

# Assessment of National Women Machineries

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report provides synopsis of the current situation of the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) as the main women machinery with focus on recommendations and future steps. The report also provides insights into the governmental mechanisms to promote gender equality and women empowerment. It discusses the role of gender focal points within governmental institutions. The objective of the report is to assess the effectiveness of the Commission and the gender mechanisms within Ministry Of Health, Ministry Of Social Development, Ministry Of Planning and International Cooperation and Ministry Of Labour with critical lens on the challenges facing the implementation of JNCW's and the gender mechanisms mandate. The report also provides road map for future interventions and actions.

JNCW was established on March 12, 1992 by a Cabinet decree and headed by HRH Princess Basma Bint Talal. The establishment of the JNCW came as response to Jordan's international commitments. JNCW is the official representative and reference on all matters related to women's rights.

The semi governmental structure of JNCW allowed for efforts to be exerted at the governmental and non-governmental fronts. The JNCW board includes members of different ministries, NGOs and private sector. The board changes every two to three years depending on nominations put forward by JNCW's chairperson.

The main area of strength of JNCW has been legal amendments. JNCW has managed over the years to review and amend wealth of laws and build database of legal amendments. Labour, social security and civil service bureau regulations were among the amended laws by the government following JNCW's recommendations.

The relationship with NGOs and women organizations is an area that witnessed its ups and downs through the years. Yet, JNCW maintains open and transparent channels of communication with NGOs and women organizations.

Mainstreaming gender into the government plans and budgets remain challenging area that needs continuous and serious efforts. The other challenges mentioned revolve around donor assistance, JNCW structure, resources and legal status. Insufficient financial resources have impacted the programs and staffing. JNCW is unable to attract skilled staff for its inability to compete with the salaries in other organizations. JNCW legal status is affecting its autonomy and power with the government and other key actors.

The report presented number of recommended strategies and action plans to foster JNCW status and plans. Working with unconventional actors such as youth groups is an area for JNCW to reach out to. Leading on new initiatives like UN resolution 1325 on women peace and security, youth participation and gender budgeting has been included as recommended actions.

The report resonates some of what has been mentioned in previous assessments with special attention to the actions and the way forward. The intention is to build on the

findings of other assessments while exploring the future. JNCW needs effective strategies to build on its legacy and move the mandate forward.

## **LIST OF ACRONOMYS**

JNCW	Jordanian National Commission for Women
NGO	Non- governmental organizations
GFPs	Gender Focal Points
GRB	Gender Responsive Budget
CEDAW	Convention on the elimination of all kinds of discrimination against women Convention on the rights of Child
CRC	Universal Periodic Review
UPR	European Union
EU	Millennium Development Goals
MDGs	Beijing Platform for Action
BPFA	National Women Machinery
NWM	Violence against women
VAW	

## INTRODUCTION

The report objective is to assess the effectiveness of the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) as the national women machinery that promotes the rights of Jordanian women. The report also provides insights into the governmental mechanisms for promoting gender equality and women empowerment to complement the work of JNCW. The report is under the umbrella of *Increasing Accountability in Financing for Gender Equality* programme that is supported by the Governments of Italy, Spain and EU. The project "Strengthening National Mechanisms for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women" aims to build capacities and strengthen the role of national women's machinery for effective supervision and implementation of gender equality commitments. The project is implemented in Ethiopia, Handorous, Jordan, State of Palestine, Senegal through 31 March 2015.

The report is structured into five parts, the first one highlights establishment of the Jordanian National Commission for Women with information about the structure and operations of the machinery, the second part provides insights into the governmental mechanisms for promoting gender equality and women empowerment to complement the work of JNCW. The third part studies the effectiveness of Commission in fulfilling its mandate and the fourth part reflects on the challenges facing JNCW. The final part wraps up the report through presenting recommendations for future directions and paints the way forward.

The report provides information on the current status of the Jordanian National Commission for Women and the challenges facing their operations, programming and fund raising. Building on the challenges, the report will draw a road map for the future interventions and strategic activities to alleviate JNCW to stronger position to continue its mandate in promoting the rights of Jordanian women. This report comes in handy with JNCW efforts to revise its role to be stronger and more effective at different levels. So it is important for this report to serve as tool to move the efforts of JNCW to more strategic and effective pathways. It is worth noting that the report provides a synopsis of the situation as is right now without detailing the Commission long history.

In one of the interviews, a staff member explained that they have underwent in this Commission a lot of assessments and wondered isn't the time now to start supporting their work to move forward, what JNCW needs are actions and support. And this is exactly what this report intends to offer. JNCW has served the Jordanian Community for many years and had its ups and downs like any other mechanism in any Country, that's why it is time to take closer look at what needs to be put in place to further support and strengthen its mandate. The report also provides the foundation for ideas and interventions to build on and start implementing. The report highlights the main achievements of JNCW in different walks of life.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Through the report interviews were conducted with JNCW staff starting with the current and former JNCW Secretary General and current staff. The staff handles different portfolios in the Commission and some has spent between a year up to ten years witnessing many developments.

The report included interviews with gender focal points within the government to learn more about the internal mechanisms to promote gender equality and women empowerment.

The main themes were extracted from the guiding questions (annexed) that served as the base of the report. The issues discussed through interviewing focal points from the government and NGO presented some information on JNCW role and ways to improve the coordinating mechanisms with different key actors. The interviews were beneficial to design an initial roadmap to the achievements, challenges and future action plans. JNCW staff was helpful in terms of providing internal information on their role, achievements and future interventions to strengthen the role of JNCW. The interview with the current JNCW Secretary General helped a lot in grasping the challenges facing JNCW and the role she personally envisions for the Commission and how to push it forward. A focus group with JNCW program staff was also conducted to explore the challenges facing JNCW and understand the role of the staff in implementing the mandate of JNCW.

Apart from the interviews, the report referred to several publications and reports on the assessment of women machineries in different parts of the world. These publications guided the structure along with the questions. The guiding questions were categorized under situation analysis, achievements and gaps including strengths/achievements and challenges and recommendations for future directions.

## **PART I: THE FORMATION OF THE JORDANIAN NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WOMEN**

### **1.1 History of Establishment:**

The Jordanian National Commission for Women history dates back to the Fourth World Conference held in Beijing in 1995 on women when it became evident the need for establishing women machineries to promote the rights of women in different countries. Establishing JNCW came "at a time when Jordan had already embarked on a political liberalization process three years before. Inherent to such processes are promises of positive political outcome for almost everyone, although there might be certain dangers posed as have been documented on several countries that underwent such transitions". (Brand 1998 in Sabbagh 2006:7)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Bell, E., Bryne, B., Laier, J.K., Baden, S. and Marcus, R., 2002. "National Machineries for Women in Development: experiences, lessons and strategies"

The Commission was established on March 12, 1992 by a Cabinet decree and headed by HRH Princess Basma Bint Talal. "The JNCW was designed to be the first national mechanism at the Arab level and a specialized semi-governmental agency that strives to improve the status of women, enhance their economic, social and political participation, safeguard their gains, and defend their rights in order to achieve a higher level of social justice and gender equity and to seek to overcome the obstacles facing women progress." (JNCW 2011: 1)<sup>2</sup>.

JNCW was established to demonstrate the Country's commitment to international conventions and agreements and to translate the political will into actions. Jordan has always strived to maintain its international status and commitments. Thus, the appointment of HRH Princess Basma to head the Commission as Royal chairperson with good international relationships and long years of experience in development and women human rights. Although this report will not assess the royal presence as head of the commission and its impact, yet, it is worth noting as it came out in some of the interviews that the Royal presence was crucial in bringing women together due to the Princess effective leadership and her role in decreasing various barriers that faced the Commission throughout the years. Especially in the early forming years where her presence was very crucial to advocate for the effective presence of the Commission and call for active participation of different key actors in government and NGOs.

