

4 Women's interests: Programs and Projects of Women's Organizations

In analyzing the organizational forms and structures, we are led to the discussion of a second area of analytic distinction, which is employed in the discussion of women's movements, namely "Women's Interests". In fact, after identifying which authorities/parties define women's interests in Jordan, it is now useful to analyze the programs and projects implemented by women's organizations from a gender/women's interest perspective. Thus, in this chapter we will examine the impact of the interaction between the internal and external factors (the atmosphere of sociopolitical transformation and the international interest in women's issues), as addressed in chapter two on the development of women's interests as well as work agenda in women's organizations.

4.1 Identifying Women's Interests

The issue of women's and gender interests occupies a place of considerable importance in the debate of women's movements and the enhancing of women at the international level. As mentioned before, the literature concerning this issue distinguishes between two main types of interests; women's interests and gender interests. The former refers to all interests that are derived from common problems and issues that face women as a "Sex". This however, was criticized as it emphasizes that sex is a sufficient basis for assuming common interests. As an alternative, the term "gender interests" was suggested by some socialist feminists. Gender interests are "referred to those arising from the social relations and the positioning of the sexes and therefore pertained in specific ways to both women and men" (Molyneux 1998: 75).

However, there are two ways in which women's gender needs and interests can be derived: these are termed as "Practical Gender Interests", those based on the satisfaction of needs arising from women's and men's placement within the sexual division of labor; and "Strategic Interests" i.e. those involving claims to transform social relations in order to enhance the women's position and to secure a more lasting

repositioning of women within the gender order and within the society at large. The political, as well as the potentially transformative nature of strategic interests, have also been emphasized through a third notion that is “ Transformatory Potential”. This term indicates: “ the capacity... for questioning, undermining or transforming gender relations and the structure of subordination” (Young 1993:156).

Young argues that the analysis of both practical and strategic gender interests is very complicated, for what is practical might turn strategic, and what is strategic might also be considered practical. Therefore, the term ‘transformatory potential’ is used to determine the capacity to transform practical gender interests into strategic ones.

In analyzing this area of the women’s movement, we apply the distinction of ‘strategic/practical gender interests’ on programs and projects implemented by the women’s organizations. A twofold method has been implemented here in order to explore what women’s interests are being politicized by Jordanian women. At the initial level, interviewed activists in women’s organizations were asked to name what they see as the most prevalent interests of women in Jordan, regardless if they did or did not work on these issues within their perspective organizations. Secondly, we analyzed the projects and programs implemented by women’s organizations in terms of which women’s interests are being dealt with, as well as which strategic and practical women’s interests are being actually met by these projects.

4.1.1 Women activists identifying women’s interests in Jordan

As previously mentioned, the interviewed activists were asked to name the various issues and interests, in which they believed were priorities for women in Jordan. Several issues were addressed in a range of arenas: legal, political, social, and economic. These issues and interests can be summarized as follows:

4.1.1.1 Poverty

Poverty as a women’s issue has, in different ways, been identified as one of the main issues for Jordanian women. Some interviewed activists refer to poverty as a family

problem, and highlighted the need to help the family through economically empowering its female members. Few others refer to the importance of financial independence for women.

Generally speaking, poverty was pushed to an extreme measure during the economic crises that Jordan faced in the 1980s, and due to the social economic consequences of the second gulf war in 1991. During this period, many Jordanians, as well as many Palestinians, were dismissed from their work in the gulf countries, and consequently, their money transfers stopped. This transfer of capital was one of the main sources, upon which the Jordanian economy stood¹. The poverty level in this context has risen from below 3% in 1986 to 19,8% in 1996. The state not only found itself with large debt, which it could not repay, but it was also forced to implement a structural adjustment program, under the supervision of the World Bank and the IMF. These first steps, which were taken in order to stabilize the economy,² were soundly rejected by the society. The break-ups (explained earlier in chapter two) in 1989 were a result of this rejection. Hence, the state avoided direct measurements and used indirect slow policies while withdrawing from supporting diverse arenas such as health and education.

Yet, economic problems, the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Program, and the state's increasing withdrawal from health care and education have led to an increased number of people living under the poverty line. These people have no safety network or social care that would enable them to meet even their most basic needs. Women constitute a large category of the poor, especially those suffering from social problems such as divorce, abandonment, singlehood and old age. In fact, many of them are responsible in providing a living for their children³. Consequently, women's as well as other civil society organizations were required to close the gap behind the state's withdrawal. They set up an agenda that mainly stresses the provision of social

¹ Jordan is therefore identified by many scholars as being economically a rentier state (see Hammarneh, 1994).

² The primary measurements that were taken to stabilize the economy ended up by raising the prices of fuel and other basic commodities. In April 1989, these measurements generated the outbreak of large-scale popular protests in Ma'an and other cities in southern Jordan. Eventually this extended to the rest of country (See chapter 2).

³ According to statistics based for the year 1997, 6,51% of families in Jordan are headed by women. 1.53 % of them are living under the poverty line (Shteivi, 2002:86)

welfare services as well as anti-poverty programs. In this context, a wide range of projects were implemented with eliminating poverty as the main target. Women's organizations are conducting projects that take the form of small credits, training programs, small- enterprises and income generating. These project forms extended widely in Jordan since the late 1980s to the present, the main form of activity provided by women's organizations and other NGOs⁴.

4.1.1.2 Education and Training

Several minor issues have been articulated under the category of education and training. Generally speaking, Article 20 of the Jordanian Constitution affirms that elementary education is compulsory for Jordanians and free of charge in government schools (Shakhatreh, 1992). Under Education Act No. 16/1964, free compulsory education also is included preparatory education. Article 13 of the Act stipulates "a student shall not leave school until he reaches 16 years of age." Moreover, section I of the Act, concerning changes in the terminology used, states that the word "male" also covers the word "female". Article three, paragraph 7, of the Act provides for "social justice and equal opportunity of education for all Jordanian boys and girls within the potential of the individuals themselves".

Under these laws, all types of education in Jordan are offered to women and men alike on an equal basis. Remarkable and substantial progress has been achieved in the educational standards for women and in their rates of enrollment. Developments reflect the increase in the number of females entering all levels of education. In recent years, female enrolment has caught up with male enrolment; in 1972, there were 79 females per 100 males at the basic education stage (Elementary and Preparatory levels). The ratio of females to males in this stage again successively rose to 94% in 1990(Shakhatreh, 1992).

In the realm of higher education, statistics seem also to point in women's favor. Many women are now pursuing higher education more than ever. The number of universities

⁴ Diverse anti poverty programs were initially implemented by the two main NGOs in Jordan, namely Nour Al Hussein Foundation, and Queen Alia Fund (now known as (Jordanian Hashmite Fund) (both Development oriented NGOs). The same concepts of anti poverty were used in the early 1990s by many other small charities and women's organizations. Many researchers believe that international funding and interest in such programs has played a great role in there extension (Hammad 1998; Nafa' 1998).

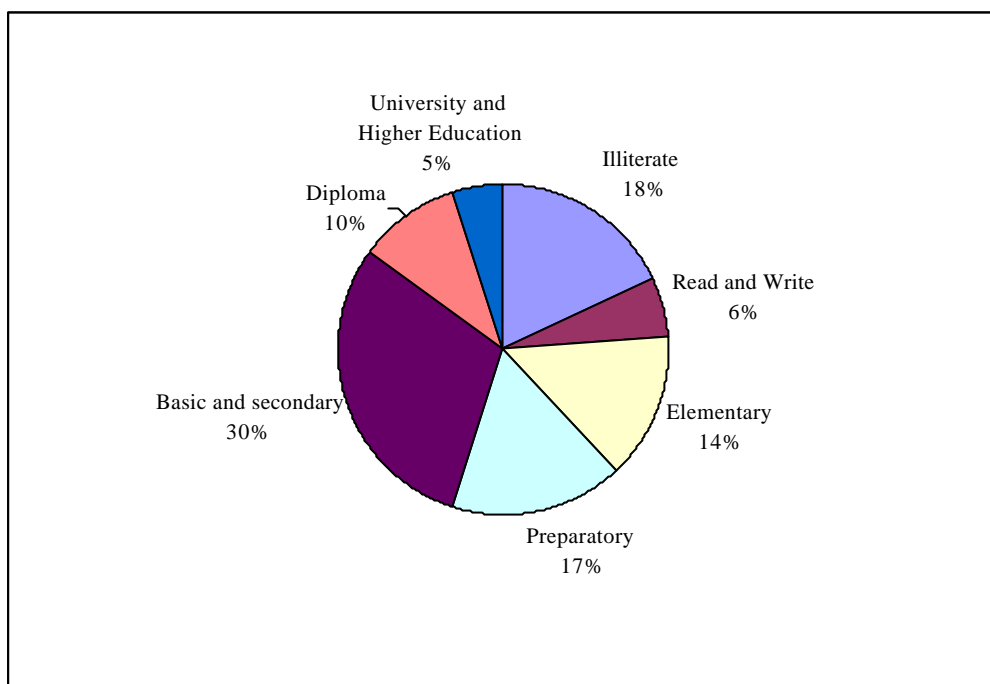
has increased from one university (The University of Jordan) in 1969 to five governmental universities and more than 9 private ones. Moreover, people in Jordan are investing more in women's higher education. The percentage of women joining higher education institutions rose from 15.6% in 1979 to 23.7% in 1990 (Shakhatreh, 1992).

