large, and to include modern educational concepts within the curriculum, highlighting a balanced image of the family in general, and women in particular. In 2013, the Government has taken several steps to promote women's participation in the labor market by increasing their access to opportunities in the production process; an area which is considered a major challenge to the socio-economic development in Jordan (the economic activity rate for Jordanians is 37.1% , 60.4% for males compared to 13.2% for females<sup>4</sup>). The Government has increased access of women to social protection and expanded the coverage of social security, and amended legislation to limit discrimination against women in the labor market.

4. Department of Statistics, 2014, Employment and Unemployment Survey

Several national organisations and Ministries have adopted gender mainstreaming strategies in policies, programs and projects. Efforts are being made to strengthen the mainstreaming of women's issues in the public sector: for example, the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) in coordination with the General Public Department and with the support of UN Women has launched a two phase project on gender responsive budgeting; in 2015 the Ministry of Public Sector Development launched a project on "Women's Empowerment in the Public Sector" aiming at equipping mid-level female employees with capacity and leadership skills to increase their opportunities in accessing high-level positions in the public sector.

In 2013, the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, which has been responsible for monitoring progress towards achieving the MDGs, led the process of preparing the post 2015 sustainable development agenda as envisioned by the Government, while a coalition for Jordanian civil society organizations, with the participation of JNCW, was established to contribute to the development of the vision, which included gender and inequality among its main themes.

In 2014, the Prime Minister created a new position for the Government for the better coordination of human rights, ' the Coordinator of Human Rights', who is mandated to follow up on human rights issues as well as to coordinate the preparation of the National Action Plan for Human Rights, which is creating an opportunity to expand the concept of equality and promote women's rights and their opportunities to participate in sustainable development.

## 4. PROGRESS ACHIEVED

Jordan efforts to improve the status of women and girls, narrow the gender gap and eliminate different forms of discrimination against them has succeeded to progress in some areas, specifically education and health, despite growing regional and national challenges.

In recent years, several legislative amendments have been implemented towards achieving equality between men and women. Constitutional amendments of 2011 have contributed to strengthening political and civil freedoms. A series of laws and regulations were issued and others were amended towards the enhancement and furthering the protection of human and women's rights. These include: the Family Protection Law (2008)<sup>5</sup>, the temporary Personal Status Law (2010), the Political Parties Law (2012) which requires that women represent 10% of all Party's founding members, the establishment of the Constitutional Court (Law No.15 of 2012), the Civil Service By-Law (2013), the Electoral Law (2012), which allocated 15 seats to women, as well as the Municipalities Law, which raised women's participation in local councils from 20% to 25%, and the Social Security Law (2014), the Juvenile Law (2014) and most recently the Ministry of Interior has issued directives regarding the children of Jordanian women married to non-Jordanians, facilitating their access to education, health services, and work and investment opportunities.

In May 2009, Jordan ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2009). This was followed by the issuing of the Anti-human Trafficking Law No. 9 (2009). Jordan has also agreed to the recommendations of the Human Rights Council (24.10.2013) to abolish Article 308 of the Penal code and any other legislation that discriminates against women.

The legislative amendments relating to women's political participation has resulted in the increase of the percentage of women in the Lower House of Representatives from 10.8% in 2009 to 12% in 2013. In 2013, "the Committee on Women and Family Affairs" was introduced to the twenty permanent committees in the Lower House of Representatives. Within the Upper House of Representatives the percentage of women stands at 12% and a "Committee on Women" was also added to the permanent committees.

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5. The Government is currently preparing a new draft law for the protection against domestic violence dealing with the shortcomings of the current one

Within local councils women's participation increased to 35.9% in 2013 after the introduction of the aforementioned 2011 Municipalities Law, while the participation of women in political parties rose to 32%.

Additionally, women hold approximately 11% of Ministerial positions (Ministry of Transportation, Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Social Development); two women sit on the Board of Commissioners of the Independent Commission for the Elections, constituting 40% of the board (2 out of 5); the number of female judges rose to 175 judges in 2014 (18% of the total number) and women make 18.4% of representatives in the diplomatic corps.

