



**EUROPEAN UNION**  
**DELEGATION TO THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN**

**Gender Action Plan III – 2021-2025**  
**Country Level Implementation Plan – Jordan**

**1. Context for EU action gender equality and women's empowerment in the country**

The situation for women in Jordan is challenging, the country ranks 131<sup>st</sup> out of 156 countries in the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index (2021) as women continue to face systematic discrimination, not least on the labour market and in the context of family law. Women are largely absent from the decision-making processes, at family, community and national levels. Violence against women is widespread. The situation for refugee women is even more challenging, notwithstanding that refugee women have come to constitute the main bread winner in many families.

Jordan's legal system is based on civil law, together with Shari'a law, and a strong influence of tribal traditions, creating specific conditions affecting women in particular. The family laws for recognised religious communities (primarily Muslims and Christians), applied in Shari'a or Church courts respectively, contain a series of provisions that are not in line with international standards in the areas of women's and children's rights. This is reflected in the reservations that Jordan maintains regarding both the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), pertaining, among others, to questions of marriage and divorce, inheritance and choice of religious affiliation.

Jordan's Comprehensive Plan on Human Rights 2015-2025 commits to reviewing national legislation and existing national development strategies to ensure women's rights, while Jordan's National Strategy for Women 2020-2025 aims to ensure a society free of "all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination", in which women and girls realise their full human rights and have equal opportunities to achieve inclusive and sustainable development.

The COVID-19 pandemic not only put on hold efforts towards gender equality, it even created additional problems for women, ranging from increased sexual and gender-based violence, to child marriages and interrupted education.

The EU Delegation conducted consultations with around 70 stakeholders, including Member States (MS), the Government (GoJ), UN agencies and civil society organisations (CSOs). They supported the implementation of the National Strategy for Women through the CLIP at all levels (including municipalities and governorates) with particular focus on young women and girls given Jordan's young population. Gender-based violence (GBV) was identified as a clear priority in Jordan, in need of prevention, protection as well as behavioural change. Investments employing women had to be encouraged. Beyond advocacy, women needed support to become agents of change themselves in order to achieve gender equality.

Women's rights remain among the EU's priorities in Jordan under the new Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategy 2021-24 and women's empowerment is mainstreamed in the three priorities of the Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2021-27. EU, MS and other partners work hand in hand with the authorities and civil society for progress in all six thematic areas of the GAP III.

## 2. Selected thematic areas of engagement and objectives

The EU and its Member States are committed to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in Jordan in all six thematic areas identified in the GAP III. They will be pursued through political dialogue and through programmes that are working with civil society organisations towards attaining the specific objectives.

- a. When it comes to **gender-based violence**, the objective is to better protect women and girls through improved legislation and its effective implementation. The Domestic Violence Law of 2008 and its 2017 amendments do not provide a clear definition of domestic violence, nor do they criminalize the perpetrator, but refer such matters to the Penal Code and to the police's Family Protection Department. The amendments mostly concern protection while the issue of criminalisation remained untouched, leaving for instance marital rape out of the Penal Code.

So-called "honour killings" continue to occur and are dealt with differently in the Penal Code than other murders. Women, whose lives are threatened for reasons related to family honour, are often incarcerated under the Crime Prevention Law with the argument that they will be protected in custody. This administrative detention is a prerogative of the Governors without warrant or judicial oversight. The women are unable to petition for their own release and prison officials can refuse the release if the woman's life is deemed in danger, resulting in some women staying in detention for several years.

The COVID-19 crisis, with long lockdowns and curfews in Jordan, increased the incidence of domestic violence, as well as online sextortion and paedophilia.

Programmes by the EU and MS work in partnership with civil society organisations and duty bearers to enhance awareness about GBV, promote legislation and implementation that protect victims, and offer GBV protection.

- b. Jordan prepared a national strategy for **sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)** but it is not yet implemented. Women's access to healthcare, including sexual and reproductive care, is still limited in practice, focusing on RH and not sexual rights, and targeted to married women only. Further challenges include sociocultural norms, lack of safe transportation options and of information and knowledge on where to seek care. Some MS try to address the information gap by working with civil society to raise awareness about SRHR and to provide support to authorities in order to improve the legal framework and enhance its implementation.
- c. Women's **economic and social empowerment** in Jordan is lagging behind the rest of the region, as well as globally. Women's participation in the labour force was just 14.4% in 2020, despite high participation rates of women in the tertiary education sector (55%), indicating a wealth of underutilised talent in the country. Beyond the lack of job opportunities, specific obstacles facing women in the labour market range from issues of safe and suitable transportation, lack of child care options, workplace discrimination and conservative family values. Jordan's National Economic Development Agenda for 2025 states an ambitious target of 25% labour participation rate for women. Women's social empowerment is further hampered by negative stereotyping and marginalization in the public sphere.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the unpaid care workload has increased on women as established gender roles assign to women the caretaking activities, while their professional or leisure activities had to be sacrificed.

