

# A Study of Jordanian Women's Aspirations for Economic and Political Empowerment

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# A Study of Jordanian Women's Aspirations for Economic and Political Empowerment

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## Introduction

This study aims to identify the current economic and political priorities of Jordanian women, including legislative and programmatic frameworks, the role of civil society organizations and decision makers. The study presents a set of recommendations that promote the economic and political empowerment of women based on these findings. This study is conducted by the Life Center - RASED, with the support of the Forum of Federations (FOF) and was carried out between January and March of 2022.

## Methodology

The research team employed the qualitative approach in collecting data. The research methods included desk research, interviews and focus groups. The desk-based research was based on reviewing the literature on the economic and political empowerment of women. These include legislation, policies, reports, statements and news. The study also reviewed political speeches issued by both male and female politicians, male and female representatives of civil society organizations and international organizations, and stakeholders. International protocols and agreements signed by Jordan were also reviewed along with their impact on national legislation, policies and plans regarding women. It also included an overview of the political and economic status of women in Jordan, the challenges they face, and the best practices in this regard at the national and global levels. There were also four virtual interviews with a former and a current woman parliamentarian in the Jordanian parliament, and two women representatives of civil society organizations working in the field of economic and political empowerment of women in Jordan.<sup>(1)</sup> Three focus group sessions were held, distributed as follows: The first session was with a group of eleven women activists representing civil society organizations in the central governorates; the second session was with a group of eight women activists representing civil society organizations in the northern governorates; and the third session with a group of seven women activists representing civil society organizations in the southern governorates.<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) Appendix (1) shows the list of interviewees.

(2) Appendix (2) shows the list of focus groups participants.

Chapter 1:

Most important  
findings and  
recommendations

## 1.1 Most important findings

The study found a set of political and economic challenges that impact women's participation. The most important of these challenges are:

### Political challenges

1. Women do not have financial resources or funding, and this reduces their chances of participating in elections and bearing the costs of electoral campaigns, thus limiting their political role.
2. Women fear losing their jobs when participating in elections; the current legal framework requires candidates to resign from their position when running for elections.
3. Traditional social norms reinforce a stereotypical image of women in Jordanian society.
4. Women lack awareness of policies, legislation and laws that encourage political participation,
5. and election laws are among the most important of these.
6. The low turnout of women participating in social committees, unions or parties.
7. Favoritism and nepotism are widespread, and this impacts parity in the distribution of jobs between men and women.
8. The tribal system impacts women's political participation negatively.
9. There is a lack in women's participation in committees that set policies and legislation, which affects their political participation in the future.

### Economic Challenges

1. The high unemployment rates, in general, and their impact on women's opportunities in particular
2. Low wages: women receive lower wages for work of equal value to men's. The disparity in wages carries over to the private sector, which does not comply with the Social Security Law because of the lack of government oversight
3. Unhealthy working conditions and the difficulty for women to access the labor market due to the lack of opportunities that align with their needs
4. Gender-based violence at the workplace, which is a form of discrimination against women

5. Weak crediting programs and the lack of effective support for pioneering projects, in addition to the lack of facilities in giving loans and grants to women, or limiting these only to certain areas
6. The absence of discussions of women's issues in the media and propagating stereotypical images of women as wives, educators and mothers while ignoring the role and struggles of working and successful women and not highlighting their achievements, issues and challenges through targeted media messages
7. Loopholes in the Social Security and Health Insurance laws created some sort of bias to men
8. The weak participation of women in the committees that set policies and legislation impacts their economic participation in the future

## 2.1 Recommendations

Positive change in society is fundamentally linked to enhancing women's empowerment and their effective participation in various fields. Hence, the role of women should be strengthened and supported on a permanent basis to counter the challenges and difficulties they may face. Following are the most significant recommendations highlighted by the respondents and which may improve the participation of Jordanian women in society:

### One: Political empowerment

1. Enhancing the financial support system for women's participation in elections by developing legislation on spending caps on electoral campaigns. On the one hand, disparities in financial capabilities between women and men should be taken into account while controlling the process of expenditure on electoral campaigns on the other hand. Additionally, financial incentives to the parties that choose women to represent them in elections, in general, have to be provided.
2. Rescinding the condition of resignation from their jobs and the full-time availability of women candidates upon nomination for elections, as women do not have the financial ability to spend on electoral campaigns. This will encourage women to participate in politics while ensuring that they do not lose their jobs, which is all they have.
3. Raising the society's awareness on the importance of women's political participation and their role in achieving sustainable political development through launching electronic awareness campaigns that highlight the importance of women's participation in political life and how they can contribute to the growth of societies in all aspects. Awareness-raising workshops involving men, women and youth should be held. These should be interactive and should emphasize the importance of involving women alongside men in political life.
4. Building women's capacities for effective political participation through the support of government agencies and international organizations for initiatives aimed at training women and the comprehensive education of women in various political and legal fields. This should be done in cooperation with civil society organizations and media agencies. These programs should be effective and methodical and should target women from different segments of society and

regions, especially villages and camps. It is also vital to measure and evaluate the impact of these programs in order to develop them continuously. An affiliated electronic platform should also be launched with the aim of educating women on their legal, political and economic rights.

5. Encouraging women to join parties, unions and social committees by providing facilities and incentives to women and to these entities to mobilize women and nominate them for elections through parties and unions
6. Enhancing the presence of women in senior management positions. These include ministerial positions and positions of general secretaries; middle management and first-tier positions in ministries and government institutions.<sup>(3)</sup> This would achieve justice, democracy and the advancement of women to leading management positions and would enhance their role in the decision-making process.<sup>(4)</sup>
7. Preparing a national strategy that includes the development and involvement of women in the next political stage with a parliamentary government and a partisan parliament, so that women can have a genuine role in defining the challenges they face and in formulating public policies and in contributing to their efficient and effective implementation. Following this strategy should enhance oversight, democracy and justice in political life. The outputs of the royal committee to modernize the political system may be adopted as the basic building block for this strategy. Accountability should be enforced to achieve the required reforms on women's issues to mitigate the effect of favoritism and nepotism in assigning positions.

### Two: Economic empowerment

1. Directing women towards entrepreneurship and financial independence by supporting their companies or small projects is a critical step in encouraging women to become financially and politically independent and in enabling them to rely on their own abilities and skills. This would also improve their skills in marketing projects and would provide them with the appropriate incentives. Women will also be enabled to access regional markets and motivate the community to embrace

(3) Interview with a representative of civil society, 25/1/2022; interview with a representative of civil society, 31/1/ 2022; interview with a former female deputy, 25/1/2022; interview with a current woman deputy, 2/2/2022; focus group session with women activists in central governorates held on 30/1/2022.