Women's increasing levels of engagement across all fields can be understood in the context of Jordan's significant investment in the education of women, which resulted in the closing of the gender gap in education – demonstrating a commitment and success in meeting the second Millennium Development Goal.<sup>6</sup> Jordan ranked 74 out of 142 countries listed in Educational Attainment according to the 2014 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap report. The total percentage of students' enrolment for the academic year 2012/2013 was (97.9%) males and (100%) females.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the general rate of illiteracy dropped from 4.8% to 3.7% in males, and from 14.1% to 10.1% in females between 1995 and 2013.<sup>8</sup> Female enrolment rates in university education reached 51.7% in 2013, (47.2% in the scientific faculties and 54.8% in Art Colleges<sup>9</sup>); and the percentage of women holding a university degrees has more than tripled in the recent years.

Jordan has witnessed a major leap in the provision of health care and has also managed to close the gender gap in the area of health and life expectancy; female life expectancy stood at 76.7 in 2013, with male life expectancy at 72.7<sup>10</sup>, scoring 134 out of 142 countries listed in the Global Gender Gap Index issued by the World Economic Forum in 2014. Official figures indicate a decline in the number of maternal deaths from 41 per 100,000 live births in 1995<sup>11</sup> to 19.1 per 100,000 live births in 2008. Infant mortality rates have also decreased from 28 per 1,000 live births in 1995 to 17 per 1,000 live births in 2013.<sup>12</sup> A slight decrease in birth rates, 3.5%, has been recorded in addition to an expansion of modern family planning methods, which reached 61.3% in 2012.

6. Achievement of universal primary education and bridging the gender gap in the education sector

7. Ministry of Education, Annual Report, 2013

8. Department of Statistics, Employment and Unemployment Survey, 1995 and 2013.

9. Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2013

10. Department of Statistics, Statistical Yearbook, 2013

11. Ministry of Health, 1995

12. DOS, Population and Family Health Survey, 2012

## 5. CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The impact of the global economic crisis and the spillover effect of the regional turmoil deepened social disparities and inequalities in the Kingdom, putting at risk gender equality and women's empowerment gains achieved since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and its Platform for action.

Poverty emerges as a crosscutting phenomenon, which prevents women and girls in Jordan from fully realizing their potential and aspirations, with a negative multiplier effect noted in several of the Beijing Areas of Concern. For instance, in the Global Gender Gap Index 2014 Jordan ranked 140 out of 142 countries listed in the country score card related to women's Economic Participation and Opportunity. Women continue to face higher levels of unemployment than men, lower wages, – they represent only about 25% of active contributors and they have lower average monthly insurable wages and lower eventual pensions. Women's lack of access to employment and decent job opportunities impacts their ability to gain economic independence and support their families in meeting their basic needs. The consequences of limited income opportunities and challenges in accessing social services are particularly acute in rural areas and communities hosting high numbers of Syrian refugees. Perceived threats of economic instability and societal invisible barriers, which confine women in the domestic domain, fuel the need to rely on negative coping mechanisms such as early marriage, which were 13.2% of all registered marriages in 2013.<sup>1</sup> Gaps in the variety and quality of educational and health services (including reproductive health) available in the capital and in marginalized areas represents an additional challenge for women and girls, especially for those living with disabilities. Moreover, female-headed households are disproportionately represented amongst Jordan's poor families. Girl children face discrimination and are often restricted in their choices and possibilities to engage in the public sphere compared to boys.

While the adoption of the Family Protection Law and efforts to strengthen the juvenile justice system denote the willingness of legislators to address critical challenges for women and girls, lack of dedicated resources to implement these structures weaken their impact. For example, awareness raising efforts to end violence against women have not adequately reached out to men, undermining prevention efforts. Rehabilitation opportunities and referral services for survivors of violence also need to be reinforced.

1. UNICEF, A study on early marriage in Jordan, 2014.

In addition, loopholes in the interpretations of certain provisions of the Penal Code or the absence of effective monitoring and implementing mechanisms may leave room for misinterpretation and, consequently, for inadequate persecutions of perpetrators. Legislative gaps leave women and girls at risk of retaliation or societal stigmatization as survivors of violence and abuse, such as under disputed art. 308 of the Jordanian Penal Code which allows the perpetrator to escape persecution if he agreed to marry the victim. In addition, Perpetrators of so-called “honor crimes” continue to benefit by being able to invoke mitigating circumstances under Article 97 and 98 of the Jordanian Penal Code. Anecdotal evidence suggests that domestic violence is increasing, though it remains highly underreported<sup>2</sup> due to the widespread ‘culture of shame’ as well as a general lack of awareness of available health and legal counselling services available at the community level. Violence against women is widely accepted - 79% of young women between 15-24 think a husband is justified to hit his wife<sup>3</sup> - and prevalent - with 32 percent of ever-married women report having experienced emotional, physical, and/or sexual violence from their spouse<sup>4</sup>.

