



جمعية النساء العربيات في الأردن
Arab Women Organization of Jordan



COUNTRY GENDER PROFILE

IN JORDAN



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FINAL REPORT

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Contract No. : **EU Gender Country Profile in Jordan (ref. no. CSO-LA/2019/412-115)**

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List of Acronyms

AWO	Arab Women Organisation
CBJ	Central Bank of Jordan
CDHRI	Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
WB	World Bank
COVID 19	Corona Virus Disease
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EDP	Executive Development Programmes
EU	European Union
GAM	Greater Amman Municipality
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women Empowerment
GGGI	Global Gender Gap Index
GoJ	Government of Jordan
IEC	Independent Elections Commission
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMC	Inter-Ministerial Committee for Women's Empowerment
JCP	Jordan Competitiveness Project
JD	Jordanian Dinar
JIC	Jordan Investment Commission
JNCW	Jordanian National Commission for Women
JONAP	Jordanian National Action Plan
JRP	Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis
VNR	Voluntary National Review
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Query
LMI	Lower Middle-Income
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOSD	Ministry of Social Development
MSE	Micro and Small Enterprises
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSW	National Strategy for Women
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
PSL	Personal Status Law
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
VTC	Vocational Training Corporation
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN TIP	UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNSCR 1325	UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security

Acknowledgment

The Arab Women Organization of Jordan (AWO) and the Arab Hydrology Alliance (AHA) would like to thank everyone who had participated in producing the Country Gender Profile (CGP) in Jordan.

Special thanks go to the renowned gender expert, Ms. Afef Tlili, who produced the CGP report and led the training for the Staff in the EU Delegation in Amman.

Special thanks go to Mr. Peter Laban, who added to the CGP report and contributed to the in-depth analysis.

AWO & AHA owe special thanks to gender experts, Ms. Manal Al-Taleb and Mr. Suhaib Khamaiseh of AWO who exerted huge efforts for collecting data from the informants and making it available to the two leaders of the team of gender experts, as their role was crucial for collecting the data. Thanks go to Ms. Rubi Assad and Ms. Diana Bazadough of AHA who assisted in communicating with and collecting data from selected stakeholders and representatives of civil society organizations.

The CGP in Jordan was enriched with the diversity of experiences, backgrounds and professional fields of the interviewed as well as the cultural diversity of the team of the gender experts.

On Behalf of the Government of Jordan, H.E. Ayman Al Mufleh, the Minister of Social Development, assured Jordan's commitment to the values, principles and approaches of achieving and supporting Gender Equality and Women Empowerment as stated in Goal 5 of the SDGs.

"In line with progress in Gender Equality & Women Empowerment, Jordan will continue addressing issues related to the enforcement of social justice and women's rights. We will work to expand equal opportunities between men and women and continue mainstreaming gender in national development plans and strategies"

H.E. Ayman Al Mufleh, the Minister of Social Development of Jordan

Executive Summary

In a democratic and inclusive governance system, every citizen is able to contribute to the development planning and implementation processes, based on his own capacities and views.

When it comes to Jordan, women agency and leadership in social, economic and political fields is low, despite the high female literacy rate. Thus, Jordanian women are not able to become influent in the power circles or effective development partners. Women are excluded from the decision-making processes, at personal, family, community and national levels. They do not fully enjoy equitable citizenship experience and ownership of the progress initiatives.

COVID-19 crisis has disclosed that gender disparities in Jordan are significant in all sectors. Women participation in governance and power structures is irrelevant, especially in politics and economic sectors. The applied approaches by the law have shown their limits as Jordan gender index is still one of the lowest in MENA. This is because women's knowledge about the legal assets and access to justice is low, and the applicability of juridical arsenal and the law enforcement are weak. The lack of information due to knowledge limitation is undermining women ability to evaluate the opportunities and make the best possible choices for their academic, political and professional careers. The majority of our informants stressed on the particular need of rural women to know more about the available resources taking into consideration their fewer educational background and their potential geographical and social isolation.

Women in Jordan achieved major progress in accessing education and health services, but much less in reaching services of strategic necessities, employment and social security. These services are most probably considered as a secondary necessity, as the need is not on a frequent or daily basis. The entrance to identified services is more complicated with the actual digitalisation trends.

COVID-19 crisis has also disclosed that the access of poor, older, rural and refugee women to online services is limited. These vulnerable female groups suffer from increased digital illiteracy, high cost of electronic devices as tablets, computers and smart phones and also the unreliable quality of internet services. With the prolonged COVID-19 immobility procedures, women are subject to more domestic violence. This is added to common GBV physical abuse, psychological offense, political violence, sexual harassment in transport, public and professional spaces, rape, bullying and other forms of violence. GBV survivors are stigmatised, which worsen the guilt and shame feelings, and significantly lowers women self-esteem.

With COVID-19 pandemic, the unpaid care workload has increased on women, with established gender roles assign to women the caretaking activities, so professional or leisure activities are considered optional. Women spend much more time than men on unpaid household tasks that compete and exceed their professional activities.

The educational accomplishment for women in Jordan is not reflected over to the job force. Jordan has one of the world's lowest rates of women participating in the workforce at 14.4 %, in 2020.

Women rights organizations (WROs) had already identified most of the problems that roll back gender equality. While these problems are formidable, they are surmountable. Women are leading the way, and can be more effective when buoyed by international support. They identified the way forward including new strategies that focus on enacting and enforcing legislation, increasing women in the decision-making positions by 50% by 2030, building civic spaces, and creating advocacy campaigns against violence and misinterpretations of Sharia Law while building international partnerships.

This, needs directing more funding to women's rights organizations in Jordan.

Being aware of the fact that the donor community has a special responsibility to foster Jordan gender agenda, there are special recommendations to the European Union Delegation, as follows:

Strategic level

- Promote **citizenship** experience for all to be an inclusive enabling asset for gender equality;
- Specifically target **men, religious and education institutions** in the design and implementation of programmes/projects activities relevant to gender equality;
- Enhance **sustainable partnership with empowered national media**, after benefitting appropriate capacities building on gender sensitivity.

Operational level

- Conduct a gender assessment and a gender audit to the EU programmes in Jordan, at mid-term and ex-post levels;
- Review applied gender sensitive indicators of EU interventions to specifically highlight the improved women agency based on i) knowledge of available resources, as personal assets and common resources, ii) Processes and means to access to different resources, including gender-based violence free environment, access to information, access to finance and physical access, and iii) control over assets namely time, finance/money and power to change.
- Engage national debate on gender through Strategic Taiex mission including all relevant stakeholders and specifically men, religious institutions and tribes;
- Provide budget support to national sectoral policies promoting the gender equality, including education and cultural sectors
- Promote entrepreneurship and innovative start-ups for the transport sector through incentives and grants to technological gender sensitive solutions (i.e.: dedicated applications for safe transport).

1. GOVERNANCE, POWER STRUCTURES AND GENDER

1.1. Politics and gender

Jordanian women participation in the public life towards power circles influence is still not significant. This is translated with little women involvement in politics and governance schemes as to be an increasingly challenging gender issue, despite the higher policy to propel women forward in decision-making at all levels: legislative, executive, and judicial¹. Despite steady but slow progress, women remain under-represented in the government. In 2019, women represented 1.2% of legislators, senior officials, and managers, 15% in the Cabinet and 20% at the diplomacy - mainly at lower-level positions, as women account for only 11% of ambassadors. The 2018 Women in Parliament Index ranks Jordan 129 out of 193 countries, women represented 12% of Parliament Members MPs in both the upper and lower houses of Parliament². Participation in the Senate and in the Council of Ministers has mostly stalled at low age over the last decade. Women's participation in the judiciary has increased, but they remain clustered in lower-level positions and there are no female judges in the Sharia Courts. Women represent 34% of professional union membership but make up only 8% of professional union boards. Women's participation is particularly low in chambers of commerce (0.5%) and chambers of industry (8%)³. Women account for 35.5 % of membership in political parties, compared with 64.5 % for men. The study informants highlighted the missed opportunity to achieve an inclusive governance scheme by excluding half of the society, making the GoJ efforts towards democracy, gender equal access to power - hence all citizens active participation - rather a marketing image of the country especially dedicated to donors.

The higher authorities of Jordan attribute increasing attention to the women involvement in politics as a clear indicator of the country progress in democracy, human and women's rights. This helps the state to meet the inclusive development agenda, and to upgrade its international image.

In fact, the strategic push forward women effective involvement in public and political grounds is mainly enacted by the evolved legal framework that follows Jordan progress and democratic transition of 1989. Women implication in politics and influence pools has been encouraged, though progressively, by legal foundations in force in Jordan, mainly the Constitution of 1952 (article 6 and article 22)⁴ and the National Charter of 1990 (article 4, article 8 and Chapter 2, third Article, entitled 'Guarantees of the Democratic Approach', Section 4)⁵. The real question remains on the impact of legislation, institutions and policies on all aspects of the daily life of the Jordanian female citizen - being positive or negative.

The actual hindrances to women's agency are determined formally by legal setting and informally through social norms. Legal rights, often reflecting social norms, are codified in legislative frameworks, implemented by formal institutions and mostly impact personal freedoms. Social norms are based on a combination of religious and non-religious factors, either self-determined or imposed by family and tribes' pressure, are enforced by informal institutions that define the acceptable choices to women. The biased delivery of public services is further reinforcing the unfriendly environment, which contravenes legal affectivity and limits access to economic assets hence to participation in policy development⁶.

¹ <https://journals.openedition.org/ema/3033#tocto1n2>

² <http://dosweb.dos.gov.jo/jordanian-womens-report-on-the-occasion-of-the-international-womens-day-statistical-perspective/>

³ <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/jsf-calls-increase-women-industry-commerce-chambers>

⁴ AWO Substantive Equality and Non-Discrimination in Jordan, Shadow report to CEDAW
https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/JOR/INT_CEDAW_NGO_JOR_51_9260_E.pdf

⁵ <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/rbas/doc/Gender%20Justice/English/Full%20reports/Jordan%20Country%20Assessment%20-%20English.pdf>

⁶ <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/16706/ACS51580WP0P130ox0379850B00PUBLIC0.txt?sequence=2&isAllowed=y>

Jordanian women long struggle towards an effective participation in politics and decision-making processes is still to be held, in particular following the recent election of November 2020 to elect the 19th House of Representatives.

1.1.1. Evolving geopolitics and national movements

This report targets to place the gender profile in the context of political, social and power systems in Jordan, so to understand the dynamics behind gender equality and women empowerment (GEWE) improvements or hinders. It is then relevant to highlight that women emancipation in Jordan has been consequent to effervescent regional geopolitics and emerged national and social movements progressively open to female involvement, which helped early women awareness and activism on social, economic and political rights⁷. Until the end of the Forties of 20th century, women had no presence in public and political life, according to social norms but also as a result to limited education and access to economic opportunities ahead with the tribal nature of Jordanian society that refused to give a political role for women⁸. The very primarily foundations of Jordanian political activity had no special attention being paid to women, pushing nascent women activism towards 'basic' society needs back then - education and health care in a social welfare regard aside concrete political dimension.

These first feminist movements led to a conscious and prominent structuring of gender action framework, hence relevant national organisations were established mainly the “Organisation of Social Women’s Welfare” in 1944 and the “Women’s Union Association” in 1945. It is important to mention that the war of 1948⁹ and the subsequent Palestinian migration to Jordan has mobilised women movement but steered them rather towards welfare actions. It was only by early Fifties that women took steps towards advocacy on their political rights mainly through female membership in the political parties, but also activism in public. The women demonstrations, campaigns and lobbying led to adoption of first amendments to the election law in 1955 enacting women right to vote¹⁰. Though of most importance towards women political involvement in practice, this law is discriminatory towards illiterate women withheld their right to vote in spite of illiterate male co-citizens enjoying it.

The concern of effective women participation was increasing, and became the flagship of the 'Arab's Woman Union' established in 1954 but rapidly dissolved three years later upon the Martial Law declaration. In fact, in 1957 Jordan went through a coup d'état and the general political situation was in turmoil, all political parties and initiatives has been suspended. Furthermore, the loss of the West Bank to Israel in 1967 led to the declaration of a State of Emergency eliminating any prospects of political action, whether for men or women.

The Arab Israeli war of 1967, Al Karameh Battle in 1968, and the war of 1973 has raised the general nationalism and political awareness, women movements and involvement in public affairs became prominent mainly in cities and in the Palestinian refugee camps. In 1974, Jordanian women obtained the right to stand for elections, almost two decades after Egypt (1956) and Lebanon (1957)¹¹. In 1978, the National Consultative Council comprised 9 women out of 190 appointed members, but the real women integration at high level power systems started in 1979 by the designation of the first female Minister, continued by the Municipalities Law of 1982¹² giving female citizens the right to vote.

Starting late Eighties, the GoJ was pushed to more attention to women’s rights, conditions and political effective participation, in line with international consciousness and mobilisation towards

⁷ Al Shalabi Jamal, “The Movement towards Democracy and Freedom of the Press in Jordan”, op.cit., p. 30.

⁸ <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/jordan/docs/Poverty/UNDP%20Socio%20economic%20Inequality%20in%20Jordan%20English.pdf>

⁹ Israel defeated military coalition of Arab states <https://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/historiography-1948-wars.html>

¹⁰ <https://journals.openedition.org/ema/3033>

¹¹ <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/women-political-representation-arab-region>

¹² <https://cpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/blogs.gwu.edu/dist/6/1613/files/2018/11/CapstoneFinal.DecentralizationJordan-1twgwua.pdf>

gender equality, aside with growing national gender trends. Nevertheless, the challenge persists, that of the effective participation of women in decision-making processes and the real influence towards change regarding gender and citizenship experience. This report analyses the aspects of the effective gender gap in the governance processes, and the real weight of women in decision-making.

