



اللجنة الوطنية الأردنية لشؤون المرأة  
The Jordanian National Commission for Women

## **Jordan's Fifth National Periodic Report to the CEDAW Committee - Summary**



## Introduction

In response to international commitments, mainly the provisions of Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Jordan National Commission for Women (JNCW) prepared the Kingdom's Fifth National Periodic Report for subsequent submission to the CEDAW Committee. This report was prepared with the active participation of many public institutions and non-governmental organizations, which provided the required information and data needed to prepare the report. The report depicts the achievements of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in its quest to eliminate discrimination against women, as well as the efforts being exerted to mainstream gender into the process of activating constitutional and legal rights in the framework of implementing CEDAW articles and the progress achieved during the period from July 2005 (when the Combined Third and Fourth reports were submitted) until November 2009 in the economic, social, cultural political and civil rights areas, through a review of the CEDAW articles one by one in order to assess the achievements made for women in all the CEDAW domains, supported by some indicators. A preliminary version of the present report was studied and refined by all the official and non-governmental organizations' commissions during several workshops addressing all the Convention's articles before it was adopted in its final form.

When Jordan ratified the Convention on 1/7/1992, it entered a reservation to Article 9/2, which stipulates that «States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children», as well as Article 15/4, relating to «the movement of persons and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile», and paragraphs c, d and g of Article 16, related, respectively to «the same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution»; «the same rights and responsibilities as parents, irrespective of their marital status; and «the same personal rights as husband and wife.»

CEDAW was published in the Official Gazette on 1/8/2007. A Cabinet decision, adopted on 31/3/2009, agreed to withdraw the reservation to Article 15/4 of the Convention. Jordan is currently studying the other reservations, provided they are not in conflict with the principles of the Islamic Shari'ah. No decision has yet been taken to ratify the CEDAW Optional Protocol, which is still under study. Jordan also sought to enforce Jordan's commitments resulting from the Convention in its national legal system.

The present report responds to the following:

1. The general recommendations annexed to the Convention and issued by the meetings of the CEDAW Committee at the United Nations;
2. The final remarks made by the CEDAW Committee during its discussion with the Jordan's delegation of the Combined Third and Fourth Report, as well as the Initial and second reports.
3. The provisions of the Beijing Platform for Action, which includes a procedural program for translating the CEDAW provisions.
4. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially Goal 3 related to promoting gender equality and empowering women.
5. The document entitled «Guiding principles with regard to the form and content of reports submitted by States Parties to international human rights conventions, 2003.»

The report also reviewed the National Agenda, which identified targets for the 10-year period (2006–2015) and formed a long-term strategy in the framework of the “We Are All Jordan” initiative. The report reviewed all the national pieces of legislation, policies, practices and procedures with a view to show the extent to which they are in harmony with Jordan's CEDAW commitments. Furthermore, it shed light on women's contribution to political, economic and social development.

## **The report highlights Jordan's progress in the following areas:**

- Expanding the base of ratified human rights conventions. In addition to CEDAW, Jordan has ratified, and published in the Official Gazette on 30 April 2009, the two protocols to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, namely the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (the Trafficking Protocol) and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants. The Kingdom has also ratified the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (the 1949 Convention) and the 1999 Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention and published many international human rights instruments in the Official Gazette.
- Adherence to the Kingdom's commitments to international charters and conventions and submitting periodic reports on ratified conventions.
- Highlighting national initiatives on advancing the status of citizens in general, and women in particular, and focusing on forging ahead with the development process through the numerous reform and economic, social and political development initiatives, including the "We Are All Jordan" initiative, which highlights the importance of increasing women's participation in work and production through proper training, rehabilitation and support, as well as the elimination of all obstacles that impede women's progress. In the same direction, the Women Empowerment theme in the National Agenda (2006–2015) recommends the implementation of the following main principles: "Ensure equality and remove all forms of discrimination against women in Jordanian laws and legislation; eliminate all wrongful social practices against women and correct negative stereotyping that undermine their rights; and increase women's participation in the economic and political activity."
- The tangible progress achieved in relation to many of the themes addressed by the Convention, whether in the area of policies, legislation or measures adopted to achieve gender equality and advancing the status of women throughout the Kingdom as stipulated in the Constitution. Continuous narrowing has been observed in

the qualitative gap in many areas where women have been able to accede to some leading positions in the Legislative Authority as senators or deputies, as well as the Executive Branch as ministers, secretaries general, ambassadors, governors and directors general. Women have also contributed to undertakings by regional and international organizations and held positions in the international and national judiciaries. Furthermore, the quality gap has also narrowed in the education sector, where women now outnumber men. No position is closed to Jordanian women any more, with the exception of those in the Shari'ah judicial system or in ecclesiastical courts. Furthermore, gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation processes are keen on meeting the needs of both sexes on equal footing. This has been extended to include planning for adopting gender-sensitive State budgets. In preparation for compiling and adopting a gendersensitive State budget for the year 2011, a plan has been set up for training higher- and medium-level leaderships in the area of gender-sensitive budgets.