Progresses made with the introduction of female quota in Parliamentary and Municipal election has not been sufficiently sustained by an effective increase of women in leading roles in national decision making processes. A number of social and invisible barriers persist in the work sphere, creating disparities in terms of salary conditions, career advancement and representation in senior management position both in the private and public sector. Worth mentioning that Jordan is ranking 106th out of 108 countries listed in the recent ILO report ‘Women in Business and Management- Gaining momentum’. While gender focal points and departments are in place in the vast majority of public institutions in Jordan, their capacity to effectively mainstream gender within national strategies, plans and policies is undermined by lack of training opportunities and interconnectivity among departments. Gender responsive budgeting is also identified as a key priority to strengthen the gender priorities in less evident domains, such as environment.

Societal stereotypes and negative cultural attitudes related to the expected role that women and girls should play in the society continue to slow down women’s empowerment and gender equality. The perception that women and girls are in need of guardianship and protection is too frequently translated into restrictions in terms of movement, social engagement and civic participation. Media professionals as well as the education system need to be empowered to portray a more equal and non-biased representation of women and girls in the society, avoiding to reinforce stereotypes in media programming and school curricula. As societal expectations are impacting the effective capacity of women to pursue a higher education and professional careers, better targeted advocacy efforts need to be pursued in order to reverse negative trends. To address this, civil society is voicing the need for Jordan to accelerate the alignment with international standards, through legal reforms and by lifting reservations on CEDAW and on the Convention of the Rights of the Child<sup>5</sup>.

Noting that the vast majority of refugees coming from Syria are women and children, the Government of Jordan is undertaking tremendous efforts to ensure the protection and access to health and educational services of women and girls refugees. Female-headed households and unaccompanied boys and girls represent the most vulnerable segment of the refugee population hosted in Jordan, who is at constant risk of exploitation and abuse, including attempts of human trafficking. Moreover, processes related to verification and bail out are often harder to access by unaccompanied women or female-headed households<sup>6</sup>. With growing vulnerability among the refugee population, incidents of early marriage as a negative coping mechanism are increasing<sup>7</sup>. Although the government of Jordan, the UN and aid organizations are providing support to refugees, increased efforts are needed to improve access of vulnerable women, girls, boys and men to services, including psychological support to refugees traumatized by the experience of the conflict, who suffered from multiple displacements (both inside and outside Syria) or who are survivors of violence. Dedicated resources are also needed to facilitate the protection and assistance to Palestinian and Iraqi female refugees who are also living in Jordan.

2. 74% of all cases of gender-based violence against women in Jordan remain unreported, National Council for Family Affairs, Status of Violence Against Women 2008

3. National Council for Family Affairs, Status of Violence Against Women 2008

4. Department of Statistics, Population and Family Health Survey, 2012

5. Jordan does not consider itself bound by the following provisions of CEDAW : 1. Article 9, paragraph 2; Article 15, paragraph 4 (a wife’s residence is with her husband); Article 16, paragraph (1) (c), relating to the rights arising upon the dissolution of marriage with regard to maintenance and compensation; Article 16, paragraph (1) (d) and (g). In addition, Jordan expressed its reservation and does not consider itself bound by articles 14, 20 and 21 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which grant the child the right to freedom of choice of religion and concern the question of adoption, since they are at variance with the precepts of the tolerant Islamic Shariah.