Figure (3) shows that the number of females obtaining graduate degrees did not exceed 5.3% in 1998, while the percentage for male graduates reached 10.5%. Yet, the figure indicates that only 57% of females are educated to the preparatory, secondary and diploma levels. In this respect, one might argue that the real analysis of the women's educational level should go beyond plain statistics. Hence, a good explanation of the low enrollment of women in graduate studies can be related to society's association between a woman's educational level and her marital chances. In fact, better marriages⁵ are believed to be offered to women who peruse a higher education in the form of a university undergraduate degree. Those who proceed further in their education would however, minimize their marital chances. This is due to the fact that, they are exceeding the average marriage- age, which is believed to be 24 years old.

From another perspective this can be explained as it is due to the societal preoccupation with gender spread in Jordan, which constitutes that a male (the husband) has to be more educated than the female (his wife). In fact, some main fundamentals of male masculinity indicate that he (the male) should be more educated, earn more money, and be professionally in a higher position than the female. There is a fear that, if these criteria were not taken into consideration, the male would lose his control in the home. Sometimes, sharing power within the family (between a man and a woman) would be interpreted as a loss of control, and therefore a great risk to a male's masculinity.

⁵ Under better marriages, in the Jordanian context, it is often understood as women can marry within special social categories and social classes. In most cases, men within these categories are economically, and socially successful. The most preferred categories are: Doctors, Engineers, Pilots, and the likes.

Figure (3): women’s educational levels



Source: PBWC 1998.

Furthermore, despite the significant progresses in the field of women’s education (viewed in figure (3)), and the substantial efforts made towards reducing illiteracy rates; women activists believe that the rate of illiteracy and school drop-outs among young girls still remains high. **Table (10)** illustrates that illiteracy among females above the age of 15 has decreased from 48.2% in 1979 to 17.5% in 1998; with an average of 2.5% annual decrease (Employment, Unemployment Survey, 1998). Yet, there are still many young girls in Jordan, who are leaving schools at an early age for an early marriage or in order to do agricultural work to help their families. Sometimes long distances to school also keep girls from continuing their education (PBWC).

Table (10): Female illiteracy Rate (15+), 1979-1998

Year	Percentage
1979	48%
1987	33%
1994	20%
1998	17,5%

Source: Population and Housing Census, 1998

The fall in illiteracy rates among females is, according to women activists, attributable to the expansion of compulsory education and to the literacy program introduced as an experiment by the Ministry of Education, as well as by many women's societies and organizations. Therefore, women activists note that illiteracy elimination programs must be developed and intensified. They believe that it must be appropriate to the needs of the local community in which the women live. In this respect, they stress the necessity of training women particularly with regard to the use of advanced technology.

However, it might be worthy to argue here that women activists did not refer to the content of the educational system, which is, according to recent studies, not only gender blind, but it also enhances some traditional gender roles and certain images of women (UNIFEM/ The Jordan Center for Social Research , 2000). In fact, the curricula in the textbooks of governmental schools provides a special training for young girls with respect to home making. One class per week is dedicated to dealing with home making issues such as child rearing, cooking, and the best cleaning methods, all under the name "Home making". Such classes are compulsory to all female pupils in the elementary, preparatory and secondary schools. Male pupils in contrast are subject to professional training, such as mechanics, electronics, and the likes.

4.1.1.3 Health, Mother and Child Care

Most interviewed women activists believe that health and childcare are issues of great importance to women of Jordan. They address issues such as the need to provide healthcare services to women in all stages of their lives; particularly to nursing mothers from occupational health risks as well as for pregnant women. Hence two main sub issues were addressed under this category, namely family planning, mother-and childcare.

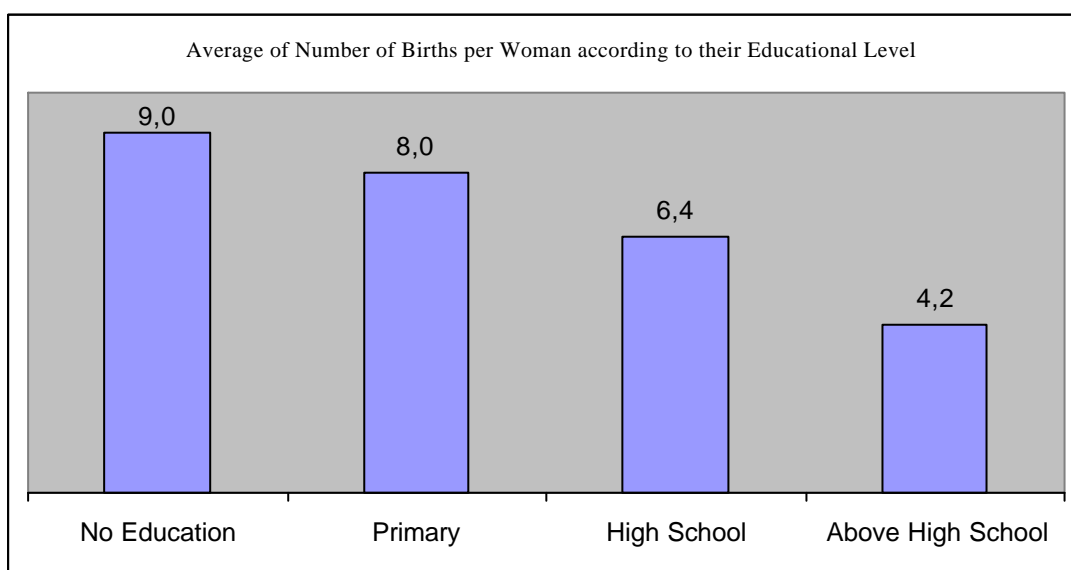
Family planning was also pointed out as a theme of significance. Women activists referred to the importance of raising awareness and implementing family planning programs in order to free women from the heavy load of a big family, as well as the health impacts that frequent pregnancies have on women's and babies lives.

A) Fertility and Family Planning

Although the total fertility rate in Jordan has decreased, it remains high. Activists believe that this not only affects women's participation in the labor force, but also has an adverse affect on their own health as well as that of their children's. This certainly limits their role in social development.

Yet, women's attitudes toward family planning differ in relation to geographic location, age, and level of education. Statistics show that the total fertility rate is lower in urban areas (4.22 children per woman) than in rural areas (5 children per woman) (Princess Basma Center for Women's Issues, 2000). **Figure (4)** demonstrates the relationship between the number of children and the level of education for women between the ages of 20 -49. The higher the mother's level of education then the lower the average number of children she bears.

Figure (4): Average of Number of Births Per Woman according to their Educational Level



Source: Princess Basma Center for Women's Issues, 2000

This lead women activists to conclude that family planning services and awareness-raising activities should focus on women in rural areas, particularly those with lower levels of education.

In the past couple of years, Jordan has made progress in promoting family planning and has initiated a national campaign that highlights this issue. Recent statistics indicate that the contraceptive prevalence rates increased from 22.8% to 52.6% between 1976 and 1997. The use of modern contraceptive methods increased from 17.3% to 37.7% during the same time period.

B) Health Care

The standards in health care available for women depends on geographical location and the availability of doctors, medical centers and equipment. The infant mortality rate is one of the indicators used in measuring the standard of health care available, because infants (of less than one year old) are more susceptible to the dangers of little or deficient health care. Reasons for infant mortality are usually related to fertility rates, birth spacing, maternal health and safe delivery. Recent statistics reflect an increased awareness of safe motherhood amongst women. For example, in 1997 the rate of women giving birth at home was 7%, a dramatic decline from the 1990 rate of 20%. In this respect, we might argue that the issue of mother- and child-care was raised in a traditional form, which is through an association made between women and child rearing. The focus on this issue at this level mirrors an articulation of a practical gender need of women that lies in providing health facilities and mother- childcare programs. Yet, no special attention was paid to transforming this issue into a strategic need that is enhancing women's control over their own bodies and consequently over their lives. In fact, child bearing and the number of children remains a male's decision. Women consequently have no control over their health, their bodies, or their lives. Dealing with this issue strategically would empower women socially, through integrating them on the decision making processes concerning family size and planning; and on the other hand physically, through gaining more control over their own bodies.

4.1.1.4 Legal issues

At the highest level, the Jordanian constitution states that all citizens are equal under law in terms of rights and obligations. However, while the constitution bars discrimination on the basis of race, language, or religion, women activists in Jordan argue that there is no explicit ban on discrimination on the bases of sex, which under the examination of national legislation reveals some of the bases of women's inferior status.

