

JORDAN

Report by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
on Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995)
and the Outcome of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000)

Report preparation methodology

In preparing this report, the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) applied a participatory methodology featuring the combined efforts of the governmental and non-governmental sectors, both of which were invited to contribute to the tasks of writing the report and determining its content. In the first two months of this year, the Commission held three meetings, bringing together activists, stakeholders and persons working in the field of women's issues at both governmental and non-governmental levels from women's organizations and other civil society organizations.

The three national meetings covered a number of fundamental matters, and the Commission has attempted to use the discussions as a basis for answers to the questions asked in the United Nations questionnaire, which defines various aspects warranting concentration and calling for precise analytic data. The theme of the first meeting, held on 14 January 2004, was "Legislation, legislative change, and successful programmes and projects". The second meeting, held on 11 February 2004, addressed the theme "Institutional development and the advancement of women". The third and last meeting, held on 19 February 2004, dealt with "Achievements and challenges in the field of gender equality and the empowerment of women". In addition, the draft version of the report was distributed to all those who had participated in the work of preparing it for their consideration and comments. A final workshop was held on 3 May 2004 to endorse the contents of the report. In general, this report is the outcome of the efforts of all the individuals and organizations involved in its preparation, and documents their accomplishments in enhancing the status of women since 1995, with particular focus on the past five years.

Part I: Overview of achievements and challenges in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment

In recent decades, Jordan has witnessed growing concern with women's issues and the form and nature of women's participation in society. That concern has been clearly evident at both official and community levels. At the national level, Jordan has substantial accomplishments to its credit as regards *policies aimed at promoting equality* in such areas as women's rights, the empowerment of women and enhancing their equal status in society, in terms of the changing patterns of women's lives and their increasing involvement in economic activities, education and politics. All Jordanians, men and women alike, are deemed to be equal as citizens. This principle is enshrined in the country's Constitution, and there have been numerous demands for the translation of that constitutional equality into legislation and policy. Those demands are clearly reflected in the 1991 National Charter, which expressly rejects gender-based discrimination. The principle was recently reaffirmed in the Jordan First initiative and in His Majesty the King's inaugural address to the current Government in October 2003, which reaffirmed the importance of striving to enlist women as partners in comprehensive national development and enhancing their status. Consistent with Jordan's current political, economic and social situation and the regard for citizens' rights and human rights that are the hallmark of democracy, and with a view to implementing the outcomes of the Beijing Conference and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, especially paragraphs 287 and 291, in 1996 the mandate of the Jordanian National Commission for Women (which had been founded in 1992) was amended: by a decision issued by the Council of Ministers in 1996, the Commission became a national mechanism for promoting gender equality, with a mission consistent with the definition outlined in the Platform for Action's provisions relating to national mechanisms.

Jordan has been the scene of noteworthy developments in the area of *monitoring and accountability mechanisms*. JNCW is the governmental authority, and with its extended structure, comprising a Secretariat and an array of subsidiary networks of governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), it serves as the official national monitoring mechanism for all government agencies in all matters relating to women's issues. In addition, it represents the Kingdom in all relevant international and regional fora (details of the Commission's mission will be found in Part III of this report). As regards accountability, the National Centre for Human Rights has recently been established as an independent national institution with a mandate to call the Government to account in all matters relating to human rights and discrimination. It is the national accountability mechanism that is concerned with all forms of discrimination. It has established a committee to hear complaints in its area of competence, and that committee is one of the Centre's most important components (details on the Centre will be found in Part II below).

As regards a *national action plan*, JNCW, in collaboration with its public- and private sector partners, coordinated a series of operations culminating in the preparation of the *National Programme of Action for the Advancement of Jordanian Women, 1998-2002, Within the Framework of the Follow-Up to the Implementation of the Plan of Action and Recommendations of the Fourth International Conference on Women in 1995*. The plan comprised a number of themes that had been acknowledged as warranting national priority. Among the most important of those themes were the empowerment of women and strengthening their personal capacities, equity and equality, and participation in decision-making. With the participation of 19

government agencies and 26 NGOs, the National Programme of Action formulated a total of 106 projects to be implemented over a five-year period; it also made provision for follow-up and evaluation. In another area discussed in the Beijing Platform for Action, namely public policy, Jordan has achieved some successes, but as regards concrete projects, its record has been more modest, for a number of reasons that will be discussed in detail in the final part of this report. At all events, our accomplishments in the area of the advancement of Jordanian women have amounted to more than a framework for action and discrete programmes; they have been integrated into what is known as the *National Strategy for Women in Jordan*. The Strategy is imbued with the spirit and basic concerns of Beijing, but it formulates them in a more explicitly national context, one that is consistent with the national discourse and pressing national priorities that are affected by changes associated with the regional situation, which is something that a global approach cannot take into account, owing to the distinctive features of the Arab region in particular. As regards *legislative accomplishments*, in response to recommendations submitted by JNCW, eight laws and a set of regulations have been amended, providing Jordanian women with significant legislative gains. Among the most important of these laws have been legislation relating to economic issues, such as the Labour Law, the Social Security Law, the Income Tax Law and the Civil Service Regulations, civil legislation such as the Civil Status Law, the Passport Law and the Elections Law, personal legislation such as the Personal Status Law, and penal legislation such as the Penal Code.

Women's issues have come to account for a substantial fraction of debates in the Government and the House of Representatives. After discussion by the Government, an experiment which is considered to be the first of its kind in the Arab world was successfully conducted: it consisted in incorporating a gender perspective into the *Economic and Social Development Plan for 1999-2003* and also mainstreaming a gender perspective in State institutions and their various agencies. For the first time in Jordan's history, the principle of strengthening gender equality was adopted as a structuring factor in the *Economic and Social Development Plan*, and JNCW devoted a great deal of effort to bringing that about. The plan acknowledges that women's issues and women's rights are as important as men's. Furthermore, Jordanian women have contributed to the development of vital governmental policies, inasmuch as women accounted for approximately 20 per cent of the members of the committees entrusted with responsibility for preparing the plan, a larger proportion than had ever been the case with any previous development plan. The *Economic and Social Development Plan for 2003-2007* contains objectives that target women specifically, and those objectives are included in most of the sectors identified in the plan. In the same context, the *Political Development Strategy and Plan of Action (2004)* published by the Ministry of Political Development (a new ministry in the Jordanian Government that was formed in 2003) focuses on the importance of active participation by women in Jordan's political life, and emphasizes the need to maintain women's citizenship rights both in law and in practice.

Women's issues have also been a basic subject for debate in Jordan's Parliament. The 2003 elections were conducted in an atmosphere of democracy; women participated in them effectively, and the outcome was that six women won seats (the quota that had previously been set for women members). The new Parliament was confronted with the extremely important task of reviewing some interim laws (the Penal Law and the Personal Status Law), debating them, and then either accepting them or rejecting them through measures introduced to deal with the

laws in question as amended by Parliament. In the event, Parliament's decision was unfavourable: both laws were voted down. The National Programme of Action was the outcome of an initiative on the part of Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Bint Talal, the President of JNCW, in July 2003, in which JNCW worked in partnership with grassroots women's organizations. The Programme's actions, which spanned northern, central and southern Jordan, were conducted under the watchword "Achievements, not wishful thinking". Work accomplished under the Programme included the coordination of a number of national meetings between the women's movement and political decision-makers in Jordan, beginning with the House of Representatives. To consider a different aspect of Parliament's involvement with women's issues, it is noteworthy that a Parliamentary working group on those issues, consisting of both women and men members, has been established with a mandate to support women's issues that are introduced into the House.

Jordan ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women in 1992. In the following year, it submitted its initial report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), followed by its second periodic report. Jordan's third and fourth periodic reports will be submitted to CEDAW together when they are completed next year. Jordan has entered reservations to three of the Convention's provisions, relating to a woman's right to transmit her nationality to her children, the right of freedom of movement, and marriage and the custody of children. However, it has undertaken to consider many other provisions of the Convention, and has amended a number of its laws to bring them into line with it. Article 1.2 of the Convention, for example, was brought into force through the establishment of a Family Protection Department within the Public Security Directorate, while article 3 of the Convention was given material form through the establishment of JNCW as a paragonovernmental organization concerned with women's affairs. Article 7(b) of the Convention was adopted through participation by women in the preparation of the Economic and Social Development Plan for 1999-2003. Other amendments will be discussed in greater detail below. CEDAW's final comments on Jordan's reports expressed the Committee's assessment of Jordan's efforts to date to embody the provisions of the Convention in Jordanian law and JNCW's efforts to act as a connecting link between governmental and non-governmental bodies. CEDAW had high praise for JNCW's participatory approach to the task of preparing national reports and its work in the area of women's issues in general.

