



UN Working Group on discrimination against women and girls

Questionnaire on girls' and young women's activism



Girls' and young women's activism in Jordan

Amman Center For Human Rights Studies

Prepared by
Valentina BLONDEL
and
Thibaut VANDRIESSCHE

Introduction

The Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, in preparation for its thematic report to be presented at the 50th session of the Human Rights Council in June 2022, has been researching the topic of girls' and young women's activism focusing on accomplishments, challenges and opportunities for change. The scope of this questionnaire will cover the various aspects of girls' and young women's participation and activism in political and public life at different levels.

In this regard, the Working Group would like to seek inputs from States, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and other stakeholders to inform the preparation of the report in line with its mandate to maintain a constructive approach and dialogue with States and other stakeholders.

The Working Group would greatly appreciate it if you could **reply by 1 October 2021** to the following email address: wgdiscriminationwomen@ohchr.org Responses to the questionnaire will be made publicly available at the time of the report publication.

I. Nature, modalities and trends of girls' and young women's activism

1. What is the normative framework related to girls' and young women's civic space and activism?

Jordan is a signatory to the following international conventions:

- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW)
- UN Convention on the Political Rights of Women
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

Article 16 of CEDAW describing the importance of eliminating discrimination against women could impose a framework for women's political participation in Jordan : “States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women ([OHCHR](#))”

CEDAW has been signed and ratified by Jordan but with some reservations. Article 9.2 on equal treatment between men and women in the passing of nationalities to children has been disavowed. ([European Union Election Observation Mission, 2016](#))

“Notwithstanding the increase of women candidates, the absence of an express constitutional guarantee against discrimination of women continues to underpin their historically low political representation.” ([European Union Election Observation Mission, 2016](#))

i. Political actors and authorities they mostly engage with

The OECD [WOMEN'S Political Participation in JORDAN](#) report attests proportionally to the number of seats a high presence of women in the municipal councils (441 out of 1057 posts), a relative presence in the local councils (555 out of 1751) and a low presence in the governorates (36 out of 299)

There has been an increase in the number of women parliamentary candidates and elected officials in Jordan since 2016, according to the OECD report : “Both the 2016 parliamentary elections and 2017 local elections resulted in an increase of women in decision-making bodies, as well as overall number of candidates.

Electoral reforms played a big role but could have gone further. In the 2016 parliamentary elections – changing from a “one man, one vote” system to open list proportional representation provided incentive for political parties to include women electoral lists given that the women’s quota allowed the possibility of getting more than one candidate elected on a single list. It also allowed voters to mark their preference for candidates on individual lists rather than seats being assigned to candidates in the order they are marked on lists as was the case in the 2013 elections. On average, 88% of lists included at least one female candidate, 3% included none and only a handful of lists included more than one woman.”

ii. Levels of engagement (grassroots, local, national, international)

Jordan's electoral law requires a 10% quota for women, yet 51.8% of the electorate is made up of women. Additionally, women remain under-represented in the electoral administration and in decision-making positions.

According to a questionnaire study conducted by Amman Center For Human Rights Studies about women in political life, regarding the percentage of women in leadership bodies, it reached 22% in the left and national parties, 19% in the center parties, and 13% in the religious-oriented parties.

*iii. Main spaces for engagement (e.g. schools, community, media, online platforms, etc.)
Online platforms, media, campaigns,*

There are several Jordanian platforms to stimulate women's political engagement and campaigns such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), learning partnership, UN Women. There is also a large community engaged in enhancing women's political participation.

iv. Cross-movement cooperation and solidarity

“The Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) is a semi-governmental body to serve as a reference authority on women’s affairs, empower women, and promote gender equality. It is the central agency gender focused institution in Jordan. The mission of the JNCW includes ‘making tangible and positive changes for the protection of women and upgrading their status to achieve active and equal participation alongside men in all aspects of life’”(OECD [WOMEN’S Political Participation in JORDAN](#) report)

2. What are the forms and modalities for girls’ and young women’s engagement activism in your country? Please provide information about any structures in place (formal and informal) and how they operate. Does your NHRI have any role in these structures?

UN Women Jordan provides a coherent programme of institutional capacity development to key government stakeholders (the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation [MOPIC], the Ministry of Social Development [MOSD], the Jordanian National Commission for Women [JNCW]) on mainstreaming gender equality and women’s empowerment into policy adoption and implementation and monitoring of global commitments. UN Women links institutional capacity development to the promotion

of social norms, attitudes and behaviors supportive of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.¹

3. What are the main trends and drivers influencing girls' and young women's activism in your national context?

Violence against women; domestic violence; 24% of women in Jordan experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetime².