The early attempts to establish national machinery for women within a government unit did not succeed. On the contrary these efforts were faced with limitations and restrictions and lack of coordination between the government and NGOs. The initial attempts demonstrated that having women machinery as a unit under the auspice of a Ministry will affect its presence, leadership and outreach. "The establishment of the Commission, rather than another unit within the government, might have been due to the fact that the lessons learnt from previous initiatives clearly indicated that line ministries did not cooperate with the one that was entrusted with women affairs, and that NGOs were doubtful of such a setup. Hence the establishment of a Commission with both governmental and non-governmental representation might get all concerned entities to feel more at ease with such a commission and be more cooperative" (Sabbagh 2006:7)<sup>3</sup>. Learning from this experience, JNCW was established as semi governmental body to enhance the participation of both government and NGOs and located within the Jordanian Fund for Human Development. The Fund is under the leadership of HRH Princess Basma and currently managed by her daughter HRH Princess Farah. Yet, JNCW is managed independently from the Fund and is directly reporting to HRH Princess Basma.

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<sup>2</sup> JNCW. 2010-2011. "National Report, Progress of Jordanian Women: In Pursuit of Justice, Participation and Equality

<sup>3</sup>Sabbagh, Amal. 2006. "A critical Assessment of NWMs: The case of Jordan". Amman, Jordan

## 1.2 Mandate and Structure

Along the lines of an EU report on *the Effectiveness of Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Gender Equality*, "The national machinery should be located at the highest possible level of government. It should have clearly defined mandates; adequate resources; and the ability to influence policy, formulate and review legislation and provide staff training"p.27<sup>4</sup>, JNCW comes with a challenging package to assume a critical role in promoting the rights of Jordanian Women. These challenges will be highlighted later relating to JNCW status, location and resources. JNCW has well defined mandate reflecting the main areas of focus on women improved participation, protection and status. The responsibilities entrusted to JNCW and translated in its mandate focused on policy, laws and legislations, networks, exchange of knowledge and expertise and the national women strategy. More specifically the mandate can be summarized and grouped as follows:

- Policy making: JNCW defines policies related to women and based on the national priorities, plans and programs, and participates in designing national development plans aimed at advancing women at all related sectors.
- Laws and legislations review: JNCW reviews and studies existing legislations and draft laws related to women to ensure they do not discriminate against women in cooperation with all concerned parties. JNCW monitors and follows on implementation of laws and regulations to ensure there are no discrimination in the implementation process as well as proposing laws and by laws to advance women.
- Networks forging: establish networks and committees with different institutions, organizations to enable the JNCW secretariat to carry out its objectives.
- Exchange of knowledge and expertise: JNCW represents the kingdom in different national and international bodies, conferences and meetings related to women issues. JNCW strengthens exchange of knowledge, expertise, activities and contacts on the national, regional and international levels.
- National Strategy for Women: JNCW develops, updates and follows up on the National Strategy for Women through working on reviewing obstacles that face its implementation and working with concerned institutions on ways forward and possible action plans.

The structure of JNCW brings together governmental and non-governmental bodies under the leadership of HRH Princess Basma. The board of JNCW has within its members twenty-two representative of ministries, commissions, members of parliament, national and civil society organizations and distinguished national citizens. The board acts as an advisory body where it "approves major policy

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<sup>4</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality. 2014. "Effectiveness of Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Gender Equality. Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States".

recommendations before being sent to the prime minister, such as legal amendments or the option of mainstreaming gender into the national economic and social development plan. This gives the JNCW secretariat and the NGOs represented on the board the opportunity of explaining the importance of such policies to the government board members, who in turn advocate for them within the cabinet"(Sabbagh 2006: 11)<sup>5</sup>

JNCW board provides interesting mix of Ministers and members of three largest women's NGOs along with other prominent members, which creates strong and vibrant platform to discuss the challenges facing JNCW. The board is shuffled every two to three years through the decision of the prime Minister following recommended names by the Commission's chairperson. According to the findings of different interviews on the need to strengthen the role of JNCW, this board offers an opportunity for advocacy and efforts mobilization to follow up on main issues facing JNCW such as funding opportunities and lack of government commitment to gender equality and women empowerment. As the current secretary general explains JNCW faces lack of government commitment to integrate gender within its various Ministries which results in scattering JNCW's efforts here and there instead of systematic approach in the handling of women issues. Therefore, this venue can be platform for serious discussions and debates.

There is the Secretariat that takes on management of the day to day operations and the execution of programs and plans.

There are other committees composing the structure with specialization in certain area such as:

- Network of Governmental Focal points (GFPs): it has been in effect since 1996 with representation of GFPs from most governmental agencies including the army. The network has within its members 18 focal points that are trained on gender concepts and gender mainstreaming. They serve as the gender experts within their organizations and were trained to provide strategic input into all plans and policies related to women. Their strategic role is to integrate and mainstream gender into the organization they work in. According to JNCW secretary general more work should be done with the gender focal points in terms of conducting regular meetings and group work to assess any given situation and propose recommendations and actions. In the interview of the gender focal point in the Ministry of Social Development, she acknowledged the active and effective relationship between the Ministry and JNCW in the area of gender equality and women empowerment. She also noted that JNCW contacts her regularly for information gathering for the purposes of preparing official reports and responds to any technical query she might have. JNCW is burdened with

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<sup>5</sup>Sabbagh, Amal. 2006. "A critical Assessment of NWMs: The case of Jordan". Amman, Jordan

the continuous change of gender focal points and the lack of authority to most of them which makes it difficult to ensure sustainable gender work within the Ministries. There is more work that needs to be done in that aspect to continue building the capacities of gender focal points. In the area of gender responsive budgeting and designing strategies to strengthen the exchange of information and expertise among gender focal points. That's why JNCW is working hard to intensify the trainings of gender focal points on gender mainstreaming and analysis. JNCW is capitalizing on the tasks assigned for the gender focal points to assist the Commission in implementing the national strategy for women and highlighting any legislations or practice that would enhance discrimination against women. Gender focal points "In themselves are insufficient without a clear process for involvement in developing gender policy or gender mainstreaming. Gender focal points should not be solely responsible for gender mainstreaming in their department and accountability should lie with senior staff" (Emma Bell et.al, 2002: 15)<sup>6</sup>. The current general secretary understands these challenges and works with the rest of the network members to mobilize efforts inside the Ministries to provide more authority and support to gender focal points. JNCW has proposed mechanisms to strengthen the role of the GFPs that will be detailed within the report.

- **NGO Coordinating Committee:** As part of the mandate JNCW formed this committee with main task to "implement certain measures of the twelve critical areas of concern highlighted in the Platform Action. Each year, the committee chose the areas that the Commission on the Status of Women and the United Nations chose as its annual theme/themes" (Sabbagh 2006: 14)<sup>7</sup> According to the General Secretary the NGO coordinating Committee is critical to support the work of JNCW especially in creating campaigns to reach out to different constituencies in the society. The aim is to work on policy level initiatives such as influencing government policies and monitoring implementation of strategies through preparation of policy and research papers on selected topics. JNCW intends to leverage support to NGOs and build on their expertise and achievements. She also noted that the current role of JNCW is to mobilize NGOs and support their actions on issues of concern to deliver the voices of women. As also noted by a member of a large NGO, the NGO coordinating committee needs strengthening to create solid base for lobbying for gender equality and women empowerment.
- **Legal Team:** According to the legal consultant at JNCW, the team consists of voluntary lawyers who come together to study legislations, regulations and

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<sup>6</sup> Bell, E., Bryne, B., Laier, J.K., Baden, S. and Marcus, R., 2002. "National Machineries for Women in Development: experiences, lessons and strategies"

<sup>7</sup> Sabbagh, Amal. 2006. "A critical Assessment of NWMs: The case of Jordan". Amman, Jordan

propose amendments for further improvement. JNCW has also revived the legal committee that has within its membership judges, head of women committee in the parliament, legal NGOs. This committee takes the recommendations of the lawyers in order to discuss and come up with strategies for enforcements. This committee has vital role in pushing amendments and proposed laws and/or regulations within parliament and government. Despite these mechanisms, it was evident through the interview with the legal consultant that the load of revising laws and regulations in some cases fall solely on her as she can't force the lawyers to conduct regular meetings on voluntary basis. It also worth noting that the team of lawyers and legal consultant have proposed many changes that were taken up by the government such as amendments to Civil Bureau regulations, pension and social security law. The knowledge gained through working with JNCW enabled the lawyers to become active in the field and assist many international and local NGOs in promoting and protecting the legal rights of women and girls.