This introduction is intended to summarize the women's-rights-related achievements and challenges in the areas of equality and non-discrimination, as detailed in this report in terms of women's participation in public life, as well as the legislation, human security and social protection, economic empowerment and media communication domains.

#### - Participation in Public Life

- Within the Government's patronage of increasing women's participation at acceptable ratios in decision-making positions, Jordanian women have made tangible progress in terms of filling governmental positions. Four women are members of the Council of Ministers, while seven others have been appointed to the 2009 Senate (12.7% of the 55 members). Seven women are secretaries general of ministries, while nine are secretaries general of commissions/corporations. Two women are counselors at the Legislation and Opinion Bureau, three are directors of police directorates, and one woman is president of a university. In addition, many women have been appointed in

high-ranking positions in all the Government's departments, including the armed forces and police corps. One woman has been appointed as governor. In view of the importance of commitment to Article 8 of the Convention, three women have been appointed as ambassadors at the foreign ministry. Many other women occupy high-ranking diplomatic positions.

- In order to support women's entry into the judicial system, the Judicial Institute of Jordan's bylaw states that women shall constitute a minimum of 15% of the Institute's student body. Students accepted in the Judges of the Future Program are accepted on a fifty-fifty basis in all governorates, which will definitely lead to raising the ratio of women's participation in the judicial system, wherein the percentage of female judges has risen from 1.2% in 2000 to 7.1% in 2009 (the number now stands at 48 female judges). It is worth mentioning that this development has involved both quality and quantity, as one woman has been appointed as president of the Amman Court of First Instance, while several female judges are members of courts of appeal panels.

- Jordan was among the first States, dispatching peacekeeping forces to war and conflict zones around the world, to include women drawn from the ranks of the Public Security Directorate in the Kingdom's detachments. Their performance prompted the United Nations Secretary General to request Jordan, for the first time, to extend the two women's service for another half a year. At present, seven women, drawn from the PSD and the Jordanian Women Police Force, serve in United Nations peace-keeping forces - four in Kosovo and three in Darfour.

- Following the promulgation of the 2007 Political Parties Law, women's participation in political parties has risen to 29% and a woman now occupies the position of secretary general of a political party.

- Women participate in large percentages in membership of associations working in the social and economic areas, as well as public life.

- The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) also contributes to empowering Palestinian women and enhancing their self-confidence and self-reliance and

## **increasing their participating in the decision-making process in their family and community.**

### **Challenges:**

- Despite the noticeable increase in the number of women casting their votes in the country's general elections, the level of women's representation in the House of Deputies is still modest. In the previous House, only seven of the 110 deputies were women — one elected by competition and 6 through the women's quota. In some areas, the society still prefers to be represented by men in the House of Deputies, which requires continued awareness-raising efforts to convince the society that the presence of women in the National Assembly and their active participation in development will lead to achieving the public interest and that achieving equality in this area will enhance democracy.
- Jordanian women's political participation is still below the aspired level. Despite the increase in women's participation in the Council of Ministers, the National Assembly, municipal councils and some administrative positions, men still get the better of most of the leadership positions within organizational structures. In order to straighten the decision-making pyramid, depict a better image of Jordan, and encourage the society to accept the role of women, it is necessary that this pyramid rests on a solid base and that the percentages of women are higher in the lower and middle tiers than they are in the higher levels.
- Women's representation of their government at the international level, particularly in the diplomatic corps, is still limited, as only 17.2% of Jordanian diplomats are women. This low representation level may be attributed to the nature of the diplomatic profession, as well as the difficulties faced by the woman diplomat's husband in accepting the idea of having to change his work every few years as a result of his wife's relocation.
- At the level of the highly-active professional associations, women's presence is not noticeable, as women constitute only 28% of the total



of around 160,000 association members and only 6 (around 4.8%) of the 123 members of the associations' governing boards are women.

## **Legislation**

- During the period following submission of Jordan's Combined 3rd and 4th Periodic CEDAW Reports in 2005, the legislative process witnessed rapid development towards guaranteeing the creation of objective conditions for fair legislation and equal opportunities. This was depicted in the important steps taken toward protecting women's rights through the enactment of new legislation or amendment of existing ones. In particular, the National Agenda recommended continuation of efforts aiming at removing all forms of discrimination against women in Jordanian laws and legislation. This process was achieved in a manner that was consistent with the provisions of international human rights conventions, especially those related to eliminating gender-based violence.

- In 2007, a "List of Demands" was prepared, including an introduction about the importance of expediting legal reform, as well as a list of proposals for amending existing women-related laws and enacting new legislation. The List was submitted to members of the 15th House of Parliament and to the Council of Ministers.