In the realm of citizenship, the law states that all Jordanian men and women are entitled to citizenship, yet only a Jordanian male may automatically pass his citizenship on to his children. A foreign woman who marries a Jordanian is eligible for citizenship after three years, if she is an Arab, and after five years if not. There is, however, no provision for a non-Jordanian husband of a Jordanian woman in obtaining Jordanian citizenship. Similarly, women and their children may obtain a separate passport only with the agreement of the husband/father (Amawi, 1999). The legislator, in this case, is basing the law on the fact that Jordan is a conservative and Muslim society. Marriages to non Muslim foreigners are not accepted or even not expected to occur. Yet, while the phenomena of marriages between Jordanian women and Arab-Muslim foreigners (mainly Egyptians and Iraqis) is observed to be increasing, the law shows deficit in this case. In fact, women, their husbands, and mainly their children face many legal problems related to their nationality although they have a Jordanian mother. So the problem is no more limited, as is widely argued in some intellectual circles, to high class women who have been raised or mainly lived outside Jordan.

Moreover, some discriminatory aspects can be found in some articles of the Retirement Law. In fact, when a woman (employee) dies, her dependents may receive her pension only if they demonstrate a need and that she was directly responsible for them. The dependents of a man in the same case do not have to go through this process. In other words, they will receive his pension without demonstrating a need, or that he was responsible for them⁶. Yet, in other respects, this law is in the women's

⁶ Personal Interview with Lamis Nasir.

favor. For instance, a man may retire after 20 years of service, a woman after 15. Moreover, a woman who resigns can withdraw what she has put into her pension, whereas a man cannot. It is clear here that the legislators are considering men as the (main) breadwinner in the family. Women in contrast, are considered as (secondary) income winners, as they might earn less.

These issues related to laws and legislation came to occupy a significant place in the public space during the 1990s. This means that legislation began to be raised at the national level, after Jordan signed the CEDAW agreement, as well as during the period of the launch of the political liberalization process. Actions aimed at changing such legislation and laws took two main forms. On one hand, the independent women's organizations conducted several workshops and lectures aimed at pointing out the discriminating aspects in these laws. On the other hand, the National Commission for Women (discussed in detail in the previous chapter) was established in order to carry out the task of reviewing the discriminating aspects of Jordanian laws. Yet, none of the implemented strategies were able to do more than simply highlight the discriminating laws. However, changes in this respect were introduced by Queen Rania in November 2002. Queen Rania has announced envisioned changes to the laws regulating the issues of nationality and retirement in the Second Arab Women Summit held in Amman in 4-6 November 2002 (Al Ra'y, November 5 2002). Moreover, she introduced these significant changes saying: "I am pleased to announce that the council of ministers has adopted amendments on the laws concerning passports, nationality and retirement". These amendments "will give the Jordanian woman equal rights as granted by the constitution," she added, without spelling out the changes or specifying when they would go into effect. However, further interpretations of the new changes state that the amendments grant Jordanian women, who are married to foreign nationals, the right to pass Jordanian citizenship on to their children. The amendments also authorized women to proceed and apply for a passport without the permission of her husband, as was the case. Moreover, Jordanian women who reach retirement age will likewise be able to obtain their pension in addition to their husband's pension in case the latter is deceased.

Ironically, the interviewed women did not refer to the Personal Status Law, which is as one might argue the most sexist among laws and legislation in Jordan. The law continues to allow polygamy and arbitrary divorce by the husband. In respect to divorce, women in Jordan, must specifically request a special clause in their marriage contract in order to obtain the right to divorce, and the law requires that men must pay support to their divorced wives for only one year. However, the real problem in Jordan is that the few protections that are included in the law are often not respected or even practiced. This is true in the case of arbitrary divorce – women often cannot obtain even the minimal compensation that they are due, including support for children- and in inheritance cases, in which women are generally forced by their families to relinquish even their inferior shares to their male relatives. Moreover, like most Islamic states, Jordan's civil code only allows men to demand a divorce. Yet, another change was introduced again by a member of the royal family and this time by the king himself. In fact, on December 14, 2001, King Abdullah II approved an amendment to the law granting Jordanian women the right to divorce their husband as long as they abandon any claims for financial compensation. According to the amendments which were issued by the Jordanian dailies, if the woman says before the court she cannot "live with her husband, then the judge can make a ruling of divorce" (Jordan Times, 14 Dec. 2001). Yet, in this case, the husband is not to pay any financial compensation.

Moreover, one cannot ignore what was previously mentioned concerning laws regulating the so-called honor-crimes. As has been explained, the issue of honor crimes was raised by independent actors and not by the women's organizations. This indicates to what extent women's actions in Jordan are being limited. The issue of violence against women, as highlighted by actors in women's organizations (as we will see next) took, however, other forms and did not target the legal reform demanded by the members of the national campaign. Women's organizations dealt with the issue as a "practical need" of women, and consequently demanded the establishment of a women's shelter, and offered the service of self-help hotlines.

Radical changes in this regard were again introduced by the royal family. In this context, the government recently introduced an amendment of article 340 in the

sanctions law, which get alleviated sentences to those who commit crimes against women in cases linked to "defending their honor". The Jordanian King has approved this new amendment. The government of Jordan has prepared this amendment at a proposal made by the Royal committee for human rights, which the King ordered to be formed one and a half years ago (Jordan Times, 14 Dec. 2001). Through studying the circumstances under which these changes were introduced, one might argue that the government benefited from the unlimited power given by the constitution in the absence of the parliament, which is known (as earlier explained) for its conservative attitude (Al Ra'y, 2002).

4.1.4.5 Violence against Women

Women activists have addressed various sub issues in respect to violence against women. They address the importance of providing (help) hotlines, health services, shelters and psychotherapies to those women vulnerable to domestic and public violence. Women activists refer to several aspects as to what violence against women in Jordan may incorporate. Referring to the criminal statistical reports of the Public Security Department for 1996 which indicates that the number of female victims of sexual abuse has witnessed an increase of 22.7 %⁷. Women activists identify domestic violence as the main problem facing Jordanian women everyday. In fact, many incidents of violence against women and girls committed at home, within the family, are seldom reported and very often ignored⁸. Moreover, women activists argue that young girls and women often suffer from neglect, rape, and other forms of physical and sexual abuse committed by members of their own families, including husbands. These incidents are difficult to discover, but even when reported, effective measures protecting the victims or punishing the offenders are lacking. Information relating to the occurrence, causes, and consequences of different forms of violence against women in the Jordanian society is, however, greatly limited, namely in respect to the problem of honor killing, which is believed to be the most disturbing form of violence against women. The number of reported honor killings has averaged 29% of all reported murders over the period of 1986-1998.

⁷ In 1995 the number of female victims of sexual abuse has reached 233 cases. yet, the number has increased to 286 in a matter of only one year (1996), registering an increase of 22,7%.

⁸ Personal interview with Lamis Nassir the head of Human Forum for Women's Rights in March 2002.

In this respect, an honor crime is defined “as the killing of a woman by one of her male relatives, usually her father or brother, for committing or being suspected of committing illicit sexual acts” (Abu Odeh 1996:124). In a conservative society like Jordan’s, family honor rests on the behavior of all family members, but particularly upon the sexual restraints of women. Any deviation, or suspected deviation would result in calling to cleanse the family honor by killing the woman or the girl. Activists argue that although Islamic *shari'a* prohibits Muslims from falsely accusing others and prescribes very high standards for proof in such serious accusations⁹, some people still associate this particular practice with Islamic teachings.

Yet in practice, once rumors about a girl start circulating, families may feel forced by social pressure and norms to eliminate the source of embarrassment or potential embarrassment. Studies have shown that these killings can also be a result of a dispute over inheritance or the 'cleansing' of a girl who has been raped, sometimes by a family member (Nasir/ Albalbisi 1999). Nasir and Albalbisi argue in a comprehensive empirical study in this respect that several autopsies of the killed women show that many of the victims are virgins at the time of their deaths (32).

Honor killings are generally sentenced leniently in accordance with the provisions of the Jordanian Penal Code, whereby most male offenders are sentenced to an imprisonment of only (6 months 3 years); and if the offender is a juvenile (which is the case in many of these incidents), he is sentenced to an even shorter period. Jordanian law provides for the lessening or elimination of penalties concerning men who commit honor murders. In fact, and in most cases, the family will appoint and pressure a young male in the family to commit the murder since he will receive a lesser punishment. As a minor, he will be sent to a rehabilitation center, where he can continue his education and learn a trade (Al Nasir/ Albalbisi 1999). According to the laws regulating the delinquency of juveniles, he is released at age 18 and will have no criminal record. The sentence can be even reduced because families do not even file a complaint, because in most cases the defendant (i.e., the victim) and the accused are members of the same family.

⁹ This view is also being stressed by diverse Islamists representing Islamic institutions of the state, namely the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs.