Gender-based violence; since the spread of COVID-19, women's rights activists are concerned about their potential unintended consequences for women. Isolation, financial worries, and constant anxiety can contribute to violence in the home.³

Labour rights; Jordan's unemployment rate was 23 percent in the second quarter of 2020. One key to promoting long-term economic growth is achieving greater female labor force participation. According to the World Bank, Jordan has "*the lowest female labor force participation of a country not at war.*"

4. What are the main successes or changes seen in terms of :

i. Social mobilization and change

Many non-profit organizations in Jordan have the same principal aim; to mobilize the population in order to promote the values of citizenship and human rights. The long-term change is continuing to build the capabilities and training of women leaders in various life skills and defending independence. Thus, to adopt holistic, participatory and work methods that are based on respect for human rights and women rights."⁴ ([European Union Election Observation Mission](#))

ii. Influencing policies and legislation

"Jordanian women's participation in political parties dates back to the 1950s. However, political activism came to a halt in the period between 1957 and 1992. In 1992, the new Political Parties Law granted women the right to participate in political parties. Since then, women have become founding and active members of political parties, but their participation remained largely cosmetic and symbolic. Women have not sought to join parties, and parties have not done enough to recruit women. As a result, women are still largely underrepresented in senior positions of many parties. In addition, women's issues are still neglected in their policy platforms, and the number of women involved in these parties remains low."⁵

iii. Personal development and empowerment (of girls and young women)

Supportive households and communities are essential to ensuring that women and girls have full access to the opportunities they need to integrate women and girls socially, professionally and economically.

¹ Source: arabstates.unwomen.org/en/countries/jordan/areas-of-work-and-programmes

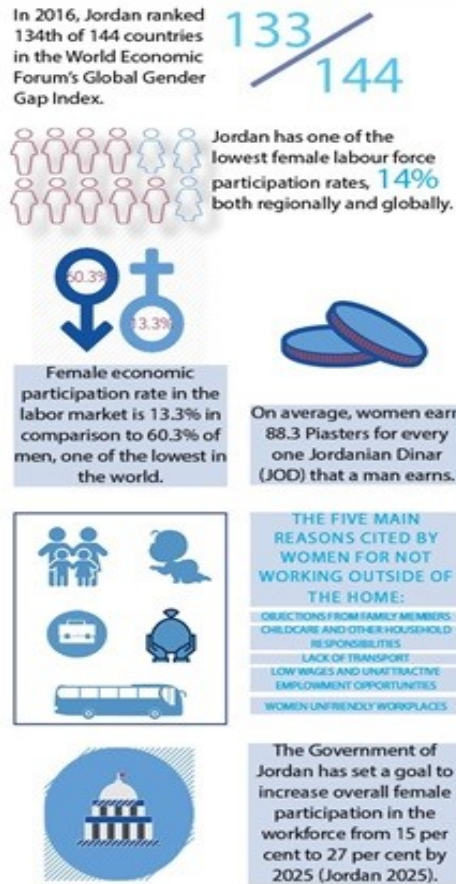
² Source: [UNWomen Global Database on Violence against Women](#)

³ Source: Solidarity is Global Institute/Jordan

⁴ Source: European Union Election Observation Mission

⁵ Source: <https://journals.openedition.org/ema/3033>

WOMENS ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN JORDAN



6

II. Enabling factors and good practices

1. What solidarity and support frameworks are available in your national context to enhance girls' and young women's activism? Please provide information on the role of:

i. Legal/policy and institutional frameworks

Governing institutions and legal frameworks can provide a national model for gender equality in Jordan. International and local organizations and UN institutions in the field support the Government of Jordan's efforts to institutionalize gender equality through training and supporting public sector workers to identify and address gender-related issues in the workplace. For example, USAID trains local organizations in order to strengthen gender related grassroots advocacy efforts.⁷

ii. Social, cultural, religious institutions

⁶ Source: www.arabstates.unwomen.org

⁷ Source: USAID - Promoting Gender Equality and Female Empowerment

“Article 103(ii) of the Jordanian Constitution grants religious institutions direct authority over personal status matters, and states ‘matters of personal status are those which are defined by law...’⁸ As the Personal Status Law is based on religion, it is highly dependent on the interpretations of religious institutions. Religious institutions are predominantly male dominated. Similarly, ecclesiastical courts that regulate personal status matters for the Christian communities are also predominantly all males.

iii. Technological infrastructures/means

N/A

iv. Collaborative initiatives, human rights and/or women’s movements

Amman Center for Human Rights Studies, IGIS, Arab Women Organization of Jordan, The Jordanian National Commission for Women, GIZ, USAID, AFD, UNWOMEN, IOM, UNHCR, etc.

v. Other frameworks

2. What are the concrete ways in which the State promotes and secures girls’ engagement/activism? Are there particular issues and platforms in which the State encourages their engagement?