1.1.2. Challenging governance process

The climate of politics in Jordan, tight to its regional tense environment, has not been very auspicious to a prominent citizenship experience that fosters both men and women engagement and influence in different governance schemes. It could be understood that the progress and openness towards women participation has been fairly due to policy makers own initiative then a common consciousness and gender activism, which more probably explains the limited awareness on gender equality issues by most KIG, even women themselves and the most influential informants.

Additionally, several informants believe that the weak governance process is a limitation to women's ascension in leadership positions, which in turn reduces governmental engagement towards GEWE. the persistent corruption, the institutional weakness and the limited CSOs technical and financial capacities are the major facts of the Jordan governance scheme, which is both a root cause and a consequence of gender inequality, in a vicious continuous circle. Indeed, most informants agree on the undeniable fact that gender inequality and corruption are closely inter-linked. Hence, Jordan is missing a considerable opportunity to achieve inclusive growth as gender inequalities weaken good governance, sustainable development and poverty alleviation. Countries advanced in women's empowerment and gender equality witness lower levels of corruption over time¹³.

The country's political environment is characterised by various, often overlapping cleavages: tribes' competitiveness, loyalists vs. opposition, Islamists vs. secularists, etc. The elections are often a contest between tribal leaders, establishment figures and businessmen. Women find themselves either candidates of the most conservative wings, potentially not to pledge for what has been their own socio-political values, or a progressive independent candidate with fewer chances to win - anyway subject to political and social harassment. The governance system is being strongly led by tribes, limiting women access to power spheres as they cannot nominate themselves a candidate unless her tribe's agreement. Men are more likely to overcome this tribal condition, based on their economic and logistical independence, to candidate in a different location or to finance their electoral campaigns.

As elsewhere, the conservative movements, being very active in power systems, induce less women emancipation and access to high control positions. In Jordan, the Islamic Action Front (IAF), an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood Organisation, reject CEDAW, women empowerment, gender equality and denies female politics¹⁴. This Islamist party, historically the most powerful in Jordan, run for last elections despite government ban¹⁵ under the National Reform Coalition named 'Islah' that united Islamists with Christians, Circassians and women. Though anticipated it would perform poorly in the elections, IAF secured 13 seats in parliament down from 16 seats previously. On the other hand, progressive wings failed to gain considerable representation in the parliament, believed to be a harsh lesson for Jordan's civil forces, which will have to reassess their ability to defend their presence on the political scene¹⁶.

Given the trouble process of 2020 legislature: COVID-19 and related severe public health crisis, lockdown and economic turbulence, newly open-list electoral system and the random online campaigns, the existing problems with the way Jordan elects its legislature is further exacerbated.

¹³ <https://www.transparency.org/en/publications/policy-position-01-2014-gender-equality-and-corruption-what-are-the-linkage#>

¹⁴ <https://www.cmi.no/publications/3521-islamists-in-jordan>

¹⁵ <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/jordan-muslim-brotherhood-elections-defying-ban-attempts>. The decision by Jordan's Court of Cassation, issued on 15 July, came four years after the country had legalised a splinter group and closed the offices of the main Muslim Brotherhood organisation, claiming it was not licensed following 2014 law.

¹⁶ <https://thearabweekly.com/jordanian-vote-highlights-tribal-factor-political-parties-weaknesses>

The parliament is more divided and void of united political blocs that are far from defending gender equalities and agenda. One woman entered the House of Representatives beyond the 15-seat quota.

In this shortened political ecosystem, one former female deputy explained that women face systematic growing challenges to win a parliament seat, unlike male candidates, due to absent political reforms, to start with the electoral law, the political actors understanding of gender politics, the elections transparency and the corrupted political finance. Women representation in the electoral lists is being intentionally reduced, as to limit female seats to the assigned quota, a clear expression of male resistance to women ascension in the leadership positions to maintain men historical dominance on the public issues. Female politics are rarely supported by parties, tribes, lobbyists, influencers, businesses and media. Elected females are subject to higher levels of media scrutiny than male colleagues. Gender focus NGOs claim the legal constraints to bring backing to women candidature, so the legislature is kept a male domain.

Within parliament, the absence of gender targets or quotas for leadership posts induce women to be often excluded from top management positions, instead naturally lowered to soft portfolios. The same applies for the local councils, the political executive, or within the Independent Elections Commission (IEC). Rarely are these types of measures articulated or applied within political party manifestos or activities¹⁷.

The female voice wouldn't impact debates and voices as long as a 'critical mass' of at least 30% is reached. Two gender related parliamentary committees are created, one for Women and Family Affairs and another for Women's Caucus, both very shy and almost inefficient. One informant described them as unprofessional since they miss a holistic vision towards gender equality, do not set goals and measurable indicators to assess gender parity, and do not appropriately consider gender mainstreaming in the national and sectoral strategies and action plans. The women's caucus, though a support tool for female MPs, do not usually unify its members around gender policy goals.

The government has made some steps to enhance women participation, mostly at declarations level. The reality is that the political will is questionable. The decisions are not up to the real challenges and do not tackle a radical reform of the political system and a revolutionary change to the patriarchal socio-political arrangement. Within this established gender repellent ecosystem, women right to equitable and peaceful access to politics and leadership remains theoretical.

1.1.3. Controversial gender activism

The consultations held at both high and grassroots levels revealed that the gender activism in Jordan is rather a stigma near to 'disgrace' than a recognised and honourable engagement. This finds its roots essentially in the confusion over gender/human rights norms generally misunderstood and perceived as in contradiction with the social values of Jordan conservative society. It was made clear that the gender topic is controversial and not well known even for the gender defenders themselves, i.e.: NGOs, the gender focal points at public administration, experts and professionals. Gender is not attractive subject to experts and researchers, one of our informants - an expert on scientific fields - expressed hesitation near to rejection to operate on women affairs, which would undermine his professional career and lower his proficiency level. Only few informants were able to properly define the gender concept and the various related issues, but most of the interviews confirmed the little knowledge about the need or usefulness of the advocacy towards women's rights and participation in a holistic approach of human rights and inclusive governance.

Apart very few exceptions, the majority of informants were confused about the gender term itself - judged unclear and complex - being often simplified to a 'woman' meaning. As reported by USAID¹⁸, the usual adopted Arabic translation 'al nawaa al ijtimai' does not reflect the conceptual meaning of gender, so institutions especially operating at grassroots levels face a significant complexity to

¹⁷ Women's political participation in Jordan, The Jordanian National Commission for Women, 2018.

¹⁸ https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00WDSP.pdf

explain the term to their counterparts, hence trend to popularise the gender concept -though at the limit of reducing it - to 'women' simple wording. The same simplification is applied to the gender concept, usually translated in Arabic to 'al jandara', which is believed to bring additional confusion and even stigma, according to several informants, seen as introduced 'western' wording that targets a forced change in the conservative social structure of the country.

Accordingly, several informants revealed the need to 'hide' the gender background of their interventions in order to get accepted by different social groups, especially the most conservative ones. It was disclosed that the 'reputation' of gender and human rights activism is bad, popularly associated to 'introduced' wrong values unfit with the Jordanian society that hold a hidden agenda to upside cultural norms, to defeat family values and even to assault the holy - according to the most radical ones. In the absence of iconic gender defenders or emblematic social change figures, the scepticism over human and gender rights persists, especially with an increasing of violent radicalisation tendencies in the region and in the country that openly adopt an adverse discourse against women¹⁹. The majority of respondents expressed serious concerns on the risks that "radicalisation" poses to women, much more than men.

1.1.4. Disrupted political advocacy for gender participation

The growing negative attitude towards gender activism explains why it is dissociated from any other kind of social activism and political engagement, mainly to avoid verbal and even physical violence. The stigma attributed to gender activism gets more severe when inside political sphere, braking efforts to shift the gender from social activism to a higher policy influence towards change. The bullying against women is a growing phenomenon in Jordan, especially when it comes to women engaged in political activities.

In the recent legislature of 2020, 1 out of 3 female candidates to Parliament faced cyberbullying²⁰, harassment and death threats. Henceforth the political violence, in its direct or indirect forms and gender-based discrimination, has detrimental effects on the participation and presence of women in decision-making processes as a critical factor to severely hinder women and girls wish and willing to participate in the electoral process mainly as a candidate, but also as a supporter or activist for a party or candidate. Two of the study young female experts expressed they don't dare engaging in politics or public activism for gender participation, being afraid of the 'heavy consequences' on personal aspects, despite their relevant professional and the openness of their families. Most informants agreed on the very dangerous aspects of the bullying against women engaged in politics, varying from verbal to physical brutality: exclusion, harassment, bullying or physical attacks, potentially enlarged to personal and professional spheres.

It becomes obvious that the political violence that face Jordanian women is a real threat to the democratic exercise itself, one more than to the citizenship experience to both men and women - as a substantial part of the society being prevented from active involvement in the governance process, considering consequent potential loss of competences and opportunities for all at levels of socio-economic wellbeing, social cohesion and peace building. One of our informants, a former female parliament member, shared serious concerns about the real government intentions to engage needed reforms to the electoral process as a whole, and to combat the harassment against women mainly in the political life. She revealed the important input of female deputies to the service of citizens, as they are closer to their electorate, much less than to the legislative aspects and rarely to the gender issues. This is because women empowerment is not an attractive topic to the constituent who cares more about the improvement of his/her livelihood conditions. The elected women noteworthy performance is indeed instrumental in shifting negative perceptions about women in leadership, inspiring and motivating other women to pursue political involvement and careers.

¹⁹ <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5881d4e44.pdf>

²⁰ <https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/1-3-women-parliamentary-candidates-face-cyberbullying-%E2%80%94-study>

In Jordan, GEWE is usually considered an elitist topic tailored to upper society issues, spoken as complicated discourses limited to refined intellectual circles. The usual distant speech of the politicians engaged for gender leadership didn't get upgraded to a convincing level, and kept the voter uninterested and leery towards women condition. Political parties do not assign required attention to the advocacy on gender issues, mainly to avoid critical topics near to social taboos that, in the best cases, wouldn't attract much electors. Raising such controversial subject could also lead to what could be judged unnecessary challenges within a traditionalist socio-political environment. As long as political party leadership positions are all male dominated, gender issues wouldn't be a top priority issue to raise especially in a continuous race to win seats. It seems that women secondary position in the Parties hierarchy is not an asset to promote women active participation and a serious advocacy for gender rights. It is also familiar that political parties fail to support female politicians.

Apart rare champions, female politicians do not stand for needed reforms towards gender leadership, avoiding this troublesome issue that do not attract votes but raises serious tensions instead - mainly with the tribes and parties that female deputies represent. Some informants reported the repeated and unpunished gender-based violence inside the parliament that reveals much of the contested women participation, as one male deputy publicly humiliated his female colleague requesting her to remain at 'their normal place, the house and take care of her husband' questioning the laws that allowed women an illegitimate access to power control positions. This parliamentary violence is trusted to be another shutter to female voice, as it creates a serious challenge to democracy, in addition to being a blatant violation to human rights²¹.

1.1.5. Heavy social norms and cultural beliefs

Persistent religious constraints

Many informants explained the little space offered to women in the public affairs management by the religious interpretations that are understood to generate the society patriarchal rules under a specific masculine cultural code. Islam is the official religion of the State, around 93% of the population are Muslims²². Despite popular belief, Islamic religion, through the Quran and Hadith, called for the equality between women and men in rights and duties, based on "as for those who lead a righteous life, male or female, while believing, they enter Paradise; without the slightest injustice" (Surat Al Nesa, verse 124). Gender roles in Islam are simultaneously distinguished by two Quranic concepts: spiritual equality and the percept that women are meant to exemplify femininity, and men masculinity²³. Advancing the complementarity of functions: (Sūrat al-Dhāriyāt, 51:49), the cultural code has developed the gender roles to concept that limits the natural space of women to the household level.

In Jordan as in the most of Islamic countries, women emancipation still depends on different scholars' readings of the Islamic references. Within the Muslim community, feminists refer to Islamic doctrine to pledge for women's rights highlighting the teachings of equality in Islam. To question patriarchal interpretations, progressive scholars rely on the Quran, the hadith and the lives of prominent women in the early period of Muslim history as evidence. Where conservatives have seen evidence that existing gender asymmetries are divinely ordained, feminists have seen more egalitarian ideals in early Islam. Liberal Muslims have urged that *ijtihad*, a form of critical thinking, be used to develop a more progressive form of Islam with respect to the status of women. Women emancipation rights has been inhibited by religious extremist groups that use the disempowerment of women as a political agenda. In view of the recent radical wave of the Jordan society²⁴, some

²¹ <https://journals.ju.edu.jo/DirasatHum/article/download/104355/11175>

²² <http://www.jordanembassyus.org/page/culture-and-religion#:~:text=Jordan%20is%20a%20tolerant%2C%20Islamic,the%20highest%20age%20of%20Muslims.>

²³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_Islam#cite_note-29

²⁴ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315827598_The_Jihad_in_Jordan_Drivers_of_Radicalization_into_Violent_Extremism_in_Jordan

informants confirmed that discriminatory practices persist and expand, finding their roots in recognised Islamic references, especially the Sharia law²⁵.

Most of deniers of gender equality and implication in public affairs refer to, though contrasted, Islamic references as the hadith "A people who make a woman their ruler will never be successful"²⁶ or the Islamic law regarding inheritance or testimony. Jordan prejudice regulation provides smaller inheritance shares, daughters generally receive only half the inheritance of the sons²⁷. Women are judged not financial responsible for their households. A testimony of a woman is worth half of a man's testimony²⁸. This further established the common understanding of the minor status assigned to women, believed unable to handle public affairs management and political responsibilities.