However, CEDAW still considers that it is important to focus on customs and traditions that continue to affect society's view of women and to enact a law turning customs that entail discrimination against women into criminal offences, besides endeavouring to raise society's awareness in order to alter discriminatory patterns of behaviour. The Committee also recommends publication of the Convention in the Official Gazette in order to give it the force of law, amendment of the Nationality Code and the provisions of the Penal Code relating to honour killings, legal and social measures to eliminate the phenomenon of violence against women, and a review of the Labour Law and the addition of a provision guaranteeing equal pay for all workers (men or women) who do the same work. We may note at this point that publication of the Convention in the Official Gazette is included as an objective of a political development plan published recently by the Government of Jordan, which is expected to take this step before the end of 2004, thereby facilitating the operation of bringing the country's legislation into line with

the Convention. The suggested amendments to the Nationality Code and the Penal Code are currently under consideration.

All this is impressive enough: important legislative gains, access to decision-making, and representation in Parliament in the form of seats allocated to women under the quota system, to say nothing of the appointment of women Government ministers and other important appointments to posts in village councils, councils of notables and the judiciary. But there is more: women in Jordan are increasingly entering the information technology sector, which is now being taught at the university level for students interesting in specializing in computer programming and computer engineering, and is also taught as a subject in both State-run and private schools. A report prepared by an international organization in Amman indicated that women accounted for 32 per cent of all students studying computer science and 15 per cent of university students taking computer engineering. Women graduates of these courses are employed today in both the public and private sectors. According to a recent survey conducted by the Department of Statistics, 5 per cent of Jordanian families own a home computer, while Internet cafés are widespread and are frequented by women and men on a footing of equality.

Jordan has adjusted to *the impact of globalization*, especially its economic aspects, notably by moving toward privatization, adopting open markets and encouraging investment. One result has been the appearance of “skilled industry zones”, which have created large numbers of jobs for women in various sectors. The Ministry of Labour is responsible for safeguarding the interests of women workers in the private sector and in these zones. At all events, to date there have been no full-scale studies on the impact of globalization on the social situation of women, but the most probable scenario is one of fear that market liberalization and privatization will have an adverse impact on the female labour force, especially in view of the fact that unemployment among Jordanian women is as high as 20.3 per cent, compared to 14 per cent for men (*Status of women report, 2004*). The need to service Jordan’s foreign debt may further aggravate matters, especially in view of the country’s difficult domestic economic circumstances and the limited resources at its disposal.

Following JNCW’s success in having gender issues included in the Economic and Social Development Plan for 1999-2003, the Commission decided that it was essential to work directly with government departments and agencies to mainstream a gender perspective. It seemed desirable to begin with the Civil Service Department in view of that department’s pivotal role and its impact on other governmental institutions. Experimental efforts along similar lines have now been undertaken by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Department of Lands and Surveys; further details will be found in Part II of this report.

These striking successes, which will be discussed in further detail below, could not have been achieved had it not been for important partnerships, which brought together activists and workers in the field of women’s issues and the advancement of women at both national and international levels. JNCW, for its part, works at the national level through various implementation mechanisms in the governmental sector and in the private sector. It has set up various subsidiary organs, including a network for communication with government departments and agencies, a subcommittee for coordination with NGOs and a legal working group. Recently JNCW sponsored a Forum for University and Professional Women which brought together professional

women and women academics from national universities and provided them with a forum for sharing their experiences in supporting the advancement and empowerment of women. JNCW intends to pursue its coordination effort at the international level with relevant United Nations bodies and their regional offices in Jordan.

Nor has JNCW been content to seek out and work with women; it has also worked with men and endeavoured to integrate them into programmes aimed at addressing women's issues. As we have seen, the National Programme of Action campaign, conducted under the watchword "Achievements, not wishful thinking", sought to enlist male Parliamentary representatives as partners in the ongoing debate over the legal aspects of women's lives, with positive results. Other national institutions have also sought to integrate men into their programmes. The Supreme Population Council, for example, has included men in its gender-related programmes, especially its reproductive health and family planning programmes.

Part II: Progress in implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action and the further initiatives and actions identified in the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

In this section, we shall survey successful programmes and projects that have been implemented pursuant to the critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action.

A. Examples of successful policies, legislative change and programmes and policies

1. Women and poverty

Projects and programmes designed to deal with poverty in Jordan are of central importance, and the issues of poverty and women are important as well. Successful policies in this connection include the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, which was announced in March 2002. The Strategy aims at improving the socio-economic condition of poor people in general, in line with the Millennium Development Goals (2000), especially Goal 1. Although the Strategy takes the family as the basic unit, it is women who are deemed to be essentially targeted under programmes that may be spun off from it. The Strategy includes among families eligible for occasional and exceptional financial assistance programmes families whose breadwinner is in prison, families whose breadwinner has been incapacitated by illness, and families whose breadwinner has died within the two preceding months. Families headed by a divorced woman or widow are stated to be eligible for recurrent financial assistance programmes. In Jordan, we are currently witnessing an improvement in the institutional structures that deal with the issue of poverty, such as the National Assistance Fund, 60 per cent of whose beneficiaries are women.

The updated National Strategy for Women includes a section on women in poverty under the theme “Human Security and Social Protection”, which contains such measures as defining all aspects of the real needs of women in poverty with a view to developing programmes aimed at reducing the incidence of poverty and ensuring that women in poverty will be able to obtain full health care, educational opportunities, better social security and more employment opportunities through development programmes in rural and urban areas.

2. Education and training of women

Girls account for 49 per cent of all pupils enrolled in primary and secondary schools, with girls-to-boys ratios of 96.1:100 at the primary level and 102.1:100 at the secondary level; at the university level, there are 98.8 women students for every 100 men students. Illiteracy among women has fallen to 15.2 per cent, compared to 5.4 per cent for men (*Jordan in figures*, Department of Statistics, 2002). This shows that Jordan has partially attained Goal 3, Target 4 of the Millennium Development Goals, Targets and Indicators, namely “Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education no later than 2015.” Many NGOs are implementing literacy programmes for women in coordination with the Ministry of Education, which has opened nine pioneering centres in various parts of the country for the development of literacy programmes for illiterate and functionally illiterate women. Jordan is currently witnessing a gathering trend toward better-quality education and training for women. The Ministry of Education organizes specialized trainer training courses for

both men and women in the field of adult education and provides moral incentives for women to take them. There have also been efforts to develop the education system, with integration of the gender concept into an educational development programme aimed at including all contemporary life skills, concepts and practices needed to cope with socio-economic change. Despite the economic situation and the general trend toward privatization, there are currently no indications that the Government is considering privatization of the education sector.

A glance at the educational development programme reveals a number of innovative features. These include, in particular, activation of the role of education in achieving sustainable development, modernizing the education system in line with the role of the knowledge economy, and technical development of computer and Internet skills (Ministry of Education, *Teachers' Newsletter*, 2003). In the context of this programme, the Ministry is seeking to reinforce participation by women in educational decision-making by linking promotion to various positions in the Ministry, educational districts and schools with enrolment in training courses: every teacher or employee, man or woman, must attend the courses if he or she wishes to be promoted. This has impelled many teachers to take the training courses, regardless of where they are offered.

A Jordanian research institution has conducted an analytic study of school curricula from a gender perspective, analysing curriculum content in order to determine how gender roles are actually presented in school textbooks.

The National Anti-Poverty Strategy has devoted special attention to women's education, explaining how education can reduce the incidence of poverty, lead to greater use of family planning methods, produce lower infant and maternal mortality rates, and increase women's participation in productive work and the job market. The Strategy has also focused on the importance of women's education, closing gender gaps, and the reasons why it has not been feasible to make school attendance mandatory for girls. Various other proposed strategies have revealed a particular concern with school infrastructure development and the development of programmes aimed at supporting the abolition of direct costs (for clothing, books and paper) in order to ease financial pressure on pupils' families. There are other programmes as well, such as a nutrition project under which every primary-school pupil in Grades 1 to 3 receives a carton of milk, and a supplementary nutrition project for pupils from Grade 1 to Grade 12.