Jordan shows remarkable gender equality in health and education. Women’s life expectancy, literacy, and women’s enrollment in all levels of education have improved dramatically. A World Bank Group report on gender in Jordan, *Economic Participation, Agency and Access to Justice*, looks at this central question and finds that improvements in human development have yet to translate into improvements in social, economic, and political participation.⁹

3. How does your institution (NHRI) promote and ensure girls’ engagement/activism in your national context? Are there particular issues or platforms or levels in which your institution encourages their engagement and what role it plays?

Amman Center for Human Rights Studies works to equip and empower women in leadership, change the national perception of women as viable, qualified decision-makers, and supports political participation and activism. Our priorities within women’s rights lie in activism and participation, through research, advocacy, training seminars, workshops, and policy recommendations.

4. How do other stakeholders promote girls’ and young women’s engagement and activism in your national context? Please describe which stakeholders are very active in this area and if they work in collaboration with your institution.

USAID works with the government to collaborate and to institutionalize gender equality. UN Women provides integrated policy support and technical expertise to government stakeholders on relevant primary and secondary legislation, strategies and policies in order to create an enabling environment for women’s improved access to income security and decent work.¹⁰ Additionally, the Jordanian National Commission for Women advocates for increased women’s rights and empowerment.

5. Are there ways to assess and support girls’ evolving capacities to fully and freely participate in all spheres of public decision-making? Also, how is the diversity of girls’ activism and inclusion in all

⁸ Source : [The Constitution of The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan](#)

⁹ Source: World Bank

¹⁰ Source: UNWomen Arab States

human rights activism initiatives ensured (e.g. gender equality, disability, environment, LGBTI issues, etc.)?

No data

6. What are the achievements at the national level in the implementation of laws, policies, plans and/or programs and practices relevant to promoting girls' and young women's engagement/activism? Please describe the role of your institutions in this respect.



Source: The Jodanian National Commission for Women has published their objective maps promoting women's rights until 2030

7. Please provide examples of good practices and any innovative initiatives taken, and lessons learnt in general and in relation to the role of your institution

Human rights promotion, implementation and advocacy.

III. Challenges and structural barriers

1. What kind of gender and age specific barriers are affecting girls' and young women's participation/activism in your national context? Please indicate concrete examples of direct and indirect as well as formal and informal factors posing threats and risks for girls and young women engaging in the public space (examples of these can include stereotyping based on gender and age, restrictions on freedom of expression, speech, assembly, liberty, etc., legal restrictions to capacity to provide legal consent, legal age of marriage, etc.)

Women often face restriction of movement imposed in rural governorates. In view of the jurisdiction and custom, the fear of divorce would weigh and influence the participation rate of women in politics. Young marriages, as well as pressure to have children immediately, also act as a barrier to participation and activism. Honor killings still happen in Jordan as well, providing a lethal threat to some considering activism.

The symbolic and statutory representation from the traditional patriarchal system would prevent women's political participation.

2. Are there any particular groups of girls and young women who are most affected by these barriers and why? What role is your institution playing to address these barriers?

The territorial barrier cannot be ignored when reading the composition of political life in Jordan. Rural communities therefore face additional challenges due to the weight of tradition and the low density of communities, making interconnection and political networking more complicated.

3. What issues or gaps do arise with regard to existing frameworks (i.e. legislation, policies, plans, and/or programs) relevant to girls' and young women's civic space and activism? Are there any specific laws, policies and practices that place obstacles to girls' and young women's participation, activism or collective action? Are there ways your institution endeavors to address these gaps?

Article 6(i) of the Constitution of Jordan states that 'Jordanians shall be equal before the law with no discrimination between them in rights and duties even if they differ in race, language or religion,' the Constitution does not explicitly prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sex, which is something that Jordan has been criticized for over the years.