Discriminatory tribal influence

The decision-making process in Jordan is heavily dominated by the tribal authority that proceeds over Political Parties operations and even personal decisions, and being particularly intolerant to women involvement in public affairs. In general, the special role of neo-tribalism in local-level political order determines the state's response to social challenges. Despite recent youth 'hirak' movement of 2011/12²⁹ calling for democratic reforms and a review of the tribe-state dynamics, tribes remain a primary source of social identity and powerful players for social stability. The Tribal Customary Law prevails, in many cases, the formal legal justice. Many informants believe the electoral and quota laws do only reinforce the tribes' dominance in national and local governance schemes - known to be not gender sensitive or an asset to women political involvement.

Lowering social norms and gender roles

Women are widely perceived, by men and women, as less-capable in serving leadership. In Jordan as in the MENA countries, cultural attitudes frequently limit and question women's abilities, reinforcing discrimination against women. Women are assigned a lower individuals' status and considered as assisted persons with limited assets for responsibility positions. Some informants recalled the social structure and value system namely patriarchal gender roles to be behind the undermined women status in the Jordan society, resulting in the narrowed access of women to leadership and high-level policy making pool.

Many informants regret that the current radical waves are pulling down the society far under what has been witnessed in the Eighties in terms of gender acceptance and social tolerance. The regressive voices, namely Salafism, are getting stronger, having more funds and presence in media and public spaces³⁰. These fanatic forces target women freedom recalling what is understood to be basic social norms, to return women at their natural place: the home. In these circumstances, politics are not an attractive environment for a Jordanian woman. It is believed that men deny women access to control positions as power is implied to be a restricted masculine domain. The introduced female competitiveness for leadership cannot be easily tolerated by a patriarchal traditionalist society.

The settled gender norms are extremely heavy that women themselves could stand against gender empowerment. Informants mentioned several examples of inter-female tensions over gender issues, or women to combat women rights and advancement in the political area. Not only the Islamist party called the government to withdraw from CEDAW³¹, but also the female members organised large demonstrations to call for immediate cancelling of such universal women rights' recognition.

²⁵ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sharia>

²⁶ <https://sunnah.com/bulugh/14/13>

²⁷ https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep12714?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

²⁸ <https://www.jstor.org/stable/164016?seq=1>

²⁹ <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43698157?seq=1>

³⁰ <https://www.mei.edu/publications/jordan-and-challenge-salafi-jihadists#:~:text=One%20expert%20on%20Islamist%20movements,Jabhat%20al%2DNusra%20in%20Syria.&text=Salafi%20jihadists%20gro>

³¹ <https://www.iknowpolitics.org/en/news-events/world-news/jordan-islamist-movement-calls-government-withdraw-cedaw>

It is important to highlight that the stereotyped gender norms are reinforced by several influential institutions, as education and media. The education curricula are considered a relevant vector for the gender stigma, so the government is reforming it to enable a behavioural change to cut with women discrimination³². In parallel, local and regional media are disseminating negative image on independent and powerful women³³, in what could be compared to a propaganda targeting gender emancipation as a whole. The broadcasted material on the television, especially the family drama, are recalling gender stereotypes more often in very exaggerated way, according to many of our interviews. On the other side, women that are progressive, self-reliant and entitled to a quality performance are usually represented as delinquent or on the edge to, hence dangerous individual on the social and family values. This negative image on women with a different profile rejects what does not fit with the exact expectations from a traditional obedient devotional person. Gender unfriendly media is indeed an acute weapon to downgrade women, resulting in massive discouragement and disengagement from the public affairs.

The culture of shame is another recurrent argument raised by several informants to explain the established secondary women status, that systematically cuts off tentative gender emancipation and access to control systems. A woman has to feel ashamed to dare a different lifestyle, to show off in public and to frequent mixed environments - what a political engagement calls for. One informant reported that several engaged female activists or leaders expressed deep wishes of repentance, to wear a veil and achieve pilgrimage before getting back to take care of her husband and child, as if political participation is a sin.

In general, the Jordanian conservative society offers a limited space for pursuing personal freedoms, so women, particularly convicted to lowering social standards, are more susceptible to surrender and opt for the easy conventional choices. This is why women do not dare politics and activism.

Inequitable family rules

Following the established gender norms, the woman is often controlled or assisted by a male member of her close or enlarged family. The masculine supervision ranges from the dress code, mobility, communication to the intimate daily life details of a girl or a woman. A woman is considered a 'horma', a fragile or less responsible person, more of a sinful or mistakable individual that needs guidance, assistance, control and correction if needed. It is traditionally inherited that a woman has to preserve the honour of the family to start with her appearance, personal behaviour in public to her personal and professional choices. So, it is frequent that a father, husband or a brother interferes to over protect his own honour that might have been soiled with what his relative women or girl might have considered a basic right. A muscular show off against a relative woman is mostly admired as a sign of family nobleness or purity, faced with a common low profile that repressed women would adopt as a preventive measure.

In this very restrictive framework, political women engagement is a family issue, to be decided upon family and even tribal interests, and rarely based on a women free choice. It was reported cases of husbands denying their wives WhatsApp, even if the wife is an elected parliament member.

But the social control is not restricted to men, several informants indicated that women are not always supportive to their female relatives in her own choices if they are judged inappropriate, means unfit to the conventional behaviour of a 'good' women. It happens that the late and mixed meetings within a political participation context is not a respectful environment, according to what our informants described as recognised social values.

As in practice, informants pointed out that in case a woman is allowed to get engaged in politics or any other form of civil activism, she would most probably suffer the multiple loads of household responsibilities, professional career and the tasks of her social or political engagement. The challenge

³² <https://www.unwomen.org/en/get-involved/step-it-up/commitments/jordan>

³³ http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Amman/pdf/Gender_in_Media_EN_25062018.pdf

is to attend late meetings, implement activities with men or in the public spaces. In addition, informants pointed out the stereotyped gender roles in the family that assign household management tasks as cleaning, cooking and caring after the children inclusively to women. Men are upgraded to a supervision level, with the unquestionable right to comment on the quality of services. This adds another layer on the domestic charges on women, one of her priorities is to achieve the satisfaction of often demanding male relatives. The common belief, shared also by women, is that men are only 'helping' in domestic tasks, what should be an exception to keep away from the strangers' view. Usually, women do not demand equity neither ask for reasonable sharing of the household charges, most probably because they were raised to consider it an inclusive feminine responsibility that perfectly meets their 'unqualifying' natural skills, making them prone to mistreatment, abuse or exploitation. For these reasons and alike, more often women either decline or give up their desired social and political commitments.

1.2. National frameworks and gender

1.2.1. Strategic frameworks

According to the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) 2020, Jordan ranks 138th out of 153 countries on global gender equality, with a 145th ranking in women's economic participation and opportunity, 81st in educational attainment, and 103rd in health and survival. The view of the GoJ is that the gender gap is relevant, and that it needs to be defeated to achieve sustainable and inclusive development allowing equitable access to socio-economic wellbeing. Jordan has set ambitious goals for the national strategic frameworks following the 2030 agenda including leaving no one behind and SDGs commitments, mainly Goal 5. Gender equality is more considered including gender mainstreaming in key visionary and planning documents and development frameworks, to be a sub-sector in all our intervention and cross cutting issue in all interventions³⁴.

An initial mapping of the government visioning frameworks allowed the identification of relevant national strategies, plans and initiatives tackling gender equality and women emancipation, the most relevant to GEWE are identified in table N°1:

³⁴ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/get-involved/step-it-up/commitments/jordan>

Table N°1: Jordanian Strategic frameworks related to GEWE

Year	Strategy/Plan	Gender focus
2020	National Strategy for Women NSW (NSW of 1993 and 2013-2017)	A society free from discrimination and violence based on gender, in which women and girls enjoy full human rights and equal opportunities to achieve comprehensive and sustainable development. ³⁵
2020-2025	Women's Economic Empowerment Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase women's labour force participation rates to 24%, by 2025. - Enhance the government capacity to identify and address constraints to women economic participation.
2019-2025	National Social Protection Strategy	Expanding coverage of part-time workers is expected to have a particularly positive impact on women (for whom working hours is a major factor in employment decisions).
2018-2022	National Jordanian Strategy for Senior Citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Older women face increasing challenges to meet their income needs, given their reduced ability to work and limited and inadequate pensions. - Women are particularly penalised in the current system, as female labour market participation in Jordan is the third lowest globally – only 16 % of pensioners in Jordan are women.
2018-2021	Jordanian National Action Plan (JONAP) for advancing the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Highlights the importance of cooperation with civil society and the role of women as key partners in preventing and combating violent extremism. - Reiterates the importance of engaging men and boys as partners in promoting women's participation in the prevention and resolution of armed conflicts. - Integrates a gender-based approach towards women's participation in prevention and protection processes during conflicts, as well as in peace building, and maintaining stability and sustainable security.
2018-2025	Poverty Eradication Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A particular target group of this policy is women and girls. - Gender pillar include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creating mechanisms for policy measures for better targeting of effective social insurance and social care services providing an inclusive social protection system for women, children of the poor and below middle class. ▪ Assisting women and men to overcome the cultural norms and practices promoting poverty, and constraining access to services and gainful employment. ▪ Ensure mainstreaming of gender throughout the whole strategy as a cross-cutting activity. All the proposed PRS objectives, measures and actions will be scrutinized through a gender lens.

³⁵ <https://women.jo/~women/ar/node/7935>

2018-2022	Jordan Economic Growth Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Empowering women and increasing their contribution to the labor force to activate their economic participation. - Empowering women in the public sector, including leadership capacities, flexible and remote work. - Promoting the participation of women in the industrial sector by joining the One Million Women Initiative of the International Trade Center (an initiative aimed at increasing women economic participation by attracting one million women to the business market by 2020. - Training business owners in technical and managerial skills, especially women. - Enhancing women participation in the national economy through: (i) the application of equal pay for equal services and (iii) the provision of support services such as transportation and nurseries.
2018	Education Strategy Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Address gender disparities. - Specific objectives of the strategy: increase women leadership positions at MOE.
2017	Demographic Dividend in Jordan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote a culture that supports the work of women and gender equality through enhancing the effective role of religious, educational and media institutions. - Set the necessary legislation to guarantee the protection of women from domestic Violence.
2016-2025	Comprehensive National Plan for Human Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The second objective of the Third Pillar is the promotion and protection of women's rights to ensure justice and equal opportunities. - Develop and adopt the policies that aim to enable women to enjoy all their rights. - Review the legislation related to women rights and propose amendments thereto.³⁶ - No mention is made about gender equality.
2016-2025	National Strategy for Human Resource Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide childcare facilities at workplaces. - Encourage enterprises to hire women. - Review educational curricula to eliminate women discrimination.³⁷
2016-2025	Communication Strategy on Gender-based Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inform on provide protection and counselling for abuse victims and offer temporary shelter for women, children under the age of five and Syrian women refugees - work on the prevention part - Serve as a policy document of cooperation between governmental and non-governmental organisations to push this issue to become a priority always for decision makers. - Work on amending "the wrongful concepts or religious teachings that are being used as an excuse to justify violence against women".

³⁶ https://jordanembassy.or.id/_2file_obj/pdf/Comprehensive-National-Plan-for-Human-Rights.pdf

³⁷ <http://www.mohe.gov.jo/en/documents/national-hrd-strategy.pdf>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct the messages to condemning violence socially and religiously, and correcting the social and religious misconceptions that are used as an excuse to practise violence against women. - Unify the terminology used in describing violence by developing a glossary to be used by the media. - Document cases of gender-based violence as well as success stories.
2016-2020	National Health Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Availability of child and maternal health services. - Improve the health and nutrition of children and mothers.
2016	National Framework for Family Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on the clear participatory relationship with civil society organisations and their exact role in dealing with cases of domestic violence. - Engage victims of abuse in all the stages of handling their cases, while a qualified coordinator will be responsible for each case.
2015	Jordan 2025: A National Vision and Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Achieve a prosperous, resilient and inclusive economy while strengthening reform and inclusion - Adopt a set of strategic objectives related to the empowerment of women in health, education, poverty, social protection, employment and participation in the labour force³⁸
2015	Executive Development Programmes EDP	Translate national priorities at the sub-national level and taking into consideration their own priorities and challenges.
2014- 2020	National Employment-Technical and Vocational Education and Training (E-TVET) Strategy	Create gender-specific curricula in E-TVET programs and apprenticeships, including management and leadership courses for women.
2012- 2017	King Abdullah II Discussion Papers (7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political reforms and democratic transition. - Enhance active citizenship experience for all. - Improve women participation.
2011-2020	National Employment Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creating jobs in adequate quantity and quality, especially for women. - Assistance to young unemployed, especially women, in finding jobs. - Secure more economic opportunities for women. - Enhance females as business owners and self-employed. - Combat hiring discrimination against women.
2010–2012	National Strategy and Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Four main axes: prevention, protection, prosecution and cooperation. - Take into account the specificity of the cases for people with disabilities, children and women.
2006	We Are All Jordan Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Address discrimination against women and restrictive social norms. - Increase women economic and political participation.

³⁸ <http://inform.gov.jo/en-us/By-Date/Report-Details/ArticleId/247/Jordan-2025>

		- Promote women as equal partners in development.
2005–2009	National Act for Protection against Family Violence	- Establish the confidentiality of the proceedings, imposing alternative penalties, and establishing precautionary measures for the safety of victims and other family members. - provide for the court to issue protection orders when necessary and establish penalties against perpetrators for violating protection orders and re-offending. Courts might also establish the payment of compensation to victims. (CEDAW/C/JOR/5, para. 29)
2004	Political Development Strategy and Plan of Action	- Focuses on the importance of active participation by women in Jordan's political life. - Enhances to maintain women's citizenship rights both in law and in practice.
2003-2007	Economic and Social Development Plan	- Objectives that target women specifically, included in most of the sectors identified in the plan
1999- 2003	Economic and Social Development Plan	- Incorporating a gender perspective. - Mainstreaming a gender perspective in State institutions and their various agencies. - Adopt the principle of strengthening gender equality.
1998-2002	National Programme of Action for the Advancement of Jordanian Women	- Priority themes had been acknowledged as warranting national priority. - Focus on empowerment of women and strengthening their personal capacities, equity and equality, and participation in decision-making. - 106 projects to be implemented over a five -year period - Provision for follow-up and evaluation.
1990	National Charter ³⁹	- Equality for all citizens in Chapters: Chap. 1(8) and Chap. 5(6) - Women political participation: article 4, article 8 and Chapter 2, third Article, entitled ' <i>Guarantees of the Democratic Approach</i> ', Section 4.