- **OMBUDSMEN Office:** It was established in 2009 to provide services to women victims of violence and discrimination in the workplace. The office provides interventions at the early stage through receiving calls, registering the complaints and referring them to the concerned agency. The complaints vary from legal to social to psychological and the office has comprehensive database used in preparing reports with numbers and some analysis. Currently, the office has no funding to continue with new activities. They are active during the 16 days of activism against violence against women in November of each year where they take on the responsibility of organizing in cooperation with selected partners an event to release data and stories of victims of violence and means to support their ordeals. The office consisting of two staff is available 24/7 through office hours and later on their mobiles to receive complaints calls and follow set procedures.
- **Gender Responsive Network (GRB):** JNCW established, in collaboration with UN Women a national network to support national budgets transformation into gender responsive budgets. The network comprises of number of focal points in government institutions, non-governmental bodies and the private sector. The network established its mission, values, mandates and most importantly the logical framework. The action plan includes procedural goals to translate the strategic objectives into set targets with indicators and follow up actions.
- **Other committees, networks and teams:** JNCW has several committees that worked on selected topics like violence against women, municipal elections, political parties, professional and academic women and media team. Each team and committee has its tasks and responsibilities in the area of expertise.

### 1.3 Strategic partners

When mentioning strategic partnerships for JNCW the first idea to arise is the relationship with the Government. As it has been explained, "Many studies draw attention to the importance of the support of the leadership of the government for the machinery and overall goals of gender equality to succeed. This may be an intervening factor in that agencies are given more powerful and clearer mandates as well as more resources when the government hierarchy is supportive of their mission and gender equality issues are high on policy agendas" (Rai 2003 in McBride et al 2011: 31)<sup>8</sup>. Yet as reality dictates, JNCW faces lack of commitment from the government on integration of gender equality as general policy guiding the governmental policies and procedures. This affects JNCW role and transforms their tasks to more of ad hoc basis. JNCW handle tasks within the government as per the requests of different Ministries whether in taking part in a committee or revising and commenting on a procedure or draft law. And some of these requests may come to the attention of JNCW by pure coincidence and not through systematic approach. Despite all these challenges, JNCW is aware that the Government remains one of its strategic partners and sole budget provider at this stage. The Secretary General acknowledges these challenges and remains adamant in steering efforts with the Government as effectively as possible. JNCW remains vigilant and active participant in any request from the Government to ensure their contribution is integrated on issues related to women. JNCW works strategically with Ministries of Planning, Justice, Labour, Social Development and Public sector reform to integrate comprehensive programs on gender equality and women empowerment. Such initiative JNCW is focusing on is looking at women leadership skills with holistic lens where it is not only training workshops but complete program to build the capacities of women as capable leaders of sensitizing the governmental programs. JNCW contributes to all reporting efforts lead by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (other than CEDAW and Beijing Platform) in report components pertaining to women (CRC, UPR, Equal Future Partnership, EU agreements, etc).

Working with NGOs is critical and strategic for effective results on the ground. The more the work was in cooperation and collaboration with NGOs on selected topics the stronger the work is presented especially in front of the Government. Hence, the coordinating committee for NGOs comes in handy to ensure smooth and effective collaboration.

JNCW's efforts over the years in lobbying for allocated seats for women within the Parliament resulted in increase from 6 seats out of 110 in 2003, to 12 out 120 seats in 2010 and to 15 out of 150 in 2012. (Nims, 2015:3)<sup>9</sup>. The Jordanian Parliament has

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<sup>8</sup> McBride, Dorothy and Mazur A., 2011. "Gender Machineries worldwide", World Development report 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Nims, Salma. 2015. " National Mechanisms for Gender Equality: Advocates for action and accountability, catalysts for change."

currently eighteen women. JNCW consider women caucuses in the parliament as their hub of champions and supporters to women issues. This is very strategic for JNCW to mobilize efforts and strengthen ties between women caucuses and other committees in the Parliament to engage in debates supporting gender equality and women empowerment with their fellow men. Expanding the alliances is critical and timely. JNCW maintains regular meetings with the Parliamentarians to discuss different issues.

JNCW has also supported women in local councils for better representation in municipalities. JNCW has launched massive campaign to support women in municipal elections and resulted in 20% of the local councils seats were entitled to women in the Municipalities Law of 2007, which increased to 25% in 2011. Today, women constitute 36% of local councils representatives. (Nims, 2015:2)<sup>10</sup>

JNCW encourages other strategic partnerships with youth groups to change the current cultural practices and spread new culture of tolerance and respect for women's rights.

#### **1.4 Financial and human resources**

JNCW just like any other women machineries face "the problem of inadequate human resources, they often have very few staff or staff who has little motivation or knowledge of gender issues" (Emma Bell et al 2002: 7)<sup>11</sup>. From the different visits and interviews the need for extensive capacity building on proposal writing, fund raising, gender analysis and mainstreaming and gender responsive budgeting was evident and explicitly voiced by some of the staff.

The number of staff provided in the interviews started with the year 2007. JNCW started off with six staff then increased to 17 till it dropped again to 11 constituting the current number of staff. The secretariat includes the Secretary General, her assistant, legal consultant and the rest are program staff to assist in implementing the mandate of the Commission. The staff has job descriptions with tasks and responsibilities including the Secretary General's. JNCW is unable to attract skilled staff due to the low salary scales and the limited budget.

For its financial resources JNCW depends on government funding which is around 170,000 JD equivalents to 240,000 USD on annual basis. This amount used to be more when the Commission started till it dropped due to the government economic crisis. The current Secretary General tried to increase the fund through its request to the Ministry of Finance but it was denied. The dedicated amount barely covers the staff salaries and some running costs. In 2014, JNCW had an actual deficit in the budget. For other programmatic activities, JNCW relies on donors funding which also

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<sup>10</sup> Nims, Salma. 2015. " National Mechanisms for Gender Equality: Advocates for action and accountability, catalysts for change."

<sup>11</sup> Bell, E., Bryne, B., Laier, J.K., Baden, S. and Marcus, R., 2002. "National Machineries for Women in Development: experiences, lessons and strategies"

dropped significantly with latest economic crisis. JNCW works with UN Women on implementing current activities on gender budgeting to support and build the capacity of the staff and the commission in this area. It was clear that donors are providing chunks of funding according to set activities and not comprehensive programs. So JNCW get funded to implement activity by activity.

Throughout all the interviews the one recurring factor was the insufficient funding from government and other sources. Poor funding is one of the main challenges facing the viability and sustainability of JNCW.

### **1.5 Policy into Practice:**

The title of this section focuses on the translation of JNCW's policies into the national strategy for women. It also studies the factors affecting the policy level and translating it into practice. This section will pave the way for the following parts dealing with achievements, challenges and way forward.

#### *a. Factors behind success/and/or failure at policy level*

The current strategy of the Secretary General to build the capacity and role of JNCW is directly linked to achieve success at policy level. This will be realized by having a solid and well resourced mechanism lobbying for systematic integration of gender equality. JNCW has a long history of achievements that provides strong platform for negotiations and debates with governmental officials. The Secretary General stressed that JNCW is in place to influence all policies related to women and should be consulted in any governmental procedure, law or regulations on women in Jordan. Despite that, the machinery is faced with bureaucratic resistance making it very difficult to have positive and sustained influence in many cases. "Bureaucratic resistance can be the result of a lack of knowledge among governmental officials and parliamentarians of gender issues" (Emma Bell et al 2002:7). Knowing these kinds of resistance are like entering a vicious circle where JNCW acknowledges these constraints but incapable of facing them.