6. UNHCR, Woman Alone: The fight for survival by Syria’s refugee women, 2014

7. UNICEF, A study on early marriage in Jordan, 2014

AREA OF CONCERN	CHALLENGES	RECOMMENDATIONS
 <p><b>Women and Poverty</b></p>	<p>Women living in poverty in Jordan have limited access to sources of income, microfinance opportunities, loans investments and access to justice. Social practices often restrict women's ownership of land and access to property. Large rural households (with eight or more family members) headed by women, or households with elderly people or with people living with disabilities represent the most vulnerable segment of the society.</p> <p>Channels that support women's economic empowerment are limited and need to be expanded, especially in host communities. Lack of information about loans and borrowing limits women access to credit. Due to the influx of Syrian refugees, a general perception that refugees are competing with Jordanian citizens over jobs, services and finances provided by government and non-government organizations is noted.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Empowering women economically is crucial to help women overcome poverty by providing them with income generating opportunities, raising awareness on the importance on economic empowerment and providing capacity building for micro businesses as well as training.</li> <li>■ Assist women in marketing their products and establish local centers which host widows, divorcées, and women with disabilities in rural communities.</li> <li>■ Gender focuses studies on poverty are needed to help inform policies and poverty reduction programs. In addition, specific emphasis to support female university students and women in vocation training is required to match them with potential careers in the market and increase their employability and competitiveness as well as to promote entrepreneurship.,</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Education and Training of Women</b></p>	<p>Over the years, Jordan has made commendable progresses in achieving gender parity in basic education. However, disparities persist in the field of vocational and technical training, with fewer women participation and just in certain domains (mainly home economics).</p> <p>One important challenge pertains to the role that the “hidden education curriculum” plays in reinforcing gender inequality, undermining attempts at changing predominant gender norms and attitudes. Despite various attempts, an effective change in the general discourse across curricula is lacking proper financing and human rights resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Gender sensitive policies should be implemented in areas of curriculum development to promote greater equality. Education curricula should be revised to ensure the promotion of female participation in the workforce and improve attitudes towards women in the workforce, so that educational achievements could be translated into economic gains for women.</li> <li>■ Schools' principals, educators and teachers should be sensitized on gender equality principles and serve as models of equality to motivate female students and stimulate their learning development.</li> <li>■ The training opportunities should be designed to include gender perspectives, applying innovative approaches to enhance the effectiveness.</li> </ul>



## Women and Health

Despite broaden access to health and reproductive health care services in the Kingdom, geographical disparities persist in terms of quality of services provided. In addition, health providers's training is currently focusing on medical aspects of Reproductive Health, with little attention paid to related gender issues.

Gaps are noted in the availability and quality of the health services provided to women especially in the rural areas.

Awareness on reproductive health issue is low among the youth due to lack of resources. In addition, limited reproductive health services and counselling are available for women living with disabilities.

In addition, women's abilities to participate in the family's major decisions especially those related to her health and wellbeing such as family planning and contraceptive use are limited.

- Integrate reproductive and sexual health services as well as dedicated psychological and mental health support for women in hospitals and health centers, especially in the rural areas. In addition, improve reproductive health infrastructures to ensure privacy.
- Develop a comprehensive package of health services to be provided according to standards of health care by well-trained health care providers at primary health care level.
- Provide mobile clinics to outreach areas where health services are not available and improve the quality of health services especially family planning and reproductive health services.
- Develop educational programs and workshops to empower women about various issues including their rights for health and wellbeing
- Develop and expand programs targeting youth concerning healthy lifestyles and include all elements of reproductive health by creating dedicated youth centers which can also decrease the unmet needs for family planning.
- Mainstream gender and reproductive health in university curricula and integrates gender perspectives in counselling services.
- Empower women to participate in decisions regarding to their health



## Violence Against Women

Although highly unreported, various forms of gender-based violence persist in Jordan, such as physical violence, honor killings and harassment. Some religious misconceptions also fuel certain social beliefs and practices that justify violence against women. Survivors of violence are not aware of referral and protection mechanisms and continue to be hesitant to seek protection and assistance due to social stigma and fear of retaliation.

Limited human resources among dedicated service providers, especially in rural areas, represent a challenge.

- Enhance referral pathways and raise awareness on dedicated service provisions for survivors of gender-based violence, while scaling up advocacy efforts to end violence against women.
- Integrate gender perspectives in the trainings of judges, lawyers, police, persecutors and service providers. Develop a dedicated code of conduct for case workers and social-psycho support providers to enhance accountability and ensure confidentiality.
- Improve a unified database on reported cases of gender-based violence and assess the impact of referral pathways available in close collaboration with national NGOs and CSOs active in this field.



### Women and Armed conflict

The participation of Jordanian women in international peacekeeping operations remains low due to security reasons and cultural perceptions. Lack of financial incentive and specific training skills represent a barrier for an effective gender balance in international personnel deployment.