³⁹ <http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/charter-national.html>

However, despite the promising environment and the declared commitments, an initial mapping of the goals, targets and indicators of the relevant national and sectoral strategic frameworks reveals strong deficiencies in:

- i) Adapting a gender sensitive visioning;
- ii) Mainstreaming the gender issues in different phases of the strategy elaboration and implementation. This is translated in the absence of gender-oriented objectives, results and outputs. The NSW is an exception as it is wholly dedicated to GEWE;
- iii) Setting gender related indicators, apart what it is classically understood to be a gender indicator - a number of female participants in a conference, an activity or a training;
- iv) Specifying the Monitoring and Evaluation mechanisms, that should be gender focus in such relevant strategic frameworks targeting inclusion and leaving no one behind;
- v) Adopting the right terminology when it is about gender issues.

On the other hand, following the rapid review of the national frameworks, the consultant identified two relevant strategic documents that did not consider the gender issues, at least at the elaboration phase, namely:

- i) The Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis (JRP) (2017-2019) and JRP 2020-2022 that constitute the strategic partnership mechanisms for the development of a comprehensive refugee, resilience-strengthening and development response to the impact of the Syria crisis on Jordan. These plans do not mention special focus on gender issues in the framed objectives, results and target groups. However, refugee women are known to be the most vulnerable to displacement regarding healthcare and hygiene, degraded living conditions, unemployment, poverty etc. Women in host communities are also prone to fragile socio-economic conditions.
- ii) The National Strategy for Reproductive Health/Family Planning do not focus on gender issues, though the strategy topic is essentially about women healthcare practices, understanding of the concepts, level of awareness and real preferences and choices. The logical framework is not gender sensitive; hence the strategy goal, outputs, results and inputs are not disaggregated by sex. Instead, women are rarely mentioned in the document, not at a strategic level, but as numbers within the indicators that are specific to the outputs.

Jordan does not dispose of a specific strategy for culture, the cultural policy orientations are fragmented in hands of several institutions. This is an obstacle to a cultural change that embraces women rights and gender equality.

The consultations held at national and regional levels, with public bodies, NGOs and other stakeholders, evidenced that most of the interviewees are not aware of the national strategies and plans, especially those targeting gender equality. Only very few institutional informants briefly mentioned some policies, in a confused and generalised manner. The limited awareness about the strategic frameworks could be assigned to either:

- i) The strategies elaboration process was not participatory or at least not sufficiently inclusive decreasing stakeholders' ownership, so the policies are not relevant to many actors, not comprehensive or do not reflect potential views. Only few of the interviewed institutional actors and selective national NGOs were consulted within the strategies building.
- ii) The planning process was not extended to regions and grassroots level, so community-based organisations and most particularly women did not get invited to speak out their points. Women interviewed individually or within focus group discussions are totally unaware of the government vision, plans or interventions in regards to GEWE.
- iii) The consultation process was absent or not relevant, none of the strategic frameworks was open to a public consultation to collect different comments and views. Most of the interviewees couldn't

define a public consultation, and could not remember such an open process to inform and discuss one of the identified plans.

iv) The communication and outreach actions on the elaborated strategies was absent or weak. almost all institutional and community informants do not remember a communication support on any of the mentioned frameworks.

The consultations demonstrated that the strategic frameworks, though ambitious and up to international standards, are probably not considered or used as real instruments to achieve the requested GEWE. The challenge remains in tackling potential overlaps with effective gender mainstreaming at all levels of the planning cycle. The monitoring and evaluation process need to be strengthened with appropriate indicators to be deeply gender oriented.

1.2.2. Legal frameworks

International commitments

The GoJ have a vision that women’s status and the country gender index are indicators of the Jordanian State and society progress, reflected in a positive image before the international community. The recent focus on human rights and women rights translates the national engagement towards improved citizenship experience for all, in a fair and inclusive society. To this end, Jordan ratified relevant international treaties and conventions illustrated in table N°2:

Table N°2: Jordan Commitments to International Conventions

International Convention	Date of emission	Date of ratification
Universal Declaration of Human Rights	1948	1951
<u>Equal Remuneration Convention</u>	1951	1966
Convention on the Political Rights of Women	1952	1992
<u>Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention</u>	1958	1963
<u>Social Policy (Basic Aims and Standards) Convention</u>	1962	1963
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ⁴⁰	1966	1972
Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)	1979	Signed 1980 entered in force 1981
The <u>Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam</u> (CDHRI)	1990	1990
Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	1984	1991
Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action	1995	1995
UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (UN TIP Protocol)	2000	2009
United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals SDGs	2015	2015

So far, CEDAW is the most relevant international convention on women rights. Jordan signed the Convention on December 3, 1980 and ratified it on July 1, 1992. Countries that have ratified or acceded CEDAW are legally bound to put its provisions into practice, and thereby agree to submit

⁴⁰ <https://www.ammonnews.net/article/65890>.

national reports on measures taken to comply with its obligations. Such reports are to be compiled at least every four years. However, Jordan made reservations on CEDAW to claim it does not consider itself bound by Article 9 (2), concerning children's nationality; Article 15 (4) listing equality of freedom of movement (lifted in 2009); Article 16 (1c) prescribing women the same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution; and Article 16 (1d) regarding same parental rights regardless of marital status, and 16 (1g) prescribing husband and wife to have the same personal rights including choice of name and occupation⁴¹. Jordan lifted its reservation to CEDAW Article 15(4) in 2009 (equal rights relating to movement of persons and the freedom to choose residence and domicile) but maintains its reservations to Article 9(2) and Article 16(1)(c), (d) and (g). Though the publication of CEDAW in the official Gazette in 2007 had the effect of giving it the force of law, national jurisdiction is not reviewed accordingly.

The Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (CDHRI)⁴² was compiled by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). This Declaration holds similar – if not identical – principles as the UDHR to address gender equality, freedom and right to self-determination, amongst others. Nonetheless, the declaration clearly lists the Sharia as reference point including for physical punishment.

In parallel, the governmental commitment to the two Ministerial Conferences – 2006, and Marrakech 2009 - resulting from the Barcelona Process to strengthen women's rights, participation, and gender equality have not materialized in any policy on the ground.

Jordanian Constitution

The Constitution of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan of 1952, amended in 2011, did not differentiate between men and women in the practice of their rights, it states that all Jordanians are equal before the law, have the right to assume public office and the right to work. Article 6 of the Constitution stipulates: "Jordanians shall be equal before the law. There shall be no discrimination between them as regards to their rights and duties on grounds of race, language, or religion".

Though the reference in the Constitution guarantees equality before the law, it does not specifically tackle gender issues in terms of equal enjoyment of their rights. However, the Constitution does not include an article addressing gender discrimination or prohibiting discrimination against women⁴³. In Article 6, no discrimination on the basis of ethnic groups, religion or language but not according to sex.

National laws

The GoJ initiated the process to harmonise national legal framework with gender international norms. The main legal provisions that regulate the Jordanian state's vision of women personal, social, economic, professional and political status are incorporated in the following laws:

- Nationality Law, No. 6 of 1954, last amended 1987
- Courts Establishment Law 1951, amended with Law on Shari'a Lawyers 1952 and Law on Structure of Shari'a Courts 1972
- Crime Prevention Law, No. 7 of 1954
- Penal Code, No. 16 of 1960 with amendments
- Election Law No. 24 of 1960 amended with Independent Election Commission Law No. 11 of 2012, Political Party Law No. 16 of 2012, Election Law for the Lower House of the Parliament No. 25 of 2012 and amended Law No. (46) for the year 2015
- Civil Code of 1976
- Law of Personal Status 1976 amended with Personal Status Law of 2001 and Temporary Personal Status Law, No. 36 of 2010

⁴¹ <https://fanack.com/jordan/human-rights/>

⁴² <http://en.reingex.com/Islam-Human-Rights.shtml>

⁴³ <file:///C:/Users/Afef/Desktop/Jordan%20Country%20Assessment%20-%20English.pdf>

- Labour Code, No. 9 of 1996
- Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, No. 6 of 2008
- Human Trafficking Law, No. 9 of 2009
- Law on Electronic Crimes, No. 27 of 2015
- Shelters for Vulnerable Persons System, No. 171 of 2016
- Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, No. 15 of 2017
- Law on the Rights of People with Disabilities, No. 20 of 2017
- Regulation of Flexible Work System, Regulation No. 22 of 2017

Almost all our institutional and activists' informants pointed that a juridical arsenal in favour for women exists, and is being systematically reviewed and amended following the society evolution, political orientations and international standards. However, the challenge consists in the applicability of the laws, and the effective rule of law. The cultural mindset in Jordan, as in many countries of the Arab region, is still not totally adherent to the approach by the law based on civil jurisprudence in matters relevant to the family rules and the personal freedoms. This is why the women status, being attributed to the intimate family sphere, is still dependant on social norms and customary practices.

Indeed, the official curricula adopted by formal and informal learning and education institutions is traditionalist, it does not educate on women rights and legal enforcement in that sense. Instead, many informants and other sources lade the educational programs to be vectors of stereotyped gender norms that exclude the consideration of the jurisprudence setting.

Media is not playing a positive role in disseminating appropriate information about women's rights and national laws in force. Right the opposite, it is rare to broadcast educative material to raise awareness about the legal advancements towards women rights, status and issues. Instead, regional and local channels mediatise women in the repetitive stereotypes of subordinate individual, a good woman to be, and a less respectful person - usually a rebellion woman with a strong character nearly delinquent, most probably because enjoying one of her fundamental rights.

As expected, the individual meetings with women and the focus groups surveys held at regional levels revealed the almost total ignorance of women on their rights and the legal arsenal developed at their service, for GEWE. Only very few women were aware of the different laws and constitutional provisions to promote their participation in political, social and economic sectors, and to enhance their wellbeing through equity in the daily life aspects. This might be explained by:

- The institutional weakness on communication strategies and tools. The few NGOs operating to disseminate information on the laws related to gender equality cannot outreach major segments of the society - both men and women, boys and girls. Rural, Bedouin and refugee women are well behind the average level of awareness, although prone to different level of discrimination.
- The little interest that families and women themselves assign to gender equality topic, due to the common cultural background that accepts what is elsewhere considered a discriminatory practice against women. Through many interviews, it was made clear that the cultural, religious and social settings are, in a way, making a certain balance that satisfies the different individuals and communities - including women.
- Gender equality is not a popular request, rather seen as a selective topic of the upper society that fits an imported or imposed western agenda, close to a conspiracy to ruin the society cohesion and values. This, explains the little involvement CSOs, gender activism or GEWE defending at grassroots level against the massive mobilisation of the preservative movements.

Despite the several amendments bringing additional provisions to the legal arsenal promoting women status, the analysis of the most relevant of the listed laws underlines relevant gaps towards gender equality at several levels. The Consultant focuses on the following laws:

i) Personal Status Law (PSL)

The 1952 Constitution declares Islam to be the religion of the State, and also provides for the establishment of separate civil and sharia courts. The legislation in Jordan is civil with the exception of the Personal Status Law that is based on religion, handled to the Sharia courts. The religious based judicial system is chaired by a Chief Islamic Justice, hence open to religious interpretations that are often discriminatory towards women - at least up to international standards. This parallel jurisdiction over personal status matters maintains and further legitimates the inferior status of women as it legalises unfair practices. It is important to mention that some of our informants among institutional and activists, denied the existence of the Sharia courts and insisted that a unified juridical system exists in the country. This might be explained by the fear of undermining the modern image of the country.

Apart from the particular jurisprudence, the PSL, though amended and subject to several modernisation attempts, is still controversial on several aspects⁴⁴:

- **Male guardianship over women:** the law includes provisions that grant a male blood relative (wali) the right to have guardianship (wilaya) required for an unmarried woman under the age of 40 (whether divorced, widowed, or single).

In addition, Article 61 of PSL provides that a wife who works outside the home is entitled to alimony only if the husband has given explicit consent to the work.

- **Marriage:** Only religious marriages are legally recognised in Jordan. Though the legal age of marriage is 18 years, sharia courts have discretion to consent to the marriage of a minor who is 15 years or older, being usually a girl. Although rates of early marriage are thought to be in decline, there are around 16,000 marriages a year (roughly 26% of total registered marriages) that take place where the bride is aged 15-19⁴⁵. the justification is to protect the reputation of the minor female or to protect her from potential violence, such as honour crimes, for having sex outside of marriage.

- **Divorce:** The wife owes a legal duty of obedience to her husband. Men can divorce unilaterally by talaq while a wife can only recourse to 'Khulaa', which is the right to dissolve a marriage by waiving their marital rights and offering financial compensation to the husband. The amended law is revolutionary, the judge could grant a divorce despite the husband disagreement. PSL 2010 review introduced a new type of divorce, 'iftida' that gave women more rights to divorce while culturally accepted. However, the law has not been ratified and remains as a temporary law.

- **Custody of children:** The mother is entitled to custody until the child is 15 and loses custody if she remarries someone who is not a close relative of her former husband. Non-Muslim mother lose custody of a child when the child reaches the age of seven.

- **Inheritance:** Sharia rules of inheritance apply; women have a right to inheritance but in many cases receive less than men i.e. half of a brother share.