The updated National Strategy for Women devotes a chapter under the theme "Human and Social Security" to the following objectives: (1) development of the education system and raising its internal efficiency, having regard to the gender concept; (2) development of informal education programmes, having regard to gender, with focus on the various aspects of eradicating illiteracy in all its forms (total illiteracy, functional illiteracy and computer illiteracy); (3) raising enrolment rates for education, upgrading and vocational training programmes, and (4) changing prevalent social attitudes that restrict women's educational choices.

3. Women and health

The health situation in Jordanian society is generally good. Concern for the health care sector is deemed to be a developmental service priority in the Kingdom. Development plans and strategies

have consistently included provisions aimed at ensuring that all citizens, men and women alike, could enjoy comprehensive health care services. The Ministry of Health is the official agency with primary oversight of health care service delivery in Jordan.

His Majesty King Abdullah II has sponsored a particularly noteworthy health care initiative featuring free health care for all those unable to afford the services they need. One result has been free comprehensive health insurance coverage for all children (boys and girls) under the age of six. The Ministry of Health also provides free premarital medical examinations for all persons contemplating marriage, both men and women, at a number of centres distributed throughout the country. In addition, there is a network of 200 health centres or “quality centres” located in all parts of the Kingdom which provide a broad range of services, including such reproductive health services as perinatal care and family planning.

In past years the Ministry of Health has implemented a number of health care service development projects in partnership with various international and national organizations. A total of 36 such projects have been executed in all, including in particular two health sector restructuring projects in 2003, another health sector structuring project that will be completed in 2005, a primary health care initiatives project that is aimed at using an integrative approach to care and seeks to develop institutional efficiency and health monitoring in primary health care centres, a postnatal care project and a “healthy villages” project. In addition, the Ministry of Health is working in cooperation with the World Health Organization to control disease and provide vaccination for children and women in all districts of Jordan. Lastly, the Ministry administers a reproductive health and breastfeeding project.

NGOs are actively concerned with health awareness issues and health service delivery to various social groups, and there are various community organizations that provide health care services, especially in the field of reproductive health; examples include a clinic services project and awareness and information projects (JNCW, draft third and fourth periodic reports to CEDAW, unpublished).

Some national institutions, such as the Supreme Population Council (which was originally founded in 1973 as the National Population Commission, but became the Supreme Population Council late in 2002), now focus primarily on promoting awareness of the concept of reproductive health. This has involved a major shift in the orientation of the national population strategy, which formerly emphasized family planning and maternal and infant care, but now seeks to address reproductive health holistically, involving men as well as women. The Council has prepared a plan of action for reproductive health/family planning which includes an extensive array of programmes and activities, notably awareness-raising, for which provision is made under the theme “Gaining support”.¹ It thus appears that the Government of Jordan has devoted particular attention to the establishment of primary health care centres in order to serve the largest possible numbers of citizens, both men and women (*National Plan of Action for Reproductive Health/Family Planning, phase I, 2003-2007*). In addition to the activities that are

¹ The Plan’s other themes are Development of national data systems, Financial sustainability, Gaining support, Altering attitudes and changing behaviour, Policy development, Coordination, and Obtaining reproductive health and family planning services.

executed by the Ministry of Health under its mandate, the Government has adopted an updated population strategy for the period 2000-2020 prepared by the Supreme Population Council, thereby clearly demonstrating official interest in that area. The general aim of the updated strategy, which has recently been approved by the Prime Minister's Office, is population growth in balance with national economic growth.

Other national strategies: while the updated National Population Strategy has focused on the importance of women's health, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy published by the Ministry of Social Development in 2002 includes a theme dedicated to health services for the poor, and JNCW's updated National Strategy for Women includes a section on health under the theme "Human Security and Social Protection".² In addition, the National Council for Family Affairs is currently developing an integrated strategy on family health. Millennium Development Targets 6, 7 and 8 will be implemented in this framework.

As Jordan's health situation has evolved, life expectancy at birth has risen, maternal death rates have declined, and there have been other positive outcomes. Older women now account for a larger proportion of the total population than was the case in preceding decades, and partly for that reason, the updated National Strategy for Women includes a section on older women under the theme "Human Security and Social Protection". Ministry of Social Development sources indicate that there are now eight homes for the care of elderly persons with an aggregate accommodation capacity of approximately 300 residents, both men and women.

There are many NGOs that provide a broad spectrum of services for persons with special needs, both women and men. Centres run by these organizations are found in all parts of Jordan.

² The National Anti-Poverty Strategy comprises a number of themes, most notably a theme relating to health care service delivery for people living in poverty and improving their health status through more effective preventive measures and human resource development for personnel working in various health centres. The Strategy focuses on the link between poor health and poverty. Under the theme relating to health care, a number of recommendations are formulated: (1) Population growth should be brought under control; (2) Health services and health care should be made available to poor communities; (3) Local communities should participate in the development of health care services. The National Population Strategy, for its part, includes themes calling for (1) reduction of the maternal mortality rate to approximately 30 per 100 000 live births by 2015, and to under 27 per 100 000 live births by 2020, through action to enable women to avoid the hazards of closely spaced pregnancies, early pregnancy and late pregnancy, provide enhanced opportunities for using safe maternity services, and broaden and extend the basic health care services network, including delivery services; (2) reduction of the infant mortality rate to approximately 20 per thousand live births by 2015 and to an even lower figure by 2020, through action to prevent high-risk pregnancies, encourage and promote the measures outlined in the National Breastfeeding Policy, provide health information, and enable women to take advantage of available services through more effective communication, and (3) reduction of the total fertility rate to approximately 2.9 children per woman by 2010, 2.5 children per woman by 2015, and to an even lower figure by 2020, through action to increase contraception use rates, enhance the effectiveness of family planning methods, and upgrade family planning service quality. The sections of the National Strategy for Women that deal with health care call for the development of primary health care services for women of all ages, the strengthening of prevention programmes designed to address health hazards affecting women at all periods of their lives, including reproductive health issues in particular, and the extension of a health culture to various age groups. (National Population Strategy/National Reproductive Health/Family Planning Action Plan, 2003)

4. Violence against women

In the course of the past decade, violence has unquestionably become an issue of public concern in Jordan. Violence against women has been discussed in the press and the media, and also in Parliament, and thanks to the National Strategy for Women it has become an official issue, with the result that the Government has now committed to developing programmes aimed at eliminating it. The National Strategy for Women adopted in 1993 defined violence against women, in its section dealing with social questions, as a fundamental issue; the updated Strategy includes it under the theme “Human Security and Social Protection”. Measures identified in the Strategy in this framework include not merely awareness-raising programmes and activities, but also the need for legislative changes making violence against women a criminal offence. According to the Strategy, it is essential to provide additional services for women who have been subjected to violence in any form.

This year, in 2004, the Government of Jordan has approved a system of family protection shelters. Moreover, there is growing interest in the establishment of shelters for battered women; the details are still being worked out by a number of relevant ministries and other institutions. Meanwhile, a women’s NGO has founded the first shelter for battered women in Jordan. It receives many cases every year, and has established branches in most Governorates. In addition, there are telephone help lines, manned by various NGOs, to provide women with legal advice and emotional support.

A Family Protection Department, affiliated to the Public Security Directorate, was established in 1998 as a security agency specializing in dealing with issues of domestic violence and sexual aggression, on a basis of confidentiality and bearing in mind the distinctive nature of those issues, subject to the principles of human rights. The Department takes a preventive, guidance-oriented approach, seeking to propagate awareness among individuals in society of the fact that there are ways of confronting violence against women and children, ways of dealing with it, and ways of preventing it, as well as a remedial approach involving legal, investigative, medical, social and psychological measures by specialists working within the Department, who use professional methods in dealing with the victims of family violence and sexual aggression against women and children.