(4) A focus group session with women activists from the central governorates, held on 30/1/2022.

local products. This is in addition to the continuous follow-up and support for projects and emerging pioneering companies by women who received grants and loans. Sustainable plans that ensure the continuity of projects is also a must. Women should also be educated on legal and administrative rights, especially in domestic projects through holding workshops on electronic marketing and financial management, so they can enter the labor market.

2. Introducing the concept of protection from gender-based violence in all public and private sectors while taking women's needs into account when formulating policies in these institutions. These should address all forms of violence and discrimination against women, such as sexual, physical and electronic harassment. They should also take the basic needs of working women into account, including providing nurseries, safe transportation, and including deterring penalties that provide working women with the necessary protection.
3. Developing a clear and written policy regarding fair wages and decent working conditions and forcing the public and private sectors to apply them: The policy should define some procedures and practices by removing all ambiguity; regulating parity in wages; providing a flexible work environment; securing women's needs; ensuring the participation of women and men in the decision-making process and in the management and evaluation of women's and men's needs etc. This should ensure justice and equal opportunities between men and women in terms of wages, incentives and career progression and in providing a supportive environment for women in the private and public sectors.
4. Strengthening the role of the media in reflecting the true image of women by spotlighting women's issues and their successes and stopping their appearance in the media as a commodity or a marketing tool. The social perspective of marginalized groups, such as divorced women and widows should be changed, and they should, instead, be motivated and empowered economically, socially and politically.
5. Enhancing women's participation in setting policies and legislation that affect their economic participation. This can only be achieved through a clear participatory approach that sees women as genuine partners in decision making. This is in addition to supporting women in leadership positions to ensure that the resulting decisions are gender sensitive.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical framework



## 1.2 A look at women's economic participation in Jordan

The Global Gender Gap Report published through the Economic Forum in 2021 ranks Jordan at 133 out of 156 in economic contribution and opportunities.<sup>(5)</sup> According to data in the 2021 World Bank report, the rate of female participation in the labor force in Jordan in 2019 exceeded 14.5% by a little.<sup>(6)</sup> The Coronavirus pandemic negatively affected the level of women's economic contribution, as the unemployment rate among women increased to more than 33% in the third quarter of 2020.<sup>(7)</sup> These statistics indicate that women are facing a number of different obstacles, all of which have an impact on their ability to join the labor force or to form their own experience in this field.

### 1.1.2 Challenges to women's economic contribution

Jordanian women face many structural obstacles that limit their economic opportunities. One of the most significant obstacles is the disproportionate level of unpaid care work undertaken by women because of social norms. These responsibilities include caring for people such as children and the elderly; domestic work such as cleaning, cooking and buying essential items; and taking care of the house besides other types of work that is done out of a sense of social responsibility.<sup>(8)</sup> In a study conducted by Oxfam in Ma'an Governorate, the findings showed that women in Ma'an Governorate spend 59 hours a week doing unpaid care work while men spend less than half of this time in doing unpaid care work. It is worth noting that the large part of unpaid care is childcare due to traditional gender norms whereby women often give up joining the labor force to dedicate themselves to the responsibilities of childbearing and child rearing.<sup>(9)</sup> Women and men feel that distancing the mother from her children after birth when they are young is not right. For example, some

(5) World Economic Forum (2021), Global Gender Gap Report 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3ovH6mP>.

(6) The World Bank (2021), Labor Force Participation Rate, Females (percentage of the female population aged 15 and over) - Jordan, available at: <https://bit.ly/3uDxHgQ>.

(7) International Labor Organization - Equality between Genders and Decent Work in Jordan, available at: <https://bit.ly/3vQWo8b>.

(8) R. Meister and Judy Thorpe (2016), Unpaid care work: Facilitating Change to Women's Economic Empowerment when Market System sponsorship, available at: <https://bit.ly/3Gt93mC>.

(9) Oxfam International (2021), Why We Care: An Overview of the Distribution of Unpaid Care Work in Ma'an, Southern Jordan, available at: <https://bit.ly/3Bmx8rt>.

women and men believe that a child should be at least four and a half years old before the mother can go to work.<sup>(10)</sup>

There are other factors that limit women's entry into the work force; these include the lack of nurseries near women's workplaces at a cost that the mother can afford and the lack of affordable, reliable and safe transportation. Long commute times and women's belief that using public transportation exposes them to harassment is a deterrent to some women who are interested in working whether they are mothers or not.<sup>(11)</sup> Additionally, employers' perceptions of women contribute to unemployment among Jordanian women; for example, some employers worry that a woman may leave her work at any time to marry, give birth or because of family obligations. Therefore, she is seen as a burden to the institution, and this is one of the reasons why employers prefer to hire men.<sup>(12)</sup> Employers are more likely to invest in male than female employees in building their capabilities and training them in skills since developing the skills of male employees is seen as more sustainable in the long-term.<sup>(13)</sup>

Due to the negative perceptions of female employees, women also face the challenge of the gender wage gap, as mentioned earlier, and this directly affects women in Jordan. According to the 2021 International Labor Organization report,<sup>(14)</sup> the average wage for males in the private sector is 7% higher than for females. According to the World Bank,<sup>(15)</sup> in 2020, the wage gap in the private sector between men and women who have academic degrees and similar experiences in the same area was 17%.

Finally, women also face many legal challenges that limit their economic participation; for example, there are loopholes in the legal frameworks that call for the protection of women from violence and harassment in the workplace and its prevention. For instance, the Jordanian Penal Code addresses sexual harassment while these terms are not used

(10) Ibid.

(11) Ibid.

(12) UNESCO, Facilitating Women's Work in Jordan, available at: <https://bit.ly/3iryzhj>.

(13) United Nations Development Program. (2015), Jordan Human Development Report 2015: Regional Differences, Jordan: United Nations, available at: <https://bit.ly/3L0lgR3>.

(14) International Labor Organization (2021), Jordanian Property Rights, available at: <https://bit.ly/3w0eYe8>.

(15) The World Bank (2020), Women's Economic Participation in Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, available at: <https://bit.ly/3nB4v4V>.

in practice and are referred to instead as offenses of “courtship or inappropriate acts,” “indecent acts” and “indecent acts in public places.”<sup>(16)</sup> In addition, weak accountability mechanisms make women vulnerable to harassment since the adopted policies on harassment and oversight are often subjective.<sup>(17)</sup> The Jordanian National Commission for Women conducted a systematic and statistical study on a sample of 1,366 respondents (86% females and 14% males). Of the male and female respondents, 322 were perpetrators of actual harassment incidents: 75.9% of the relevant sample had experienced one or more acts of harassment. The study reported that 75% of the male and female respondents were exposed to some form of violence or harassment in their place of work,<sup>(18)</sup> and 75.3% of women who were subjected to harassment did not think of taking any legal measures.<sup>(19)</sup> Therefore, the weak legal frameworks and the lack of deterring accountability mechanisms limit women's protection in the workplace and may discourage their participation in the work force.