Legislation framing this phenomenon are stated under law article 340, while most often applied laws come under article 98. The Article 340 of the Penal Code, states: “he who catches his wife or one of his female relatives unlawfully committing adultery with another and he kills, wounds or injures one or both of them is exempt from any penalty; 2) he who catches his wife, or one of his female ascendants or descendants or sisters with another in an unlawful bed and he kills, wounds or injures one or both of them benefits from a reduction in penalty”(Abu Odeh: 64).

Yet, Article 340 is being hardly used regulating and ruling conflicts of honor. In most cases concerning an honor crime, judges apply Article 98 to reduce the penalty of the offender. Article 98 states that the one who might benefit from a reduced penalty is: “1) he who commits a crime in a fit of fury caused by an unrightful and dangerous act on the part of the victim benefits from a reduction of penalty” (Abo Odeh:65). This article covers much wider ground than 340, including that of self-defense. Trespass against one's honor can be construed as an " unrightful and dangerous act" by judges, primarily in the Jordanian Court of Cassation, who then applies Article 98 in giving men who kill in the name of honor 3-6 month sentences.

Generally, violence is widespread among all social classes, regardless of economic or educational status. Indicators also suggest that it may worsen with the spread of poverty and a lack of awareness. Women activists believe that support services for abused women in Jordan are also limited, and rehabilitation services for victims of violence are virtually nonexistent. Apart from legal advice bureaus and a newly established hotline service for women operated by a few women organizations, it could be said that rehabilitation services are lacking¹⁰.

Women's actions in this respect take many forms. As some women's organizations have formed hotlines and in turn have demanded women shelters(the case of JWU); other radical activists have demanded legal reform and active policies that would criminalize any violation against women especially in the case of honor crimes.

¹⁰ A personal Interview with Lamis Nassir.

Changes in this respect were, as previously mentioned, made by the king in late 2002. Benefiting from the absence of the `conservative parliament, the government in response to a royal decree passed some changes concerning law article 340. Specific details of these changes, as well as a specific date of implementation were not yet declared.

4.1.1.6 Political participation, Positions of Power and Decision-Making

Women in Jordan have been fighting for more participation in politics since the early 50s. As already mentioned, one of the early women's organizations (the Arab Women Union) established in 1954 started an action sending several petitions to the prime minister as well as to his cabinet members demanding more political rights for women at all levels. Educated women, however, were granted the right to vote, but not the right to run for office in 1955 by a "Royal Decree" of king Hussein. Educated as well as uneducated women in Jordan were granted the full right to elect and nominate themselves as candidates in 1974, during the preparations for the United Nations women's conferences, and the Women's decade announced by the UN. Women activists believe that, despite the fact that the Jordanian constitution does not discriminate between men and women because of gender, reality and everyday practices reveals a violation of this constitutional aspect. In fact, the three branches of the government; the legislative, executive and judicial, are still dominated by men.

Women participated for the first time as electors in the by- elections of 1984. Yet, they did not run for elections until 1989 and once again in 1993 and 1997. The percentage of female candidates has not exceeded 3% in the best of situations (See table (11). Only one woman actually won in the 1993 Parliamentary elections (namely Taujan Faisal). Her success was –from the viewpoint of several female activists- not based on solid grounds that could be used in planning for the coming election campaign¹¹. She however, ran for the elections in 1997 without any success.

¹¹ Some activists believe that the success that Taujan Faisal has gained in the election of 1993 was due to the fact that the state had encouraged her winning as a part of a certain policy aimed at limiting the power of the Islamists in the parliament (Jordan Times, August 24 1994).

Table (11): Number of Men and Women Candidates in the Parliamentary Elections of 1989,1993 and 1997

Year	Men	Women
1989	635	12
1993	531	3
1997	544	17

Source: Jordanian Parliament Council

The case is however, different when looking at women as voters. In fact, women have been mobilized by the male members of their families and tribes to vote actively. In some areas, their votes have reached more than 70% (elections of 1997) (PBCW 2000).

However, there are several reasons why women could not win seats at the Lower House of Parliament in the 1997 elections. A study conducted on Jordanian women in the 1997 Parliamentary Elections (Princess Basma Women Resource Centre, 1997), showed that the society's view of the role of women was one of the most important reasons why women were not able to win parliamentary seats in the Lower House. The Jordanian society still lacks the willingness to accept the existence of women in the Lower House. According to some statistics, four out of every five men and women believe that men are more capable than women to carry out political work. Even if male and female candidates were to have the same characteristics, qualifications and abilities, 68.5% of the women would still prefer to elect male candidates. In addition, 20% of males do not even want women to practice their electoral right (Bauer/ Pederson 1998).

We might also add here, that the process of selecting an election candidate may stand as a main obstacle facing women's political participation at this level. Since the long absence of political parties in the period of martial law, the society has developed several mechanisms to practice political actions and to perform critiques on the government and palace. The two main forms of mechanisms within which politics were practiced were; 1) Professional associations, within which the Islamists were

politically active, and 2) the tribal leagues, within which tribal activists were the main driving force.

Yet, the tribal leagues remain the most active and effective institution for political mobilizations. During the elections, the tribe works similar to modern parties. The tribe members nominate one candidate who is supposed to represent them in the Parliament, and consequently, each tribe members (males and females) should elect this agreed upon candidate. Women have to elect him although they do not participate in the process of selecting him, due to the fact that these leagues are exclusive to male members of the families. Moreover, they have no chance to be nominated as a tribe candidate. This male-based election culture has led to an absence of women participating in high-level politics. Women, therefore not only lack the experience to run elections, as well as the sufficient financial resources, but also the self-confidence that she could run elections and even win. This however, when connected to a lack of confidence among voters, that women could actually deliver on their election promises, would provide the main obstacle to women's active political participation. There is also a lack of networking and cooperation between women's organizations and women's MPs. Also, financial support and experience in running election campaigns and providing platforms is also minimal.

With respect to women's participation in the Upper House of Parliament, which is made up of forty members who are appointed by the King, the women's share, since 1989, has gone up from one woman in that year, to two women in 1993 and then to three women in 1997. This is an increase from 2.5% to 7.5% of the total number of members in the Senate (See table 12).

Table (12): Number of elected and appointed members of the Jordanian Parliament based on gender during the years 1989, 1993, and 1997

<i>The Parliament</i>	<i>1989</i>		<i>1993</i>		<i>1997</i>	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
The Upper House	39	1	38	2	37	3
The Lower House	80	-	79	1	80	-

Source: Jordanian Parliament Council.

As for the executive power, the percentage of women representatives is approximately 3%. This was the same percentage of women's participation in the legislative branch as in 1979 when one woman was appointed as Minister of Social Development, and in 1984 when a woman was appointed as Minister of Information. After that, there were a number of administrations without any female representatives. Then, in 1993 a woman was appointed as Minister of Industry and Commerce and then later Minister of Planning. In 1995, another woman was appointed as Minister of Social Development. Thus, this was the first time when two women become simultaneously integrated in the government. Then, in 1996, the government changed and only one women survived in her office¹². In the judicial branch, the total number of women, until the end of 1998, was only five out of a total number of 406 judges at the Ministry of Justice(New Jordan Center 1996).

The above described current gap between men and women in Jordanian politics goes back to the fact that most of the Jordanian people believe that the role of a women is at home and 57% of the group of young men ages 20-24 do not appreciate the idea of having women in leading ministerial or parliamentary positions (Bauer/Pederson 1998). In other words, heritage and traditions contributes significantly to the low representation of women in the government in higher positions.

Women activists viewed active political participation as the most effective strategy to enhance women's conditions in Jordan. Interviewed women activists addressed also the need of supporting women in gaining high governmental and other political

¹² The impact on women's lives due to political participation at this level is not yet clear. Studies dealing with such impacts in Jordan are lacking.

positions. They also addressed the need of providing skill-development programs in leadership, planning, and policy-making¹³.

Women in Jordan have gained more success at the level of *local municipalities* despite their more conservative nature . Until 1995, there was also a lack of female representation at the municipality level. In the 1995 elections, ten out of fifteen women candidates were elected as municipality council members and one was elected as the first female mayor. However, for this success, women have to thank another royal initiative. This time the initiative of princess Basma, who succeeded in lobbying for the appointment of 99 women in municipal councils in 1990, opened the door for women to win in 1995. Yet, in the 1999 municipal elections eight women were elected, however, Jordan's first woman mayor lost her seat.

To summarize, women activists view the issue of political participation as a strategic issue. An active involvement of women is envisioned in order to create a new and better future for women. It will also guarantee more rights for women, as well as making sure that the existing rights are respected, and that form of discrimination disappear. In order to fulfill this vision several policies and strategies were studied and discussed. One of the envisioned strategies to enhance the women's political representation in Parliament is the application of the quota system.