- **Polygamy:** Polygamy is permitted by the Personal Status Law.

ii) Nationality Law

Jordanian women married to non-Jordanian men cannot grant their citizenship to their children or husband in the same way as men. It does not allow Jordanian women to even confer automatic long-term residency on their children, despite the GoJ promises to grant privileges to Jordanian women children⁴⁶. In 2012 Jordan's Prime Minister vowed to support the full implementation CEDAW and to lift reservations on the remaining articles at the 11th International Conference of National Human Rights Institutions held in Amman. Despite the publication of the CEDAW in the official gazette in

⁴⁴ <https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/islamic-family-law/home/research/legal-profiles/jordan-hashemite-kingdom-of/>

⁴⁵ <https://spring-forward.unwomen.org/en/countries/jordan>

⁴⁶ <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/04/24/i-just-want-him-live-other-jordanians/treatment-non-citizen-children-jordanian>

2007, which in theory makes it binding in national legislation, the Nationality Law has not been reviewed accordingly, and still contradicts with Article 9, paragraph 2 of CEDAW convention.

The political backgrounds are behind this status quo. Previously, the League of Arab States (LAS) had reservations to give nationality to Palestinians to maintain the 'Right to Return' to Palestinian husbands and children of Jordanian women. LAS changed this policy and Arab States followed except for Jordan and Lebanon.

Some informants reported that activists and NGOs argue the illegality of the Jordanian citizenship law in reference to the Jordanian Constitution and are keen to question it in front of the established Constitutional Court.

A critical reading concludes women are second class citizen as they are disowned their right to citizenship. This law legitimizes the social and cultural patriarchy and adversely impacts the family's livelihood conditions. Non-Jordanian spouses are obliged to follow the costly protocol to renew their residency by crossing the country borders every three months, and cannot - with children - benefit from the social welfare programs. Children are particularly endangered as the families struggle to obtain visas and residency permits needed to enrol in private or public schools, and they have to shuttle between police stations and health centres every year to get security clearances and medical reports. Additionally, schools and universities tuitions are higher for non-citizens, which compromises their right to education. Access to jobs is further limited without a Jordanian citizenship or a national ID number⁴⁷.

iii) Election law

The legal provisions that regulate the Jordanian state's vision of women to improve women's political participation are mainly capitalised in the amendment to the Election Law of 1960. Jordanian women were deprived from their right to participate in the political life until the definition of the term "Jordanian" in Article 2 of the Election Law No. 24 for the Year 1960 was redefined to become "every person, male or female" by means of Amendment 8 for the Year 197448. With this review, women were allowed to stand for election and to vote for the first time in legislative assemblies. This law was followed by the 1982 law, which in turn opened the door for Jordanian women to stand for election in municipal councils as well.

The 2001 amendment to the Election Law for the Chamber of Deputies is also in favour of women, as it reduced the voting age to 18 years raising the proportion of voting women who are expected to contribute to political and parliamentary life in Jordan. The amendment of 2003 raised the number of parliamentary seats to 110 also contributed to a number of potential seats going to women. Jordan is one of the first Arab state that adopted the quota system. In 2003, six seats were allocated to women and, by the promulgation of a new provisional electoral law Number 9 of 2010, the women quota was raised to 12 seats.

The quota system opened a door to discuss the women political participation, more than to allow advanced female parliamentary representation. Some of our informants argued this quota mechanism is not sufficient to enhance gender equality in the political representation, as it becomes a political tool in the hands of the real actors: men and tribes. One example to follow could be the electoral law in Tunisia of 2011 that settled electoral lists has to respect horizontal and vertical gender parity. Women won 25% of the assembly seats. In Jordan, the quota system seems more a clearance from the gender issue, as to wind up this big challenge through law enforcement without engaging needed reforms and raising the debate at national priority level. It was agreed that the engaged dynamics to enhance women effective leadership has to be reinforced by strong policies to be implemented and monitored at the ground. The recent elections of 2020 are a deceiving but

⁴⁷ uprdoc.ohchr.org

⁴⁸ <http://www.jordanelection2010.com>

informative example of the impact of the persistent closeout, the society is not ready to accept women in command positions.

1.2.3. Institutional frameworks

Jordan has established several public institutions to develop and implement national policies on gender at national, regional and local levels. In parallel, relevant stakeholders related to gender have been raised from different sectors, i.e... local authorities, private, academia, NGOs, CBOs, media, formal and informal education institutions, financial operators, technical and financial partners of the international and regional cooperation. The different actors in Jordan that are involved in the gender equality and women empowerment are capitalised in annex N°III.

The complexity of the institutional setting at the service of the gender cause has been rather a hinder to achieve national policies and commitments, as majorly reported by this report informants. It is believed that weak governance and coordination are principal barriers to tackle multiple gender issues. The governmental bodies relevant to GEWE are classical, centralised and distant from the other actors, most importantly from women themselves. The public initiatives are often offer driven and do not reflect proper political will neither actual popular demand. This is why they fail to gather public trust and ownership. Many informants question the intentions of gender institutions and openly accuse them of holding a hidden agenda to maintain gender inequality, a way to sustain their existence. The same judgment applies on the gender activists and CSOs. It is commonly believed that civil actors are not seriously tackling the gender issues, as to preserve their funding sources.

A primary stakeholders analysis conducted to the permanent institutional weaknesses in terms of human and financial resources, services delivery and communication. The persistent gender inequality could be also attributed to the institutional and actors' deficiencies in a weak governance scheme characterised by missions' overlaps, limited transparency, communication and networking. Gender equality is not a national priority, hence related institutional setting is poor, with limited participatory process for policies and initiatives building, implementation and monitoring. Table N°3 illustrates the analysis of sectors relevant to GEWE:

Table N°3: Sectors Analysis relevant to GEWE

Sector	Strengths	Weaknesses/challenges
Public administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overview on sustainable development requirements and commitments, including gender equality - Master of visioning and planning tools for sectoral and financial strategies - Execute the political engagements - Hold the executive power to build, implement and monitor/evaluate the gender strategies and interventions - Suggest and implement gender sensitive reforms and legislation - Command over public funds mobilisation - Ability to collect international funds and budget support to gender strategies - Representation at governorates level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Centralisation - Limited human, technical and financial capacities - Limited knowledge on the gender issues - Gender is not a national priority - Public finance do not fund gender strategies and interventions - Gender plans depend on donors' orientations - Irrelevant gender mainstreaming in national plans - Weak to absent monitoring to national commitments/indicators - Weak institutional cooperation and networking - Overlaps in missions and interventions - Biased gender related services delivery - Advanced bureaucracy - Limited public communication - Weak participatory planning and governance schemes - Limited public trust - Dependence on cooperation funds
Religious Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Huge influence on population - Unquestionable social norms source - Proximity at neighbourhoods' level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discriminatory discourse against women - Absent review to generated social norms up to universal standards
Legislators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legitimate elected legislative power - Law making, enforcement and amendment towards gender equality - Ability to codify reforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Little interest in gender equality - Limited laws effectiveness and applicability - Little monitoring of laws enforcement - Dependence on parties/tribes' political agenda - Limited support to women's access to justice
Juridical Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Independent Justice system - Execute gender related legislation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fragmented in two judiciary systems: civil and sharia courts - Women affairs, personal and family laws are handled to the sharia courts - Absence of female judges in the sharia courts

Law enforcement Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In close contact with communities, individuals and women - Acknowledged executive power - The state structure to implement the laws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited awareness of human and women rights - Limited update on gender related laws - Few capacities to handle female victims
Local Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct reporting channels and tools with central administration - Recognised executive power at regional level - Proximity to citizen, including women - Interaction with multi-sectoral stakeholders at regional/local levels - Ability to monitor interventions at regional/local levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited analysis and planning tools - Weak technical and financial capacities - Weak knowledge on the gender issues - Weak instruments to strategies implementation and monitoring - Weak to absent communication - Weak to absent governance - Absent hearing and interaction with women and NGOs - Limited public trust
Political Parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential advocates for change agenda - Influence power on legislators and politicians - Master of visioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited lobbying for social reforms - Little interest in gender issues - Prioritisation of own leadership objectives - Use of gender issues for campaign goals - Few women leadership positions
CSOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Representation power of target groups - Mended credibility and public trust - Improved networking, lobbying and advocacy towards change - Available communication channels with women at national and local levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited human and financial resources - Limited technical capacities and knowledge on gender topics - Inefficient communication and awareness raising techniques - Offer driven interventions - Shortened funds for gender interventions - Negative perception and reputation - Political influence, often judged government-friendly - Weak interaction with grassroots communities and women - Limited citizenship and engagement for gender issues - Weak governance process - Tense relationships with the government
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Real leverage for change and reforms - Openness towards innovation - Relevant analysis and knowledge of development assets - Influence power on strategic decisions - Ability to achieve appropriate women inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exclusion from policy making - Limited to absent ownership of gender sensitive policies - Limited Corporate Social Responsibility CSR - Limited awareness on gender issues - Reduced knowledge on economic opportunity in women inclusion

Private sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advanced skills on entrepreneurship and business development for all - Considerable financial resources - Autonomy on decisions and execution - Satisfying services delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor entrepreneurship ecosystem - Limited entrepreneurship skills - Weak access to finance and micro-finance, especially for women
Finance Operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relevant vector for socio-economic wellbeing - Autonomy on decisions - Relevant technical and financial resources - Proximity and interaction with citizens and stakeholders - Satisfying services delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exclusion of innovation - Inefficient micro-finance solutions especially for women - Advanced bureaucracy - Limited funds accessibility for vulnerable groups, especially women - Limited engagement in national gender sensitive strategies - Limited engagement in CSR
Education Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential vector for social change - Recognized authority at family level - Proximity to citizens - Credible and communicative informal knowledge institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Segregation of classes based on gender - Non secular education - Traditionalist transmitted gender norms - Limited review of educational pedagogy, didactic and material - Limited human and financial resources for informal institutions
Academia/ Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Admitted vectors of knowledge and innovation - Relevant competences on gender issues and potential strategic and practical solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distance from other actors, especially decision makers, employers and women - Few communication skills - Exclusion from visioning and strategizing patterns - Limited interest in gender issues - Limited human and financial resources
Cultural Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential vectors for social change - Access to international funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Centralisation
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proximity to citizens, women and other actors - Influence power on politicians and stakeholders' interventions - Potential factor for social change - Enlarged audience - Fluid and comprehensive communication tools and messages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vector of stereotyped social norms and gender roles - Adversity against women - Little interest in gender equality

The confused roles and missions overlap among and between public institutions and other stakeholders is not an asset to properly build, execute and monitor the national gender equality agenda. This resulted in a weak gender ecosystem, unable to move forward women's rights ownership in appropriate rule of law and normative approach. Gender stakeholders' relationships is often tense, biased by few communication and cooperation channels. CSOs are particularly averse to public administration, having lost trust in the government will to realise requested reforms and to upgrade women rights to a national priority level. The CSO-government relationship has ever been spiny dealing with personal freedoms and expression, as the government is believed to drop back on human and women rights in the favour of dominant preservative political actors, to maintain the country stability.

The government, though, pledges for a consistent and steady legal approach to tackle gender issues, and has established institutions for normative and strategic aspects. The main entities are:

– **The Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW)**, founded in 1992, specialised semi-governmental agency to improve the status of women. In 1996, JNCW was mandated to become a national mechanism for promoting gender equality, as an outcome of the Beijing Conference and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action⁴⁹. JNCW is a semi-governmental authority with extended structure, comprising a Secretariat and an array of subsidiary networks of ministries, national institutions, CSOs, women agencies, and the private and academic sectors. JNCW mission is to formulate general policies related to women in all sectors, lately the National Strategy for Women. Through its mandate, the JNCW has established **gender focal points at Ministries**, many of them have moved forward and establishing women or gender divisions and directorates. Yet, informants witnessed the focal points at the ministries display considerable knowledge gaps in relation to the very core of their tasks, namely gender topic itself and subsequent themes.

The JNCW setting is the first in the Arab countries, combining multi-stakeholders' views to promote gender participation in social, economic and political areas and to enhance accountability on gender equality. This unique feature has indeed accomplished significant steps in suggesting gender integrating on strategic and legislative levels, as the amendments of PSL, Passport Law and the Election Law. JNCW has played a prominent role in building the Strategy on Women and related action plans, including a monitoring plan that follows indicators based on Jordan international commitments. According to JNCW board, the commission is actually reviewing several national plans to mainstream gender indicators and to harmonise different interventions with the sustainable development agenda, especially Goal N°5. JNCW sets its annual plan in accordance to NSW, and enhances technical and financial partners to subscribe their programs in the same strategic vision.

However, the commission fails to achieve appropriate gender mainstreaming in national policies and to monitor women rights status on the ground, mainly due to the limited allocated human and financial resources. The action plans related to women strategies and interventions are not funded from the national budget, but relying on cooperation financial support that might also shorten. The exclusion of women affairs from the national financial exercise only evidences that gender is not a national priority. Despite the particular coordination aspect of JNCW mission, this entity-platform is weak on public communication and information sharing. Only few informants at the regional level, mainly women, knew about JNCW existence and accomplishments on tackling gender issues. Other institutional informants pointed out the little impact of JNCW in framing the requested reforms towards women empowerment, believed after the heavy political influence on the commission that reduces its efficiency and openness towards fundamental gender equality demands. JNCW board explained that the government is not systematically considering the commission recommendations, as happened lately with the official response to covid-19 crisis that did not integrate specific women socio-economic needs. This explains the stakeholders and communities' informant's scepticism and

⁴⁹ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/responses/JORDAN-English.pdf>

reticence to acknowledge JNCW as reliable central players to effectively induce change on actual unbalanced gender norms.