Moreover, the weak financial independence of women limits their involvement in public work and political life. The financial capability of women is less than that of men, which limits women's candidacy for parliamentary elections because they are unable to match what men spend on election campaigns. The poor economic condition in the country, in general, affects women and their priorities and increases their sense of responsibility towards their home and families. It also reduces their chances of opening up to public life and dedicating some time to finding a space in public work. This is in addition to the lack of economic solidarity with women since tribal or geographical groups see economic solidarity with men as more beneficial than showing that to women.<sup>(20)</sup>

(16) Jordanian Penal Code, Articles (305) and (306), available at: <https://bit.ly/3Is3apz>.

(17) Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (2018), Silent Women: The ARDD Report on Harassment in the Workplace, available at: <https://bit.ly/2WjhbTZ>.

(18) The Jordanian National Committee for Women's Affairs (2017), Sexual Harassment in Jordan, available at: <https://bit.ly/3HR21ro>.

(19) Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (2018), available at: <https://bit.ly/2WjhbTZ>.

(20) Al-Hayat Center - RASED, A report on women's participation in the 2016 parliamentary elections (challenges and recommendations), available at: <https://t.ly/cOly>.

## 2.1.2 Government efforts to promote women's economic participation in Jordan

The Jordanian government and its partners in development have undertaken many initiatives to increase and support the economic inclusion of women in Jordan. Since 2017, the Jordanian government has enacted several reforms related to flexible working hours, employer-provided childcare facilities, and the removal of restrictions imposed on women working in specific sectors and during certain hours.<sup>(21)</sup> Additionally, the Jordan 2025 vision encourages women's entry into the labor market and aims to increase their participation from 15% in 2014 to 27% by 2025.<sup>(22)</sup> This vision also aims to provide leadership positions for women in the field of business, enhance competitiveness, increase women's contribution to various institutions, provide training programs for them in many sectors and work to bridge the gender gap.<sup>(23)</sup>

Some measures to protect working women during and after pregnancy have also been taken. For example, Article (27) of the Jordanian Labor Law prohibits the termination of the contract of pregnant employees. According to Jordanian law, this applies only to women who are in the sixth to ninth month of pregnancy or on maternity leave, although this does not always prevent employers from taking this measure against them.<sup>(24)</sup> It should be noted that Article (77) of the Jordanian Labor Law grants working women a ten-week paid maternity leave.<sup>(25)</sup>

With the various efforts to address the gender wage gap, the Jordanian government has articulated a legislation on the principle of “equal pay for work of equal value” in line with the International Labor Organization's Equal Remuneration Convention.<sup>(26)</sup> Article

(21) The World Bank (2020), Economic Empowerment of Women in Jordan, available at: <https://bit.ly/3A68cFv>.

(22) Jordan Vision 2025, available at: <https://bit.ly/2vlLuyE>.

(23) The Jordanian National Commission for Women (2019), Comprehensive National Review of Progress in the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Plan for Action 25 years on, available at: <https://bit.ly/3fx2VNV>.

(24) The United Nations in Jordan (2021), Working Mothers Face Barriers to Social Protection, available at: <https://bit.ly/3A9ynv1>.

(25) The United Nations in Jordan (2021), Working Mothers Face Barriers to Social Protection, available at: <https://bit.ly/3A9ynv1>.

(26) Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/ International Labor Organization/ 2020 (CAWTAR), Changing Laws and Breaking Barriers Facing the Economic Empowerment of Women in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, Competitiveness and Private Sector Development, OECD Publishing, Paris, available at: <https://bit.ly/34MMVoK>.

(17) of Law No. (14) of 2019 allows the Minister of Labor to assign the “Wages Authority” to verify and determine wage discrimination for work of equal value. Article (17) of the Labor Law also states that employers who do not meet minimum wage requirements or discriminate in wages may be fined. Moreover, Jordan is also leading the efforts of the Middle East and North Africa region to bridge the gender wage gap through the launch of the Equal Pay International Coalition.<sup>(27)</sup>

(27) Ibid

## 2.2 A look at women's political participation in Jordan

There is still a lot to do to achieve political parity in Jordan. The 2019 roadmap to stimulate women's political participation examined women's political participation in parliaments around the world and ranked Jordan at 132 out of 193 countries. The 2021 Global Gender Gap Index<sup>(28)</sup> places Jordan 144th among 156 countries in political empowerment.<sup>(29)</sup> According to the 2021 Global Soft Power Index of the Council on Foreign Relations, Jordan ranks 18 out of 100 in women's political participation.<sup>(30)</sup> Women occupy only 9% of top leadership positions in the Council of Ministers; only 12% of the seats in the National Assembly as senators and deputies in the legislative authority; and 32% of elected seats in local government bodies.<sup>(31)</sup> In 2018, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development reported that since the increase to 15 seats reserved for women through the “quota system” in 2010, the average rate of change increased by 3%. The organization expects that in the best-case scenario, we need another 12 years for women's seats to be equal to the number of seats occupied by men in parliament. This also applies to women's participation in political parties for which another 30 years are needed.<sup>(32)</sup>

Since the beginning of the seventies of the last century and after many demands, women obtained the right to run for parliamentary councils and to be elected for the first time in 1974. According to the amended Electoral Law No. (8) of 1974 of Election Law No. (24) of 1960, Article (2) states, “The definition of the word ‘Jordanian’ mentioned in Paragraph (A) of Article (2) of the Original Law is amended by deleting the word ‘male’ and replacing it with the phrase ‘whether male or female.’”<sup>(33)</sup>

After the issuance of this law, the first participation of women in official councils took place in 1978 in what was at the time called the National Consultative Council. This

(28) UN Women / Inter-Parliamentary Union (2019), Women in Politics: 2019, available at: <https://bitly/33DlxYK>.

(29) World Economic Forum, (2021) Global Gender Gap Report 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3ovH6mP>.

(30) Vogelstein, R. B. A. Women's Power Index, Council on Foreign Relations, available at: <https://on.cfr.org/3twAkAn>.

(31) Vogelstein, R. B. A. Women's Power Index, Council on Foreign Relations, available at: <https://on.cfr.org/3twAkAn>.

(32) Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2018), The Political Participation of Women in Jordan, available at: <https://bit.ly/3KgqsAT>.