Many factors play in favour of the Commission and against it. Having a royal chairperson mobilized great efforts and support especially with her extensive knowledge in the field of development and women human rights. Her ability to bring NGOs together without interference was exceptional, a member of an NGO explained. Another key factor is working in solidarity with NGOs in some initiatives such as the nationwide campaign demanding women's quota which was adopted by the government in 2003. Initiating dialogue between the parliamentarians and their women constituents proved to be very beneficial on both sides as it opened the door for better understanding of the needs of grassroots women. Although these initiatives have been completed years ago, JNCW have definitely benefitted through expanding its base and reach to different constituencies. That is part of the legacy that needs to be built on and fostered.

Investing in the vision of the current Secretary General to work on strengthening the status and position of JNCW will be strategic move to affect policy levels. Any failure to influence general policies will be due to the Commission poor funding, limited and unskilled human resources and legal status. The question of establishing JNCW as an entity through cabinet decree and not law or a by-law remains one of the major challenges. A thorough debate is taking place on how to move from a cabinet decree to a law or a by-law as part of strengthening the status of JNCW.

*b. National Strategy for Women*

"One of the first tasks accomplished by JNCW after establishment was the preparation of the national strategy for women. This initiative was the first of its kind, not only in Jordan but also in the Arab region. It is believed that the importance of the national strategy was that it created a focus on the priorities of Jordanian women and that it defined them within the national context. It served in sensitizing society at large to women's issues as well as providing a Jordanian Platform for Action prior to Beijing Conference" (Talal 2004 in Sabbagh 2006:22)<sup>12</sup>. The first adoption of the national strategy for women was in 2003 when the Prime Ministry issued circular to all governmental institutions to consider it as reference document for their programs. The approach in preparing the national strategy for women was in full participation with different official institutions, NGOs, academic and media centers and international women organizations. The various components of the strategy covering the period from 2013-2017 cover human security, political empowerment, economic empowerment, media and ICT, integration of gender in policies and legislations, Institutional improvement for organizations working on women issues and the popular culture on women empowerment. The national strategy serves as road map and guiding document for government to promote the rights of women under each component.

JNCW has updated the strategy through conducting evaluation sessions of what was implemented and what needs to be done to ensure better monitoring of the strategy. The updating and evaluation exercise included workshops from all over the twelve governorates in Jordan to discuss ways to improve the strategy.

Based on the pillars of the national strategy, JNCW has adopted the draft Action Plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 and The National Coalition strategy for supporting women in Elections (2013 – 2017). It aims at contributing to meeting the targets of the National Women Strategy regarding women participation in leadership and decision-making positions through seven strategic objectives: 1) Creating a supportive legislative and policy-making context; 2) increasing women participation in senior position in the public sector; 3) increasing women representation in elected positions (including professional associations, political parties, etc.); 4) building women capacities and knowledge; 5) Nurturing supportive social context; 6)

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<sup>12</sup> Sabbagh, Amal. 2006. "A critical Assessment of NWMs: The case of Jordan". Amman, Jordan

reinforcing networking and partnerships and supporting women in parliamentary and local councils elections.(Nims, 2015: 3)<sup>13</sup>

The latest national strategy for women for the period 2013-2017 was endorsed by the cabinet on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2013. The Secretary General highlighted the need to revise the indicators of each component to strengthen the document with results oriented objectives. The indicators will reflect the indicators of post 2015 and other areas affecting the status of women in Jordan. The areas take into consideration the regional conflicts impacting Jordan in terms of refugee influx and economic and security challenges. The spread of religious extremism has in the vulnerable and marginalized communities in Jordan are areas for serious consideration.

## **PART II: GOVERNMENTAL MECHANISMS TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUITY AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

The governmental gender focal point network has been established by Cabinet decree in 1996. The network has representation of most governmental organizations. This report will assess in brief other existing national women machineries and they are gender units of four Ministries; namely, Ministry of Labour, Planning, Social Development and Health. This section sheds light on the structure of the units, main achievements, challenges and needs. In all the interviews with the gender focal points within the Ministries, there is a need for leadership on gender. There is a need to redefine the role of the gender units and the composition of team to engender policy, programmes and budgets at the Ministries level. The interviewees clearly stressed the role of JNCW to lead this governmental focal points network and continue the provision of technical support.

### **2.1 Directorate of Women, Ministry of Labour**

History of Establishment<sup>14</sup>: In 2006 the Ministry of Labour had a division for women. It was renamed in 2008 to take on the responsibilities of a directorate according to the new organizational structure. This move came as a sign of appreciation of the economic development of women. In 2012 the organizational structure was revisited and the directorate of women reports to the assistant of the General Secretary for technical affairs. The tasks of the women directorate include:

- Economic Empowerment
- Awareness and Education

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<sup>13</sup> Nims, Salma. 2015. " National Mechanisms for Gender Equality: Advocates for action and accountability, catalysts for change."

<sup>14</sup> Translated from ministry of Labour website:

<http://mol.gov.jo/Pages/Women/AboutWomenDepart.aspx>

### Objectives of the Directorate<sup>15</sup>:

- Provide legal and social protection for working women
- Empower women economically and reintegrate them into the local market
- Raise awareness of the community regarding the role of women in the economic empowerment and the rights and responsibilities in the labour law

### Staff of the Directorate:

The directorate has three staff, the director, head of economic empowerment and researcher.

### Main Achievements:

- Within its mandate on economic empowerment, the directorate conducted in cooperation with international organizations researches on women economic participation. The aim of such researches is to foster progress on the road towards economic empowerment while raising some flags.
- Provide employment for around 80 young girls in the industrialized zone.
- Amend the labour law to include article on creating nurseries in the workplace
- Hold trainings for the Ministries personnel and supervisors on international agreements regarding pay equity, discrimination in the workplace and protecting the rights of migrant women workers.
- Contribute to the preparation of CEDAW reports in close cooperation with JNCW.
- Participate in the formulation of the women complaints within the JNCW and nominated focal point for monitoring and follow up.
- Implement in cooperation with ILO program on pay equity.

### Needs and Challenges:

- The directorate needs hands on experience in mainstreaming gender within the Ministry. There is a need to win the support and championship of the senior management to strategically mainstream gender within the departments/directorates of the Ministry. This step will place the directorate at the center of the Ministry's organizational structure where their role is considered cross cutting.
- There is a need to involve the Gender Unit into policy, planning and budgeting process and to clarify the policies and procedures to facilitate the process.
- The Ministry's staff needs awareness workshops on gender as concepts and terminologies.
- The employment strategy needs revising to include gender sensitive indicators and statistics.
- The directorate needs adequate funding to implement certain initiatives such as holding national exhibitions to market the products of Jordanian women.

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<sup>15</sup> ibid

According to the director this is a very important and successful initiative that needs proper funding.

## **2.2 Gender Unit, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation**

History of Establishment:<sup>16</sup> the gender unit falls under the department of Policies and Strategies. The department develops economic policies through conducting researchers and studies. One of the major tasks and responsibilities is to:

- Contribute to determining objectives, policies and development indicators which related to gender mainstreaming perspective in cooperation with the Jordanian National Women Commission for Women and the gender focal points in the ministries, government institutions and non-governmental organizations.
- Build a system to monitor and evaluate policies and programs and their impact on gender equity.

Objectives of the unit:

- Build the capacity of the personal of the Ministry on gender mainstreaming and analysis
- Build the capacity of the Gender focal points in close cooperation with JNCW.
- Serve as focal point for donors and facilitate the work on gender between the Ministry and other institutions

Staff of the Unit: the unit works with head of the unit and assistant taking on the tasks and responsibilities of gender. The staff work on gender depends on the requests and the funded programs by the various donors. There are no specific items in the budget of the Ministry on gender.

Main achievements:

- The gender unit has long years of working with different donors and JNCW so the accumulated knowledge enriches the unit's expertise. This enables the unit to serve as hub for continuing knowledge and expertise.
- The Unit has policy and strategy on gender for the Ministry but it is not activated due to lack of proper implementation mechanisms within the Ministry.
- There is gender database for Ministry that includes all the gender programs.