- Many pieces of legislation have been enacted. The present report highlights the overall advantages, which these laws have achieved for women, including the following:

1. The Shari'ah Execution Law (2006), whereby executing Shari'ah verdicts are now under the jurisprudence of Shari'ah courts, thus facilitating procedures.
2. The Hashemite Fund for Development of the Jordan Badia (2006), which aims to contribute to achieving comprehensive development in the different Badia regions, improving the living standard of residents of the Badia, investing their human capacities and capabilities and enhancing the role of women in the Badia.

3. The Jordanian Law Guaranteeing Access to Information (2007), whereby a Council established by virtue of this law guarantees the provision of information to any male or female who requests such information, looks into complaints submitted in order to access information, and works on settling these complaints.
4. The 2007 Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which explicitly provides for equality in rights and duties between disabled men and women.
5. The Municipalities Law (2007), which allocates not less than 20% of municipal council seats to women who win the highest number of votes among female candidates. Women have effectively participated in the 2007 municipal elections and won up to 27.4% of the seats in councils throughout the Kingdom.
6. The Execution Law (2007), which stipulates the inadmissibility of imprisoning a pregnant woman until the elapse of three months after delivery, or of withholding Nafaqa (adequate support paid, especially to a wife) on the part of the debtor.
7. The Olympic Committee Law (2007), which assumes responsibility for patronizing and developing sports at the national level, combating discrimination, promoting women's sports, urging females in Jordan, on equal footing with males, to enjoy their right to participate in recreational and sports activities.
8. The Social and Economic Council Law (2007), which provides for observing women's representation in at least two of the four groups constituting the Council.
9. The Civil Service Bylaw (2007), which is based on the principles of transparency, justice, equal opportunities, and gender-based non-discrimination in dealing with civil servants in matters related to the employment rights, duties and responsibilities. By virtue of this law, the Civil Service Bureau is committed to these principles through planning for, managing, selecting and appointing human resources. At the level of both obligatory and optional promotions, there are no conditions that differentiate between men and women. The bylaw introduced certain social benefits for women without jeopardizing their job, seniority, or due allowances, e.g., leave related to death of a family member, which is granted in accordance

with the degree of kinship with the deceased, and the female employee's leave for purposes of Idda (the period of waiting during which a widowed or divorced woman may not re-marry).

10. The Protection Against Family Violence Law (2008), which aims to safeguarding family ties, reducing the effects of penal measures in cases of violence among family members, maintaining secrecy, imposing alternative punishments and precautionary measures that guarantee avoiding any harm to the victim or any other family member, adopting arrangements to protect reporters of violence, and creating Family Conciliation Committees.
11. The Public Health Law (2008), which devotes special attention to the health of women and children by providing them with the required services in accordance with the requirements of reproductive health. This law also provides for implementing programs related to health activities for the elderly and to supervising the institutions that care for them.
12. Law on the Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings, No. 9 (2009), which incriminates all forms of trafficking in human beings as stipulated in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. This Law prohibits the exploitation of persons in slavery, forced or compulsory labor, debt bondage, or serfdom, or in prostitution or any form of sexual exploitation. Furthermore, the law imposes severe penalties in cases where the victims are children and women. Articles 4 and 5 provide for the creation of a "National Committee for the Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings."

- Some new legislation have targeted the protection of motherhood. The present report includes details of these rights, as in the Civil Service Bylaw; the 2009 Social Security Law, which created a "motherhood fund"; the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the 2007 Execution Law.

- Some laws were also amended with the aim of achieving more protection for women. Amended laws include the following:

1. Social Security Law, wherein social protection was extended to include all workers. The draft law included an amendment to the law, whereby a wife can combine the pension salary from her deceased husband with her income from her job. Early pension retirement for females was also amended and the law no more differentiates between males and females in terms of salaries and pension incomes.
2. The Civil Service Retirement Law, whereby the period specified for retiring a male or female civil servant was raised in order to limit cases of early retirement.
3. The Civil Service Bylaw (2009), which imposes severe disciplinary penalties against anyone who causes the infliction of corporal punishment on any child in a governmental institution, including an educational, rehabilitational, or training facility, as well as care or protection centers.
4. The Labor Law (2009), which repealed paragraphs that excluded certain categories of workers, mostly women, from being subjected to implementation of the provisions of the law. The amended law introduced Article 29, which punishes sexual harassment and exempts labor-related lawsuits from all fees, including rulings execution fees.
5. One panel at the High Criminal Court has been designated to look into and expedite the rendering of judgment in the so-called "honor-killings" lawsuits and unify the exercise of judgment in these cases.
6. "Family wings," equipped with closed circuit television, have been created in courts with a view to mitigating psychological pressure and protecting witnesses who are under the age of 18 years.
7. Several legislative and preventive measures have been adopted to alleviate crimes perpetrated on the pretext of honor. By the end of 2009, 350 cases were handled and lives of all the girls involved were saved.