(33) Al-Hayat Center - RASED, a report on women's participation in the 2016 parliamentary elections (challenges and recommendations), available at: <https://t.ly/cOly>.

council was formed by appointment to cover the years between 1984 to 1978 and fill the constitutional vacuum during the period of freezing parliamentary life. The council held three sessions, each of which was two years long, and it did not have any legislative powers. It did not have the right to question the government but only to query it. At that time, the king appointed 3 women out of 60 seats, and they are: In'am Al-Mufti, Widad Boulos and Na'ila Al-Rashdan.<sup>(34)</sup>

The actual transformation in political and parliamentary life took place during the 1989 elections. For the first time, Jordanian women participated as voters and candidates, but they did not get any seats in the Lower House of Parliament in 1989. In 1993, one woman candidate, Toujan Faisal, won membership in the Lower House of Parliament. That was the first time in the history of the country in which a woman won a seat in parliament, and the number went back down to zero in 1997. In 2003, the election law of 2001 was amended by a temporary law to introduce a quota system for women. After that, 6 out of 110 parliamentary seats were allocated to women through the electoral district division system and its amendments No. (42) of 2001 by allocating seats to each district. The Kingdom was considered as one constituency in women's elections so that the 6 women with the highest percentage of votes in the Kingdom would be selected. The quota system strengthened women's participation in political life, as their number in the fifteenth parliamentary council reached 7 as a result of the victory of the member of parliament Falak Al-Jama'ani outside the quota system. In the sixteenth council, women won 12 seats; in the seventeenth council, they won 18 out of 150 seats, including 3 competitively and 15 through the quota system, thus reaching 12%.<sup>(35)</sup>

Election Law No. (6) of 2016 was the basis for the elections for the eighteenth and the nineteenth parliamentary councils. Paragraph (A) of Article (9) of the law states, "Nomination to fill parliamentary seats allocated to the electoral district is done through the proportional list." The list includes no less than three candidates and does not exceed the number of seats allocated to the electoral district. The second item of Paragraph (D) of the same article states that female candidates representing seats reserved for women can run within those lists. Accordingly, a woman candidate does not count as part of the upper limit of candidates on the list. Therefore, women won

(34) Ibid.

(35) Ibid.

20 out of 130 seats. The seats were distributed among the 15 women who obtained the seats through the quota system stipulated by the election law, and 5 women won their seats by competition, bringing the percentage of women in the eighteenth parliament to 15.3% of the total number of members of the 18th parliamentary council.<sup>(36)</sup>

In the last parliamentary elections in 2020, the number of women running for parliamentary elections increased to 360 candidates. This number had reached 208 female candidates in 2013 and 252 female candidates in the 2016 parliamentary elections.<sup>(37)</sup>

In the last elections in 2020, women won 15 out of 130 seats through the quota system stipulated in the electoral law. Women represented 57% of the total number of voters in the 2020 nineteenth Jordanian Lower House of Parliament elections, amounting to 4,647,835 voters with 2,447,379 women. The percentage of women voters reached 58% of the total number of voters which reached 1,387,711, with 63,8081 women. In the 2016 parliamentary elections, women represented 53% of the total number of voters with 4,130,145 total voters and 2,188,578 women. The percentage of women voters reached 48% of the total number of voters of 1,492,400 with 716,716 women. In the 2013 parliamentary elections, the percentage of women voters was 51% of the total number of voters amounting to 2,272,182 and 1,178,864 women. The percentage of women voters was 49% of the total number of voters, which amounted to 1,288,043 with 63,0501 women.<sup>(38)</sup>

## 1.2.2 Challenges to women's political participation

Jordanian women face many challenges that restrict their participation in public life in Jordan. These include social restrictions due to the structure of Jordanian society since Jordan is still a patriarchal society. The family may discourage women from political participation or may control their political preferences due to several reasons. The most significant of these is their preference to nominate a male instead of a female candidate. This came to be known as political violence against women, and it prevents many women

(36) Ibid.

(37) Al-Hayat Center - RASED. A Survey of the Experience of Female Candidates for the Nineteenth Jordanian Parliamentary Council 2020 from a Gender Perspective (Opportunities and Challenges), available at: <https://t.ly/5bbQ>.

(38) Policy paper on the challenge of Jordanian women's access to Parliament (page 37), available at: <https://t.ly/EtOm>.

from making informed and independent decisions.<sup>(39)</sup> A recent study conducted by the Karak Center shows that most of the former candidates and election management officials who were interviewed feel that women are either prohibited from voting or are forced to vote for a particular person or a list. For example, one respondent said that she decided to boycott the elections, but when her brother learned of this, he “slapped” her, so she went to vote. The study also revealed that the threat of divorce is often used to control women’s voting choices or their desire to run for a political position; for example, a young female candidate from a local tribe was divorced by her husband because she refused to withdraw in favor of a candidate from his own family.<sup>(40)</sup> Additionally, women’s limited access to financial resources created a disparity in competing against their male counterparts and in their ability to start electoral campaigns. Although restrictions have recently been imposed on campaign expenditures, the funds that male candidates receive greatly exceed that received by female candidates since the methods of fundraising or managing campaigns by women are limited due to the social restrictions imposed on them. For example, in conservative areas of Jordan, women are not allowed to conduct home visit campaigns, host fundraising dinners, call voters, use social media, or participate in events to form a network and build an electoral base since they are not allowed to mix with men.<sup>(41)</sup> As mentioned in section (1.1.1), the weak economic participation of women and the consequent weakness of their financial independence is one of the most important challenges that hinder women’s political participation in general. Women who are elected whether on a competitive basis or through the quota system are underrepresented in national and local legislative bodies, in leadership positions and in the executive authority.<sup>(42)</sup> For example, the quota system in elections is somewhat weak because of the uneven distribution between genders because it grants one seat to each governorate. Moreover, women who belong to minorities in Jordan have lower chances of being elected since their seats will not count as part of the quota system, but, rather, part of the share of the minorities.<sup>(43)</sup>

(39) Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Karak Castle Center Report (2020) on Violence against Women in Elections in Jordan, available at: <https://bit.ly/3FEv7ZV>.

(40) Ibid.

(41) Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2018), Women’s Political Participation in Jordan, available at: <https://bit.ly/3KgqsAT>.

(42) Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (2019), The Reality of Women’s Political Participation in Jordan, available at: <https://bit.ly/3FAqkPm>.

(43) Al-Hayat Center - RASED, Enhancing Women’s Quota in Jordan, available at: <https://bit.ly/3sPHGOS>.