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<sup>16</sup> Translated from Ministry of Planning website:

<http://www.mop.gov.jo/DetailsPage/DirectoratesDetails.aspx?ID=29>

### Needs and challenges:

- As other gender units in other Ministries, the gender unit does not have the proper implementation mechanisms to ensure gender is properly addressed at all levels of the Ministry. There is a need to formulate action plans to ensure proper implementation of the policy and strategy on gender.
- The gender unit has limited financial and human resources to provide technical assistance on gender mainstreaming.
- Gender focal points network with JNCW need further support to strengthen the work of each unit/directorate on gender and women's issues within each Ministry.

### **2.3 Gender Unit, Ministry of Social Development**

#### History of Establishment<sup>17</sup>:

The gender unit falls under the supervision of the directorate of Studies and Policy Development. The directorate's objective is to prepare strategic studies, follow up on progress and implementation. The directorate formulates policies, analyzes data and social norms.

#### Objective of the Unit<sup>18</sup>:

- Participate in formulating policies and implementing programs to mainstream gender and ensure gender equality.
- Participate in preparing awareness and service programs to address to gender issues in collaboration with related units.
- Institutionalize gender within the Ministries, field offices and build the capacity of the Ministries staff through the gender focal point.
- Conduct research on women and gender to enact policies that ensure women effective participation in social, political and economic spheres.
- Coordinate with monitoring and evaluation unit to establish database, monitoring an evaluation system to follow up on the programs that are gender related.
- Follow up on implementation of international conventions, strategic plans, reports and legislative reform on issues related to empowering women.
- Prepare leaflets, periodic reports and participate in workshops on gender mainstreaming, analysis and other related topics.

#### Staff of the Unit:

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<sup>17</sup> Translated from the website:

[http://www.mosd.gov.jo/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1544:2012-03-29-10-17-03&catid=5:5&Itemid=41](http://www.mosd.gov.jo/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1544:2012-03-29-10-17-03&catid=5:5&Itemid=41)

<sup>18</sup> ibid

The unit has one staff responsible for the unit and is overloaded with tasks within the Ministry.

#### Main achievements:

- The focal point developed sex-disaggregated data system for the different departments in the Ministry. The Ministry includes gender sensitive indicators that are integrated in the workplans for the Ministry staff and the directorates.
- The Ministry integrates women issues within its policies and strategies as women are among the main beneficiaries.
- Number of directorates namely the one responsible for people with special needs, families and childhood, social protection and housing have incorporated some budget items that are gender responsive.
- The Ministry has launched the strategy for gender-based violence that was drafted and launched through the technical help of JNCW.
- The gender focal point contributes to international reports such as CEDAW, and Beijing.

#### Needs and challenges:

- The gender focal point follows up with various directorates on gender sensitive indicators, increasing the burden on the gender unit due to its limitation in staff.
- Lack of expertise among the governmental gender focal points in general on gender analysis and mainstreaming. The gender focal points need intensive work in applying gender analysis and reflecting the tools on their day-to-day work.
- The gender focal points need leadership in the area of gender analysis and mainstreaming.
- There is a need for a unified database on women in Jordan. JNCW should lead in this area.
- There is a need to have a customized manual to give guidance to the gender units on how mainstream gender in policies, plans, programmes and budgets

### [2.4 Ministry of Health](#)

The situation for the Ministry of Health is different as there is no gender unit within the structure of the Ministry. There is a gender focal point that has received advanced trainings on gender and gender responsive budgeting through the trainings provided by UN Women and other EU programmes. The gender focal point is in continuous cooperation with JNCW and UNWomen on all matters related to gender within the Ministry.

It is worth noting that UN Women has closely worked with the nominated focal point from the budget and health welfare departments on building their capacities on gender mainstreaming and gender responsive budgeting.

### **Recommendations:**

For JNCW and International Organizations:

- Developing gender mainstreaming toolkit.
- Provision of technical and financial support to the gender units.
- Developing of comprehensive capacity building activities for the gender units.
- Advocating to mainstream gender at the policy level.

For Ministries:

- Strengthen the position, authority and resources of the gender units.
- Revise the structure of the gender unit.

## **PART III: MOVING TOWARDS MAINSTREAMING**

This part lays the different areas that impact the work of JNCW and how it steers its efforts amid waves of resistance. This part also highlights certain areas that cover JNCW relationships, monitoring and evaluation mechanism and overall support to its work. Certain areas can be seen as achievements and challenges at the same time.

### **3.1 Addressing legislation and gender discriminatory laws**

Addressing legislations and discriminatory practices and/or regulations have been JNCW strong niche over the years. Although there is always fear to transform the work of JNCW from general policy advocate into focusing more on law amendments and review of discriminatory laws. Yet, JNCW has "embarked on studying Jordanian legislation at early stages of its establishment. Through its legal team, it first surveyed all the legislation and then moved to consider possible amendments to legislation."(Sabbagh 2006, p.17)<sup>19</sup> That was thoroughly explained by JNCW legal consultant as having database for all the legislations that were reviewed and the ones that need further studying and amendments. The amended and adopted laws were related to civil service bureau, social security, labour, and elections, personal status law related to increasing the legal age of marriage for both males and females. As general secretary clarified the work on gender sensitizing legislations and laws are very critical. JNCW has within its database number of laws suggested by NGOs for negotiations with the parliament and government. Such as article 308 in the penal code that stops the prosecution of the rapist and/or halt the implementation sentence in case of marrying the victim and staying with them up to five years. This controversial article has sparked heated discussions among NGOs and JNCW and

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<sup>19</sup> Sabbagh, Amal. 2006. "A critical Assessment of NWMs: The case of Jordan". Amman, Jordan

need lobbying and support from various key institutions like the Parliament in order to be able to eliminate it. CEDAW is the international agreement that serve as reference for amending laws that discriminate against women and girls. JNCW in all its official reports build on the international commitments and status of the Country placing pressure on the government to work through the proposed legislations and laws.

JNCW along with NGOs and women activists were at the forefront in the struggle of Jordanian women married to non Jordanians to pass on their nationality to their children for many years. After many debates and negotiations and heated discussions the government agreed to grant civil rights to their children. JNCW does not claim ownership of this success as it was the result of long and exhausting team efforts. Yet, JNCW believes that those directives are still unable to fulfill the conditions and challenges facing this group.

### **3.2 Influencing governmental policies, plans and budgets**

Jordan made commitments to advance gender equality and women's empowerment, in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women (CEDAW) but often there is a gap between the policy statement and the ways in which government raise and spend money. Jordan is one of the countries that have also expressed commitments to greater transparency and accountability, but again there is often a gap between participation and consultation in the formulation of new policies and legislation and in the allocation of resources

JNCW impact on governmental policies, plans and budgets remain limited and not effective. The underlying factors are the limited capacities of JNCW to integrate gender mainstreaming into various governmental agencies and the lack of commitment and understanding of the governmental agencies of gender analysis and mainstreaming. Although there are focal points that work within the ministries to spearhead gender issues yet again their role is limited and they do not have the authority to target high level policies within their Ministries. "In practice, focal points have often been limited in effectiveness because of junior female staff tend to be burdened with the responsibility, with few extra resources and little training support or clarity about their role" (Emma Bell et al 2002: 6)<sup>20</sup> The gender focal points in the government agencies received many trainings but the on job training remain limited due to the limited knowledge and understanding of the government officials of gender mainstreaming. This results in automatically limited resources and influence of the gender focal points. The gender focal point at the Ministry of Social Development explains the challenges as the lack of expertise on gender analysis and mainstreaming within the Ministry's senior officials. GFPs in her opinion still need work in applying

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<sup>20</sup> Bell, E., Bryne, B., Laier, J.K., Baden, S. and Marcus, R., 2002. "National Machineries for Women in Development: experiences, lessons and strategies"

gender analysis and implementing gender mainstreaming tools in their day to day work. The Ministry's efforts to institutionalize gender are not active and need strategic intervention from the JNCW at high levels. JNCW had earlier initiatives dating back to 2001 with the Civil Service Bureau, ministries of Labour and Foreign affairs on gender mainstreaming. Presently, the governmental initiatives on gender mainstreaming are inactive. According to JNCW staff they will be called upon by any Ministry to comment on a policy or strategy or to join in preparing development plans. Their contribution is on tasks basis without comprehensive perspective. In 2014, Jordan has embarked on the development of Jordan Vision 2025, a participatory process lead by Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, with a ministerial committee, which included JNCW. JNCW proposed a mechanism that would ensure the mainstreaming of gender within the work of the 17 task forces representing various sectors and utilizing the 18 trained GFPs, to represent JNCW and coordinate with JNCW and its Gender experts.