The EU is keen to support growth that is more inclusive of women. There is huge untapped potential in the highly educated women currently outside the workforce. EU support to the private sector already contributed to policy changes and to a number of success stories in terms of support to start-ups or innovation policy.

- d. Jordan's latest plans to modernise the political system include the improvement of women's **political participation and leadership**. Although the 2020 legislative elections saw a record number of women candidates, voter turnout among women was significantly lower than among men and in the end no woman was elected outside the allocated quota seats, contrary to previous elections. The situation is slightly better at the level of local councils.

The EU and MS support democratisation and women's political empowerment through dedicated programmes as well as high level political dialogue, including with the Interministerial Committee on Women (IMC).

- e. The Jordan National Action Plan on **Women, Peace & Security (JONAP)** for the years 2018-2021 is a comprehensive national framework to promote equal participation and full involvement of women in efforts for maintaining and promoting peace and security. It includes participation of women in preventing radicalisation and violent extremism, awareness raising and GBV-related prosecutions.
- f. The **green transition and digital transformation** provide opportunities for women in Jordan to take leadership, including through the media, and enhance economic participation by ensuring their inclusion in digital financial services. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the inequalities linked to access to online services and general digital literacy, with poor, older, rural and refugee women suffering particularly.

### 3. Targeted action(s) supporting gender equality and women's empowerment

- a. Freedom from all forms of gender based violence

Ongoing EU-funded programmed PAVE (Policies Against Violence) financed through the EIDHR (€479,964) and implemented by the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung (2021-2024), aims to improve the political, legal, and socio-cultural environment for labour market participation of women with a particular emphasis on gender discrimination and GBV.

Another EU-funded programme (CSO-LA, €400,000) named "Putting Words into Actions for the Elimination of SGBV", implemented by the Princess Taghrid Institute (2020-2022), works on prevention in terms of identifying and confronting the root causes that lead to sexual violence while implementing a gendered approach to address attitudes rooted in discrimination, negative power dynamics and gender inequality within the community. The second aim of the programme is to work on protection in terms of implementing strategies designed to protect and support survivors.

The EU Regional Trust Fund for Syria (MADAD) implemented a programme with targeted outputs on tackling social practices that normalise GBV. A new programme, implemented by AECID, will include a component to improve access to GBV prevention and protection services for refugees and host communities. The project will reinforce CSOs' role as service providers in the health, psychosocial and legal areas as well as the public-private referral mechanisms. The second component of this programme will be implemented by GIZ and will tackle police reforms, capacity building and gender sensitisation on gendered crime prevention and case management.

An EU project for children's rights (€329,000, 2020-2023) aims to prevent early marriage by allowing the children to raise their voices and express themselves through the art of puppetry.

NL supports (JOD 1,393,822) the King Hussein Foundation to promote gender equality and women's empowerment through 1) Knowledge Management 2) Advocacy and Awareness and 3) Capacity Development. The goal is to improve Community Based Organisations' institutional capacity to handle victims of GBV, and increase public understanding of existing gender-protection systems, laws, available resources and institutions. NL also supports several INGOs and civil society organisations to provide GBV services. The Power of Voices partnerships will work across Jordan with national partners to increase GBV awareness and enhance service delivery. The PROSPECTS partnership supported UNHCR to train 1280 Government officials in support of the expansion of Government based protection systems in both child protection and GBV.

FR supports a project implemented by the NGO Justice center for legal aid (JCLA) that aims to promote the culture of legal aid among young Jordanian lawyers through the provision of training for students and young law graduates. As part of this project, 70% of indirect beneficiaries are vulnerable women who need legal aid, particularly to be represented before the Shari'a Court.

**b. Promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights**

DK is funding the Danish Arab Partnership Programme (DAPP), which is implemented in four countries and supports projects that promote human rights, gender equality and free media in Jordan. The current phase covers 2017-2022 and a new phase is currently under preparations for 2022-2027. Among other objectives, the programme aims to prevent GBV and enhance SRHR in Jordan through improved legislation and practice, in partnership with the government and civil society organisations.

NL supports ShareNet Jordan Hub which provided support to the Higher Population Council while preparing the National SRHR strategy. NL will further support INGOs to mobilise the power of youth and CSOs to fight for greater freedom of choice and respect for SRHR.

**c. Strengthening of economic and social rights and empowerment of women and girls**

The EU supports protection and prevention systems, policies and services for boys, girls, men and women in Jordan through EUTF MADAD (€4 million implemented by AECID and another €4 million implemented by GIZ for 43 months from 09/2021) focusing on the provision of legal, medical and psychosocial services, as well as on building policing capacity, behavioural change and gender sensitivity.

The EU project "Women promoting democracy and women's rights in Ajloun, Irbid and Mafraq" (2020-2022) is implemented by Alianza por la Solidaridad (APS) and Al Hayat-RASED. The project aims at promoting equality and fostering non-violence, focusing on strengthening the capacities of women and institutions to work for the recognition and exercise of women's rights and prevent violence.

NL supports JoWomenomics organisation (JOD 682,467, 2019-22) to create a new independent nonpartisan think tank to establish a local resource committed to holistic, evidence-based approaches to tackling gender inequality in the labour force in Jordan.