According to a policy paper prepared by Al-Hayat Center- RASED on the challenges in the way of Jordanian women’s access to parliament, women face many challenges. The political challenges facing Jordanian women are multiple: The first one is political awareness, and this is clear through the need of Jordanian women for more political awareness through joint action among various social and official institutions. The second challenge is the quota system since the number of seats allocated to women by law is still little and below the desired level. The third challenge is the ability to form and the difficulty in forming electoral lists. In the 2020 elections, 30% of the female candidates initiated the formation of electoral lists themselves while the others did not initiate this action. The fourth political challenge is the trend set by previous parliamentary practices.<sup>(44)</sup>

In a report by RASED on women’s participation in parliamentary elections, a number of cultural and social challenges emerged. The most prominent of these challenges was the weak knowledge of women of their legal rights and of the possibility of nominating themselves for the Lower House of Parliament. They were also not aware of their rights to participate in the political process or the legacy of freezing parliamentary work until 1989, which directly excluded women from political work and contributed to their weak political experience. In addition, the number of seats allocated to the women’s quota in the election law was divided on the basis of governorates when it would have been more appropriate to distribute quota seats at the level of electoral districts. This would have greatly contributed to enhancing the presence of women in the Lower House of Parliament. Additionally, the methodologies for raising awareness of the political axis used with women in peripheral areas are not aligned with their needs since an unsustainable training methodology is used. This does not solidify or develop information for women in peripheral areas. The participation of women in political parties is weak, and this undermines their ability to engage in political work in general and in developing ideas to benefit from if they wish to participate in parliamentary elections.

One of the challenges that women face in running for elections is their place on the list, as women do not have a genuine role in forming the electoral list that is running. Customarily, the list is formed by men, and then a search for a woman to be added to the list is carried out. Conversely, women who have a big presence within their communities

(44) Policy paper on the challenge of Jordanian women’s access to Parliament (page 37), available at: <https://t.ly/EtOm>.

find it hard to form a list because male candidates fear that this woman would gain the seat competitively, and so the man is left out of the competition.<sup>(45)</sup>

### 2.2.2 Government efforts to enhance women's political participation in Jordan

Jordanian women's political participation dates back to the seventies of the last century when women obtained the right to vote and to be represented in parliament in 1974, although they did not participate in political life until 1978.<sup>(46)</sup> Since then, some steps have been taken to increase women's representation in elected decision-making positions in Jordan.<sup>(47)</sup> The Jordanian constitution guarantees women the right to representation in parliament and in the municipal council through competition or the quota system that was approved by the Elections Law of 2003, that is Law No. (11) of 2003 and the Municipalities Law of 2007. In the 2013 parliamentary elections, the number of seats reserved for women was raised to 15 out of 100 seats. In 2016, women's representation in parliamentary elections reached the highest level, with 20 seats filled of 130.<sup>(48)</sup> Despite these amendments, women did not constitute a quarter of parliamentary candidates. Moreover, the results of the 2020 elections showed that not a single female candidate succeeded on the basis of competition; all 15 won on the basis of the seats designated for women through the women's quota.<sup>(49)</sup>

The Municipal Law of 2011 raised the allocations for women in municipal councils from 20% to 25%, which proved immediate success. This led to women winning 35.9% of the seats in the 2013 elections.<sup>(50)</sup> According to the Municipalities Law of 2015, one out

(45) Al-Hayat Center - RASED, A report on women's participation in the 2016 parliamentary elections (challenges and recommendations), available at: <https://t.ly/cOly>.

(46) Al-Awamleh, R. A. (2020), Jordanian Women's Participation in Political Life: Reality and Challenges. *European Journal of the Social Sciences* 59 (1), p. 5-18, available at: <https://bit.ly/3Cv30kD>.

(47) Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2018), Women's Political Participation in Jordan, available at: <https://bit.ly/3KgqsAT>.

(48) Al-Hayat Center - RASED, Enhancing Women's Quota in Jordan, available at: <https://bit.ly/3CY9MuG>.

(49) Al-Hayat Center - RASED (2020), Poll: The Experience of Female Candidates for the Nineteenth Jordanian Parliamentary Council 2020 from a Gender Perspective, available at: <https://bit.ly/3vLy3CE>.

(50) United Nations: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Consideration of Reports Submitted by State Parties under Article (18) of the Agreement on the Sixth Periodic Report of the State Parties to be submitted in 2016 in Jordan, available at: <https://bit.ly/3jtH4nX>.

of 5 seats in local councils is reserved for women while 25% of municipal council seats are reserved for women.<sup>(51)</sup> In 2017, only four women in the Kingdom competed for the position of mayor. As for the municipal and decentralized elections in the same year, women candidates won 241 seats on a competitive basis and 549 seats on the basis of a quota system: 175 of these seats were in municipal councils, 342 in local councils, and 32 in governorate councils.<sup>(52)</sup> The Local Administration Law of 2021 maintained the quota in municipal councils at 25% and this was raised in governorate councils to reach 25% of elected members. This would enhance the representation of women in elected local councils.

In addition, the Political Parties Law of 2012 stipulated that the percentage of women who are founding members of the party must not be less than 10%. In 2017, there were three women heading Jordanian political parties compared to 49 political parties led by their male counterparts.<sup>(53)</sup>

The government was eager to support women's political participation by adopting a set of plans and policies over the past years, including the National Agenda 2016-2025<sup>(54)</sup> which focuses on basic axes to empower women and activate their role. This is in addition to the National Strategy for Women 2020-2025 whose vision focuses on attaining a society free from discrimination and gender-based violence and one in which women and girls enjoy full human rights and equal opportunities to achieve comprehensive and sustainable development.<sup>(55)</sup>

(51) Al-Khatib, W. (2020), Decentralization in Jordan. Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), available at: <https://bit.ly/37dzizgy>.

(52) Majali, A and Khater A. (2017), Jordan's Municipal and Decentralized Elections in 2017: A Political and Statistical Study. Center for Middle East Studies, available at: <https://bit.ly/3vQgfGu>.

(53) Nassarat, D. M. et al (2017), Attitudes of Jordanian Citizens towards Social, Economic and Political Rights of Women in the Governorates of Karak, Tafileh and Ma'an. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, available at: <https://bit.ly/3qzlp6H>.

(54) Middle East University, Jordanian women's participation in political life and the study of obstacles and ways to address them (1954-2020), available at: <https://bit.ly/365kZNq>.

(55) The Jordanian National Commission for Women, The National Strategy for Jordanian Women 2020-2025, available at: <https://bit.ly/3lYtIjk>.

On June 10, 2021, King Abdullah II called for the formation of the Royal Commission for the Modernization of the Political System whose task was to provide recommendations on updates and reforms to the laws on elections and political parties.<sup>(56)</sup> The Royal Committee ensured the formation of a sub-committee for the empowerment of women and to present recommendations on enhancing women's participation in decision-making processes, expanding women's participation in political life, and ensuring equal opportunities for women in all sectors.<sup>(57)</sup>

(56) The Royal Committee to Modernize the Political System, available at: <https://bit.ly/3sSHXAu>.