4.1.4.7 Possible implementation of a Quota system and its impact on women's political participation in Jordan

In this connection, discourses and actions, concerning the adoption of a quota system, took place in the Jordanian public sphere directly after the first national elections in 1994. These discourses, which have been mainly carried out by women's and several other civil society organizations, focused, on discussing the possible mechanisms to enhance women's political participation. Yet, political participation seemed in the context of these discourses to be minimized to elections (electing, and running for office). In the early 1990s women activists from different background and from

¹³ Three of interviewed activists have stressed this argument, namely Nafa', Abu Assamin, And Nassir.

different women's organizations ran a huge campaign concerning the various possibilities of implementing the quota system as a mechanism to enhance women's political participation. In this concern, there were many opinions regarding the effects of implementing a quota system on women's participation in political life. Some think that such a system would be prejudicial to equality between women and men as far as rights and responsibilities are concerned. This view was adopted by some women activists such as al Zo'bi the head of JWU, as well as by some Islamists of the Muslim Brothers group (Jordan Times 14, Nov. 2002). This is thought as it demonstrates a lack of understanding in the capacity of women to occupy key posts on the basis of their own efforts and popularity. The other view is that the quota system is capable of ensuring greater participation by women in political life, particularly where a women's social situation and the prevalence of certain traditions and customs hampers their participation, in rural areas it should be especially emphasized. However, the discourse on the possible implementation of the quota system included only the parliamentary level, and did not cover other political institutions such as the state or the political parties. Even those who support the application of a quota agreed that if the government decides to introduce a women's quota, it should be temporary. Interviewed women Abu Assamin and al-Saket comment on this by saying, "The quota should aim only to get people accustomed to women's presence in Parliament and to give female candidates confidence in themselves"¹⁴. The discourse, however, took another dimension within the context of the preparations for the coming elections which is to take place in June 2003, and the context of the "Jordan First" campaign within which a women's issues committee has prepared for the application of a female quota at the level of the Lower House. Women activists seem-this time- to widely agree on the quota system as the only mechanism of enhancing women's political participation.

To summarize, the discourse over the quota and its possible implementation have successfully addressed the issue of the Jordanian women's weak political participation. It mobilized many social and political forces, regardless if one is pro or con concerning women's political participation. Social and political forces in Jordan

¹⁴ Personal Interview with Mai Abu Assamin and Wijdan al-Saket in March 2003.

have been exposed to the importance of women's political participation and this is considered a step forward.

4.2 Projects and programs implemented by women's organizations meeting women's interests in Jordan

So far, we have introduced the diverse interests of women's issues from the viewpoint of women activists. Yet, one may argue that simply addressing the issues and interests alone is insufficient; and that it is more important to look at these issues and interests as being met through the projects carried out by the women's organizations themselves. Such an analysis of programs and projects would offer a better view of women's interests in Jordan, for it provides us also with the ability to compare these interests identified by women activists with these integrated within the various programs and activities of the organization.

Yet, it might be useful to look at these issues from the perspective of the organizational form, that is as to how differently do women activists within directed, associational, and independent women's organizations identify women interests and meet them through projects. This perspective, as one might argue, mirrors the extent as to which women activists are able to identify women's needs and to transform them into political interests.

4.2.1 Directed Organizations identifying women's interests

Projects and programs implemented by the 'directed women's organizations' deal with: Poverty, health, a significant weak political representation of women, an increasing need to support and to train female candidates in order to run a successful election campaign, the need of implementing positive discriminating strategies, and the problem of insufficient information on women as the main interests of women in Jordan. In particular they have assisted: The creation and application of The **National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Jordanian Women**, setting up the **National**

Strategy of Jordanian Women (both implemented by the JNCW and again with the assistance of the Princess), and the establishment of **The National Information Center for Women (NICW)** by the GFJW.

4.2.1.1 The National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Jordanian Women

The plan of action was meant to meet the points on the platform of the 4th International Conference of Women, The Jordanian National Commission of Women "JNCW", in cooperation with representatives from various ministries and official institutions, has laid down the national 'Plan of Action for the Advancement of Jordanian Women', in a proposition to guarantee that there will be emphasis on setting projects to upgrade the status of Jordanian women. As a result, the Committee has adopted six main issues to concentrate on in the projects that target women. These issues must balance between Jordanian needs, arrived at from previous experiences and the international trends accredited in Beijing. As for the six main issues adopted, these are: 1) Family issues (family planning, violence within the domestic sphere); 2) empowering women and promoting their abilities; 3) equality, justice, and women's human rights, 4) participation in the decision-making process, 5) participation in the utilization and management of natural resources & environmental protection and 6) eliminating poverty.

4.2.1.2 The National Strategy for Women in Jordan (NSWJ)

Heading up the list of priorities in the work of this National Committee for Jordanian Women has been the drawing up of a 'National Strategy for Women in Jordan' (NSWJ). Such a strategy is envisaged as the focal point towards which all-national efforts, whatever their orientations and fields of activity, would ultimately lead. The NSWJ was ready in 1993. The Strategy has 4 main objectives. First, improving women's social status; second, improving and enhancing women's economical status; third, enhancing women's status on the legislative level; and fourth, enhancing a possibility of wide female participation in politics.

Several bases such as the Islamic Shari'a, the Jordanian constitution, human rights principles, and the Arab society values and norms frame this strategy. The strategy has several domains such as the legislative, political, economic, social, and health domains. This strategy through the NCJW is working as a pressure group on the country and aims to gain more recognition at both state and societal levels. Moreover, in order to meet the main objectives addressed by the strategy, the committee is to practice lobbying as well as pressure institutions in both the public and private sectors.

The Strategy was the outcome of a number of studies, meetings and seminars conducted throughout the Kingdom, in which a large number of men and women representing a wide sector of society took part. All these efforts culminated in a national conference held in June 1993. The conference resolved to adopt a fully integrated proposal for a national strategy for women, which would combine modernity with national heritage.

National heritage is here understood as it is related to the Arab and Islamic norms and values, as well as to the ways in which these norms and values have developed throughout history. Modernity, on the other hand, is believed in the context of this strategy to involve keeping up to date with modern technology, methods and trends that would enhance the status of women in Jordan and support their role in the construction of society, the consolidation of social progress and the realization of social development.

The drawing up of this strategy has further emphasized the fundamental principles preserved in the Jordanian National Charter¹⁵. The Charter provides that all Jordanians are equal before the law, and that regardless of sex, race, language, or religion, they are all equal in rights and obligations.

In the spirit of the National Charter, the strategy also emphasizes that in the exercise of their constitutional rights all Jordanians have a commitment to the higher national interest and to the ethics of national action, in a way which safeguards the proper

¹⁵ The National Charter (al-Mithaq) is a national document inscribed in 1989 by a committee, which included major Jordanian figures and civil society groups. The charter includes the general guidelines for political activity, and affirms the state's commitment to rule of law and political pluralism.

channeling of the potential of Jordanian society and the tapping of its material and spiritual resources in the endeavor to realize the objectives of unity, progress and the building of a better future.

Women's needs and interests as identified by the Strategy are:

1. Economic: At this level the strategy aims at increasing women's participation in the labor force, ensuring no discrimination against them and increasing the facilities that ease their continuous participation in the work place. Several mechanisms were suggested for the implementation of such goals: First, through media campaigns that aim at increasing the social acceptance of women's participation in the public and in the work place. Secondly, through increasing women's access to credits and encouraging initiatives for private investments. Finally, through developing women's qualifications and enhancing their mobilization within their jobs.

2. Political: At this level the strategy aims at increasing women's and society's awareness concerning the importance of women's political participation, increasing women's participation in the local councils and community level institutions.

3. Social: In this field the strategy aims at enhancing women's positions and role within the family and the society at large; and supporting special categories of women, such as women as family heads, and disabled women. Implementation strategies were to increase women's awareness in family planning, breast-feeding and child rearing. Moreover, implementation strategies include increasing awareness with respect to violence against women, establishing special facilities and support to poor women and to women who are the heads of families.

4. Health: Concerning health the strategy calls for the development of quality health services presented for women, and increasing women's awareness of health issues, for this alone would have a significant impact on family health.

5. Education: In this field the strategy aims at developing educational services and improving its quality all over the country. This is believed to be possible by "presenting a neutral image of the family, where women are presented as productive

workers outside home as well as being good mothers and housewives inside homes”; and supporting the general plan of the Ministry of education which aims at reducing literacy levels to their minimum i.e. 10% by the year 2000 (The National Strategy for Women in Jordan 1993).

6. Legal: At this level laws and legislation such as the Labor Law, Social Security Law, Retirement Law, Landlords and Tenants Act, and the Civil Service Regulation, were addressed by the strategy to be in some aspects discriminatory against women. As mentioned earlier, these laws identify workingwomen as singles, even if they are married and have children. Consequently, their husbands and children do not benefit from their various health and social insurance.

For the implementation mechanisms some official and private entities concerned with women's affairs and issues will assume, according to their specialization, the responsibility for planning, implementing and evaluating the various components of the national strategy for women, by designing plans, taking measures, performing activities and executing programs and projects. Meanwhile, the Jordanian National Committee for Women's Issues will undertake the task of following up the execution and evaluation of this strategy through several approaches. The most important of which are: Seeking to incorporate women's issues in economic and social development plans, through the necessary channels; ensuring women's effective participation in designing these plans, and asking government and private entities to provide regular annual data on their accomplishments and activities to achieve the strategy goals. This data will cover various activities pertaining to education, training, labor, health, social and political development, information, legislation and the likes.