8. In order to remove all forms of discrimination against women in Jordanian legislation, a draft law amending the Penal Code was prepared in 2009 for submission to the House of Deputies. The draft is intended to harmonize with CEDAW provisions and other international criteria. The present report highlights the most important amendments to the law.

– The Labor Law grants benefits to female workers as it prohibits dismissing a female worker from service because of pregnancy, during her motherhood leave, or on the basis of her marital status. The provisions of the Labor Law or the Civil Service Bylaw do not infringe upon the principle of gender equality. On the contrary, they include special benefits in the framework of providing care to a working woman and conciliation between her duties towards both her family and her work.

- Several draft laws have been finalized for submission to the 16th National Assembly. These drafts include the following:

Draft Nafaqa Fund Law, draft Social Security Law, draft Personal Status Law, draft Election to the House of Deputies Law, draft Law Amending the Penal Procedures Law.

In addition, several draft bylaws have been finalized for submission to the Council of Ministers with the aim of enforcing the provisions of the Protection against Family Violence Law, including the Family Conciliation Committees System.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Justice formed a committee in 2009 to follow up on a project to train top-ranking ministry employees on gender mainstreaming. Since 2007, female judges had increasingly participated in courses conducted within the framework of this project. The Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) has been, and still is working for the benefit of Jordanian women. Following are some of the Commission's achievements:

- A joint House of Deputies-JNCW follow-up team has been set up to establish cooperation in studying discriminatory legislation against women and the Parliament's role in implementing CEDAW provisions. A Women's Affairs Committee was established at the Senate in 2008.
- In cooperation with the Legislation and Opinion Bureau, the JNCW has been providing its views on women-related draft laws and recommending legislation aimed at advancing the status of women.
- A project, entitled "Supporting and Promoting Local Capacities to Protect Women's Rights in Jordan" is currently being implemented in cooperation between the Commission and Mizan Law Group for Human Rights. The project targets judges, lawyers, public prosecutors, and all other institutions involved in providing legal assistance and aims to familiarize them with CEDAW, its status and how to advance it as evidence before the Jordanian judiciary.

### **Challenges:**

The challenges addressed by the present report include the necessity of amending many pieces of legislation with the aim of gender mainstreaming. These include the following:

According to the provisions of the Social Security Law, the pension salary shall be paid to the deceased's mother and widow, as well as his unmarried, widowed or divorced daughters and sisters as long as they are unmarried at the time of his death. The pension of any of these women shall be suspended in case she gets married, but shall be re-instated in case she gets divorced or widowed. This enhances the concept of "dependent women" and requires amending the law in a manner where marriage shall not have any effect on due pensions. It also calls for revoking the condition that, for the husband of an insured woman to deserve his share of her pension, he should be completely disabled and should not have any income from wages or another pension salary that equals his share of his wife's pension. Also, unemployment insurance should be activated and it is necessary to issue the bylaws and regulations related to activating implementation of motherhood insurance. Furthermore, the Civil Retirement Law and

the Labor Law do not fare better in that they both deprive a widow, daughter, mother or sister of their due share of the pension.

– The Civil Service Bylaw does not grant a female public sector employee an hour for breastfeeding, nor does it provide for nurseries in governmental departments, despite the fact that these rights are provided for in the Labor Law. Furthermore, a male employee is entitled to a “family allowance” that a female employee receives only in case her husband is deceased or disabled and she is the sole supporter of their children. There is a need to amend the Labor Law and the Civil Service Bylaw in order to create “parenthood” leave to either parent.

– The Civil Retirement Law deprives a female insured employee of combining an inherited salary with her pension salary. If she is allocated a pension salary for her service, she will be paid whatever higher salary while the other salary will be suspended.

– It is important to amend some articles of the Penal Code, in particular Article 308, which allows dropping the charge against the perpetrator of rape upon agreement that he marries the victim, on the pretext that this article depicts the extent to which the Legislator is keen on the fate of women, especially in cases of pregnancy for family and social reasons. The Code should also be amended in terms of punishing anyone who performs the wedding ceremony of a person who has not completed 18 years of age. The matter of incriminating aborting victims of forbidden fornication.

– The Nationality Law does not grant a Jordanian woman the right to pass her nationality to her children, even though Article 9 of the law states that: “The children of a Jordanian shall be Jordanian wherever they are born.” According to the Arabic language syntax, the masculine always equally denotes males and females. Furthermore, the Nationality Law should explicitly give a Jordanian woman married to a foreigner the option of regaining her Jordanian nationality without any conditions.