(57) Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs (2021), Al-Ma'aytah to "Sputnik": Constitutional Amendments Establish Reform Laws and the woman wins, available at: <https://bit.ly/34oZ2Zv>.

### 3.2 Social and cultural challenges

The patriarchal culture sees that men are better able to make general political decisions than women. The culture reinforces the patriarchal political space at the expense of the space available to women. The stereotype of women sees them as incapable of carrying out their responsibilities or political decisions, managing public affairs and participating in legislative decision-making. According to the stereotypical image, these roles are inconsistent with the roles previously established in the minds of society which are focused on raising children and conducting household affairs. Men from the same family do not accept women's participation in public life in general or in political life and elections, in particular. For example, some husbands do not accept that their wives participate in elections whether by running or electing people. Moreover, some religious interpretations propose that a woman's voice is taboo and should not be heard and that she should not leave the house, thus preventing them from participating in public debates. The cultural heritage that is contaminated by this image of women and their role has made women incapable of taking on leadership positions.

The cultural and social heritage still has a great influence in forming public opinion, which may be exploited by some people who object to women's participation and prefer men's access to the legislative authority. This is in addition to some practices that strengthen gender discrimination in society and even within some political bodies and positions. This is due to the social view of women as unequal to men in work efficiency or in dedicating the necessary time at the expense of family obligations. Other issues include challenging the tribe negatively and the emergence of the phenomenon of tribal consensus over only a single candidate to ensure his access to parliament. This is in addition to the men's lack of acceptance of women's votes being outside the tribe.<sup>(58)</sup>

(58) Al-Hayat Center - RASED, A report on women's participation in the 2016 parliamentary elections (challenges and recommendations), available at: <https://t.ly/cOly>.

## 4.2 Media challenges and access to the society

Women's low-level experience in dealing with the media restricts their social access. On the other hand, men have greater experiences due to their higher involvement in public work, the stereotypical image in traditional media and its role in stereotyping women's images. This limits the appearance of women in the media and constitutes a major challenge to integrating women into political work. The government developed systems to integrate women and create incentives for them, such as the proportional list system, which is supposed to encourage the inclusion of women in the lists of political parties. Despite this, the list is sometimes limited to only one woman.<sup>(59)</sup>

## Chapter 3: Main results

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(59) Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2018). Women's Political Participation in Jordan, available at: <https://bit.ly/3KgqsAT>.



## 1.3 Challenges facing women in political and economic participation

### 1.1.3 Political Challenges

The majority of respondents from focus groups and personal interviews agreed that there are many challenges that women still face in the political sector. The most important of these challenges are obstacles to participation in political decision-making through participation in political parties, running for elections in elected councils, or assuming leadership positions. According to women participating in the study, this is due to several factors, the most important of which are:

#### **First: Women's lack of financial resources or funding, which reduces their chances of participating in elections and bearing the costs of electoral campaigns**

The majority of female respondents agreed that women's options for candidacy depend on the availability of funding in order for them to have effective political participation.<sup>(60)</sup> They added that their chances of obtaining funding are always less than men's. Some of them, however, reported that there are active, qualified, and experienced that would enable them to win elections if financial support is available to them.<sup>(61)</sup>

#### **Second: Fear of losing the job when participating in elections**

Since the current legal framework requires the candidate to resign from the job when running for elections, the majority of female respondents believe that staying in their jobs feels safe, and they are not ready to sacrifice the job, which is the only source of income for them and their families, to run for elections that have unknown or guaranteed results. They also believe there is an absence of real opportunities for change in the culture of Jordanian society that supports women in the elections.<sup>(62)</sup>

(60) A focus group session with women activists from the central governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the southern governorates, held on 30/1/2022.

(61) A focus group session with women activists from the central governorates, held on 30/1/2022.

(62) A focus group session with women activists from the central governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the southern governorates, held on 30/1/2022.

#### **Third: The traditional social norms that reinforced the stereotypical image of women in Jordanian society<sup>(63)</sup>**

The majority of female respondents confirmed that the reason for the society's low confidence in the capabilities of Jordanian women is that Jordanian society is still a patriarchal society that believes that men are better able to shoulder the course of political work and decision-making than women,<sup>(64)</sup> and that women's most important role in society is undertaking family and child care. In addition, a woman's political participation decision is not an individual decision, but a decision dependent on the approval and support of the family or tribe that imposed social restrictions.<sup>(65)</sup> Some female respondents believe that the practices and views of women towards themselves and their lack of support for each other reinforced this stereotype about women, in addition to the bullying campaigns that are launched on them.<sup>(66)</sup>

#### **Fourth: Women's lack of awareness of the policies, legislation, and laws that encourage political participation, the most important of which is the election laws**

Some female respondents reported that some female candidates do not have sufficient awareness of election laws and the quota system. It is worth noting that when female respondents were asked during the focus groups about the most important policies or applicable legislation related to the political status of women, most of them were unable to mention one legislation or policy, except for the minority of them.<sup>(67)</sup> In addition, some female respondents did not know how to access the official websites through which these policies and legislations are published.<sup>(68)</sup>

(63) A focus group session with women activists from the central governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the southern governorates, held on 30/1/2022.

(64) A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the southern governorates, held on 30/1/2022; Interview with current female MP, held on 2/2/2022.

(65) A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the southern governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the central governorates, held on 30/1/2022; interview with representative of civil society, held on 25/1/2022.

(66) A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the southern governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the central governorates, held on 30/1/2022; Interview with representative of civil society, held on 25/1/2022.

(67) All focus group sessions.

(68) A focus group session with women activists from the central governorates, held on 30/1/2022.

**Fifth: The low women's participation in societal committees, unions or parties, which may be a base for them to start political work and mobilize community support<sup>(69)</sup>**

Some female respondents believe that women's participation in parties is still low, and some of them confirmed that there is a fear of the security grip when participating in parties that may affect the future of the individual, whether male or female.<sup>(70)</sup> Some respondents added that even while some laws and policies encourage women to join political parties, they feel that these laws and policies are not activated and not applied on the ground, and that contrarily, through these policies and laws, women are exploited by making her participation in the political process a superficial status without actual participation.<sup>(71)</sup> Some respondents also mentioned that the women's quota system in the elections may have had a negative impact on women's political participation in political parties and events, as it limited women's participation to a limited number of seats in the parliament, which made women and society permanently focus only on these pre-secured seats.<sup>(72)</sup>

**Sixth: The proliferation of the phenomenon of "wasta" and nepotism, in which women see an infringement on the rights of others and an absence of the concept of justice and equality**

Some female respondents reported that this phenomenon greatly affected women's access to senior leadership positions, although some of them reported that there are women who have held senior leadership positions and demonstrated effective performance without any favoritism, as they are more loyal and productive.<sup>(73)</sup>

(69) Interview with representative of civil society, held on 25/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the central governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the southern governorates, held on 30/1/2022; Interview with former female MP, held on 25/1/2022.