Achievements

At the legal level, the Labor Law, Social Security Law, Retirement Law, Landlords and Tenants Act, and the Civil Service Regulation were comprehensively reviewed and demands were made that certain unjust and discriminating provisions be amended and sent to the Prime Minister and the parliament. To insure the adoption of these amendments, two members from the JNCW legislative committee participated in the House of Representatives legislative committee sessions by discussing law

amendments since late 1994. Moreover, a special legislative committee that includes two religious magistrates is reviewing the Jordanian Civil Status Law, to come up with necessary amendments to insure equity for Jordanian Women. The Medical Insurance Regulation added a provision giving the wife the right to include her children under 18 years of age in the insurance, if her husband is not already included in it, provided they are not insured by any other medical insurance benefiting the husband, and in including her husband also if he is unable to provide for his children due to health reasons. According to the JNCW recommendation to the Prime Minister's Cabinet, one provision of The Landlords and Tenants Act was amended stating that the wife and children are considered original tenants in the tenancy contract signed by the husband in 1994. In 1995, maternity leave was extended from two unpaid months to three fully paid months in the new amendments of the Civil Service Regulation. In 1995, fifty five mini-drama messages, about women's legal rights were produced in co-operation with Radio Jordan; messages were broadcasted during prime time, three times per week, twice daily "morning and afternoon" for four months.

At the socio-cultural level the strategy has developed diverse policies which are aimed at influencing state's institutions. The Ministry of Culture was encouraged to conduct two studies; the first was about the gender status of its staff, and the second about its role in supporting creative women in Jordan (such as artists, novelists, poets etc.). Results showed that 50% of the Ministry's female staff were in supervisory and top management positions. It is sponsoring five cultural women associations; eleven books were published in 1994 for women writers; nineteen art exhibitions by Arab and Jordanian women artists were sponsored and supported; the participation of women journalists in the Ministry's four journals and magazines was considerably increased; and it actively participated in JNCW celebrations of the 1995 International women's Day.

However, the National Strategy with all its structure, implementation mechanisms, and representatives faces some critique. First, apart from discussing and questioning the top-bottom authority to define women's priorities and goals, we might argue that, this strategy is ideal. In addition, the implementation mechanisms do not seem

applicable enough to meet the various interests of women addressed by the strategy. Moreover, it is based on controversial sources. The fact that the strategy is being based on traditional sources such as Islam Shari'a, the Arab society heritage and traditions, as well as on the constitution and human rights principle makes it quite difficult to imagine how these contradictory systems could work together solving women's issues. The strategy does not give clear answers regarding which of these bases would be the one to be implemented when these systems contradict one another. Their contradiction is, however, highly probable concerning women's issues. Moreover, the NSWJ is family oriented; it considers the family the main cell that forms the society as a whole. The family in this context is viewed as the natural environment where socialization processes, child rearing, and the character building of the societal members takes place. Hence, with regard to women's issues, the strategy is being limited by this frame (the family), that is highlighted and emphasized very often. This means that there are limits and red lines that should not be crossed and definitely not ignored. The woman as a 'person' and not as a means of family development is not present in this strategy. Hence, while being enhanced to participate effectively in the public sphere, women viewed as being responsible for child-rearing, family health, and as protectors and transmitters of cultural identity. Moreover, women are seen to move within the frame of "balanced rights and duties". This means that the strategy does not challenge the cycle of the traditional roles for women; also, it does not encourage women to break out of the cycle of traditional roles and images. Hence, it does not promise a new or a better life concerning their life within a patriarchal society. Rather the strategy can be seen as indirectly enhancing the main principles and rules of patriarchy, as it does not address the latter as the main oppressing source of women in Jordan.

Despite this negative critique, the NCJW went on to create new accesses for women in the Jordanian public space through placing pressure on governmental policies. One of the main achievements in this respect was the integration of gender within the national socioeconomic plan for the period 1999-2003.

4.2.1.3 The Socioeconomic Plan for the Period (1999-2003)

Since work began on the socioeconomic plan for the period (1999-2003), an agreement has been made between the "JNCW" and the Ministry of Planning not to allocate a separate sector for women, but instead to integrate policies, programs and projects pertaining to women within the various sectors of the plan which was accredited and endorsed in 1999. This is the first time in the history of Jordan that a developmental plan working within the framework of gender was endorsed. In fact, the plan depends in its tackling of women's issues through considering them as key issues in sustainable human development. The plan also aims at dealing with women's issues within the general economic, social and cultural framework on the grounds for equality and equal opportunities in all fields. Finally, it aims at achieving social justice in the face of poverty and unemployment as well as fulfilling the basic needs of all citizens; men and women alike.

4.2.1.4 The National Information Center for Women (NICW)

Another issue of great importance that has been identified by directed organizations is related to a lack of sufficient and reliable databases on women's affairs. The increasing interests in women's issues in Jordan has to be accompanied by systematic and reliable statistics, studies and research. With the assistance and support of USAID, the General Federation of Jordanian Women GFJW started establishing the National Information Center for Women (NICW) in 1997.

The NICW is aimed at providing 'systematic and reliable' information for women's affairs, conducting field studies concerning the socioeconomic development of women, conduct training programs to rehabilitate women to increase their social productivity, finance income -generating projects for women and support them in business counseling issues. As for the organizational structure, the NICW is composed of three main units:

First: Research and training Unit (RTU), which has two sections. First, a Research Section which deals with field research and studies, preparing papers, articles for periodicals, seminars, and workshops for different women's concerns as well as

distribute and issue a periodical magazine for women's affairs. Secondly, a Training Section which trains and rehabilitates women to increase their qualifications in order to equip women to play a more effective role in helping their families and developing their local societies.

Second: Information and Computer Unit (ICU): ICU has a major data -base for women collected from data & information agencies both inside and outside Jordan. The main target of the ICU is to provide institutions, NGO's, and researchers with a data-base concerning women's issues. Generally speaking, the database will cover the following issues: Population, labor force, education, economics; health; public life and politics. Finally, ICU is working on establishing a modern library, which will include books, literature documents, studies, publications films and a computerized image processing system for information regarding women's issues. The library will also include slides of different socioeconomic activities for women.

Third: Credit Unit (CU): The CU includes a project section; follow up; and repayment section. This unit, in cooperation with the GFJW, conducts activities aimed at raising funds and building a budget in order to finance income-generating projects for women. Funds raised in this way are used to support the establishment of micro-enterprises and small-scale industries. In addition, the CU appears also to provide technical assistance services for targeted enterprises run by women. This is believed to have been done by conducting a continuous follow-up of the projects financed at least once a year for three years. Finally, the lending policies and strategies of this unit were designed according to international standards and local experiences.

Apart from the fact that this project is designed and managed by what we earlier termed as a "directed organization", the project still seems to cover a practical as well as a strategic need of women in Jordan. The lack of sufficient and reliable information concerning women's life-patterns in Jordan is being frequently addressed. Moreover, the use of computer technologies within this project seems to offer women the chance to eliminate "Technical Literacy" and allow wider access to information.

To conclude, the data base for this project seems to cover several main fields in women's lives. These are; population, education, health, labor force, economics;

public life and politics. Despite the significance of these fields on women's lives in Jordan, several other issues still have been neglected, such as violence against women, and honor crimes.

4.2.2 Projects and programs implemented by independent and associational women's organizations identifying and meeting women's interests

Independent and associational women's organizations in Jordan implement a diverse collection of projects and programs. As can be seen from figure (5), there are many different types of programs and projects in diverse fields. They can be summarized as follows:

Rehabilitation and training: Women's organizations started providing training programs in the early 1970s. Women organizations then implemented several programs aiming at providing training in certain traditional handcrafts, such as weaving, and sewing. Training programs include many aspects such as, sewing, printing, cosmetics, etc. In fact, there are in general around 30 centers in Amman which provide training on beauty and cosmetics whereby 340 women participant. There are also around 23 printing centers, that provides training with computers, with around 307 female participants. In addition to this there are 15 centers for handcrafts, with around 190 female participants (GFSCJ 1999).

Awareness and education: This category includes every form of project, which deals with providing literacy elimination classes to women, as well as awareness in legal aspects. According to statistics provided by women's organizations, around 40,000 women in Amman benefited from these programs. These projects started in the beginning of the century by focusing on eliminating illiteracy among women. In the 1980s, the concept of illiteracy was developed by women's organizations to include all forms of ignorance in legal aspects. Lectures and workshops were conducted in the city of Amman to discuss the issue of eliminating women's illiteracy concerning legislation. Moreover, training courses were held by the Jordanian Women's Union to eliminate ignorance on civil laws that are related to marriage, divorce, child custody,

and women's rights concerning these issues. On the other hand, the Business and Professional Women's Club provides courses to eliminate women's illiteracy in laws that are related to labor and investment. These courses aimed at empowering women in economic fields by facilitating their participation in national markets as investors and not only as simple employers.