- **The Inter-Ministerial Committee for Women's Empowerment (IMC)**, established in 2015 with a mission to provide leadership, coordination and accountability on achieved commitments related to women rights following the implementation of strategic frameworks. The IMC structure is at higher policy level, with a rotating chair and the membership of the Secretary General of the JNCW. IMC is meant to enhance gender mainstreaming at different national plans and interventions, what could overlap with JNCW mission to lead the Task Force on Gender Equality and Mainstreaming within the Executive Development Programs⁵⁰. The exact attributes to IMC are not clear, many informants related the superposition with JNCW mission, even though IMC is active. Even so IMC is a strategic committee, it did not push forward needed reforms, translate the government commitments into sectoral gender sensitive policies, enhance the political will to embrace gender equality, nor even ameliorate data availability and access to information.

The recent institutionalisation of the IMC is an asset to improve its stability despite potential governmental reshuffle. The expected induced efficiency is still dependent on the chair Minister orientations and personal engagements, according to informants. IMC activities are scattered, the meetings are not periodic and the members are not properly engaged.

1.3. SDGs and gender

Jordan is committed to the 2030 Agenda and to leaving no one behind. The government ratified the 17 Sustainable Development Goals SDGs, including Goal N°5 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls'. The Agenda overall objectives, besides Goal 5 particular targets, is adopted in Jordan as a holistic growth approach to achieve social, economic, ecological and personal wellbeing for all - men and women - with an inclusive approach to leave no one behind. This specifically all-in development scheme is an opportunity to propel forward women status, rights, initiatives, views, expectations and wellbeing. What is important then is to translate such ambitious commitment into national strategic, legislative and institutional reforms, Jordan has launched the process.

A Roadmap for SDGs implementation has been developed and detailed in the first Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2017, with special focus on gender mainstreaming through mapping the SDGs, especially SDG5, with the current and future EDPs and national strategies, in addition to identifying disaggregated indicators needed to monitor progress⁵¹. The Higher National Committee for Sustainable Development is mandated to oversee the implementation of 2030 Agenda, through intended Coordination Committee and 18 working groups, including two new working groups dedicated to gender and human rights. However, practical instruments for SDGs follow-up and monitoring are still to be developed, within a participatory process to involve CSOs, communities and target groups. This encompasses a capacity building for all scheme on SDGs topics, translation into actions, and the evaluation of the government achievements. Another challenge is financing the agenda implementation, heavily depending on international aid.

⁵⁰ <https://www.oecd.org/mena/governance/womens-political-participation-in-jordan.pdf>

⁵¹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16289Jordan.pdf>

2. SOCIO-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT AND GENDER

In the last decades, Jordan achieved major sectoral reforms towards governance, citizens wellbeing and livelihoods improvement, based on upgraded public services delivery, what has been translated into increased GDP growth rates (8.2% in 2007, WB). Jordan is facing growing challenges, to start with climate change effects on the already scarce water and natural resources, reduced economic performance, little enterprises competitiveness, high unemployment, brain drain phenomena, terrorism and unprecedented immigration flux. Hence, women involvement in the sustainable development schemes is a basic solution for Jordan.

2.1. Social sector

2.1.1. Education and gender

Formal and informal basic education

Jordan shows considerable progress on gender indicators in education. Over the last three decades, the gender gaps in school enrolment at the primary and the secondary levels has been narrowing until recently reversed for secondary and tertiary levels. Jordan is among eight MENA countries to reverse gender gap at university level. Since 2010, the gender gap in literacy closed completely⁵², placing the country among the top five MENA countries. Jordan has one of the highest literacy rates for girls in the Middle East, which is a staggering 97.3%. In 2018, over 94% of girls attend school compared to 95% of boys. Girls in rural areas are just as likely as girls in urban areas to attend school⁵³. Between 1980 and 2002, literacy rates for adult females rose from 55% to 86%.

The vocational training, though institutionalized since 1976, is not attractive for students as of 2011, only 3.5% were enrolled in vocational training, 38% of them women. This is due to the weak supply to the labour market with in-demand specialties, bridging the gap caused by the mismatch between education outcomes and the market's demands, as well as the social perception lowering vocational occupations. Historically TVET education has targeted able-bodies Jordanian males, female TVET is often informally limited to pre-defined areas of traditional female employment such as hairdressing. One of our informants, a well-educated young female engaged in gender advocacy, did not seek enrolment at a TVET centre specialised in carpentering, despite her particular passion and family support. Her concern was the social acceptance of such an alternative pathway for a woman, to the extent of not even verifying the registration conditions, being confused of the female eligibility to the course. The probability of similar professional disorientations is high.

The Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) provides training through 43 centres across Jordan, and had recently settled a vocational training programmes in Refugee Camps to benefit for Refugee Syrian women.

On the other hand, the enlarged socio-economic gap in Jordan hinders equitable quality education at formal and informal learning patterns. The private schools offer excellence curricula, but they are reserved for wealthy upper society. Girls of middle to low class society are the most vulnerable to school abandon, as they are more likely to be kept at home due to protection concerns and household responsibilities such as caring for younger siblings or ailing parents. Girls are also far more probably to be married at an early age⁵⁴, yet new studies showed that adolescent boys in urban areas are more likely to drop out than girls.

Despite recent strategic reforms, the gender equality is not a concern of the current education curricula. Children are exposed to stereotyped didactic, pedagogy and learning material. Education in

⁵² Country Gender Economic Profiles - Jordan 2016

⁵³ <https://borgenproject.org/top-10-facts-about-girls-education-in-jordan/>

⁵⁴ <https://www.unicef.org/jordan/education>

Jordan is not secular, religious hardliners are opposing reforms towards secularising school curricula, but also a large segment of the population that demonstrated against 2016 textbooks reforms⁵⁵. The classes are not mixed since the age of 8. Girls and boys are handled to a traditionalist schooling system that institutes for the segregation, frustration, ignorance of the other sex and the proliferation of social and sexual phantasms to be later translated in limiting behaviours and injustice against women. Most of our informants, including gender defenders, are not ready to enrol their own girls in a mixed school, the social pressure and the little trust in the boys around are real hindlers to such decision. Abuse of girls at school has also been widely reported, with issues ranging from bullying, verbal and sexual harassment to corporal punishment⁵⁶.

The informal education and the cultural establishments are not an exception in delivering stigmatised gender norms. Very few cultural institutions are addressing gender equality and fighting discriminative cultural norms against women⁵⁷.

The Syrian refugee crisis has strongly impacted on public education in Jordan, increasing classes crowdedness and education costs. With international support, the government is striving to create safe child-friendly spaces for Jordanian and Syrian refugee children⁵⁸. School closure due to COVID-19 has impacted 2.37 million learners, including 230,900 school-age Syrian refugee children. Since the onset of the crisis, MOE have sought to prevent learning loss through developing distance education such as televised lessons and establishing digital platforms.

Research and innovation

The reversed gender gap in tertiary enrolment is a recent encouraging feature (43%/37% female/male enrolment, 2015), potentially to induce tangible changes in women agency and social perceptions, as also expressed by our informants. However, less than a quarter of Jordanian Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) researchers are women⁵⁹, regional averages for female researchers are 39.8% for Arab states and 32.3% for North America and Western Europe. Jordan is not an exception to the global leaking pipeline regarding women participation in research, but still behind average MENA rates for female involved in research patterns. This is due to the restrictive gender bias and the limited employability of research degree holders.

2.1.2. Health and gender

Jordan has made substantial investments in public healthcare and increased expenditure by more than 9% of GDP on health in 2010⁶⁰. Women and girls have benefitted, like male co-citizens, better access to health infrastructure and services, and the quality of their lives has improved. Maternal mortality is low and declining. In 2016, The ratio in Jordan is 46 per 100 000, lower than the average of 420 per 100.000 live births in the Eastern Mediterranean Region of WHO and the average of 400 per 100.000 live births globally. The lifetime risk of dying from pregnancy-related causes in Jordan is 1 in 450, which is lower than the average of 1 in 61 in the Eastern Mediterranean Region of WHO and the global figure of 1 in 92 (2008). Female life expectancy rose from 52.65 (1960) to 74.4 (2018) years, compared to a rise from 52.45 to 72.73 years for men⁶¹.

The Jordanian health sector is highly competitive in terms of infrastructure and services, for both public and private institutions. However, with covid-19 strike, although landlocked, healthcare facilities strained to meet the increasing emergencies, also of a large refugee population. The access

⁵⁵ <https://www.mei.edu/publications/secular-islamist-divide-deepens-jordan>

⁵⁶ <https://plan-international.org/jordan/education-jordan>

⁵⁷ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/museums/museum-projects/archive/international-center-for-women-artists-to-be-created-in-amman-jordan/>

⁵⁸ <https://plan-international.org/jordan>

⁵⁹ <http://womeninengineeringpmcs.org/jordan>

⁶⁰ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.XPD.CHEX.GD.ZS?locations=JO>

⁶¹ https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.MA.IN?end=2018&locations=JO&most_recent_year_desc=false&start=1960&view=chart

to basic healthcare for covid and non-covid cases is limited to 65% of the population⁶². The proportion of women who are completely unable to access family planning has increased by 10-20 % depending on the age group. Fewer women and girls have information on how they can access sexual and reproductive health services compared to before the lockdown. For 10 to 17 year-old girls, this has fallen from 37% to 18%.⁶³

Our rapid assessment with communities at regions revealed growing concerns among women, for own and family safety as they are the care takers of close relatives. The contamination risk is then increased for women, in particular head of households, refugees, non-Arabic speaking domestic workers. Female refugees, in-camp or non-camp settings, are among the most vulnerable groups to covid-19 pandemic, as access to basic healthcare services is generally compromised for refugee population. A recent UNDP survey revealed 70% of female refugees raise serious health related concerns. In case, 24% declare denied access to cure services while 34% cannot access medicine⁶⁴.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health is evidenced: early quarantine-related anxiety and its correlates is increasing among Jordanians, women in particular⁶⁵. Generalised stress and anxiety are high, especially amongst 18–49-year-old women, with 78% reporting worries relating to the pandemic.

2.1.3. Gender Based Violence - GBV

In Jordan, considerable number of women reported being victims of gender-based violence (GBV): physical, psychological, sexual or political. Depending on the discriminatory social norms, the definition of violence differs if the victim is a woman, and the violence is often overlooked if the offender is a close male relative. The paradox is worrying, victim women rarely report on violence, particularly domestic one, and men seem to vaunt their natural correctional accomplishment. Following the supposed women obedience and subordination to her father, brother and husband - in a heavy guardianship system on women - the limits of what is considered abusive or not are confused. The violence acceptance in the society, families and by women themselves is not a surprise, despite high female literacy. After each abusive incidence, women felt insecure, ashamed, frightened, captive and stigmatised.

The prevalence data on different violence against women is alarming, in 2019 Physical and/or Sexual Intimate Partner Violence was 138%, while lifetime alike violence was 19%⁶⁶. A recent study in 2020 evidenced 98% of women subjected to at least one type of violence, 38% of the sample believed a husband has the right to control a woman's behaviour and 93 % believed a wife is obliged to obey a husband⁶⁷. The covid-19 pandemic has raised levels and incidences of GBV, especially domestic abuse, as reported also by our informants. The lockdown and quarantine increased violence risks on girls and women by 69%⁶⁸. Refugee women are more subject to physical or psychological domestic violence with the lockdown as a result of either/or increased tensions in the household and increased food insecurity, both of which have been caused by the crisis⁶⁹.

Women with disabilities are also at high and increased risks to abuse. Some informants related that many parents of a female mentally disabled child request their forced sterilisation to prevent uncontrolled births, acknowledging the specific vulnerability of girls to sexual abuse - reported also at care facilities. The absence of a law protecting women with mental

⁶² https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/news-centre/news/2020/Jordan_survey_finds_most_struggle_meet_basic_needs_and_health_care_under_lockdown.html

⁶³ <https://plan-international.org/news/2020-05-20-covid-19-jordan-domestic-violence-poor-access-family-planning>

⁶⁴ <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20jordan/images/publications/2020/unwjcrapidimpactassessmentcovid19v8.pdf?la=en&vs=3456>

⁶⁵ <https://applications.emro.who.int/emhj/v26/10/1020-3397-2020-2610-1165-1172-eng.pdf?ua=1>

⁶⁶ <https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/pt/countries/asia/jordan#2>

⁶⁷ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257588313_Violence_Against_Women_in_Jordan

⁶⁸ <https://euromedrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Domestic-violence-amid-COVID19-EuroMed-Rights.pdf>

⁶⁹ <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20jordan/images/publications/2020/unwjcrapidimpactassessmentcovid19v8.pdf?la=en&vs=3456>

disabilities from forced sterilisation was addressed with the 2017 law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Domestic female workers are a vulnerable group to violence, especially migrants' women, despite the 2008 labour law and the adoption of the anti-human trafficking law in 2009. The law enforcement is irrelevant and abused domestic workers do not even report the crimes fearing charges, detention, or deportation, as the Jordanian system grants the employer control over the migrant worker's residence status. Single mothers are another group vulnerable to discrimination and violence. A woman who gives birth out of wedlock can be held in administrative detention for years under the pretext of protecting her life from danger. She normally loses custody of her child, who is registered without his parents' names and taken to an orphanage.

Jordanian laws do not explicitly criminalise same-sex physical relations. Nevertheless, lesbians, bisexual, transgender and questioning women are more subject to violence, facing conservative social norms. LGBTQ and prostitution are taboo in Jordan, data is not available and NGOs do not address these communities' issue, though particularly at high risk of abuse. The subject was rarely and carefully raised within the consultation, one answer was 'LGBTQ is not applicable in Jordan'.

The number of marriages involving girls under the age of 18 increased in 2011 peaking at 10,866 in 2015. In 2017, approximately 8% of girls in Jordan get married before turning eighteen⁷⁰. These figures increase when considering the Syrian refugee population in Jordan, with one third of all Syrian marriages in Jordan between 2011 and 2015 involve girls below the age of 18⁷¹. According to our informants, the actual figures could be even higher, as marriages among refugees are not always registered immediately.