As regards what are known as honour killings, it is noteworthy that the phenomenon has regressed markedly in recent years. Official figures and statistics available from departments and agencies that deal with these issues indicate that there were 17 cases of honour killing in 2003, compared to an average of between 20 and 25 cases a year in the preceding years. Jordan’s Penal Code has been amended to make these killings criminal offences (details of the amendment will be found in the section of this report dealing with achievements in the area of women’s human rights). Furthermore, there are many organizations in Jordan, both governmental and non-governmental, that are endeavouring to promote awareness of the seriousness of this phenomenon and the importance of eliminating it. There are also organizations that provide a variety of services to victims of threats of honour killing.

5. Women and the economy

In 2003, women accounted for 16 per cent of the work force (all workers aged 15 and over). Unemployment among women in that year was 20.3 per cent (*Status of Jordanian Women, 2004*). In view of Jordan's current economic difficulties and the crisis that has been affecting the country since the mid-1980s, the economic empowerment of women must be regarded as a fundamental priority for Jordanian women. Accordingly, it is the subject of an important theme in the updated National Strategy for Women in Jordan, which includes among its objectives: (1) increased economic opportunities for women; (2) enhancement of women's capacities through training and education; (3) greater knowledge of the negative impacts of structural changes in the national economy, which are leaving progressively less scope for the economic empowerment of women, and (4) creation of a legislative climate conducive to greater participation by women in economic activity and ensuring complete gender equality in that area.

With a view to giving effect to His Majesty the King's aspirations for a better standard of living for Jordanian citizens and lower unemployment levels, and in order to ease the burden of economic adjustment, a programme aimed at enhancing socio-economic productivity within the existing package of social security measures and promoting development in the Governorates was launched early in 2002 in a coordinated effort involving the Government, the private sector, international organizations and community organizations, both Government-sponsored and non-governmental. Some of the most important components of the programme were rural community development, productivity upgrading centres, investment support infrastructure, small grants, and training. Many citizens, men and women alike, have benefited from activities under this programme.

The Ministry of Social Development is delivering poverty alleviation programmes in the context of small and mid-scale productivity programmes targeting broad categories of women.

Many NGOs are implementing economic development and economic empowerment programmes for women, including high-productivity kitchens, microcredit, small and mid-scale productivity projects, credit unions and the like.

6. Women in power and decision-making

The political situation of women in Jordan has evolved substantially for the better in the course of the past few decades. In this connection, we may note the following achievements:

1. Early in 2003, a quota system was adopted under which six seats in Jordan's Parliament were reserved for women. The system is an open one, which means that women are free to win seats in open competition, and are also free to compete for the quota seats, the winners of which are decided on a proportional basis, depending on the votes cast in each electoral district: the winners of those seats are the women who obtain the largest numbers of votes relative to the number of votes cast in their districts. We should note that the quota system is a temporary measure that is still confronted with some challenges. Efforts are currently under way to address those challenges through a political development plan of action and strategy which was recently debated in Parliament with a view to its adoption. It is noteworthy that the most recent elections

(in 2003) featured more women candidates than ever before: there were 54 of them, compared to 17 at the 1997 elections, three at the 1993 elections and 12 at the 1989 elections. Women voters, for their part, turned out in large numbers; in some electoral districts, participation by women exceeded participation by men. Women accounted for 52 per cent of all registered voters. Special measures designed to support women's participation in political life are an important aspect of the Ministry of Political Development's strategy and plan of action.

2. Encouraged by the success of the policy of appointing women to village councils as a "positive discrimination" measure, which resulted in 99 women members of village councils in 2004, and the positive impact of that policy in encouraging women to compete victoriously in local elections in 1995, the Government of Jordan has continued to apply it. Every village council must now have at least one woman member, and if no woman member is elected, one will be appointed. At the most recent local elections, which were held in mid-2003, five women candidates were elected to seats on village councils, and 94 women were appointed. It is noteworthy that the 2003 elections were marked by record numbers of women candidates, with a total of 46 standing for office.

3. In the recently (late 2003) formed Government, three women have been appointed to ministerial posts. This is unprecedented in Jordanian history, as no Government has ever had more than one woman minister, although in late 1994 and 1995 there was a woman minister who held two portfolios at the same time. In the present Government, women ministers hold the portfolios of Environment and Tourism, Municipal and Village Affairs, and Minister of State and Government Spokesperson. Furthermore, a total of seven women have been appointed to posts on councils of notables. At the dawn of the second millennium, Jordan had two women ambassadors, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had 24 women diplomats, accounting for 17 per cent of Jordan's diplomatic corps. This represents substantial progress by comparison with previous decades. Moreover, women represented 6.8 per cent of Jordan's judiciary.³

4. The numbers of women holding senior management posts are growing steadily. While as yet women hold only 3.8 per cent of such posts in Jordan, many ministries and other national institutions are striving constantly to increase that figure. The Ministry of Health, to mention only one example, recently appointed 15 women directors, an unprecedented action at that level.

5. The Government has recently adopted a Political Development Plan (2004) containing many themes aimed at addressing issues relating to more active participation by women in decision-making and more women in leadership posts. JNCW is currently making preparations for a conference on political development and Jordanian women, using a comprehensive participatory approach aimed at involving all sectors of society, including both governmental and non-governmental organizations.

One aspect of the updated National Strategy for Women in Jordan is concerned with participation by women in public life, especially decision-making processes and leadership positions. The Strategy identifies a number of main objectives that are to be attained through a work plan keyed to the Strategy. Those objectives include: (1) reinforcement of the concept that women are full citizens and the practical application of that concept; (2) strengthening of

³ Figures and percentages refer to 2003.

women's leadership capacities; preparation and application of special measures aimed at enabling more women to accede to decision-making posts; and (3) action to change the stereotyped social image of women's capacities and roles in society.

With a view to supporting participation by women in decision-making processes, JNCW is cooperating with a number of national institutions in trial gender mainstreaming efforts aimed at promoting women as participants in the work of comprehensive national planning and women as senior managers in State bodies. A number of pioneering initiatives are particularly noteworthy in this connection, including:

(a) Economic and Social Development Plan for 1999-2003

JNCW played a key role in national planning processes and sectoral development through its participation in the work of preparing the Economic and Social Development Plan for 1999-2003. JNCW and the Ministry of Planning joined forces to integrate the gender concept in various sectors of the Plan. A coordinating committee on programmes and policies of concern to women in various economic and social development sectors was established. The committee was made up of six members (five women and one man): one male and one female representative from the Ministry of Planning, two women members from the Secretariat of JNCW, and two women members from JNCW representing NGOs. The committee held periodic meetings to decide on working methods and oversee implementation. Its responsibilities were outlined in the following terms: "(1) Determination of main strategic orientations on gender issues in all sectors, including obstacles to the advancement of women and participation by them in the development process; (2) Production of an initial working framework for the integration of social strategies concerned with women, population and other issues into the Economic and Social Development Plan, having due regard for the Plan's overall orientation featuring economic liberalization, a market economy, participation by civil society and regional and international cooperation, including the peace treaty and environmental protection; (3) Integration of projects relating to women into all appropriate sectors as part of the governmental initiative; and (4) Submission of periodic reports to the Plan's steering committee, and production of the definitive working framework in accordance with outcomes" (*Integrating a gender perspective into the Economic and Social Development Plan for 1999-2003*, JNCW, 2004).

(b) Gender mainstreaming in national institutions

The Economic and Social Development Plan paved the way for JNCW to embark on gender mainstreaming operations in national institutions. It coordinated its work with the Civil Service Department (CSD),⁴ which agreed to undertake an experimental gender mainstreaming initiative covering its basic structure and the services it provided. This project was based on the idea that gender mainstreaming in an institutional setting would mean targeting the hierarchical structure of the institution in question and its usual procedures, including both those that were prescribed

⁴ This experimental initiative will be described in general terms below. It will not be included in our in-depth analysis of the various aspects and outcomes of the gender mainstreaming operation as applied to the Civil Service Department itself, because JNCW undertook not to publish the results it had obtained or its planned programme of work in that connection. In any case, the work is still in its early stages, and consequently it is difficult to make any general evaluation of it as yet.

by regulations and those that were not, as well as its working principles and the way it put those principles into practice, and sensitizing all concerned to gender issues. Accordingly, a four-person task force was put together from senior CSD officers (two men and two women, comprising three Directors and a Division Chief). Following an initial period of training, this task force worked with JNCW members during the successive stages of the project to develop gender analysis methods. The project consisted of four basic stages: analysis of CSD's human resources, review of the relevant legislation, a study of the dominant institutional culture within CSD using gender analysis tools (these analytic studies constituted the basis for the gender mainstreaming plan), and follow-up, monitoring and evaluation. Mechanisms for these final purposes have not yet been developed. The plan features a number of basic themes, of which the most important are the following: the need to work on two levels, both internally, within CSD itself, and externally, with reference to the services it provides; the need to increase the proportion of women holding decision-making posts; action to raise CSD employees' awareness of gender issues; action to bring about the amendment of legislation that is clearly discriminatory; development of effective means of regulating selection and appointment procedures; and lastly, action to create a work environment that is more gender-sensitive and institute systems for receiving and dealing with complaints about discrimination and violence (*Plan for gender mainstreaming in the Civil Service Department, 2004*).