Mother and Childcare: Mother and childcare occupies a significant share of many women's organization activities. Services like family planning and a mother's medical care during pregnancy are but a few examples concerning women's activities in this field. Many women's organizations also provide kindergarten services which offer a great service for working women with children.

Income generating projects: These kinds of programs were developed in the 1980s, more precisely during and after the economic crisis in 1987. Many women's organizations tried to improve the economic status of women as part of fighting poverty in general. The programs encouraged women to set up small enterprises which could generate income and help in improving women's as well as the family's economic status. Most women's organizations in Amman provide this kind of a service and there are currently around 10,000 female beneficiaries of the income generating projects. By analyzing these types of enterprises it is obvious that they indirectly enhance the women's reproductive role. In fact, Most of these projects (such as bee keeping, herbal plants, etc.) are being implemented inside the domestic sphere (the house) and do not enhance the participation of women outside the home, or even do not provide alternative projects which can improve women's skills away from their traditional roles.

Consultation: some women's organizations in Jordan offer consultation services in terms of familial and legal aspects. Examples of such services are the hotlines that offer legal and psychological consultation to domestically violated women, offered by the Jordanian Women Union. Another example is the legal and economic consultation offered by the Business and Professional Women's Club. The purpose of such programs is to provide women with enough knowledge concerning their legal rights in what to do in case they are subject to domestic violence.

Consequently, beneficiaries of women’s organizational projects and activities vary according to the main objectives of each activity or project. It is clear that women’s organizations cover a wide variety of women in Jordan with different life conditions and interests. Namely, these are: Poor women; women in refugee camps; mothers and children, orphans and homeless girls, low or uneducated young women; violated women, housewives, business, working, rural and old women (see table (3) attached). Study results concerning members of women’s organizations pointed out that such women are also members of women’s organizations. This indicates that members of women’s organization are potential or direct beneficiaries of their programs. Consequently, one might conclude that these members are by no means challengers who believe in a mission to further the “Women’s movement”. Rather they are only beneficiaries to the services provided by the women’s organizations and in the diverse fields.

Figure (5) Projects implemented by women's organizations in Jordan

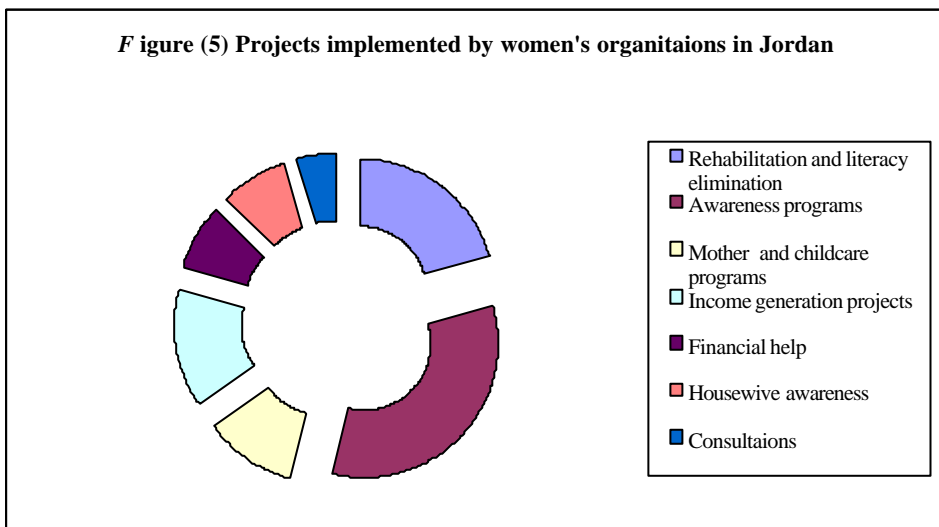


Table (13) provided below shows the type of women's interests (strategic or practical) met by the various activities and programs of women's independent and associational organizations. The table shows that diverse interests of women have been covered by women's organizations. Empowerment as a main work focus have been reflected by the projects implemented through legal and economic aspects. Projects that target raising women's awareness in terms of legal rights and duties are intensively being reflected by the projects implemented by the BPWC as well as the JWU.

Women's role in the public space, namely the political role, is being recently enhanced and covered through diverse activities, namely those that provide special training for election candidates and those related to raising political awareness with respect to women's political participation .

Yet, it might be useful to consider the projects presented in table (13) and compare them with the main focus of women's organizations that existed in Jordan overtime, namely those presented in table (3). In this respect it is observed that there has been a significant shift in terms of work themes and interests met by the projects implemented. The comparison supports our main argument in this study, that is there is a shift from need- based towards a rights- based agenda. The new projects focuses on political, social and physical empowerment, while the traditional projects and organizations focus, as can be seen in table (3), on the diverse basic needs of women, such as mother and child care, nursery and kindergarten, and short- term training programs which focus on enhancing women's classic skills and roles. Consequently, only the aspects of women's lives that were covered by the programs and projects of most women's organizations are related to enhancing their job qualifications, and/ or raising their awareness as good mothers and childrearers. In fact, most of the programs, as can be seen from the table, were more focused on traditional fields, such as sewing and improving the clerical skills of women who might later work as secretaries.

Projects that aimed at opening new arenas for women's participation in the public space were become significant in the 1990s, which indicated an emergence of a new agenda with a new work themes. Some of the projects and programs implemented by

women's organizations also targeted the strategic interests of women. One main issue addressed in this respect is also related to the economic empowerment of women. The Business and Professional Women's Club of Amman, which was earlier introduced, provides one of the unique programs that targets the strategic gender interest of women, namely their role as investors, project managers and businesswomen.

Table (13): Projects and programs implemented by Independent and associational women's organizations in terms of meeting women's gender Interests.

Women's empowerment				
	Organization	Project	Strategic practical	Cost JD
1	Business and Professional Women's Club	Consultation center for small-Business	X	64,000
2	Business and Professional Women's Club	Business incubator services	X	322,000
3	Business and Professional Women's Club	Industrial incubator services	X	545,000
4	Jordanian Women's Union	Courses for the eradication of legal illiteracy	X X	30,000
Equality & Justice				
1	Business and Professional Women's Club	The information and documentation center for women's studies	X	35,000
2	Jordanian National Forum for Women	Defending human rights: advisory services for women	X	420,000
Participation in Decision Making Process				
1	Business & Professional Women's Club	Regional training institute for democracy and legal advice	X	315,000
2	Jordanian National Forum for Women	Participation of Jordanian women in the democratic process (studies and workshops)	X X	175,000
3	Business & Professional Women's Club	The national democratic programme	X	54,000
4	Arab Women Organization of Jordan	Intensive training courses for women's political participation	X X	90,400
Poverty				
1	Arab Women Organization of Jordan	Establishing vocational training and employment center for community college female graduates	X	135,000
Family issues				
1	Business and Professional Women's Club	A family, social and legal advice bureau for women	X	40,000
2	Jordanian Women's Union	Children's reception center	X	30,000
3	Jordanian National Forum for Women	Raising women's health awareness	X	420,000
4	Arab Women Organization of Jordan	Raise awareness of population issues and family planning	X	288,000
5	Human Forum for Women's Rights	A study on violence against women in Jordan	X	27,900

The project introduced below provides one good example of women's empowerment through many aspects. First, it provides a good example for social empowerment, by presenting women in a conservative society, like that of Jordan, as business women who can run projects, provide work opportunities for others (including males), and be in a position of power and decision making. Secondly, it shows the empowerment of women at the economic level; women are running businesses, earning money, and competing with male businesses for success. Next, we take a closer look at the sociopolitical impacts of such a project on women's lives.

Women Enterprise Center

The women's enterprise center has been implemented by the Business and Professional Women's Club in Amman¹⁶ (Associative Organization). The Center is divided into two main units, namely the Small Business Counseling and the Small Business Incubator. The former is aimed at offering female entrepreneurs counseling in terms of the following: Preparing a feasibility study of the project, preparing a marketing study, preparing a business plan; providing information on legal requirements; business operation; accounting and bookkeeping services; cash flow planning and access to finance. The main idea behind the establishment of this center is to minimize the burden of the starting up stage. For this purpose the center provides an integral package of technical assistance, facilities, mechanisms of support, counseling and training. However, such services are provided for a limited span of time. In fact, it is stipulated for the businesses, which lies within the incubator, to leave at the end of a specified time period. This is in order to make room for other new entrepreneurs and small enterprises, which are still in their founding stage and wish to start from the incubator. However, the incubator is considered to be a distinctive pioneering experience at the Middle Eastern level, and the first of its kind in Jordan from the time it was established in 1996.

¹⁶ Business and Professional Women- Amman is a voluntary business association. It was established in 1976. It is one of the four associations that form the Jordanian Federation of Business and Professional Women, which is affiliated with BPW-International, known as the International Federation of Business and Professional Women. BPW International enjoys a recognized voice for Business and Professional Women at the UN and many other NGOs. BPW-Amman is directed by an active committee of nine members who are elected every three years with the participation the immediate past president, as an Advisor.