- The Election to the House of Deputies Law should be amended to increase the number of seats allocated to women to at least 12 seats.
- In addition, the report includes some amendments to the Personal Status Law. A draft Personal Status Law, which takes into consideration many gender-sensitive aspects, has been prepared for submission before the upcoming National Assembly. The draft law calls for not withholding the Nafaqa from a female, who resists the order to join her father. It calls for making custody costs payable as of the date of filing the legal action. It reduces the litigants' burden of establishing proof in cases of separation on grounds of marital disputes. In addition, it adds provisions that observe the best interests of a child put in custody, as well as provisions on separation because of sterility, guardianship, custodianship, and inheritance. It also adopts the Nafaqa Credit Fund.
- There is a need to increase the number of seats reserved for women in the House of Representatives to become at least 12 seats.

## **Human Security and Social Protection Domain**

### **a) In the area of education:**

The concepts of international human rights, including CEDAW, have been incorporated into the basic courses taught at universities and faculties of law, as well as the curricula of all the educational stages.

– According to the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007, Jordan ranked first among the Arab States with medium-likelihood to achieve the Education for All goals. Encouraged by its 2008 net enrolment ratio in primary education of 97.7%, Jordan is seriously endeavoring to move into the high-likelihood category in EFA development.

– The National Agenda emphasizes the need to “expand opportunities for children to be enrolled in public kindergartens particularly in poor and rural areas.” To achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of gender-specific equality by the year 2015, the Ministry of Education is working on eliminating all disparities between the two sexes and



enhancing preparedness for learning through providing early childhood education, making equitable opportunities available for both sexes, activating women's participation, and establishing gender-specific justice as far as the Ministry's policies, plans and programs are concerned, in addition to forging ahead with modernizing and developing curricula to become 100% gender-specific, removing any discrimination-based references that identify stereotypical roles for men and women, and introducing human rights charters into the curricula. In order to ensure that family education is based on full understanding of the role of men and women alike, concepts related to reproductive health, women's rights, family planning and the CRC should be incorporated into the curricula.

– Opening of adult education centers is expanding and priority is given to the women's sector in terms of raising enrolment ratios and opening special centers. Serious efforts are being exerted to reduce the illiteracy rate, especially among females, bearing in mind that illiteracy is almost non-existent among the under-40-years age groups (both males and females). The 2008 rates for all ages stand at 4.1% for males and 11.4% for females.

– The Ministry of Education implemented a "formal education program" in 2008 with a view to re-enrol female school drop-outs in schools to pursue their study.

– The Child Protection against Abuse division was opened at the Ministry of Education in 2007 to protect children against abuse through implementing certain related strategies, programs and projects.

– UNICEF is implementing the 2008 Better Parenthood project in cooperation with 13 governmental and non-governmental organizations (National Better Parenthood Program Network). Intensive education courses have reached more than 70,000 parents and other caregivers. The project is depicted in empowering parents and caregivers to create a loving, safe and stimulating home environment

– Jordan is witnessing above-average ratios of females accepted to study at official universities. They usually earn the highest grade averages in the general secondary school examinations. The top 10 in the 2009/2010 examination were all girls.

– Higher education in Jordan has witnessed rapid development. According to a World Bank report in 2008, Jordan ranked high in this area among the region's states. The University of Jordan Facts and Figures indicates that the presence of females is impressive and that they outnumber males in most of the University faculties. The 2008 female enrolment at the University of Jordan stands at 51.3%.

– The Center for Women's Studies, established at the University of Jordan in 2006, teaches courses that create the interest of students in women's issues and focus on raising awareness of women's affairs.

– Five of the 22 deans (22%) at the various faculties of the University of Jordan are women.

– The 2007 Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities called on all concerned bodies, each according to its competence, to provide general, vocational and higher education opportunities to persons with disabilities. In the area of university education, assistance was extended to 430 male and female students in receiving deductions from fees. Students with disabilities of more than 40% were granted exemptions of 90% of their university fees. The Council of Ministers also allocated 400 (4%) of the jobs listed in the Job Formation Schedule to disabled persons. The National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities (2007–2015) was launched in 2007.

– As of 2008, around 500 schools throughout the Kingdom have benefited from the "Madrasati" initiative, which calls for involving the private sector in improving the infrastructure of government schools and providing quality educational tools.

## Challenges

The National Strategy for Jordanian Women (2006–2010) considers education as a solid base for empowering women and developing their status. The Strategy demonstrates that the tangible progress in women's enrolment rates in the different stages and forms of education, does not rule out some problems related to this area, including the persistent qualitative gap in the illiteracy rates. The Strategy calls for future education policies that will lead to empowering women and contributing to their better involvement in all aspects of economic and political development, as well as qualitative and quantitative expansion in programs targeting raising the awareness of students and school workers toward violence issues and seeing to it that the school plays its awareness role in ending the violence against women phenomenon. There is a need to amend the Ministry of Education regulation so as to allow married girls to return to government schools as students.

### **b) In the area of health:**

– The strategic health objectives of the National Agenda and the “We Are All Jordan” document pay special attention to the provision of family planning and effective reproductive health services in a safe and healthy environment. Both documents call for extending the health insurance umbrella to cover all the poor, as well as providing and improving the quality of health services, especially family planning and reproductive health services.