JNCW commissioned a study entitled gender audit of the public sector. The quantitative and qualitative study provided set of recommendations on the status of gender mainstreaming in the public sector. The study aimed at identifying the status of gender mainstreaming within the public sector through presenting the percentage of male's and female's employment, gaps in hiring and the functions and hierarchy of gender units in different ministries. The study published in 2010 has not been mentioned in any of the interviews as reference document to be used in lobbying with the government. Yet, it remains reference for future use by different parties.

JNCW efforts to implement and improve sex disaggregated statistics within the governmental departments also remain a challenge. The gender focal point at the Ministry of Social Development clarified that she personally takes on the responsibility of integrating sex disaggregated statistics into the Ministry's documents. In terms of gender mainstreaming, collecting and compiling sex disaggregated data is the only part she applies through her work. These efforts vary from one Ministry to the other depending on the effectiveness of the gender units which are in most cases if not all limited in resources and effectiveness. As for the overall JNCW efforts with the national department of statistics, it succeeded in gender sensitizing the census in 2004. And nowadays, the department provides sex disaggregated statistics in various sectors.

JNCW trained the network of gender focal points and selected civil society organizations on gender responsive budgeting. The initiative was very beneficial for the participants in increasing their knowledge and expertise in this area. JNCW developed in partnership and cooperation with UN Women and members of the network an action plan to guide their work on mainstreaming gender and gender responsive budgeting. This project and efforts provide an opportunity for shifting the development agenda for the government especially at this particular time that the government is embarking on a decentralization process through the drafting of the

Municipalities Law and the Decentralization law. JNCW sees that it is important to create synergy between donor projects in support of local communities in setting their development priorities.

### **3.3 Collaborating with NGOs and women organizations**

The history of the relationship between JNCW and NGOs faced many obstacles and was characterized as bumpy at certain times. At the early stages of JNCW's formation, women organizations considered JNCW presence a way for the government to monitor and tighten its grip on women issues and rights in Jordan. So the scene was tense and lacked proper cooperation mechanisms. Not until JNCW formed the NGO coordinating committee after Beijing conference to show good intention and build trustful relationship through continuous consultation that the relationship improved tremendously. Currently, JNCW is in continuous cooperation with women organizations and NGOs lobbying for women issues. According to the General Secretary their work aims to leverage support to NGOs and women organizations on strategic issues concerning gender equality and women rights. In a press conference, the Secretary General stressed, "one of the main focus areas will be reinforcing relationships with NGOs that are working in the field in various governorates and have achieved progress, and conducted successful projects" (The Jordan Times 2014)<sup>21</sup>

"The legitimacy and accountability of NWM's are dependent in part on the quality of their links with women's organizations and NGOs representing women's interest" (Emma Bell et al 2002: 15)<sup>22</sup> JNCW is not intending to clash with NGOs and women organizations on implementing projects, on the contrary, the commission is planning to design campaigns to reach out to different constituencies in the society with the help and support of these organizations. It is well known as it has been clarified by JNCW staff that the relationship with NGOs is an area that needs continuous maintaining and cooperation. And as one of the staff explained, due to the absence of women's movement more pressure on JNCW to affect the government policies is exerted. The absence of unified women's vision has negative impact. A member of one of the women organizations that was interviewed felt the need for more cooperation with JNCW and that the commission needs to reach out to them more often. They still have a lot to work on together and it will not happen without serious team work.

JNCW is working with UN Women to position policy papers with the technical assistance of NGOs on Beijing Platform for action. These papers will be used in the lobbying efforts with the Government. They will provide wealth of information on each area of the Beijing Platform for Action and its timely with the 20-year anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing+20).

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<sup>21</sup> The Jordan Times. 8<sup>th</sup> June 2014, "New JNCW secretary general 'to build on the achievements'."

<sup>22</sup> Bell, E., Bryne, B., Laier, J.K., Baden, S. and Marcus, R., 2002. "National Machineries for Women in Development: experiences, lessons and strategies",

This paper does not intent to delve into the relationship between JNCW and NGOs and women organizations in details nor does it evaluate their performance. Yet, it is fair to say that the absence of unified vision to bring women together is having its toll on JNCW. JNCW and NGOs working on women issues and women organizations need to pull their efforts strategically and design roadmap with clear objectives, goals and indicators.

### **3.4 Partnering with key players and networking**

Working with untraditional actors is an area that JNCW wants to tap into, as clarified by the Secretary General. Apart from JNCW continuous work with government and women organizations, looking for new partners can support its mandate. Joining regional networks such as the one on UN resolution 1325 on women, peace and security can also expand the work and outreach of JNCW especially with the commission's efforts to compile a report on Jordan's contribution to the UN resolution 1325.

Building new base and using methods like arts, drama entails that JNCW look for new partners to implement such activities to promote women and girls human rights and strengthen the status of the commission in the Jordanian context. Reaching out to youth groups, bloggers, human rights activists and artists is an area to be considered. This will be scored as one of the achievement of JNCW with its current vision to expand outreach and join new and unconventional forces.

JNCW is closely cooperating with UN women on different initiatives such as gender responsive budgeting, political participation and empowering youth. JNCW is also collaborating with the European Union (EU) to build the capacity of gender focal points. JNCW is closely working with USAID program called TAKAMOL that aims at empowering women in the public sector.

### **3.5 Monitoring and Accountability of gender equality and women empowerment**

"JNCW has entrusted the government to follow up on the implementation of laws and by laws to ensure they are acted upon and do not discriminate against women, we well as to assess the actual implementation of policies and activities related to women adopted by national plans and programmes" (Sabbagh 2006: 24)<sup>23</sup>. Currently, JNCW faces unresponsive decision makers and parliamentarians. This is definitely limiting its accountability mechanisms and their role to monitoring the implementation of laws and regulations. If JNCW suffers limited financial and human resources then their mechanisms to hold the government accountable remains restricted if inactive. The Secretary General explains that she is burdened with sending letters to the Prime Ministry on its regulations and proposed laws. This lack of systematic approach leaves JNCW constantly monitoring the government laws and proposed actions without any proper mechanisms to the governmental bodies' performance on gender

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<sup>23</sup> Sabbagh, Amal. 2006. "A critical Assessment of NWMs: The case of Jordan". Amman, Jordan

equality and women empowerment. Again, if the network of gender focal points has the authority and proper resources they can act as internal agents for the JNCW to detect any discriminatory act and procedures. Absence of women movement and unified vision of NGOs and women organizations left JNCW in total vacuum in the area of monitoring and accountability.

### **3.6 Overall support to JNCW work**

The most recurring words in all of the interviews describing the government support and interventions were not responsive, blind and lack of commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. There should be clear understanding of JNCW role as an agency promoting gender equality and women empowerment as general policy. JNCW should be empowered to provide support and advice on all issues to ensure gender equality and women empowerment is cross cutting through all governmental policies and procedures. According to report published by EU on the Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of Gender equality, it has been noted that "the higher gender equality agencies are in the governmental hierarchy and the better resourced they are, the more chances they have of bringing gender equality issues to the fore" (p.11)<sup>24</sup>

JNCW efforts to strengthen its institutional capacities to mobilize and lead on women issues in Jordan are critical aspect of the status of the Commission. This is priority for JNCW to integrate proper in house renovation and capacity building activities.

## **PART IV: RAISING FLAGS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP**

This part presents the challenges facing JNCW in implementing the mandate. The addressed factors raise alerts and red flags that need serious and strategic interventions.

### **4.1 Political Commitment to gender equality and women empowerment**

Jordan is committed as Country to its international commitments in general and strives to keep the international image as positive as possible. Although this may not be translated when it comes to women rights and gender equality yet it is a good foundation to build on and refer to. JNCW operates as one constituent of the Jordanian context that already suffers lack of proper and effective institutionalization. The institutions are depended on individuals rather than sustainable plan. The major factor is lack of commitment from the government to work on strengthening JNCW though providing the commission with needed means to implement its mandate.