It is noteworthy in this connection that a number of national departments and agencies, including the Department of Lands and Surveys and the Ministry of Agriculture, have taken steps in the direction of gender mainstreaming. The Ministry of Agriculture has established a "gender unit" which has been working to mainstream a gender perspective within the Ministry since late last year. Details of these initiatives will be found in Part III of this report.

5. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women (this theme will be discussed in detail in Part III).

6. Human rights of women

Under this heading we shall discuss achievements in the field of legislation and laws, and we shall also review the most important programmes and institutions concerned with human rights in general and the human rights of women in particular. Activities in this area have recently been intensified in Jordan's public arena.

Achievements in the field of legislation and policy development

1. Equality between men and women is guaranteed by Jordan's Constitution, Article 6 of which states that Jordanians are equal before the law in rights and obligations, without distinction as to race, language or religion.
2. Jordan has ratified 17 human-rights instruments, six of which are fundamental. The most important of these are the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which Jordan ratified in 1992, the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, and the Convention on the Political Rights of Women.

3. In recent years a number of laws have been amended and new laws enacted making provision for positive discrimination. An example is the interim Elections Law of 2003, which instituted a quota system. Under this law, women are allowed to stand as candidates for election to Parliament on a basis of open competition and also on the basis of a quota system, six seats in Parliament being reserved for women. This is a temporary measure pending greater participation by women in political life; it was adopted following earlier unsuccessful attempts by women to win seats at parliamentary elections, as was the case in 1997.

A number of laws have been amended to eliminate provisions that were discriminatory toward women, thereby enhancing gains made by women in the area of legislation. These laws include:

1. **Labour Law (law No. 8 of 1996)**, which provides that a woman's employment may not be terminated while she is pregnant or during her maternity leave. The law also provides that a woman employee may take leave without pay for a period of not more than one year to devote herself to raising her children, and shall be entitled to return to her job thereafter. In addition, the Labour Law unequivocally provides that no woman may be employed in an industry that presents a hazard for her or her unborn child. Women employees are entitled to ten weeks of maternity leave with full pay, and are also entitled to one or more periods of absence with pay to nurse a newborn child. Any employer whose work force includes at least 20 married women is required to provide a suitable area for the children of women workers under the age of four years, provided there are at least ten such children, and provided that they are under the care of a qualified child care worker.

2. **Civil Status Law (law No. 9 of 2001)**: this law provides that a separate family record book may be issued to a divorced woman at her request, and that a family record book may be issued to a widow with children. A family record book may also be issued to any Jordanian woman who marries an alien.

3. **Social Security Law (law No. 19 of 2001)**: this law permits an insured woman to continue working until the age of 60 if necessary in order to complete the prescribed term of service required to enable her to qualify for a retirement pension. Upon the death of a woman participant in the social security system, her sons, daughters, brothers, sisters and parents may become recipients of her retirement pension under the same conditions that apply to male pensioners. Furthermore, a married woman may draw both her own retirement pension and any part of her deceased husband's social security income to which she may be entitled.

4. **Amended Income Tax Law (law No. 25 of 2001)**: this law places men and women on a footing of equality with respect to tax exemptions; both husbands and wives are entitled to the exemptions for which provision is made in the law. A wife is entitled to a personal exemption for herself and to exemptions for her own education or for support for her children's education. In addition, a wife is entitled to exemptions in the same amount as her husband, namely 1000 dinars, whereas under the previous law a wife's exemption was only 500 dinars.

5. **Interim Personal Status Law (law No. 82 of 2001)**: Under this law, the minimum age of marriage was raised from 15 for women and 16 for men to 18 for persons of both sexes. The law also gives a wife the right to ask a judge to grant her a separation from her husband provided she

returns the nuptial gift she has received and repays all marriage expenses incurred by the husband. If the husband refuses to consent, the judge can rule that the marriage contract is terminated (this form of divorce is known as *khul'*). Mothers and guardians have equal rights as regards access to minor children in the custody of the other partner or other person, and such access is allowed once per week. Where a man wishes to take a second wife, the law requires both the first wife and the prospective second wife to be informed of the situation, and it provides that the man's financial circumstances shall be investigated.

6. Interim Penal Code (law No. 86 of 2001): In the matter of so-called honour killings, article 340 of the Penal Code, which made such killings lawful, has been replaced by a provision admitting extenuating circumstances. Under the former wording, a man who caught his wife or one of his female relatives in the act of committing adultery with another person might kill or injure one or both of them with impunity, whereas under the current wording, he is given the benefit of extenuating circumstances but is liable to prosecution; he does not enjoy impunity. Similarly, a wife who catches her husband in the act of adultery and kills or assaults him and/or his partner is given the benefit of extenuating circumstances.

7. Interim Passport Law (law No. 5 of 2003): This law provides that a married woman is not required to obtain her husband's permission before a passport may be issued to her.

8. Civil Service Regulations (regulations No. 1 of 1998): Under the new regulations, maternity leave is extended from 60 days to 90 days with full pay.

Still in the area of human rights, the National Centre for Human Rights (NCHR) was founded late in 2002, pursuant to law No. 75 of 2002, as an independent national institution the function of which is to regulate human rights promotion mechanisms in the Kingdom, including the numerous NGOs concerned with human rights that are active in Jordan. An important feature of NCHR is that it is one of the country's leading institutions for receiving complaints from individuals and corporate bodies. It is also responsible for monitoring the enforcement of laws and recommending amendments in line with the spirit of the Constitution and international instruments, especially in matters relating to public freedoms. NCHR has established a Committee on Women and Children which is still in its early stages and is not yet executing any specific programmes or projects (*NCHR, 2004*).

9. Women and the media

An "Arab campaign to change the stereotyped image of women in the media", sponsored by Her Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah, was launched followed the second Arab Summit Conference on Women, held in Amman late in 2002 under the presidency of Her Majesty. A substantial number of recommendations emerged from the Conference, including one to the effect that a serious and active effort should be devoted to the task of changing the stereotyped image of women presented in the media. The campaign was inaugurated early in March 2004, and media messages aimed at strengthening the role of women began to appear on television screens. We may note here that the campaign was an implementation measure for the Arab Strategy on Women, which was adopted at the second Arab Summit Conference on Women.

In response to suggestions from the international community, especially UNESCO, that it was essential for women to be given leadership and decision-making posts in media institutions for one day in celebration of International Women's Day, Jordanian women took over decision-making posts in all national media institutions, including the press, television and radio. Women do, of course, hold posts as editors-in-chief of various weekly and monthly publications and one political daily newspaper.

A number of NGOs have produced documentary films discussing such women's issues as violence, divorce (including *khul'* in particular), and the image of divorced women.

10. Women and the environment

The Government of Jordan⁵ and various NGOs, especially NGOs concerned with women's issues, have shown keen interest in environmental protection, and many international institutions have been prepared to provide support for environmental projects. More than 20 associations are currently working on environment-related issues and carrying out a variety of activities with support from the Government, ordinary people and donor agencies, which have given priority to these associations' activities and programmes because of their community links and their ability to execute their projects with a high degree of efficiency.

Women's organizations and associations have participated in many environmental projects involving local communities and women's groups in rural and urban areas. The Global Environment Facility's small grants programme is a particularly striking illustration of the enlistment of women as participants in environmental work: it has made support available to approximately 25 women's associations for the execution of environmental projects and programmes in local communities, representing 37 per cent of all projects supported by the Facility, which was one outcome of the 1992 Rio Conference.