(70) Interview with representative of civil society, held on 25/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the central governorates, held on 30/1/2022.

(71) A focus group session with women activists from the central governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the southern governorates, held on 30/1/2022.

(72) A focus group session with women activists from the southern governorates, held on 30/1/2022; Interview with representative of civil society, held on 25/1/2022; Interview with representative of civil society, held on 31/1/2022; Interview with former female MP, held on 25/1/2022; Interview with current female MP, held on 2/2/2022.

(73) A focus group session with women activists from the central governorates, held on 30/1/2022; Interview with representative of civil society, held on 25/1/2022; Interview with representative of civil society, held on 31/1/2022; Interview with former female MP, held on 25/1/2022; Interview with current female MP, held on 2/2/2022.

**Seventh: The tribal system had a negative impact on women's political participation**

Some female respondents believe that the tribal consensus in running for elected councils negatively affected women's participation in elections and political life, due to the preferences of the majority of tribes to be represented by better men than women.<sup>(74)</sup>

**Eighth: The weak participation of women in setting policies and legislation that affect their political participation**

Women agreed on the existence of a weakness in women's participation in the development of public policies and laws related to the political situation in general and to the participation of women in politics in particular.<sup>(75)</sup> One of the respondents pointed out that the weakness of women in leadership positions makes (male) leaders not take into account women as a participant in decision-making.<sup>(76)</sup>

### 2.1.3 Economic Challenges

The majority of female respondents from focus groups and personal interviews agreed that there are many challenges still facing women in the economic sector, especially the challenges facing working women or entrepreneurs and the high rates of unemployment. However, the majority of female respondents agreed that Jordanian women currently have the competence, education, and experience that qualify them for active participation.<sup>(77)</sup> According to women participating in the study, this is due to several factors, the most important of which are:

(74) A focus group session with women activists from the southern governorates, held on 30/1/2022.

(75) A focus group session with women activists from the central governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the southern governorates, held on 30/1/2022.

(76) Interview with representative of civil society, held on 25/1/2022.

(77) Interview with representative of civil society, held on 25/1/2022; Interview with representative of civil society, held on 31/1/2022; Interview with former female MP, held on 25/1/2022; Interview with current female MP, held on 2/2/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the central governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the southern governorates, held on 30/1/2022.

### First: The high unemployment rates in general and their impact on women's opportunities in particular<sup>(78)</sup>

Some female respondents see the limited available job opportunities and the difficulty of obtaining employment opportunities, in addition to the weakness of entrepreneurship projects, as challenges that have affected society in general and women in particular.<sup>(79)</sup> One of the respondents, who runs a home project (productive kitchen), believes that the employment of hosted refugees working in the same field of work has affected the chances of continuity of her work.<sup>(80)</sup>

### Second: The burden of low wages

Women suffer from low wages for work of equal value compared to that of men and the disparity in wages in the private sector and their non-compliance with the Social Security Law.<sup>(81)</sup>

### Third: Unhealthy working conditions

The majority of female respondents agreed on the difficulty of women's access to the labor market as a result of the lack of appropriate opportunity that suits their needs.<sup>(82)</sup> This is in addition to the absence of flexible work contracts and the lack of basic needs for women in the workplace, such as: providing nurseries for women's children and means of transportation for female workers.<sup>(83)</sup> This affected women's ability to combine work and family life.<sup>(84)</sup> This has led to wasting women's energies and capabilities and not using them in effective and sustainable projects that may bring an income to them and their families.<sup>(85)</sup>

(78) A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022.

(79) A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the southern governorates, held on 30/1/2022.

(80) A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022.

(81) A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022; Interview with current female MP, held on 2/2/2022.

(82) A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022; Interview with current female MP, held on 2/2/2022.

(83) A focus group session with women activists from the central governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022; Interview with representative of civil society, held on 25/1/2022; Interview with representative of civil society, held on 31/1/2022.

(84) A focus group session with women activists from the central governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022; Interview with representative of civil society, held on 25/1/2022; Interview with representative of civil society, held on 31/1/2022.

(85) A focus group session with women activists from the central governorates, held on 30/1/2022.

### Fourth: The difficulty that women-run projects face in accessing regional markets as a result of the high costs of business and customs and consumer distrust of the local product

Some female respondents believe that, despite its development, the local industry still suffers from a lack of consumer demand for the local product. In addition, one of the respondents may see that it is difficult for women to bear the costs of the local product in light of the difficult economic conditions and customs restrictions.<sup>(86)</sup>

### Fifth: Gender-based violence in the workplace, which is a form of discrimination against women<sup>(87)</sup>

One of the female respondents mentioned that many women face gender-based violence in its various forms in the workplace, which negatively affects the performance and work continuity of female employees. Social norms affect the victims' decision to file complaints for fear of their reputation and society's view of them. This is in addition to the lack of awareness of female workers of the concept of gender-based violence and its types.<sup>(88)</sup>

### Sixth: Weak loan programs and lack of effective support for entrepreneurial projects

The fact that there are no loan and grant facilities that women may access and that they are limited to certain areas, such as the central governorates, while the rural areas are marginalized,<sup>(89)</sup> this prevents women from being active in their society.<sup>(90)</sup> Some respondents also mentioned that granting women long-term financial loans without follow-up from donors makes them fall into a complex web of financial obligations that increases poverty, increases women's defaulting on payments.<sup>(91)</sup>

(86) A focus group session with women activists from the southern governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the central governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022.

(87) A focus group session with women activists from the central governorates, held on 30/1/2022; Interview with current female MP; held on 2/2/2022.

(88) Interview with current female MP; held on 2/2/2022.

(89) Interview with representative of civil society, held on 31/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the southern governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022.

(90) A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022.

(91) Interview with former female MP, held on 25/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the southern governorates, held on 30/1/2022.