Despite tremendous efforts made by Jordan in providing support to Syrian and Palestinian women refugees residing in the Kingdom, a number of challenges persist in terms of economic support, access to health and education, protection and psychological support.

- Support advocacy campaigns to strengthen social culture and overcome stigmas related to women's engagement in peace keeping missions.
- Strengthen capacity-building programs within peacekeeping missions to increase gender sensitivity of men and women deployed.
- Ensure increased support from the United Nations for women's engagement in peace keeping missions (such as ensuring a safe environment, providing special incentives and services for women officers, etc.)
- Provision of centers for the protection of women and children from violence; the centers receive victim of human trafficking in Jordan regardless of nationality, race and religion.
- Ensure a holistic approach from the Jordanian justice sector in addressing issues of the forced marriage of minors.
- Ensure the provision of physiological support and safety to women through trained and skilled staff.



### Women and the economy

Female unemployment is particularly high in marginalized areas, due to lack of job opportunities and cultural barriers. Low income perspectives, lack of business training opportunities and the persistence of discrimination at work contribute to discourage women from entering in the job market.

The persistent gender wage gap especially in the private sector and the lack of a provision in the Labour law that entails equal pay for men and women for work of equal value; as well as, the continuous horizontal and vertical gender segregation in labour market, present a great challenge to women's economic participation.

- Enhance awareness among women about their labor rights and introduce gender sensitive human resource policies including flexible working hours, part time work and work from home options.
- Expand training dedicated training opportunities for women's integration in the labour market, and support career paths in the field of innovation and technology.
- Create synergies among the public and private sector to effectively address female unemployment and develop complaints systems for women facing discrimination at work.



### Women in Power and Decision Making

Despite the introduction of female quota in national elections, women are still widely perceived, by both men and women, as less capable of serving in leadership roles. The gender gap is often attributed to traditions and customs that restrict women's involvement in politics due to a perception that public affairs is a male-centered domain.

Women also generally lack financial independence to engage in public and political life. Women are still absent in key leadership positions or, if present, they are not fully empowered to influence the decision making process.

- Women across all age and social and economic background should be encouraged to engage in the decision making process in all fields, through dedicated training opportunities and financial support.
- Ensure the principle of equal opportunity in procedures for employment, promotion, and training at public and private institutions.
- Public and private sector to work closely in order to promote women as decision makers and as leaders.



### Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women

While dedicated gender units have been established in all main national institutions, there is still a gap in effective gender mainstreaming in national policies and plans. Certain provisions still include elements that enshrine gender discrimination and inequality.

- Gender sensitive budgets should be integrated at all government levels in order to address gender issues and ensure that women and girls need are met in national policies and plans.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of gender focal points in national institutions throughout dedicated training opportunities.



### Human Rights of Women

The JNCW and women's movement in Jordan has been calling for amendments of several provisions that discriminate against women and undermine human rights under the Personal Status Law, the Citizenship Law, the Jordanian Penal Code, the Retirement Law, the Labor Law and Civil Service Law.

In addition, Jordan does not consider itself bound by the following provisions of CEDAW :

- Article 9, paragraph 2;
- Article 16, paragraph (1) (c), relating to the rights arising upon the dissolution of marriage with regard to maintenance and compensation;
- Article 16, paragraph (1) (d) and (g).

- Accelerate the harmonization of national legislation in accordance with ratified international conventions, while continuing to promote a national debate over reservations on the CEDAW convention.
- Ensure adequate gender-sensitive training opportunities for judges and lawyers to foster the recognition and the correct applications of human rights in courts.
- Promote the principle of equality and non-discrimination in policies and law formulation and review already existing legislative framework to ensure consistency.



### Women and the Media

Women are to some extent still considered passive recipients of media content; their active role is not fully mainstreamed in media programming and design. In addition, discriminations still exist in the language used to refer to women in the media.

Despite progresses made in the past 20 years, women are still struggling in media outlets (eg. working hours). Men and women are not encouraged to play the same roles.

- Code of conduct for media professionals to be developed to strengthen the media role in alleviating persistent stereotypes on women in media content and ensure the respect of women's rights.
- Media outlets should take into consideration the social and cultural status of women while designing programmes, as well as reflect their different needs.
- Female media professionals should have access to adequate research tools and training opportunities to support their role and professional advancement in the field.