– Because Jordan is an active part of the World Order, it has always been keen on abiding by international instruments and working towards achieving the health-related MDGs, of which a large portion has been achieved. The standard of motherhood and childhood healthcare has improved, high rates of vaccination coverage have been maintained, a policy of pre-marital tests has been adopted, and educational activities are organized for mothers on reproductive health.

– The range of services provided to women has been expanded as of the beginning of 2008 through the introduction of two programs: The first has two components: the Women’s Health program, which aims at providing integrated services to women of the different age groups, and the Family Protection Against Family Violence program, which seeks to mainstream these services into the healthcare services provided at the health institutions operated by the Ministry of Health. The other program consists of creating a continuous and free of charge system to supply all the Kingdom’s health sectors, except the private sector, with modern family planning devices.

– This was accomplished simultaneously with the increase in the number of health units and centers in villages and the provision of guidance and therapeutic services to women in these facilities. This was reflected in improvements in the population’s health conditions and in several health indicators, as the life expectancy at birth rose to 74.4 years for females and 71.6 years for males. Tangible progress was achieved in recording statistics pertaining to under-five and child mortality rates, as well as child mortality rates during the first year of life. The maternal mortality rate declined to 19.1 deaths for every 100,000 live births in 2008.

– The Ministry of Health provides free reproductive health services to Iraqi women.

– The Jordanian National AIDS Program targets women in the following areas:

- 1) Implementing awareness and health education campaigns through the different awareness-raising channels,
- 2) providing AIDS consultation and voluntary testing services,
- 3) involving women in awareness and health education programs and activities and in membership of the National AIDS Committee.

– UNRWA provides its free health services, including reproductive health services, to Palestinian refugees registered by the Agency in Jordan and estimated in 2008 at 1,951,000 male and female refugees.

– Formation of the Higher Population Council constitutes a mechanism for supporting and implementing the National Population Strategy through the following domains of the Strategy: Reproductive health, family planning, population and sustainable development, justice and equity between the two sexes, and empowering women. The Council works under the slogan, “Empowering women and organizing childbearing through transparency and accountability; through creating opportunities, the demographic gift will be achieved.” With the participation of all the relevant national institutions, the Higher Population Council has laid down implementation plans for the Strategy. It had devised the first (2003–2007) and the second (2008–2012) Jordanian National Plan of Action for Reproductive Health. The plans of action aim to improve the environment for reproductive health policies, boost the provision of quality reproductive health/family planning services, and raise demand for reproductive health/family planning services. These plans of action included national numeric objectives for reproduction rates that cope with human and reproductive rights and harmonize with the quest for achieving balance between Jordan’s population and resources.

## **Challenges**

The importance of continuing the effort for planning development programs to help reduce the overall fertility rate from the present rate of 3.7 births to 2.5 births in 2015, as the use of family planning devices, especially the modern ones, is still below the hoped-for rate.

### **c) In the area of violence against women:**

- The National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA) prepared the “National Framework for Family Protection Against Family Violence, which the Council of Ministers adopted in 2009. The Council also prepared many other projects, including a project for the development of procedures for addressing family violence and another involving compiling a guide for preachers to advocate protecting women against all forms of violence.
- The Family Protection Department at the Public Security Directorate organizes annual awareness campaigns targeting different strata of the society to raise awareness of the risks and effects of family violence, which led to an increase in the number of cases of disclosure of family violence during the recent years.
- In cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund, the Family Violence Division at the Mother and Child Health Directorate of the Ministry of Health has prepared a guide for dealing with cases of family violence. The guide aims to mainstream this service into the healthcare services provided at the Ministry’s hospitals and health centers.
- The Center for Integrated Services and Family Justice was established at the Family Reconciliation House of the Ministry of Social Development. The center was established in cooperation with several official institutions and civil society organizations in order to confront violence against women, safeguard the lives of many females placed under administrative detention, and create a safe, enabling environment for the physical, psychological and emotional well-being of women and children, who become victims of family violence. The center provides family and psychological consultations. It houses all the services needed by abused women under one roof, including medical care, psychosocial and legal guidance, training and rehabilitation for the beneficiary and her family, as well as economic empowerment. The experience of establishing the Family Reconciliation House in Amman will be replicated in other cities, e.g., Irbid in 2010. Human rights institutions will be allowed to

establish centers to provide shelter to females of Iraqi and other nationalities, who are detained, abused, or asylum seekers, where reform and assistance interventions will be provided.

– The Federation of Jordanian Women’s Guest House receives abused Jordanian women and their children. The Guest House includes a health clinic to serve mainly residents of the House, and callers to the guidance Hotline. The Federation also has programs to train and empower abused women to become able to operate their own enterprises. The Federation has also agreed with the Public Security Directorate to use the Guest House as a shelter for female victims of trafficking in human beings until their return to their homelands.