11. The girl child

Jordanian children, both boys and girls, enjoy full legal protection from discrimination, abuse and violence. In addition, there are a number of government departments and agencies that deliver programmes aimed at fostering children's talents and meeting their cultural, educational and health-related needs.

The Ministry of Education attaches great importance to child development, and offers a broad range of programmes in various cultural areas, such as competitions, sports and social activities, and organizes workshops, seminars, conferences, educational and recreational outings, and school theatre for children (*First report by Jordan on the Convention of the Rights of the Child*, 2003).

⁵ In 2003, Jordan established an environmental management framework by creating a separate ministry for Environmental Affairs, replacing the National Foundation for the Protection of the Environment, and enacting the Environment Protection Law (law No. 1 of 2003), which covers all aspects of the environment in Jordan and confers broad powers on the Ministry of Environment.

The Ministry of Culture also cooperates with 15 organizations and associations concerned with child development in Jordan that are officially registered with the Ministry, which monitors their activities and provides them with all the support it can.

The Ministry of Education has developed a project for the establishment of Government-funded kindergartens⁶ in school districts. Premises have been built in girls' or mixed schools (letter from the Ministry of Education to JNCW, ref. 18/30/24505, date 5 June 2002). In this connection, there have been indications that the Government is contemplating a special curriculum for kindergartens, rather than leaving children in this age group without any educational curriculum tailored to their needs.

As regards family issues, in 2002 the National Council for Family Affairs was founded, with Her Majesty Queen Rania as its President, with the mandate of supporting and promoting Jordanian families. The Council has developed a strategy covering the period up to 2008, which is designed as a response to issues affecting Jordanian families' capacities and as a contribution to ensuring their security and prosperity. The Council endeavours to raise families' standard of living through its role as a scientific and intellectual authority that helps develop policies relating to the family, amends those policies as necessary, and conducts a comprehensive review of family-related legislation in coordination with all civil society institutions, including government agencies, community organizations and universities, and also in partnership with the private sector, in a multidimensional approach to family issues.

A national early childhood development strategy for children between the ages of 0 and 8 has been adopted. In the context of that strategy, a work plan has been developed which the National Council for Family Affairs is in charge of implementing. The strategy focuses on children's pre-school education, basic education and health, and on children with special needs.

NGOs organize a children's parliament in which both girls and boys participate. The purpose of the parliament is to enhance girl children's awareness of and participation in social, political and economic life. The children's parliament is regarded, not only in Jordan but throughout the region, as a highly successful experiment.

The Family Protection Department is a security agency specializing in dealing with women and children who have been victims of domestic violence and sexual aggression, on a basis of confidentiality and bearing in mind the unique nature of these cases. The Department has adopted a technique of making video recordings of interviews with children who have been subjected to domestic violence and sexual aggression; the interviews are conducted at the Department's offices, and the video recordings are sent to the court. This technique has been approved for use at law. Its purpose is to spare the child from having to repeat the account of the mistreatment he or she has suffered, for the sake of his or her psychological health.

A Jordanian NGO established a safe house for children in 2000 in order to protect girl children from violence. It shelters battered children between the ages of 6 and 12, both boys and girls.

⁶ Premises for 145 kindergartens have already been built in various districts, with capacity to accommodate 3237 children, both boys and girls. The Ministry has also supplied teachers and distributed teaching guides, and has contributed to the acquisition of furniture (JNCW, third periodic report to CEDAW, unpublished).

Another Jordanian NGO operates a “guest house for children”, where divorced fathers and mothers can visit their sons and daughters with no police presence. The institution also provides psycho-social guidance services for families and children.

We now turn to a detailed presentation of the national action plan developed for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The programme set forth in detail in Jordan’s first report on implementation of the Platform for Action defined a number of basic themes constituting priorities for action aimed at the advancement of women. That programme included a total of 106 proposals for projects which had been prepared by various governmental and non-governmental bodies, but only a few of them subsequently secured financial support and were implemented. However, Jordan remains committed to international instruments and the resolutions of international conferences, especially Beijing, and a number of the above-mentioned themes have been translated into programmes and projects outside the framework of the basic action plan. Funding for their implementation has been raised by various NGOs and government agencies. This is in accordance with the current political and socio-economic situation in Jordan, taking into consideration recent amendments to the country’s legislation and political reform.

B. Main obstacles encountered in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Jordan

One of the main obstacles that has confronted the task of implementing the Beijing Platform for Action is funding. The fact that the country is going through an economic crisis and has limited resources at its disposal has made funding a critical factor in the work of devising and executing projects of all kinds, including action for the advancement of women. Outside funding for national projects is another challenge, and funding faces various internal challenges as well.

National priorities, as defined in the light of Jordan’s persistent economic difficulties and the regional political situation, which is directly reflected in the country’s internal situation, are another critical factor in determining which issues are targeted for action, implementation mechanisms and funding at the national, regional and global levels. In a region that is politically volatile and unstable, national priorities are constantly subject to change and adjustment in the light of shifting government and non-governmental agendas, and this makes it very difficult to address women’s issues in particular areas on a sustained basis.

Gender gaps in various areas constitute a fundamental challenge to the task of achieving equity, complete equality or parity between men and women in Jordan. There have been some important gains in the area of women’s education, but the quality of that education (e.g. in the humanities and applied sciences) is still a basic problem because of cultural preference and the traditional stereotyped view of women’s roles, and more education for women has not produced as many women graduates or women in the labour force as might have been hoped. Unemployment among educated women is a real problem in Jordan. It is noteworthy in this connection that unemployment rates among women have resulted in high dependency ratios, and this is having a negative impact on families’ socio-economic circumstances and health. Gender gaps persist in the areas of political participation and decision-making, at all levels in the latter case, especially senior management posts, no more than 2.3 per cent of which are held by women in Jordan.

There are still wide gender gaps in economic matters as well: very few women are investors or owners of property or large firms. National institutions have undoubtedly made progress in combating poverty, but more support for this endeavour is essential. There is also room for a greater effort to ease the burden of economic reform borne by women, especially women heads of families (families headed by women account for 12 per cent of all Jordanian families). Violence continues, and there are still laws which discriminate against women; these factors are an ongoing fundamental challenge confronting all those who are concerned with women's issues. More of an effort is required to make statistics published by the country's public institutions gender-sensitive in view of the vital importance of this for purposes of national planning and decision-making. A nation-wide survey aimed at determining the actual incidence of violence against women in Jordan is of the utmost importance and urgency, especially in view of the seriousness with which that phenomenon is now regarded and the need to combat and eliminate it.

The socio-cultural heritage, especially the traditional view of women's roles and capacities, constitutes a fundamental obstacle to the achievement of gender equality and implementation of the Beijing objectives. Popular culture is reflected in the rejection or minimal impact of programmes aimed at women, especially programmes relating to personal status laws and programmes designed to promote full and equal participation by women alongside men in the political and economic arenas. Moreover, that culture permeates national institutions as well, governing relations between workers, employees, directors, politicians and so on (including both men and women). Traditional assumptions about women's role in society do not preclude their full participation in public life, but it is considered desirable that such participation should not displace or downgrade women's role in private life.

C. Lessons learned

Thanks to our action in the areas of the Beijing Platform for Action discussed above, our study and analysis of the obstacles confronting the work of implementation, and our national experience in working together, government departments and agencies and NGOs collaborating in pursuit of the same goals, we have learned a number of lessons which are summarized below.

1. One of the most important lessons that we have learned from our efforts to implement the Beijing Platform for Action has been that national priorities and contexts must be developed, and that work must go forward within a national institutional framework. This is essential for achieving the advancement of women in Jordan.
2. It is essential to associate both men and women with the task of bringing about change. Our experiments with gender mainstreaming would not have been as successful as they have been had it not been for the fact that persons of both sexes have contributed to the preparation and implementation of the plans.
3. It is essential to strive to ensure that all persons working in various fields of relevance for the advancement of women as leaders and decision-makers, and in the areas of politics, the economy, legislation, social action, health, education and the like, are aware of the gender concept and the disparities of roles and needs arising from gender differences.