FR supports (€291,100) the CSO "Sadaqa" to advance women's labour rights in Jordan by advocating for equality in law, building capability to enabling equal access to the labour force through the provision of child day-cares.

d. Advancement of participation and leadership

The EU supports several programmes aiming to enhance women's leadership. The Qararuna project (EU €2 million + ES €2 million) fosters the development of active CSOs, in the promotion of political participation, advocacy, electoral observation, and parliamentary monitoring, with a focus on women and youth.

A project designed to empower civil society through media is financed from the EIDHR (€779,594) and implemented by the Community Media Network (2018-2021). It aims to strengthen the role of civil society in promoting human rights and democratic reform, consolidating political participation and representation and having particular regard to women's rights.

Another project, implemented by KVINFO (and co-funded by EU and DK) titled "Accelerating gender equality locally" with a sub-granting scheme (€400,000) promotes gender equality and women's rights through a bottom-up approach and from a democratic development perspective by assessing, developing and monitoring the capacities and capabilities of CSOs and local authorities to engage in dialogue on how to overcome all forms of discrimination against women including barriers to women's equal status and leadership.

DE helps to build capacities of female council members and trained 100 potential female candidates for local elections through the project "Strengthening Women in Decision-Making in the Middle East" (LEAD). The Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation works on strengthening the political participation of youth and women, e.g. in the context of the upcoming decentralized elections; while the Konrad Adenauer Foundation organises a new series of workshops entitled "women's voices" with young women from East Amman. The Deutsche Welle Akademie trains female journalists in the framework of a regional project.

NL supports the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) to enable political and civic actors to be able to collaborate, influence and participate in legitimate, transparent and accountable political processes. NIMD will be working on civil society capacity strengthening, and investing in aspiring young and women leaders.

e. Integration of the Women, peace and security agenda

The multi-donor UN Women pooled fund project (11 million USD) entitled "Implementing the Jordan National Action Plan on Women, Peace & Security (JONAP) for the implementation of UNSCR 1325" – funded by CAN, ES, FI, NO, UK – is going to continue; the planning of JONAP phase II for 2022-2025 is in the national consultation phase. It is intended to 1) support and strengthen Jordanian government and stakeholders to implement the country's WPS commitments and 2) contribute to Jordan's stability and security through the increased and meaningful participation of youth and women to maintain peace and security and 3) address gender-specific needs in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic including widely spread GBV and domestic violence.

f. Harnessing the challenges and opportunities of the green transition and digital transformation

The EU supports women and girls in online media (€166,667) by contributing to the promotion of positive gender roles among women and girls in the (online) media in Jordan through strengthening their voice and participation in public affairs.

NL supports Sowt Podcasts (JOD 400,498) to create a healthier media ecosystem in Jordan, with discussions on journalism, gender equality, labour issues, etc. Moreover, the project aims to build community and provide safe spaces for further discussion and includes a

training component in audio journalism. DK (through International Media Support and DAPP) also supports Sowt Podcasts to produce critical and independent audio content for Arabic speakers that explores topics rarely discussed in the Jordanian society, including issues pertaining to women's rights and taboos in the region.

#### **4. Engage in dialogue for gender equality and women empowerment**

The EU co-chairs, along with UN Women and the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW), the high-level Gender Partners' Coordination Group (GPCG), where donors and like-minded countries participate. Its regular meetings provide for in-depth dialogue and advocacy messages developed to advance in key areas related to women's rights and gender equality. The GPCG has focused in the past two years on addressing GBV, economic participation and political representation in parliamentary and local elections. The EU and MS have provided valuable inputs on policies that should be tackled through a gender lens, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic; particularly in education and the social protection sectors.

The Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) for Women's Empowerment was established in 2015 with a mission to provide leadership, coordination and accountability on achieving commitments related to women's rights within the implementation of strategic frameworks. The IMC structure is at higher policy level, with the participation of the Secretary General of the JNCW, and coordinates with a network of gender focal points in ministries and other government institutions.

The EU Human Rights Working Group meets with relevant stakeholders on a regular basis (at least twice a year). The CSO roadmap foresees regular dialogue with CSOs including on gender equality, without specifying a periodicity.

#### **5. Outreach and other communication / public diplomacy activities**

The EU traditionally marks International Women's Day in Jordan and organises campaigns and events, together with MS and other partners, during the 16 days of activism on violence against women.

#### **6. Technical Facility and/or financial resources allocated to support GAP III implementation**

The EU has conducted a gender country analysis during the transition between GAP II and GAP III. The analysis revolved around governance and power structures in Jordan, as well as the socio-economic environment in the country. Sub-sectors under governance included gender activism, political advocacy and social norms and structural barriers, while under the social sector the analysis involved education, health, GBV, access to justice and economic participation, including in the contexts of food security and climate change.

The EU has also implemented four gender and GAP III training seminars for the programme managers in charge of social protection, political participation and economic participation, as well as to the Administration Section staff and the secretaries of the Cooperation Section.

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