The political will is evident in all of the King and Queen's speeches to provide all the support to women issues and gender equality. This commitment weakens going down the hierarchy structure. The commitment is reflected in the official reports but not on

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<sup>24</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality. 2014. "Effectiveness of Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Gender Equality. Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States"

the ground leaving JNCW to struggle in building its momentum and continuing the progress. The Secretary General summed up the challenges in two factors; the conservative culture and society and the uncommitted government to gender equality and women empowerment. The culture inside most of the Ministries is conservative and resistant to gender equality. Without finding the right discourse and entry points gender equality will not be fully achieved.

#### **4.2 Relationships with Government and NGOs**

The relationship with Government is not consistent and relies on the personal connections of the Secretary General with whoever is in office. As explained it takes a lot of nagging, following up and sending letters to the Prime Ministry on different matters. The relationship lack proper communication channels of sustained methods of cooperation. The work of JNCW as one staff remarked is tied to what the Prime Ministry deems fit at a given time. The Government's obligations under the national strategy for women are critical to ensure women's social, political and economic empowerment. Each component in the national strategy has sub themes that touch on different Ministries responsibilities such as health, education, environment, violence against women (VAW) etc. This framework should present solid foundation for cooperative and consistent relationship with the government.

The relationship with NGOs started with the early establishment of JNCW and was then characterized as bumpy. It had to be strengthened throughout the years till this moment. NGOs collaborate with JNCW on issues of concern as per the request of JNCW such as the 16 days of activism to end VAW, gender responsive budgeting, legal amendments and community campaigns. JNCW has long record of collaboration and cooperation and welcomes any requests from NGOs for support as the staff noted in the interviews. Yet, again JNCW limited funds and human resources can not satisfy the needs of NGOs and women organizations. The Secretary General emphasized that JNCW role is to leverage the support to NGOs and women organizations through its plans to work on policy level initiatives and the implementation of the national strategy for women. The willingness of JNCW to work with NGOs and women organizations is evident. Yet, it requires extensive work from both ends to strategize their efforts and push for better status and representation of JNCW within the government.

An NGO member feels that the relationship with JNCW needs to be put on track to help JNCW reach its goals. Mutual meetings and trainings is one aspect of this relationship where much more efforts have to be exerted to influence more policies, programs, plans and budgets of the governmental agencies.

JNCW's capacity building efforts components has to be dedicated to enhancing its relationship with NGOs to press for more progress. The history of JNCW with NGOs is the base to build on and expand the outreach to various women organizations and NGOs interested in women issues. From the perspective of the Secretary General

JNCW is building on the expertise of different NGOs and the services they can deliver. So all in all, the relationship has good base and needs continuous improvement.

#### **4.3 Commission legal status**

JNCW was established by a cabinet decree issued in 1992 with mandate to work on improving women status. The legal status was questioned from the earlier years but nothing was initiated to review its legal status. As explained by the legal consultant the cabinet decree leaves JNCW at the mercy of every government that can override its decision. The decree restricts JNCW from enforcing set of priorities for they are linked to every cabinet's priorities. In light of that, JNCW is preparing couple of scenarios. One of which is proposing draft law to gain autonomy while fortifying its structure. This option's major obstacle is the parliament as the law needs to be passed and approved by the members and the resistance to that will be high. If reverted to this option then the envisioned mechanism needs to win major support of women parliamentarians and other male allies.

The Second option is drafting set of new regulations to help strengthen the role and status of JNCW. This will be less confrontational with the parliament but will need strategic mobilization within the government to approve it. JNCW will be drafting enough reasons for this move to be ready for negotiations and debates. As the Secretary General and legal consultant clarified studying these options is priority for JNCW.

#### **4.4 Donor assistance**

The issue of donor funding was relevant in the interviews; donors are more likely to fund activities instead of complete projects, one staff told me. It is obvious that apart from governmental funding few activities are being implemented with some donors including UN agencies. JNCW is reaching out for some donors in explaining its efforts to build the institutional capacity of the commission.

Due to the fact that JNCW's mandate is at the national level and focuses on advocacy and policy making and planning- such mandate does not seem attractive to donors in comparison to activities implemented by civil society. Such mandate requires more funding for human resource rather than activities. This is limiting JNCW's abilities to secure funding

JNCW is currently engaging in the formulation of project proposals with UN Women and USAID program TAKAMOL on the implementation of JNCW 2015 plan.

There is need for more strategic partnerships with donors especially that there are gender focal points within the donor agencies that can support the mandate of JNCW. UN Women is working with JNCW on gender responsive budgeting to build the capacity of the staff to address gender gaps in sector and local government policies, plans and budgets. UN women is also supporting JNCW on other topics of concern

such as youth and political participation. Donor assistance can include both funds and technical expertise to work on selected topics of interest. Supporting JNCW in strengthening its internal structure and capacity should attract donors working on gender equality and women empowerment.

## **PART V: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This part will provide conclusions and recommendations for future interventions and directions. With all the challenges facing JNCW from limited funding to lack of responsiveness from government and lack of skilled resources, there are ways forward. JNCW has long history of achievements and lessons learned and have promoted the rights of Jordanian women in different sectors. For more specific recommendations the report will focus on the following:

### **5.1 Responsive government mechanisms**

With all the challenges facing government efforts to respond to gender equality and women empowerment obligations, JNCW is in position to work through these restricting factors. The area of training top level governmental officials, developing tools and methodologies to integrate gender mainstreaming and documenting best practices for some of governmental responses should always be on top of JNCW agendas. Even if JNCW does not have the means to fund these trainings, collaborative efforts with other donor agencies, international agencies, women NGOs and NGOs working on gender equality and women empowerment is the way forward. These are all efforts to ensure better response of government mechanisms especially with the need to capitalize on the gender focal points within the governmental institutions as effectively as possible.

JNCW can focus on its' board to mobilize the involved Ministries to act as champions within the cabinet to integrate gender into development plans. JNCW should devise mechanisms to hold the government accountable such as lobbying for integration of sex-disaggregated data, gender budgets and performance indicators. This structured data and tools can serve as base for national reports to look into the actual implementation of gender equality and women empowerment. This can be evidence to how responsive the government is on paper, plans, budgets and interventions. The board is a venue to discuss this initiative and how it can be integrated within the responsibilities of senior staff and gender focal points.

JNCW need to create an example for the government on how the agencies need to be accountable to its national and international commitments.

### **5.2 NGOs coordination mechanisms and information sharing**

Maintaining the solid base of NGOs interested in women issues and women organizations is the backbone of the commission effective role. Without clear, open and transparent relationship with civil society many opportunities of pressuring the government will be lost. JNCW has to continue its efforts to leverage support to

NGOs and women organizations specific initiatives. Meetings for information sharing between JNCW and NGOs should be conducted more often to learn more about each other's initiatives and how their efforts can work together. Documentations of lessons learnt and good practices are good sources of material for lobbying for change with government and for building the capacity of JNCW in leading these sharing of resources. The media committee at JNCW should put in place electronic mechanisms such as portals, blogs to network among different NGOs. Different kinds of coordination will result in more strategic work to promote gender equality and women empowerment. Joint statements are great channel of advocacy and lobbying. The more JNCW and women organizations pull their resources and stand together in advocating for ending VAW or enforcing legal amendments or integrating gender into national development plans, the louder their demands will resonate.

### **5.3 Sustainability of JNCW**

The presence, stability and sustainability of JNCW are serious areas for consideration. With the mentioned limited resources it is still maneuvering its way in complex situations. JNCW needs serious re-evaluation of its status and resources from the government. The board can be venue to discuss possible ways of moving forward and increasing the momentum. As national machinery it achieved a lot and has connections inside and outside the Country and remains the body to fulfill the international commitments on women rights and gender equality. Their presence is important and so need their power to be strengthened. Cases of countries in resource poor environments like for instance Mozambique can be studied (Tripp et.al 2009: McBride et al 2011: 31)<sup>25</sup> to learn more about their strategies to affect the government.