**Seventh: Absence of women issues in the media and the stereotypical image of women**

A woman is represented by being a wife, educator and mother, ignoring the role of the working, successful, and struggling woman, and not addressing her achievements, issues, and challenges with a targeted media message. Most of the female respondents stated that women's issues are no less important than other issues.<sup>(92)</sup>

**Eighth: The presence of loopholes in the Social Security and Health Insurance Law**

This has created a type of bias in favor of men. With regard to the Social Security Law, it is considered a form of gender discrimination because of the retirement age and the entitlement to the pension. The Law set the retirement age for women at 55 and for men at 60. It would have been better for the Law to equalize the retirement age for men and women, since women are able to continue working, which would enable them to obtain a better retirement salary if she continues to work until the age of sixty, as does the man. In addition, in the event of the death of the woman, her children or her husband are not entitled to a salary from the insurance as the man.<sup>(93)</sup> The same applies to the current health insurance laws, which enable a man to give his family insurance, but a woman is not allowed to give her husband insurance, except on the condition that official proof is presented that the husband does not work or is a day laborer.<sup>(94)</sup>

**Ninth: Women's weak participation in setting policies and legislation that affect their economic participation**

Women agreed that women have weak participation in the development of public policies and laws related to the economic situation in general and the economic participation of women in particular.<sup>(95)</sup> One of the respondents pointed out that women's weak presence in leadership positions makes (male) leaders not take into account women as potential participants in decision-making.<sup>(96)</sup>

(92) Interview with representative of civil society, held on 25/1/2022; Interview with representative of civil society, held on 31/1/2022; Interview with former female MP, held on 25/1/2022; Interview with current female MP, held on 2/2/2022.

(93) A focus group session with women activists from the central governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022.

(94) A focus group session with women activists from the southern governorates, held on 30/1/2022.

(95) A focus group session with women activists from the central governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the southern governorates, held on 30/1/2022.

(96) Interview with representative of civil society, held on 25/1/2022.

**2.3 The role of civil society in the economic and political empowerment of women**

The majority of female respondents agreed that civil society institutions and international organizations played a major role in women's achievements,<sup>(97)</sup> and this is done through the workshops, seminars, courses, and trainings held by these organizations to help empower women politically and economically. However, the respondents believe that this is not enough to ensure women's access to decision-making positions. They see that many of the recommendations that are made in many conferences and activities are not taken into account or worked on, and that there is repetition of these trainings and recommendations without moving towards actual development and empowerment.<sup>(98)</sup> The respondents unanimously agreed that the role of civil society organizations has become a modest one because the organizations remained largely elitist and restricted to a certain group and regions of society, while continuing to give courses and awareness meetings to the same social segments.<sup>(99)</sup> Some respondents also see that the activity of some civil society organizations is seasonal and related to events, such as the elections, and these organizations hold courses and workshops during this period only.<sup>(100)</sup> One of the respondents mentioned that the projects offered by some international organizations that support women economically to establish home businesses are ineffective due to the poor follow-up of these projects, and this affects their sustainability.<sup>(101)</sup>

(97) Interview with representative of civil society, held on 25/1/2022; Interview with representative of civil society, held on 31/1/2022; Interview with former female MP, held on 25/1/2022; Interview with current female MP, held on 2/2/2022.

(98) A focus group session with women activists from the central governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the southern governorates, held on 30/1/2022.

(99) A focus group session with women activists from the central governorates, held on 30/1/2022; A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022.

(100) A focus group session with women activists from the northern governorates, held on 30/1/2022.

(101) A focus group session with women activists from the central governorates, held on 30/1/2022.



Appendixes

## Appendix (1): The list of the female interviewees

No.	Name	Position	Entity	Interview Date
1	Amal Shabsogh	Head of the Circassian Society	Civil Society Organization	25/1/2022
2	Shaha Al-'Amareen	Former female MP	Former female MP	25/1/2022
3	Thana' Al-Khasawneh	Head of the Jordanian Businesswomen Association	Civil Society Organization	31/1/2022
4	Rahaq Al-Zawahreh	Current female MP	Current female MP	2/2/2022

Appendix (2): The list of women activists participating in  
focus groups

List of women activists from central governorates participating in focus group held on 30/1/2022

No.	Name	Position	Governorate
1	Arwa Al-Fawalheh	Director of Fitra Charity Society	Zarqa
2	Engineer Nelfer Abu Rabiha	Former governorate council member; Member of the executive council of the National Trend Party	Capital Amman
3	Khulood Al-Falahat	Former municipal council member; Head of Al-Karama Cultural Forum; Head of Al-Amal Society for Environmental Development	Madaba
4	Isra' Riyad Al-Salamat	Former municipal council member; Atyaf Al-Rabi' for Childcare, a non-profit company	Zarqa
5	Isra' Al-Jamal	Private sector educational supervisor; works for the Jordanian Breast Cancer Program	Zarqa
6	Buthayna Al-Jawarneh	Social activist	Zarqa
7	Malak Salameh	Head of the Women Programs Center in Zarqa refugee camp	Zarqa
8	Diana Al-Khawaldeh	Head of the Cultural Center; Head of the Women Empowerment Unit in Zarqa Municipality	Zarqa
9	Dina Al-Khodari	University professor at Middle East University	Amman
10	Dr. Mervat Al-Abbadi	Former governorate council member; Head of women sector in Al-Shura Party; Head of Nur Al-Mashreq Charity Society	Amman
11	Hayat Mubarak Al-Zawahreh	Former municipal council member; Rapporteur of Women Committees Assembly	Zarqa

List of women activists from northern governorates participating in focus group held on 30/1/2022

No.	Name	Position	Governorate
1	Yasmeen Al-Zo'bi	Head of Al-'Ata' Charity Society	Irbed
2	Dr. Hiyam Al-Khatib	Works for Accreditation and Quality Control Center at Yarmouk University; Researcher and trainer in the field of women's political empowerment	Irbed
3	Eman Bani Mustafa	Public relations director in Jarash Governorate; Project coordinator for Women Empowerment Unit	Jarash
4	Arij Salim	Head of Women Empowerment Unit in Greater Irbed Municipality	Irbed
5	Firyal Al-Kofahi	Owner of production kitchen; Member of Ayam Zaman Heritage Society	Irbed
6	Reem Sobh	Works for Arab Women Society	Irbed
7	Dalal Al-Shaykh	Owner of Be Smart centers in Zarqa	Zarqa
8	Thabyah Al-Ghazzawi	Head of Al-Sham'ah Charity Society	Irbed/Northern Valley

List of women activists from southern governorates participating in focus group held on 30/1/2022

No.	Name	Position	Governorate
1	Dr. Sana' Al-Refai	Professor at Balqa Applied University, Aqaba University College	Aqaba
2	Majdoleen Al-Sbeihat	Teacher of biosciences/ Jordan University - Aqaba branch	Aqaba
3	Fatima Al-Yamani	Administrative supervisor at Aqaba Port Company for Marine Services; Head of Al-Hayat Society	Aqaba
4	Ala' Al-Btoush	Editor and presenter of programs at Sawt Al-Karak Radio; journalist for Al-Mawqif news website	Karak
5	Fatima Al-Hinnawi	Head of Princess Basma Center	Aqaba
6	Rania Abu 'Arisheh	Agricultural engineer and accredited trainer for the International Republican Institute	Aqaba
7	Nancy Al-Siyuri	Social activist/learning difficulties teacher/ human resources and capacity building trainer	Aqaba