### Women and the Environment

A general lack of social awareness of the correlation between gender issues and environmental challenges is noted. Environment projects also lack a consistent approach in integrating gender mainstreaming principles and gender-disaggregated indicators. Rural areas remain the most affected by the adverse impact of climate change in terms of food security in Jordan but women living in these areas are frequently not aware of associated consequences.

- Women should be encouraged to participating in the environmental decision-making process, starting with dedicated incentives to pursue a university degree in scientific field.
- Gender responsive budgeting should be applied in all environmental policies and public awareness on the correlation between women's empowerment and climate change should be enhanced.
- In order to maximize their impact, environmental policies need to integrate income generation and self-sufficiency components targeting women in rural areas.



### The Girl-child

The official minimum age of marriage in Jordanian law is 18 years. However, in exceptional circumstances and on an assessment that is based solely on judicial discretion, a judge may allow marriage at the age of 15. The principal factor taken into account in the exercise of this discretion is whether an early marriage is in the girl's best interest.

Social expectations and cultural conventions represent invisible barriers, which limit the expression of girls' full potential, even in the domestic domain. Girls living in large or poor families or girls living with disabilities are more likely to be pulled out of the education system, thus being exposed to a greater risk of exploitation and abuse.

- Sensitize judges on the consequences of allowing exceptional circumstances for girls to get married before the official minimum age.
- Develop training opportunities and awareness raising programs targeting youth and children (specifically young boys) to readdress cultural stereotypes and societal misconceptions on girls.
- Develop coordination mechanisms to better liaise stakeholders working in the field of girls rights, establishing specialized national committees for service providers.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Attempts to advance gender equality in Jordan face legislative, institutional and social impediments. Despite efforts, gender equality focused amendments to legislation encounter backlash from more conservative elements of society, which the Government and the legislators are reluctant to confront. The demands of the women movement are perceived as elitist and “feminist” rather than the reflection of a cultural consensus. The roots of such resistance need to be tackled through and confronted within the education system, the media and different channels of social culturalisation such as the religious sphere. There is a need to harness the potential and energy of youth groups within all governorates to strengthen and energise the gender equality movement in Jordan. This can be achieved through support to civil society organisations at the local level to equip young people with the capacity to advocate for change, which would support advocacy efforts carried out by JNCW and the women civil society at the national level to amend legislation to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

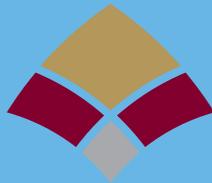
The womens’ caucus in the Senate and Parliament as well as the women’s committees within them provide an opportunity for influencing the House of Representatives to push for advancing the gender equality agenda at the legislative level. However, without being a critical mass of women representatives and male gender equality champions within the Parliament it is highly unlikely that they will be able to achieve change alone. This reality is reflective of the reality of women in decision making circles at large, such as the executive authority, senior positions in the public and private sector, political parties, boards of professional associations, etc. Strategies in support of the participation of women in decision-making spheres at all levels are yet to be fully adopted and implemented, partly due to a lack of dedicated financial and human resources. Meanwhile, women caucuses need to work on building alliances with other committees and coalitions to broaden their influence within the parliament in order to achieve needed changes.

The development agenda is yet to be transformed in a manner that positions women at the center of the process through a human-right based approach. This calls for furthering the efforts to build the capacity of gender units and divisions and to empower them within the organisational structure in order for gender mainstreaming efforts at the governmental level to be reinforced and strengthened to influence planning and policy-making processes. It also calls for a stronger coalition among women and men rights activists supporting their government counterparts.

Engendered plans and policies tap into the potential of human capital of both men and women to be main vehicles for development, taking into consideration geographical disparities in terms of job creation and service provision. In order to confront the economic challenges, which women are shouldering a major part of its consequences, the Government development plans and policies need to adopt an integrated approach that tackles challenges within the employment sector – namely in the creation of job and economic opportunities – ensuring equal access to opportunities and resources, the introduction and enforcement of sexual harassment policies in the workplace, affordable child care, as well as safe and reliable infrastructure such as transportation. This process calls for the reinforced partnership and coordination of the efforts of the public sector, the private sector and the civil society organisations especially in the light of the budget deficit that the Government of Jordan continues to face in a region that is characterised by unforeseen changing realities.

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