Attracting qualified staff is an area to ensure sustainability whereby criteria for hiring and salary scales have to be revisited. JNCW should prioritize the kind of technical and/or operational staff they need at this moment and how can they hire them till more funds are received.

Funding is another dilemma that needs serious consideration whether working with the government to increase its share or looking for other sources of funding as the donor community is committed to gender equality and women empowerment. At this point, JNCW needs to design funding strategy that appeal to the donor community.

### **5.4 Lead on new initiatives on gender equality**

JNCW with the fruitful partnership with the national network action plan to support gender responsive budgeting is on the track for forging strategic and institutional relationship with different key actors. Whether in the government or private sector, this documented effort will pave the way for in depth analysis and practical methods of application of GBR. JNCW needs to continue leading in the context of applying

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<sup>25</sup> McBride, Dorothy and Mazur A., 2011. "Gender Machineries worldwide", World Development report 2012

GBR into the national, governmental and private institutions. Continuing to improve the skills of well trained national experts on gender budgeting can serve as basis for JNCW future work.

Many regional and international networks have exerted efforts in lobbying for UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Karama is an organization that has worked a lot in this area and has wealth of experience in strategies of implementation, challenges, lessons learnt and good practices. Connecting with these regional organizations will improve the initial efforts of JNCW to learn and report on the resolution implementation process. Especially when the interviewed gender focal points remarks that the knowledge on UN resolution 1325 is still premature.

Efforts by UN agencies and international agencies are directed to the post 2015 development agenda. These efforts focus on the global partnership for development, monitoring and indicators and financing for sustainable development. JNCW is in good position to lead national consultations to contribute to implement the gender commitments identified in the post 2015 development agenda. This is another area that joint efforts with the UN agencies can yield positive results. Meeting to acquaint different stakeholders with the identified gender commitments localizes the global efforts for post 2015 development agenda.

### **5.5 Continue strategic partnerships with media, donors and youth groups**

Collaborating with media, donors and youth groups are all added value to the performance and status of JNCW. Media is critical factor with all its impact on the national context. It's a tool to enhance pressure on the government agencies to respond to their obligations. And it's a vibrant platform to join the forces of women organizations and NGOs interested in women issues together. Social media is the ultimate medium of advocacy and lobbying. Exposing certain topics in social media can generate public support. JNCW has to work with young bloggers and media activists to change the discourse and come up with appealing messages to generate support. JNCW can start nationwide campaign to change article 308 in the penal code through these methods.

Youth groups with social reforming agendas are emerging in the Jordanian society. Getting to know them and understand their objectives will certainly create common grounds and higher momentum to promote women's rights. JNCW should tap into this youthful world and take part in its initiatives.

Donors remain committed to gender equality and women empowerment and maintaining channels of cooperation is the engine for JNCW. Updating JNCW database of donors will be first step in this direction. Meeting with donors and explaining JNCW's efforts for institutional capacity building will generate support. JNCW has its history, achievements and interventions and such legacy can never and should not be taken lightly.

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## ANNEX

### ***Increasing Accountability in Financing for Gender Equality programme***

#### **Assessment of National Women Machineries<sup>26</sup>**

##### **Background:**

Under the umbrella of the *Increasing Accountability in Financing for Gender Equality* programme and with support from the Government of Italy, the project ‘*Strengthening National Mechanisms for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*’ is implemented in Ethiopia, Honduras, Jordan, State of Palestine and Senegal through 31 March 2015. The project aims to build capacities and strengthen the role of national women’s machinery (NWMs) for effective oversight and implementation of gender equality commitments. The focus of this project is predicated on the idea that strengthening the capacities of NWMs will enable them to articulate priority actions on gender and participate more effectively in policy and programme processes, thereby supporting stronger implementation of gender equality commitments.

It is envisioned that the project will: a) provide support to NWMs to strengthen their role and visibility in line with their mandate within national government, b) strengthen technical capacity of NWMs to engage in formulating national and sectoral policies and plans and c) strengthen NWMs’ capacity to monitor financing practices of donors and national governments from a gender perspective and engage in multi-stakeholder dialogues to advocate for actions to address gender inequalities.

As part of the project, an assessment of NWMs will be conducted in the 5 countries. It is envisioned that these studies will contribute directly to the achievement of the project objectives by supporting a comprehensive and multi-stakeholder assessment of current capacity levels of the NWMs and identifying existing gaps. The assessments will also contribute to the knowledge sharing component of the project, generating much needed data on NWMs through primary research and supporting comparison of findings across three regions.

##### **Purpose and Proposed Methodology:**

Existing literature on NWMs in developing countries is “fragmented, piecemeal and incomplete”<sup>27</sup> with serious limitations in terms of assessing the effectiveness and

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<sup>26</sup> National women machinery includes Women Ministries, Commissions on gender equality, gender focal points within line ministries, parliamentarians and gender advocates

<sup>27</sup> McBride and Mazur 2011.

performance of these institutions. Further evidence of this constraint comes from the recent national consultations conducted to review progress on the Beijing Platform on Action which indicate clear data gaps on the functioning, effectiveness and resourcing of NWMs. One reason for the data challenges is an overall absence of primary-level research with clear conceptualization of the issues to be explored and corresponding methodology.

The overall goal of the assessment is to contribute to filling the recognized evidence gaps by using participatory methods (focus groups and individual interviews) with national stakeholders, including the NWMs themselves and their government and non-governmental partners. The study in Jordan will include a review of the achievements and challenges in NWM fulfilling their mandate, drawing out the perspectives of different actors both within and outside of the NWM. The assessment will also provide recommendations for strengthening the role of NWM to participate effectively in policy, programme and monitoring processes. Each of the national assessments will contribute to the respective country-level NWM capacity development and also support cross-country analysis to inform regional and global processes on institutional mechanisms for gender equality, including the Beijing +20 review.

The main components of the methodology are listed below.

#### **National Stakeholder Consultations (Focus Group & Individual Interview)**

- A list of questions (included below) can be used to structure the focus group and individual interview discussions.

#### **Desk Review**

- National level documents (as available) will be reviewed to contribute to the analysis and assessment.

#### **Documentation & Information Sharing**

- Jordan Office will compile all of the information into a concise, analytical report that will be shared with the programme manager to support synthesis.
- The draft overall synthesis findings will be presented at various fora, including the events related to Beijing +20.
- The final synthesis report will be shared with stakeholders.

#### **Proposed Questions:**

##### **A. Situational Analysis:**

- What constitutes the national women machinery? [Include all government bodies and institutions that make up the NWM].
- Is there a dedicated ministry for women's affairs or a commission? If not, where in the government is the NWM located?
- How and when was the NWM established? Please provide a brief history of its creation and development.
- What factors (positive or negative) have affected the NWM level of policy influence and/or access?

- What, if any, changes have happened since the NWM was created in terms of its location within government, mission, staff size, budget, etc.?
- What is the specific mandate of the NWM is and how is it governed?
- What is the total number of staff within the NWM, including women ministries, commissions, gender units within line ministries, no. of parliamentarians, etc.?
- Who are the main partners for the NWM (inside and outside government)?
- What was the annual budget of the NWM in each of the last three years? Provide additional data on the financial allocations for NWM where available.

## **B. Achievements and Gaps:**

### *Strengths/Achievements*

- What does the NWM do well and what specific results can you share about its work? What are the main criteria/factors that have supported these achievements?
- What partnerships have been particularly useful in supporting the recognized achievements in gender equality and women's rights?
- What role has the NWM played in promoting accountability of the government and in monitoring effective implementation of gender equality commitments?
- What is currently in place to support the work of the NWM (i.e. policies, legislation and/or human and financial resources)?

### *Challenges*

- What are the main weaknesses of the NWM? What are the reasons that contribute to these weaknesses (internal and external)?
- What are the existing obstacles for the NWM to fulfill its mandate?
- What is the current financial need (to deliver on mandate) for the NWM as compared to the available budget?
- What is ineffective in terms of existing partnerships? In your opinion, what are the reasons for these issues?

## **Recommendations for Future Direction**