Jordanian constitution does not refer to any gender-based discrimination. Only some forms of violence targeting women are criminalised. Marital rape is not considered a criminal offence, while abortion is considered a criminal offence under Articles 321-325 of the Penal Code, with no exception in case of rape or incest. Jordan does not have a specific law on honour crimes, the penal code does not specifically mention honour crimes, instead provide lenient sentences to perpetrators. However, noteworthy women protection advancements are brought through recent legal reforms, including amendments to the penal code. The annulment of Article 308 which allowed a rapist to escape punishment by marrying his victim is a victory for women, as majorly reported by our informants. The jurisprudence is more attentive to prevent and penalise GBV through reforms to the PSL, the Family Violence Law, the criminalisation of sexual violence in labour law and the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence.

Though, several informants believe legal reforms are incomplete and still under a conservative perspective. The domestic violence law is judged weak, as it does not specifically define the domestic violence crimes, and does not mention the concept of GBV. Still, the law presents some major shortcomings, including the failure to criminalise forms of violence such as restrictions on women's freedom and choices, economic and psychological abuse, marital rape and the exclusion of former spouses and non-married intimate partners from the definition of family members⁷². The detection of female trafficking victims is insufficient and the prosecution of perpetrators remains low. Female genital mutilation is not criminalised, and is still practised in a limited geographical area in southern Jordan, perpetrators can only be prosecuted for injuries.

The data on GBV is confusing: During the covid 19 lockdown, it was officially reported 68% decrease of GBV cases, against an increase on 33% according to the Family Protection Department of the Jordanian Police. Anyway, women are reticent to report on GBV, particularly domestic violence, refrained by shame, stigma, negative perception and social pressure. Another factor is the limited awareness on available reporting and assistance mechanisms. GBV victim has to denounce at the

⁷⁰ <https://www.unicef.org/jordan/media/1796/file/Jordan-Reports.pdf>
https://www.unicef.org/publications/index_101992.html#:~:text=The%20State%20of%20the%20World's%20Children%202017%3A%20Children%20in%20a%20Digital%20World,-%3C%3C%20Previous%20page&text=As%20the%20debate%20about%20whether,or%20yet%20another%20dividing%20line.

⁷¹ <https://euromedrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Factsheet-VAW-Jordan-EN.pdf>

⁷² <https://euromedrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Factsheet-VAW-Jordan-EN.pdf>

nearest police station, a matter to dissuade women from reporting abuses, as they might have been seeking protection and not necessarily a judicial proceeding. The family protection officer has the typical profile of: being a male, in the surrounding neighbourhood so probably knows her abuser, non-qualified to deal with traumatised persons, not aware or adherent to women and human rights, vaguely informed of jurisprudence and law enforcement in favour to women, and loaded with masculine cultural background, as majorly accentuated by our informants. Most times, women end up intimidated, reminded of her shameful act against her male guardian, forced to reconciliation and returned to the violence source.

Some NGOs offer hotline services to report on GBV, and rarely a further assistance or hosting facilities. Women shelters are few but allow access to live-saving protection services for GBV survivors. The state-owned shelters are three, with restricted access conditions. As a paradox, under Jordan's Prevention of Crimes Act No. 7 of 1954, adults and minors can be detained if they are perceived as a threat to the community and to prevent crimes. Girls and women escaping violence could be jailed, as the case of the 17 years girl, imprisoned for running out child abuse⁷³.

2.1.4. Access to Justice

Women access to justice, as the ability of persons to effectively enforce rights and achieve redress for complaints, is limited. The factors that undermine equal gender access to justice are essentially i) Discriminatory legal framework lacking to establish universal women rights and efficient understandable procedures for enforcing them ii) poor public and women awareness of their rights and the available applicability tools, iii) questionable services delivery by justice sector institutions.

In practice, the ability of women to access justice depends first on their readiness to challenge the inhibiting social norms before discriminatory legal frameworks. The exercise of women agency is the actual preliminary to eliminating gender gaps in access to justice. Many of our informants at community levels stated the heavy stigma on women 'in front of justice', without distinguishing if she is the actual justice seeker - a good women should not deal with juridical affairs, and absolutely not with a police station. The common belief links the justice institutions with exposure to abuse, explicitly sexual, in 'correction facilities', police offices and detention institutions. This might be all but a myth, based on cases of the kind, the fear is exacerbated to a level to dissuade women from a simple act to start an administrative legal procedure. The confusion on juridical institutions and processes is enhanced by limited public awareness but also the little respect of human and women rights at the executive level, the law enforcement institutions namely the police.

The justice system in Jordan is hardly accessible for men and women due to limited knowledge of rights and legal provisions, administrative procedures and competent institutions, heavy and complicated process, and increasing costs for legal processes. These general practical obstacles to accessing justice are further amplified for women, typically with shortened financial resources to pay lawyers and courts. The legal aid and support services are not often visible and accessible to women.

2.1.5. Peace building, stability, refugee crisis and gender

Jordan is the historical host of Palestinian refugees who constitute around 20% of Jordanian population, among which 370.000 live in the camps⁷⁴. Since Syria Crisis in 2011, Jordan population accounts around 10% of Syrian refugees estimated at 1.3 million considering the non-registered refugees, of which 81% live outside camps⁷⁵. The average unemployment rate among all residents in governorates with the largest influx of refugees has increased by about 3.3% since the beginning of the Syrian Refugee Crisis. Almost 6 in 10 Syrian refugees of working age are unemployed, 8 of them are women. A recent study found that 6% of Syrian women are currently working, and that 2% of

⁷³ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/11/feature-jordan-survivors>

⁷⁴ <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan>

⁷⁵ <https://www.unhcr.org/jo/12449-unhcr-continues-to-support-refugees-in-jordan-throughout-2019.html>

women have a legal work permit⁷⁶. In 2018, 78% of the Syrian population was living below the Jordanian poverty line. Those who live outside camps spend average two-thirds of their income on housing, the left resources barely cover food, health or education expenses, so most of refugee families adopt extreme money saving solutions: cutting meals, child labour, or early marriage. The most vulnerable to such practices are girls and women. The percentage of households with "poor" and "borderline" food consumption among Syrian refugees residing in Azraq and Zaatari camps increased by 280% between September 2019 and September 2020. Households' reporting "emergency" and "crisis" levels of livelihoods-based coping strategies (including early marriage and child labour) increased by 260% in the same period⁷⁷.

This is a rising concern as more urban refugees and host communities have difficulty accessing basic services and earning an income due to the COVID-19 lockdown. Now, most Syrian families are relying on humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs. Some 10,000 refugees, mainly women and children, live in an informal settlement called Rukban in a no-go military zone where humanitarian access denied since covid-19 crisis.

2.2. Economic sector

2.2.1. Labour, entrepreneurship and gender

Employment, economic policies and public financing

The educational accomplishment for women in Jordan is not reflected over to the job force. Jordan has one of the world's lowest rates of women participating in the workforce at 14.4 % in 2020 against 46.5% globally, 34% in Libya and 39% in Sudan, and lower to MENA average of 24.6%. The ratio of female to male labour force participation rate is at 22.68%. Women's economic activity was 17.3 % in 2017, 15.4 % in 2018,20 and 14.3 % in the second quarter of 2019. The paradoxical gender gap inversion between high human development indicators and weak participation in workforce is a MENA region feature, and is heavily impacting Jordan economy. If the gender gap in Jordan's workforce continues, the country potential GDP growth is expected to decline by 0.5 to 0.9 % per year⁷⁸, while an International Labour Organization ILO study estimated that Jordan's gender gap in labour force participation yields a 21% loss in the GDP, which is valued at \$8 billion based on 2014 figures⁷⁹. This is a considerable missed opportunity cost that negatively impacts the economy and results in a loss of return on public spending on education and also impacts household poverty by increasing dependency ratios (the ratios of dependents to working-age people).

Women with higher education have much greater probabilities of joining the labour force: women with post-secondary education and with university and post-graduate education are respectively about 22.8 and 56.2% likelier to be in the labour force than their less educated counterparts⁸⁰. The unemployment of males who carry a bachelor's degree and higher is at 23%, while the same indicator is at 78.2% for females⁸¹. Married women also tend to remain outside of the labour force. The 'marital-status gap' in labour force participation (the relative difference in labour force participation between married and never married women) is about 30 %⁸². Among women aged 22-

⁷⁶ UN Women and REACH, "Women Working: Jordanian and Syrian Refugee Women's Labour Force Participation and Attitudes Toward Employment," 2017, <http://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20jordan/attachments/publications/jordanian%20and%20syrian%20refugee.pdf?la=en&vs=1300>, 28, 35.

⁷⁷ <https://www.wfpusa.org/articles/10-facts-about-the-syrian-refugee-crisis-in-jordan/>

⁷⁸ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?locations=JO>

⁷⁹ Zafiriz Tzannatos, Effects of Gender Inequality in Employment and Pay in Jordan, Lebanon, and the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Three Questions Answered (ILO, 2016),18; Jordan Times (January 17, 2019).

⁸⁰ OECD, *Youth Wellbeing Policy Review in Jordan* (OECD, 2018).

⁸¹ https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/m/13B3612BD2694D28C125802000327DE9_PRIME%20Issues%20Paper%20Jordan.pdf

⁸² <https://unevoc.unesco.org/yem/Female+unemployment+in+Jordan+YEM+Blog&context=>

⁸² <https://growthlab.cid.harvard.edu/files/growthlab/files/2019-10-cid-wp-365-female-labor-jordan.pdf>

29, the marriage gap is even larger, suggesting that early marriage causes an even earlier non-return exit from the labour market⁸³.

Women are being paid almost 29% less than men in the private sector and around 5% less in the public sector. Underemployment may also dissuade women from looking for jobs: the average female wage earner is likely to have 12.3 years of education compared to 9.3 years for a male counterpart holding the same job (Economic and Social Council, 2010).

One recurrent argument raised by the majority of informants is the unavailable and unsafe transport that undermines women ability and will to search a job and to maintain her employment. Public transport is not reliable, punctual and available across the country. Many women in Jordan have experienced sexual harassment on public transport. 80.5% of women report that bad public transportation is a key reason they leave work (WB, 2019).⁸⁴

The covid-19 crisis and lockdown impact on Jordanian economy is considerable, causing GDP decrease rate reached -2.2% during the third quarter of 2020 compared with growth rate that reached 1.9% at the same quarter of 2019. Unemployment rates has increased by 4.8% with, specifically impacting women by 6.1% as generally employed in vulnerable sectors as agriculture and manufacturing. Female refugees job loss is estimated at 99% at the informal sector⁸⁵. Despite women low introduction in the workforce, the unemployment rate has reached 24.7% during the fourth quarter of 2020: 22.6% for males against 32.8% for females, whose rate increased by 5.7 %age points compared with fourth quarter 2019⁸⁶. Unemployment levels are particularly high among the young (age 15-29) and highly educated women (above 77 %, SIGI). Vulnerability to unemployment rises with the level of education for women, while men with higher education are less likely to be unemployed. Women tend to leave the labour market after failing to find a suitable job after a certain age. According to the 2015 general census, Jordanian women start withdrawing from the labour market at the age of 30, despite having a high-level education, preventing them from reaching decision-making positions.

The wife's duty to obey the husband in exchange for financial maintenance is enshrined in the family law⁸⁷. Conversely, traditional gender roles create expectations that, in times of crises, women prioritise their family responsibilities. Hence, when initial government measures were announced to close schools and restrict movements in both public and private sectors, employers sent home women employees first to complete their domestic care duties⁸⁸. Similarly, despite the gradual reopening of economic activities as of early May, day care centres have remained closed, forcing many women to remain home to take care of their children⁸⁹.

The official figures related to the workforce do not consider the growing informal sector. In Jordan, informal employment represents 44% of total employment⁹⁰, that is absorbing 35%⁹¹ of female manpower in 2020, with the majority of informal workers concentrated in agriculture and food processing, such as dairy manufacturing and animal husbandry. Female refugees represent 30% of the labour force, massively non registered and about only 2% on full-time basis⁹².

⁸³ https://www.ilo.org/dyn/youthpol/en/equest.fileutils.dochandle?p_uploaded_file_id=171

⁸⁴

http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:v7E3vyM_pG8J:documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/429441581525262376/Jordan-Improving-Women-Economic-Opportunities-Select-Entry-Points-for-Policy-Dialogue-and-Operational-Interventions.docx+&cd=1&hl=fr&ct=clnk&gl=dz

⁸⁵ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_743391.pdf

⁸⁶ Department of Statistics DoS, 2020.

⁸⁷ OECD (2019), SIGI 2019 Global Report: Transforming Challenges into Opportunities, OECD Publishing, <https://doi.org/10.1787/bc5d212-en>

⁸⁸ OECD (2017), Women's Economic Empowerment in Selected MENA Countries: The Impact of Legal Frameworks in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264279322-en>.

⁸⁹ <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/covid-19-crisis-in-the-mena-region-impact-on-gender-equality-and-policy-responses-ee4cd4f4/>

⁹⁰ <https://seepnetwork.org/Blog-Post/Discovering-A-Route-to-Formalize-Women-Owned-Businesses-in-Jordan>

⁹¹ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/briefingnote/wcms_743393.pdf

⁹² https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/3_SyrianRefugeeCrisisImpactJordanianLabourMarket.pdf

To explain the limited women involvement in manpower, on top of limited job opportunities, many informants pointed at the cultural and religious background that pressures women to stay at home. Indeed, the prevailing gender norms in Jordan assumes men to be the main breadwinners while women are the caretakers. This influences women's educational choices and related job orientations, historically in the care field, judged more suitable to the accepted professional careers and in harmony with women skills. The Jordanian Constitution lay down special employment conditions for women, such as prohibiting them from working in certain sectors and or night work (with some exceptions, such as working in hospitals or airports). On the other hand, the Labour Code provides paid maternity leaves (70 days for private sector and 90 days for the public sector). Interestingly, pregnant women who work in the private sector are protected against termination of their employment contract during pregnancy, although this is not always the case in the public sector. Working mothers are also entitled to a maximum of one hour a day for breastfeeding for one year from the end of the maternity leave period. Article 72 of the Jordanian Act makes it mandatory for companies to have a day care centre if they employ more than 20 women with at least 10 children under the age of four between them. In 2014, the Social Security Act included maternity insurance, unemployment benefits and optional subscription to the social security corporation for housewives and unemployed women. This Act widened the scope of social security coverage to include female employees in mini-corporations. However, the Jordanian Labour Code does not include any clause to give women the right of equal remuneration for work of equal value⁹³. This undoubtedly contributes to the gender pay gap. Official data show that the widest pay gap is in the manufacturing sector 43.1%, followed by 27.9% in health and social work and 24.5% in education (2016).