4. Are there particular threats or risks girls and young women activists in your country or region experience in relation to their work? In particular, in terms of:
 - i. Being prosecuted and punished for their activism

The prevalence of administrative detention, or imprisonment without a proper trial, is perhaps one of the most critical issues faced by both female Jordanian citizens and foreign nationals within the country's legal system. According to the NGO Sisterhood is Global Institute (SIGI), 65% of all female inmates in Jordan are administrative detainees.¹¹

- ii. facing intimidations, harassments, and attacks (direct or indirect, online or offline, sexual or physical)

The lack of regulations regarding administrative detention gives local governors outside the judicial system a large amount of discretionary power over the lives of women fleeing violence. Human Rights Watch describes administrative detention as used simply to detain women for "acting outside local norms, such as women alone in public at night or in the company of men who are not their relatives."¹²

- iii. lacking access to justice and reparations for violations of their rights

¹¹ Source: [OHCHR](#)

¹² Source: OHCHR - Documents Issues Women

No data

5. Are there particular concerns that may arise with respect to girls' and young women's access to technology and other infrastructures, and the corresponding divide? What role do NGOs play in response to these gaps?

UN Women has programs in Jordan that empower women through technology, particularly in the camps with the introduction of cash distribution through the Irish recognition technology; this technology by allocating financial freedom to women allows political inclusion.

The Orange Foundation in collaboration with the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development ([JOHUD](#)) has opened training centers allowing Jordanian women to train in the use of technological tools that could support the development of a business or by appropriating the use of technology. ([foundation orange](#))

What are the challenges, in your national context, in the recognition and protection of girls as human rights defenders? What negative trends undermine their evolving capacities and interests at the family, community, and State levels? Does your institution promote and work with girl human rights defenders?

Discrimination within family and/or community. Jordan is still a very patriarchal country.

6. What are the main challenges in ensuring the following?
 - i. Safe space for engagement

Lack of women's rights movement. Lack of political engagement to put in place safe spaces.

- ii. Inclusion of diverse groups of girls and young women and those from marginalized communities
 - The inclusion of diverse groups of girls and young women covers the issues of political representativeness
 - Representation of minorities and coverage of the world of the margins

iii. Access to resources, infrastructures, networks and platforms

No data

- iv. Collaborative programs with different stakeholders

UN Women programs, grassroots NGOs, USAID, JNCW

IV. Emerging issues

1. Are there new emerging issues related to girls' and young women's engagement at the community and national levels?

We consider it important to cover new topics such as the protection and defense of refugee women through emergency aid.

2. What are the impacts of digital advancements and major shifts in digital activism on girls' and young women's engagement/participation?
3. What are the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on girls' and young women's activism/participation?
 - Social isolation may have had an impact on women's participation if one understands the importance of special proximity on the nature of political networking in Jordan.
 - In addition, COVID has initiated a growth in the number of domestic violence as revealed by [Amnesty International](#)
 - There was also a drop in cases of people seeking protection from the authorities or turning to women's state shelters. Other measures were introduced, such as tele-counselling and a hotline, but women's groups reported that these could only offer limited support."¹³
4. Please provide information on other recent national, regional and global developments and concerns with respect to girls' and young women's movements.

V. Recommendations/ the way forward

1. What concrete measures should be adopted and implemented to ensure girls' and young women's meaningful participation, activism and collective action at all levels?

The reserved seats for women in the House of Representatives should be increased. Additionally, the women who do have seats should be able to participate in more meaningful capacities, included in committees and able to hold decision-making roles.

2. What concrete measures should be adopted to address systemic gender-based/age-based discrimination and challenges affecting girls' and young women's engagement in the political and public life?

The women's quota as it currently stands is discriminatory, as it does not come close to true representation of the electorate. It should be amended to a gender-neutral quota, such as a 50/50 split that would represent the electorate.

¹³Source : Amnesty International, *Jordan 2020*, available online : <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/jordan/report-jordan/>

3. What concrete measures should be introduced to improve solidarity, support, collaborations towards creating an enabling environment for girls' and young women's engagement in the political and public life?

Gender inequality is still one of the major issues in Jordan. In 2018, only 14.6% of women were economically active. Women's participation in the labor force was lower across all age groups when compared to men. The percentages drop aggressively as women get older, which means that very few women assume leadership positions according a report on "Gender discrimination in Jordan" 2019, of the Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation (IRCKHF). Women's participation in political, public life will enrich and improve women's empowerment in education, health, labour, protection, gender equality, etc.

4. What role should NHRIs play to promote and protect girls' and young women's participation/activism?
 - There should be women in religious institutions, to create some balance at the very least. Women today work as judges in civil courts, and many are more qualified and have more integrity than many male judges. (Dr. Hayel Dawoud, Professor of Shari'a at the University of Jordan)
 - There are no women in courts that govern personal status matters; they are all men. This becomes problematic because not all women are comfortable with discussing private matters with men, and these men do not understand all the details concerning women's needs and expenses. (Dr. Ayam Halaseh, Policy and Institutional Development Component Lead at USAID Takamol.)