4. Every project that has been satisfactorily executed should be documented so that it becomes an experience from which others can learn, and every effort should be made to disseminate information about it at all levels. Documentation should include reliance on formal written agreements rather than on unwritten, informal commitments and measures.
5. Governmental and non-governmental bodies should coordinate their efforts for the sake of more effective project planning and implementation. The Economic and Social Development Plan for 1999-2003 would not have been issued in its present form had it not been for high-level coordination and receptiveness to joint action on the part of all concerned.
6. Active monitoring and accountability mechanisms are essential to the work of implementation, as otherwise it is difficult in many cases to follow up and evaluate projects. Effective monitoring also affords a means of timely intervention if necessary to take corrective action, rescue a project that is in difficulty or redirect its course.
7. Regional and international coordination is essential for exchanges of experience and greater interaction. Many programmes have benefited from national or domestic and global coordination in matters of exchanges of experience and technical and financial support.

Opportunities

At this point, JNCW, with the assent of most of those who contributed to the preparation of this report, wishes to add a new dimension to those already covered in this part of the report, one dealing with opportunities. It is not enough to speak of obstacles and lessons learned from our experiences; it is also important to identify opportunities—political, economic or social—that have opened up, as these may determine the general setting for future efforts to implement the various themes of the Beijing Platform for Action. As regards Jordan, there are a number of points that may be made: (1) There is a high degree of political will for the advancement of women in all fields; (2) Successive governments have committed to the goal of social justice and equality in rights and duties for men and women. That commitment springs from a genuine awareness of the need to promote women's equality and simultaneously to respond to pressing internal demands from the women's movement, and it bespeaks an informed acceptance of the provisions of international agreements and the resolutions of international conferences, especially the Beijing Conference, in that area; (3) The importance of promoting the advancement and equality of women is recognized, officially and unofficially, both by the Government and Parliament and by civil society institutions; (4) There is a far-flung network of governmental and non-governmental organizations working to promote gender equality, and they are coordinating their efforts clearly and effectively.

Part III: Institutional development

The Fourth World Conference on Women and the Platform for Action that emerged from it pointed to the importance of establishing appropriate national bodies and mechanisms at various levels with responsibility for promoting the advancement of women; those national mechanisms should be granted planning and advocacy authority to achieve progress in bringing about the advancement of women and monitoring successive steps in such progress (Beijing, paragraph 217). Jordan's response has not been wanting. The main impact of Beijing has been the change in JNCW's mandate from its original terms as formulated when the Commission was founded in 1992 to a broader mission that is more consistent with the Beijing Declaration and the critical areas of concern in the Platform for Action. By a decision issued by the Council of Ministers on 12 September 1996, JNCW was entrusted with responsibility for various implementational, coordinative and advisory tasks⁷. The most important of those tasks are as follows: (1) to develop general policies relating to women's issues and to participate in the drafting of national development plans and development plans for every sector with a bearing on women's issues; (2) to strengthen communications, exchange information and experience and conduct domestic, intra-regional and international activities relating to women's issues and the advancement of the status of women; this includes acting as Jordan's representative to various bodies and at domestic, intra-regional and international meetings relating to women; (3) to review and study legislation in force and draft laws and regulations relating to women to ensure that they do not contain any provisions that are discriminatory toward women, to suggest regulations and laws that would achieve gains for women and prevent discrimination against them in all areas, and to monitor enforcement; (4) to prepare, update and develop a national strategy for women and monitor its implementation; (5) to establish a network of communication between JNCW and Government ministries and public institutions for the purpose of facilitating cooperation in pursuit of the Commission's objectives, and to establish a parallel committee of non-governmental organizations with objectives, tasks and policy instruments to be laid down in instructions issued by JNCW.

The Commission pursues these aims through a Secretariat that includes women experts and women specialists in various gender issues, and subsidiary committees which constitute JNCW's outreach both to the official government sector and to the community at large. These committees are the communication network to maintain contact with government institutions, the committee for coordination with NGOs, the legal working group, and the University and Professional Women's Round Table. These committees serve to provide communication between JNCW and its public-sector and community partners. The Government provides JNCW with funding, and the Commission also receives funds from foreign and domestic sources to enable it to execute its mission and finance its programmes and activities aimed at promoting equality for Jordanian women. All its projects enshrine JNCW's commitment to the National Strategy for Women (the

⁷ The implementation of those tasks is the basic goal for which JNCW was established. The Commission is the authority for all official bodies in matters relating to women's activities and women's issues. Accordingly, all Jordanian government departments and agencies are required to, in the words of paragraph (b) of the letter from the Prime Minister's Office defining JNCW's mandate, "take the Commission's views into consideration before reaching any decision or taking any action in that area." JNCW, for its part, is required to submit its recommendations and periodic reports to the Prime Minister.

Strategy will be described further on in this report), which lays down the fundamental priorities relating to crucial areas for action in the lives of Jordanian women.

JNCW, then, is a paragonovernmental organization reporting directly to the Prime Minister's Office, and at the same time enjoying unconditional freedom of action along any lines that it may deem appropriate in the context of the status of women in Jordan. This is known to be an excellent, highly effective model, and it represents a qualitative change from previous experiments, such as a Women's Directorate within the Ministry of Social Development, or a Women's Department within the Ministry of Labour, both of which were limited in the action they could undertake because of their links to the social development sector and the labour sector respectively. They were in contact with the highest political decision-making level in the country, but were ineffective at the grassroots level (*JNCW, Authority and Mission* (2004):2). JNCW is the first organization of its kind in Jordan, and can work on an inter-ministerial basis for the advancement of women, in accordance with the official national view that women's issues are indivisible and cannot be addressed in isolation from any development sector. Women's issues and needs and a gender perspective must be mainstreamed within every national institution, department, programme or activity aimed at Jordanian citizens.

Addressing women's issues: the National Strategy for Women in Jordan

One of the first concrete results of JNCW's efforts was the National Strategy for Women in Jordan, which was prepared through a broadly based participatory process involving the public sector, the universities, NGOs and women's-rights activists from all parts of Jordan. The Strategy focuses on legislative change, greater participation by women in public and political life, access to and control of economic resources, and equal opportunity in the areas of education, social life and health. JNCW has now completed a final draft of an updated National Strategy for Women, one that takes into account the numerous changes that have affected the situation of women in Jordan in the course of the past decade, responding to the changes occurring at the political level and benefiting from the political climate of openness and the high degree of political will in favour of supporting women's issues. New factors and circumstances had made it imperative to review the Strategy and update the issues, basic themes and proposed implementation mechanisms contained in it. In general terms, those factors and circumstances may be summed up as follows: (1) new political and economic realities at the national, regional and international levels; (2) evolution of the socio-economic situation of Jordanian women; (3) lessons learned from implementation of the original Strategy adopted in 1993; and (4) JNCW's conclusions after a review and assessment of achievements to date and identification of strengths and weaknesses. The updated Strategy contains a number of themes, including legislation, economic empowerment, human security and social protection, poverty issues, older women, women with special needs, women heads of families, education, health, violence against women, the media and participation in public life.

As noted earlier, Jordan has recently been witnessing a remarkable shift toward gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women in Government ministries. Various models for the integration of a gender perspective have been adopted by public-sector institutions and agencies. The pioneering experiment conducted by JNCW in cooperation with the Civil Service Department was discussed above, and in 2000 the Ministry of Agriculture launched an initiative

aimed at supporting women in the agriculture sector by establishing a “gender unit” in the Ministry. Late last year that unit’s mandate was redefined: it now focuses largely on gender mainstreaming. The Department of Lands and Surveys embarked on a similar initiative in 2001. This is still something of a novelty, but the Department has conducted a quick survey of the situations of its male and female staff members, followed by a capacity-building programme. The Department of Statistics, for its part, is implementing a gender mainstreaming programme which is still in its initial stages. In this context, JNCW and specialized national institutions have joined forces to offer gender training, which is essential for the implementation of gender mainstreaming plans and for conservation of the momentum that has been built up. Other experimental initiatives that may be noted here include the establishment of a Working Women Division (WWD) within the Ministry of Labour in the second half of the 1990s and the establishment of an Empowerment of Women Division (EWD) within the Ministry of Social Development at about the same time, with branches in most Social Development offices in Jordan’s various Governorates. Unfortunately, the human and financial resources at the disposal of the EWD are not adequate to enable it to carry out its work effectively, while for the Ministry of Labour’s WWD, human resources are a serious challenge. Furthermore, neither division possesses the political power it would require in order to take what it deems to be appropriate action for the advancement of women within its sphere of competence: the WWD concentrates on issues of relevance for women workers in the private sector, while the EWD’s focus is on women’s issues only in so far as they are a factor in the services it provides and the programmes it delivers. As a result, both divisions have encountered administrative difficulties and are faced with many challenges. In another development, the Ministry of Labour has recently been assigning more women to serve in its various national subsidiary bodies, and when the seven-person Board of Labour Consultants for the Gulf States was revived recently, the Ministry appointed a woman to serve as a member, for the first time in its history. It is also noteworthy that the recently created Ministry of Political Development has established a new directorate, the Directorate for Women, Youth and Human Rights. The Director is a woman, as is the Chief of the Women’s Division within the Directorate.