Private Sector and Entrepreneurship

The correlation between women agency, female business development and countries' economy growth is globally evidenced. Yet, women entrepreneurship in Jordan is not effectively supported. In 2018, only 6.7% of start-ups are female owned⁹⁴. Female financial agency and private investment is a revolutionary issue in the Jordanian patriarchal society, as it does not correspond to the established gender roles to put women not at a breadwinner position. The first obstacle to a woman entrepreneur is her self-confidence and self-determination to break through family, tribe and social perceptions. Many informants welcomed female business-owned ventures, but contrast on the investment fields that should be adequate to women abilities in terms of movement, transport, exposure to mixed environment, time spent outside the house, and networks. The idea of a fitting business model to the social norms only reminds the persistent guardianship on women. It was said, in different wording, that a woman does not have a freedom of choice. The society, male in particular, seem afraid of women economic empowerment, as it is undoubtedly, a first step towards women agency and gender equality. Female entrepreneurship, in this context, is not expected to expand.

Globally and in Jordan, the economic activities of women are mostly linked to the informal sector, being workers or business owners. Many informants recall the limited support to formalise female small and medium size enterprise, despite the 2017 new instructions allowing certain professionals to register and work from home.

Applying the developed gender agency framework in the economic sector, particularly at the entrepreneurship level, the identified elements that reduce women power are:

1) Knowledge of available resources for wealth creation and professional careers development

i) Personal assets: capacities, self-determination and freedom of choice: Jordanian women is highly educated, but not necessarily highly qualified to fit the labour market demands, or the business development requirements. The imposed academic and professional orientations have limited

⁹³ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_242615.pdf

⁹⁴ SIGI, 2018

women choices to the care field jobs, namely education and healthcare occupations. In this context, it is also very probable that women do not properly evaluate their own capacities and do not upgrade them to match their desired careers. Women are then more likely to exclude entrepreneurship patterns because they ignore their own skills relevant to business development, as such alternative money earning scheme is not a common option. Many of our informants confirm that women are less self-confident than man, and do have little space to choose for themselves. This combination induces women little involvement in private investment settings.

ii) Common resources: Women, the usual outsider of the investment exercise, miss relevant information on available and accessible resources to enhance their employability or to set their self-owned business. Potential female investors are less likely to know and to access to public or private services applicable at her support, including academic and skills development opportunities, legal and institutional assets and financial support schemes. This limits women ability to evaluate opportunities, efficient resources management and related investment scopes, hence to make the best possible choice for their profession development.

2) Processes, mechanisms, and means to access to different resources In Jordan, full and equitable access to identified resources for entrepreneurship is not easy, in particular for women. The main features of the limited entrance to assets, as discussed with several informants, are:

- **Gender Based Violence GBV free environment:** GBV is increasing in Jordan targeting women from different social and economic backgrounds

- **Access to information:** The applicability of the Law on Guarantee of Access to Information No. 47 in 2007 is weak, so the right to every Jordanian to obtain the information is challenged by limited governance, limited awareness and heavy bureaucracy of the administration. Women are among the vulnerable group with fewer access to the information they need to better evaluate their business models, in terms of markets study, sectors and companies' competitiveness and available support mechanisms.

- **Access to services:** The actual challenges to female business model's start-up are basically linked to access to financial schemes, markets and enhanced capacities in relation to financial and technical management, business planning, competitiveness and innovation. The enterprise ecosystem in Jordan is not an asset to start and grow sustainable private investments, especially with covid-19 economic restrictions. Jordanian women - particularly prone to poverty, unemployment, underemployment and exclusion from development schemes - are a growth opportunity to the country through establishing their own income generating activities. This can alleviate poverty and enhance employment opportunities for other women and move Jordan toward its 2025 goal of 27% female participation in the workforce.

- **Access to finance:** Both male and female entrepreneurs face restricted access to finance to start or sustain their businesses. Financial institutions impose strict conditions to land loans, including real estate property, which excludes huge section of female potential entrepreneurs. Acknowledging that female land ownership in Jordan does not exceed 17%⁹⁵, it remains impossible for the major part of women to benefit private banks financial schemes. The practice is to deny or limit women access to land ownership, especially in rural areas. In addition, women are sometimes pressured into waiving their right to inheritance⁹⁶. The micro-credit solutions have shown their limits, the 'gharimat' issue was only resolved after the King launched the initiative to pay the debts of 5,672 ones⁹⁷, after women failure to sustain their businesses and pay the initial loans.

⁹⁵ SGI, 2019

⁹⁶ https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep12714?seq=3#metadata_info_tab_contents

⁹⁷ <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/debts-1542-gharimat-covered-totalling-jd11m>

- **Physical access:** In Jordan, women freedom of mobility is restricted, due to the social and family repressive norms. Male guardianship impinges over female personal and professional decisions, in particular regarding alternative choices as entrepreneurship. Besides, the inefficient public transport infrastructure is a major limitation to women business development, considering the unsatisfying services and the particular harassment women are subject to. The majority of informants revealed little trust in public transport efficiency in terms of punctuality, availability and accessibility to women. The sexual harassment targeting women is a fact, but also verbal and physical intimidation. On the other hand, private transportation solutions are expensive and heavily increase investments costs for women, with already limited financial resources.

3) control over assets: Women are not in full control of the available assets they are able to use to establish and sustain their investment, as:

- **Time:** Women are overloaded with multi-tasks assignments according to the established gender roles. Covid-19 lockdown and schools closure charged a Jordanian economically active mother with unsustainable total workload of 80-85 hours per week, with a gender gap in unpaid work of 17.7. Women have to take care of children, the elderly, husband and male relatives demands, cooking and cleaning and housekeeping related tasks. The unpaid workload increases to up to 20 hours with children, and much more if a family member catches covid. Women are obliged to prioritise their assigned roles before their business development. Many informants relate several cases of women that dropped their jobs or businesses to look after their families. The extra workload consumes the time women would spend on her work, business management or leisure activities. This impacts active women efficiency at delivering quality assignments, which decreases the business profitability and competitiveness while increasing the investment costs.

- **Finance/money:** Working or self-employed women do not usually control their incomes, due to social and family pressure. Rural and refugee women are more likely to cede their earnings totally to their male relatives, generally the husband, willingly or not. Less vulnerable women tend to better control their incomes. Women are denied land ownership, especially in rural areas. They are also often pressured into waiving their right to inheritance⁹⁸. A female entrepreneur is, then, rarely to use her own financial assets to promote and sustain her business, or simply for entertainment activities.

- **Power to change:** In Jordan, financially empowered women do not stand to the decision-making level, and usually keep under male guardianship. The mindset is still patriarchal preventing women of participation, even those in the right position to command. Female entrepreneurs are still behind effective leadership in the economic sectors being unaware, unable or afraid to upraise their voice and impose themselves as equal partners for joint development. Women represent 34% of professional union membership but make up only 8% of professional union boards. Women's participation is particularly low in chambers of commerce (0.5%) and chambers of industry (8%). Most importantly, female business owners, once on the command board, are not lobbying to realise the required change.

2.2.2. Food security, climate Change and gender

In Jordan, women are underrepresented in decision-making on climate change, so adaptation and resilience policies are not gender sensitive. Since men tend to enjoy a higher socio-economic status, women are disproportionately affected by droughts, floods and other extreme weather events, have unequal access to resources and are marginalised when it comes to making decisions on adaptation and resilience strategies and actions⁹⁹.

⁹⁸ https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep12714?seq=3#metadata_info_tab_contents

⁹⁹ <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-equality-and-climate-change-report>

In Jordan, the economic sectors to be strongly affected by climate change effects are water, agriculture and land use¹⁰⁰, to which is mostly linked rural women activities. In rural Jordan, the vulnerability to the effects of climate change is disproportional between men and women, particularly because women are among the poorest, their income generation depend on the threatened natural resources, and they bear the responsibility to secure water, food, and fuel for cooking and heating.

In the country, almost 9.1% of female-headed households are food insecure or vulnerable to food security, compared to 5.7% of male-headed families¹⁰¹. Furthermore, women adaptation and resilience capacities are hindered with the significant social, economic, and political barriers they face. Thus, clear gender differences in the ability to cope with climate-change-induced shocks.

On the other hand, food insecurity is an important layer of complexity to violence, most women subject to increased risk of violence also reported having to borrow food or money from neighbours, family or other households. This demonstrates an important and concerning relationship between increased risks of domestic violence, food insecurity and economic pressures.

¹⁰⁰ <https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/country/jordan>

¹⁰¹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/rural-women-and-climate-change-jordan#:~:text=In%20rural%20areas%20of%20Jordan,are%20threatened%20by%20climate%20change.>

Recommendations

The donor community has a special responsibility to foster Jordan gender agenda. The European Union is in the position to provide significant support through:

Strategic level

- Promote **citizenship** experience for all to be an inclusive enabling asset for gender equality;
- Specifically target **men, religious and education institutions** in the design and implementation of programmes/projects activities relevant to gender equality;
- Enhance **sustainable partnership with empowered national media**, after benefitting appropriate capacities building on gender sensitivity.

Operational level

- Conduct a gender assessment and a gender audit to the EU programmes in Jordan, at mid-term and ex-post levels;
- Review applied gender sensitive indicators of EU interventions to specifically highlight the improved women agency based on i) knowledge of available resources, as personal assets and common resources, ii) Processes and means to access to different resources, including gender-based violence free environment, access to information, access to finance and physical access, and iii) control over assets namely time, finance/money and power to change.
- Engage national debate on gender through Strategic Taiex mission including all relevant stakeholders and specifically men, religious institutions and tribes;
- Provide budget support to national sectoral policies promoting the gender equality, including education and cultural sectors
- Promote entrepreneurship and innovative start-ups for the transport sector through incentives and grants to technological gender sensitive solutions (i.e.: dedicated applications for safe transport).

ANNEXES

ANNEX I: Key informant groups

Key Informant Groups	Institutions / Individuals/level	Focus	Target Interviews/ data collector	Total target interviews
Women Groups (At least 100 interviews)	Households	Active/ Non active women: shares of responsibilities, shares of revenue, childcare, personal and family laws	10	40
	Community	Society leaders, Tribe/community leaders, entrepreneurs, activists, divorced, widowed	10	40
	Rural areas	Active in Agriculture, land owners?, revenues shares, birth rates, marriage age, access to services, inheritance	10	40
	Culture	Celebrities, writers, journalists, actresses, musicians, art performers	2	8
	Legal / Law enforcement / Trade unions	Activists, lawyers, soldiers, police officers	5	20
	Refugees	Integrated individuals/groups	5	20
	Degree holders	- Unemployed/ underemployed - Highly skilled: medical seniors, engineers...	10	40
	Entrepreneurs	Access to support, challenges	3	12
	Handicapped / Mental health issues	Access to services	3	12
	With heavy / permanent diseases	Access to health services	3	12
	Victim of violence - sexual, domestic, workplaces, etc.	Denunciations? Process? access to legal and social assistance	3	12
	Incarcerated (or previously)	Society acceptance	2	8
	Poor / illiterate		5	20
	Excluded (honour motif, single mothers, LGBTQ, homeless, etc.)	Living conditions? Options?	2	8

Social Groups	Youth: boys and girls		10	40
	Educated (degree holders)		10	40
	Tribe members		3	12
	Religious groups / leaders		2	8
	Community leaders		3	12
	Emigrants	Perception on social differences	3	12
NGOs	Women NGOs	Assistance in practice	3	12
	Violence prevention/protection NGOs	On-field interventions / denunciations		
	Legal NGOs / HR			
	Cancer/HIV/permanent diseases NGO			
	Culture NGOs			
	Sports NGOs			
	Religious NGOs			
	Economic growth NGOs	Opportunities / missed opportunities		
	Sustainable Development NGOs	Environment / Climate change / water		
Private sector (Formal and informal)	Start-ups	Incentives (for women), added value	3	12
	Manufactories / Industry	- Corporate Social Responsibility CSR - Informal female workers/ exploitation - Work environment: safety, shifts,... - Salary grid - Access to social security, health insurance	3	12
	Agriculture		5	20
	Tourism		2	8
	Service		3	12
Public bodies	Ministry of Culture	- Gender focal points (if existent) - On-field operators		Following assignments to each team member (interviews schedule)
	Ministry of Women and family? Youth			
	Ministry of social development			
	Centres for assistance to women: 4 shelters			
	Family protection Department			
	National Council for Family Affairs			
	National Commission for Human Rights			

	JNCW Jordan National Commission for Women			
	Ministry of Education			
	Schools and universities (many)			
	Ministry of Religious affairs			
	Ministry of employment and entrepreneurship? Labour?			
	Ministry of justice			
	Ministry of health			
	Ministry of Agriculture			
	..			
Donors / Finance	UNWOMEN		5	20
	UNDP			
	Banks (at least 3)	Women access to financial schemes		
	Microfinance institutions (all of them)	Impact of projects on women life, debts...		
Policy influencers	Media		2	8
	Opinion leaders	Female bloggers	3	12
	Researchers	Female researchers	3	12
Policy makers	Elected persons	Female players	3	12
	High level decision makers		3	12