In addition, as the incubator faces difficulties of limited space, its capacity has not until now exceeded more than seven tenants despite the increasing number of entrepreneurial beneficiaries on the waiting list. Only two small projects have graduated from the Incubator up until September 2000. Each of them was then able to achieve success, which enabled them to start an individual enterprise in the business market. The incubator provides a necessary package of services for budding new enterprises. These services include a space for management in addition to joint managerial services. A reception hall with a receptionist, a kitchenette, computer, fax and international telephone line are all also included. Moreover, the Incubator provides an electronic link with international informational networks, as well as information detailing the methods of registration at governmental departments. In addition, the businesses within the incubator are assisted in obtaining facilitated loans. This of course enables them to perform some required tasks. Finally, the BPWC has a network of wide relationships with the various associations and institutions, such as universities, research and development centers, chambers of commerce and industry, and local institutions. Such a network is believed to have assisted several enterprises within the incubator facing the difficulties of execution in the starting up process.

General Discussion

Strategies implemented in meeting women's interests

This chapter has demonstrated the main projects and implemented policies through which the women's organizations have mobilized women's interests and issues. We have seen that not only has the form and level of engagement in organizations been changed (within the developmental process of women's action in Jordan), but also the various types of women's interests and needs, as well as the forms of politics and strategies needed to implement them. Moreover, the previous analysis of projects already implemented in Jordan provides, *On one hand*, a general view of the main strategies and politics implemented by women to meet their diverse practical and strategic gender interests. In this respect, two main approaches can be distinguished. The first can be referred to as the traditional conservative approach and the second as

a progressive radical approach. While supporters of the first traditional, approach see the woman question as a problem of an existing gap between women and men in regard to the various fields of development, politics and the economy. The second approach sees the woman problem more in light of the fact that women are oppressed and discriminated against by male-based culture.

The first approach, as presented in Table (14), suggests that gradual changes should start with the advancement of women within the fields of education, work and health. Defenders of this approach do not negotiate the role of women in the context of the family, society or culture as child rearers. In other words, they do not target changing the culture and cultural aspects, which view women only within their traditional reproductive roles. They rather emphasize the fact that the advancement of women should be based on the grounds of the “Arab” heritage and traditions, and the main tenets of the religion (Islam). Advocates of this approach consist of state and royal feminism as well as the diverse women’s organizations linked to them. They believe that enhancing the women’s situation in Jordan requires the practice of policies, which seek the empowerment and advancement of women. Therefore, they are applying politics and projects that focus on covering the gap between men and women, assuming that women are backward and should be helped in gaining the same achievements as men. In other words they deal with women as if they were a deviation and of course the man as being the rule to which women should be compared.

One other form of female mobilization, which could be included within this approach, is that of the Islamic mobilization of women (this will be later explained in more detail). In fact, since the establishment of the first Islamic society in 1989 (Anwar Al Huda Society), the Islamic discourse on women and women’s issues was concentrated on ethics and morals. In other words, the way in which a Muslim mother, wife, sister or daughter should behave within the family (the private sphere) and towards males in the society. A serious discourse on women’s conduct and dress outside the private sphere first emerged in the late 1980s, when women’s active participation in the labor market as well as educational institutions became a reality (al-Tariki 1995; Brand 1998). Yet, until the mid 1990s this discourse was masculine. In fact, it was discussed only by male members of the Islamic movement. Actual studies have observed that a

new Islamic oriented female discourse, concerning women's issues, is taking place in the Jordanian public sphere (al-Atiyat 2002). This new discourse seems to be moving away from the male structured arguments that link women's liberation projects to western and Israeli projects, all of which are considered to be aimed at destroying the society through moral decay. Rather it deals with women's issues from a feminist standpoint, revealing the original Islamic views. The new discourse demands that the Jordanian society to return to Islamic regulations and norms, where women's legal, political and social rights are preserved. The content and significance of this discourse will be addressed and explained in the next chapter under the role of Islam and the Islamic movement in forming the ideology of gender.

Table (14): Two main Approaches for emancipating women in Jordan

Item	Progressive approach	Conservative approach
Representatives	Independent women's organizations, and active individual women's rights advocates and sympathizers	Royal and State Feminism Semi- independent organizations (Associational Linkages)
Visions of women's situation	Women are oppressed, discriminated against, and subordinated by legal, political, and religious aspects of the neo-patrimonial Arab society.	There is a gap between women and men in many aspects of life. Women's situation hence has to be enhanced in terms of education, participation in the labor market and politics. Raising women's awareness in terms of political, economic, and legal rights.
Vision of women's emancipation	Radical legal, social and political Reform	Gradual enhancement of women
Strategies and politics	Demonstrations, protests, and politicization of discourse on women's issues.	Lobbying, borrowing power, establishing pressure groups.
Society's response towards their action	Mostly rejected. Labeled as western oriented and therefore viewed as morally corrupt, and as instruments of western and Israeli projects that aim at destroying an Arab and Muslim society from within.	Widely accepted. Their representatives (the princess or public figures) provide them with essential social and political legitimacy and protection.
Relations with the State	Free to act as long as they do not target in their activities towards the state's policies and its legitimacy.	Normally they are part of the state's apparatus. They therefore act in the general frame of the state's political and social vision.

The second approach, or the radical one, is related to the actions which demand a radical legal reform in women's favor, and/or a radical elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in Jordan. Advocates of such an approach blame the

backward status of women on the male-based culture. They argue that from a human rights perspective, women in Jordan are subject to abuse, violence and discrimination at all levels. The abuse and trauma of women in the society is not only going unprotected by the culture, but also through state institutions and policies. A few examples of actions being taken in women's favor are that of the national campaign to eliminate honor crimes, as well as the courageous action of the JWU in rejecting the Minister's decision in closing its headquarter and thereby moving the case to court. Yet, a societal reaction is the main problem facing women's activism in adopting this approach. We have seen and will also be emphasizing in the coming chapter that social mechanisms in which the society implements, in order to prevent any change, has played a significant role in the success and failure of women's actions. While the first approach is gradually being accepted without problems from the society, the second approach, however, is being charged as being part of an international western or Israeli conspiracy aimed at destroying Jordanian society from within, and therefore is being rejected. Generally speaking, however, radical and conservative approaches are being taken, regardless of the success or failure of their actions, which by the way is not easy to examine. In fact, the society's preoccupation with women's issues in these days is a good indicator that the women's movement has succeeded in politicizing women's issues in Jordan at all levels.

On the other hand, the evaluation of projects and programs, that are implemented by women's organizations, provide a good base for the analysis of the sociopolitical outcome of women's action in Jordan. It was clear enough through the previous overview and analysis of programs that they were able, in addition to meeting their short-term objectives, to gain access in decision-making, targeting discriminating legislation and altering institutional priorities for a more active political participation of women. Yet, only those organizations which are state /princess supported, or that are well known NGOs or internationally supported, are able to politically effect women's issues in Jordan. The rest of the grassroots organizations were satisfied in providing services for local communities without targeting social change in anybody's favor. Political power and the support from international actors were significant determinants in the success or failure of projects. International financial aid was the main mobilizer of many of the women's actions. In order to gain international aid, the

national organization has had to fulfill several criteria. For instance, the international aid agencies do not sponsor any organizations that have no active history in the field of its work. This is also valid for projects, as international agencies do not provide financial support for any project that is not included in their agenda. Yet, some international agencies were observed to have changed their focus over time¹⁷. The impact of this change has had significant impacts on the autonomy of women's organizations, which of course will be part of our discussion in the coming chapter.

This conclusion invites us to reconsider the number of women's organizations normally accounted for by the women's movement. If we exclude grassroots organizations that aim in providing social services at a local community level, without aiming to work on the strategic gender interests of women, such as political participation, violence against them, or the elimination of all forms of discrimination against them, then very few organizations are left to consider. These few organizations primarily emerged in the 1980s and 1990s (i.e. within the context of the political opening of the Jordanian state). The other grassroots organizations were for the most established earlier than that. Because of the political situation in Jordan in the 1960s and the early 1970s, they were obliged by law to perform social services and not to target any political change at any level (Brand, 1998). Therefore, we might argue that only ten active women's organizations actually paved the way for the women's movement in Jordan. These organizations were provided as case studies in the previous chapters.

To sum up, there is no specific approach or strategy which is founded to be more effective in the case of mobilizing women's issues in Jordan. Yet, the determinant factor in this respect– in addition to political power and financial resources– asks how does the society (women and men) feel about all these actions, and also, how does it react towards them? In the next chapter, we will refer to some interrelated variables that might assist in clarifying the society's reaction to women's organizational activities.

¹⁷ A good example of this is the German Friedrich Naumann Foundation, which changed its focus from environmental protection i.e. sponsoring only environment oriented civil society organizations, to women's oriented projects and organizations Friedrich Naumann Stiftung: <http://www.fnst.org>