– The venue for preventive or judicial detention of girls under 18 years of age, who need protection or are in conflict with the law, has been relocated to specialized reform, rehabilitation and care homes.

– The Human Rights and Family Affairs Directorate has been established at the Ministry of Justice to address cases related to family violence and contribute to laying down judicial inspection criteria to guarantee proper litigation procedures.

– The Jordanian National Commission for Women also established the Network for Violence Against Women (Sham’a). The network organizes an international 16-day campaign to combat violence against women.

– To support females placed under administrative detention, the “Fresh Start” project was established as part of the Jordanian Fresh Start Alliance. The project aims to find long-term solutions for administratively detained women, as well as “women at risk”, and create an enabling environment for the inmates.

– The “Amal Home” was established to provide care to children of women detained at the women’s Reform and Rehabilitation Center. The Amal Home is the only center in the Middle East to provide such services.

– A program to protect children against abuse was established in 2008. The program aims to mainstream this service into the healthcare services provided by the health establishments operated by the Ministry of Health. The Ministry followed up on its interest in this subject in the framework of the project, implemented with UNICEF during the years 2000–2007 and then for the period (2008–2012). The most important achievements in this area include breaking the silence barrier, raising awareness of protecting children against abuse, training of trainers and health personnel, preparing the health sector’s strategy for protecting children against abuse, and producing a guide to procedures for addressing cases of child abuse.

## **Challenges**

The challenges confronting the problem of violence against women include lack of a national monitoring system and of transparent statistics. There is a lack of knowledge of the size of the actual problem of monitoring cases of all forms of violence against women, as well as an urgent need to raise women’s awareness of these issues.

As far as the preventive (administrative) detention of women, there is a need for the provision of alternative protection to administratively detained women and the establishment of homes and shelters that can accommodate the large numbers of these women and create a safe environment for them.

## **Economic Domain**

– In order to increase women’s contribution to the economic activity and make them partners with men in development, many ministries have implemented significant projects within the framework of the National Agenda. The Ministry of Labor implemented a project addressing decent work and working women’s issues, while the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation launched the activities of the Gender/Equal Opportunities Fund.



– The “We Are All Jordan’ document emphasizes the urgency of “increasing women’s participation in work and production through proper training, rehabilitation, adequate support and overcoming obstacles impeding them.” The 2007 Civil Service Bylaw is based on the principles of transparency, justice, equal opportunities, and non-discrimination on the basis of gender in dealing with civil servants in matters related to the employment rights, duties and responsibilities.

– Within the activities of the Gender Mainstreaming in Public Life project, which is being implemented in cooperation with the National Jordanian Commission for Women, the Ministry of Labor, and the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, a working-women database was finalized in 2009 at the Ministry of Labor. The database classifies women in the public and private sectors according to demographic and economic characteristics, as well as gender, nationality, educational achievement and specialization. It gives detailed data on wage levels disaggregated according to profession or vocation and the average number of paid working hours.

– The Social Security Corporation is expected to complete the process of extending the social security umbrella to include all establishments employing one or more workers in the Kingdom by the end of 2011.

– The Vocational Training Corporation has prepared training programs and courses targeting the provision of services in the different training areas, as well as organizing vocational work and encouraging the involvement of females in the different VTC programs.

– In May 2006, the Ministry of Labor established the Domestic Workers Directorate with the aim of maintaining the discipline of recruitment agencies and monitoring their performance. A hot line was established to respond to any labor-related enquiries or complaints and raise awareness of the rights of expatriate workers.

- In 2006, the Ministry of Labor issued a special guide targeting migrant working women/domestic workers in Jordan. The guide, distributed at all border points, is available in Arabic, Filipino, Japanese, and Sinhali.
- The Coordination Commission for Social Solidarity will embark on specialized studies of the various aspects of poverty alleviation and the enhancement of social solidarity, including studies, which will be conducted for the first time in Jordan on poverty from a gender perspective, as well as women's issues and economic empowerment.

## **Challenges**

- Jordan is on the verge of bridging the gap in the areas of health and education, while the gap in the economic participation and political empowerment domains is still below the level achieved by men. This depicts mal-utilization of human resources and indicates the deprivation of women from earning direct incomes that would empower them economically and socially. In addition, it demonstrates the low economic returns for women as a result of their involvement in "low income resulting from their work in low income jobs in the first place, or from discrimination against them in income levels, the level of professional skills of women and the high involvement of women in the informal economic activities." This indicates that Jordan has not been able to utilize its human capacities, in which it has invested for long decades, nor has it been able to sustainably reach 48.5% of Jordanians. Women represent 51.3% of the all university students (for the year 2008), while the literacy rate among females has risen to 88.6% and girls' enrolment ratios in Basic and Secondary education have increased remarkably. However, the economic activity of women aged 15+ years is still below the required levels as women in this age group constitute less than 14.8% of the labor force (2009), only slightly better than previous years (e.g., 14.2% in 2008), a situation that calls for increased efforts in this area.

– When looking into unemployment rates, which are among the most important phenomena that depict an accurate picture of the status of the economy and the labor market in the society, we will find that unemployment rates among women have been for many years more than double those among men. This indicates that women may face additional employment-related obstacles that force them to choose educational specializations that are not in demand in the labor market, as well as the receding market capacity to create sufficient job opportunities to assimilate new entrants to the labor market.

– In its part on the economic empowerment of women, the National Strategy for Jordanian Women highlights the difficulties hampering women’s economic participation, including “low income resulting from their work in low income jobs in the first place, or from discrimination against them in income levels, the level of professional skills of women and the high involvement of women in the informal economic activities.” The Strategy adopts the following objectives:

- 1) Creating a proper legislative environment that will result in increasing women’s participation in economic activities;
- 2) Increasing the available economic opportunities for women; and
- 3) Increasing the percentage of women’s participation in decision making positions and in the drawing of economic policies.

– Gender-disaggregated statistics are still in need of further development, despite the remarkable progress achieved in this area. The challenge still exists for completing the gender-responsive data and indicators, which still face shortcomings in certain areas. There are no transparent statistics on women’s work in the non-formal sector at the Kingdom’s level, despite the great development the country has achieved in the area of statistics, especially in the data-gathering methods. The gravest problems of which women suffer in this sector include low income levels, long and irregular working hours, lack of social securities, incompatibility of the workers’ specializations with the available opportunities, and lack of training. This is an area, which the Jordan National Commission for

Women is seeking to achieve in cooperation with the Department of Statistics.

### **- The Media and Communication Domain**

– For some time now, the different mass communication media have been highlighting the effective role of women in all areas and disseminating community awareness materials that urge not to confine women to certain stereotypical jobs. This coincides with the elimination of any consecration of stereotypical roles in school curricula.

– An agreement was signed in 2008 between the Jordanian National Commission for Women and media professionals to prepare and implement the “Hand in Hand” Campaign to promote the gender mainstreaming in public life project, which seeks to effect change in the widely-acceptable stereotypical roles and create an enabling environment for increasing women’s economic participation in the labor market. As a result, the number of women in the media has risen to reach 19% of all members of the Jordan Press Association, 70% of whom work in newspaper or news agencies.

Finally, the Government’s commitment to create an enabling environment for advancing the status of citizens, particularly women, has been depicted in many national initiatives, including the “Jordan First” document and the National Agenda, as well as political, administrative, economic and political development initiatives, and the establishment of many bodies to address human right violations. These endeavors have tangibly impacted the advancement of women’s status. In addition, credit should be given to the role played by each of the Anti-Corruption Commission, the Coordination Commission for Social Solidarity, the Complaints Management Unit at the Ministry of Public Sector Reform, the Ombudsman Bureau, and the National Center for Human Rights, all of which strive to achieve their own objectives through several ways, including receiving complaints and addressing any excesses or

violations of human rights and through establishing justice, equality and equal opportunities.

The Jordanian National Commission for Women was established to work on advancing the status of women, enhance their capacities and empower them in the economic, social, cultural and political fields through the implementation of the National Strategy for Jordanian Women (2006–2010). In 2009, the Commission established a “complaints bureau” and provided it with a free telephone hotline as a mechanism for receiving complaints from women who are subjected to violence and discrimination in their public and private lives. The Commission also established the women knowledge network «Nashmiyat» and the “Who is She” website with the aim of establishing and filing records of distinguished women in the society in order to develop a special information system for them. The Commission also launched the “Waraqati” project, which aims to disseminate awareness of women’s and children’s rights in national laws and international charters on a large scale that covers cities, as well as rural areas. A special CEDAW unit was recently established at the Commission with the mandate of monitoring national efforts in the area of guaranteeing equality, justice and equal opportunities.

The Commission’s allocations in the State budget, as well as its revenues from donor agencies, earmarked for funding the Commission’s programs and projects, have risen from JD 22,000 in 2005 to JD 104,000 in 2008. This is yet another proof of recognizing the Commission’s important role.

Despite the progress so far achieved, there are still some social problems and obstacles resulting from the erroneous cultural heritage of the concepts that prevent women’s enjoyment of their full rights. While this challenge is being continuously confronted, it is incumbent upon governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations to double their efforts and sustain intensified awareness campaigns and programs that would lead to changing these patterns and creating a positive image of Jordanian women by working with all potential awareness-raising bodies in schools, cultural institutions and the prin-

ted and electronic media, and taking advantage of such opportunities as the supportive higher political will towards the advancement of women in all fields on the premise that justice, human rights and development cannot be achieved without commitment to gender equality by the successive governments and the recognition of the need to achieve justice, equality, equal opportunities in rights and duties for both sexes.