In sum, we may say that experiments in gender mainstreaming are still of recent origin in Jordan, and that gender mainstreaming capacities, in terms of national experts, are excellent, albeit still limited. Experimental initiatives that have been implemented to date by such national institutions as the Civil Service Office and the Department of Lands and Surveys have yielded important results in terms of capacity-building for the technical work teams whose task it has been to integrate a gender perspective within those institutions. It is still too early for success stories, but the outlook is promising. In the Department of Lands and Surveys, there has been a radical change in the matter of women occupying decision-making posts: the post of Director, Land Registration Directorate had always been held by men, but it is now held by a woman, while women employees in other units now participate more extensively in courses and delegations both within Jordan and abroad.

A wide variety of monitoring mechanisms have been established to track progress in implementation. Every gender mainstreaming plan adopted by one of the national institutions referred to above includes a follow-up and monitoring component, with mechanisms established expressly for that purpose. The gender mainstreaming plan developed jointly by JNCW and the Civil Service Office, for example, includes an array of mechanisms and measures to be applied

by the joint implementation team and the supporting technical team whose function it is to prepare and submit periodic reports containing information about the numbers of men and women employees in decision-making posts within the Office, their career profiles, and their access to such resources as training courses, delegations, outside conferences and study grants, as well as information about gender gaps, with reasons and justifications.

With respect to national statistics, the National Strategy for Women in Jordan identified areas of critical concern and priorities for Jordanian women in the fields of legislation, human security and social protection, economic empowerment, participation in public life and the media, and emphasized the importance of gender-disaggregated statistics in all those fields. None the less, gender-disaggregated statistics continue to represent a persistent problem in Jordan. The annual and other periodic reports issued by most national institutions and agencies, and even ministries (except for the Department of Statistics), do not contain gender-disaggregated statistics. As a result, JNCW and its partners are devoting greater importance to this question. A major objective under the theme “The economic empowerment of women” in the Strategy is inducing all ministries to publish their national and sectoral statistics in gender-disaggregated form.

A recently published statistical report entitled *Status of Jordanian women: Demography, Economic Participation, Political Participation and Violence* is an extremely important and accurate source of information for the sectors mentioned in the title. The report is highly useful for users of statistical data such as JNCW (which relies on it in preparing its periodic reports on women), research institutions, the women’s studies programme at the University of Jordan, and decision-makers generally, and its statistics are taken into account for purposes of comprehensive or partial national planning. One substantial challenge confronting users of gender-disaggregated statistics in Jordan today is that the statistics produced by some agencies are not computerized, but are still kept in the form of paper files and printed records which are accessible only at the cost of considerable expenditure of time and effort. However, this problem is gradually being solved as all national sectors, agencies and institutions are progressively adopting the computer and learning how to use it effectively.

Turning to the matter of the monitoring of progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, JNCW provides coordination among national programmes and projects established for that purpose. In general terms, the Commission consistently applies a participatory approach involving not only its governmental and non-governmental partners, but also pressure groups and interest groups in Jordan. A working group has been formed to study and discuss Jordan’s monitoring effort, comprising 19 representatives from the Government and national institutions and 26 representatives from various NGOs and women’s organizations that are working for the advancement of women in Jordan. Indeed, these NGOs have developed a plan of action based on the outcomes of 12 workshops held to consider the issue of monitoring. Participating NGOs, moreover, have proposed a considerable number of projects and programmes designed in accordance with their various capacities and skills (*National action plan for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action*, 1998).

Part IV: Main challenges and action to address them

Main challenges

1. **Limited institutional capabilities:** The institutional capabilities of national agencies are still unequal to the burden of responsibilities incumbent upon the State, and not all agencies are equally mature from an institutional standpoint. Some organizations have been able to provide excellent structures, studies, statistics and skilled personnel, while others have been less satisfactory in terms of these desiderata. In this situation, we who are trying to implement the Beijing Platform for Action have had to accommodate these institutional disparities as best we can, relying on the institutions themselves to define their priorities and activities in the light of their capacities while helping them to evolve toward a greater degree of structural maturity. The situation also calls for more gender awareness and training programmes and institutional gender mainstreaming mechanisms generally.

2. **The national and regional economic situation:** The unstable political situation in the region and the economic difficulties currently besetting Jordan's domestic economy have, of necessity, put economic and political issues at the top of the country's list of national priorities. Even so, the issue of the advancement of women has attracted the attention of successive national governments, albeit to varying degrees, and has now increased to a striking degree, as many observers have noted. In the climate of political development that characterizes Jordan today, Jordanian women have been successful in attracting attention to the issue of their advancement and keeping it on the national agenda. Furthermore, the present Government is concerned to encourage more effective participation by women and supports JNCW's efforts in connection with women's issues.

3. The same applies to the impact of **economic factors** : one important cause of shortfalls in attaining the Beijing objectives has been Jordan's overall economic situation, which has been severely affected by global economic crises and the country's lack of domestic resources. The country's economic circumstances may be regarded as an important reason why labour force participation rates for women are comparatively low, and why more women are now living below the poverty line. The economic situation has also had the effect of drying up financial resources that would have made it feasible to carry out more activities aimed at implementing the Platform. Indeed, economic factors have had an adverse impact on funding for women's issues in general; the public budget is not yet sensitive to gender issues and gender disparities. Consequently, the Beijing implementation effort, and the implementation of the National Strategy for Women as well, have had to adjust to Jordan's economic reality. Government agencies and NGOs alike have had to rely primarily on their own capabilities as direct support has been cut to a minimum and has been forthcoming only for the most important issues.

4. **Socio-cultural factors** : The areas in which the greatest progress has been made are health and education, while the areas in which least progress has been made are the labour market and legislation. The latter are areas in which the effort to enhance the status of women comes into conflict with the prevailing social situation, with the result that objectives have sometimes not been attained, and even where obstacles have successfully been eliminated, it has been difficult for women to take advantage of the improved position.

5. Extensive overlapping of various factors relating to the advancement of women,

indicating that an integrated, multidimensional approach is required, rather than different factors being addressed in isolation. This is clearly true in the case of education and the labour market, to take only those examples. It is true that the aim of education is not merely to qualify individuals for income-generating employment, but it is also true that a job, for those who do not have one, represents a fundamental objective in a country like Jordan, with its scanty economic resources. Jordanian women have found that an education, including vocational training, does not guarantee employment. The same applies, to an even greater extent and in more complex fashion, to the problem of the growing numbers of persons living in poverty. Employment-related objectives do not take into account the interlocking effects, total or partial, of an array of social and economic factors, with the result that growth in the numbers of employed persons has been accompanied by growth in the numbers of persons living in poverty. This situation confirms, once again, that complex objectives require a multidimensional approach.

Accordingly, for purposes of the implementation of the educational and economic aspects of the Beijing Platform for Action, those two areas must be treated as one, and the theme of poverty should be added as well, so that the complex, interlocking dimensions of this problem can be adequately addressed.

6. Nature of the international setting in which the advancement of women is being pursued:

there has been a tendency to focus on shared international aspects and to neglect distinctive regional and national aspects, which are of the utmost importance in the case of the Arab region, especially as regards legal systems and legislation. Jordan has overcome obstacles of this kind through its National Strategy for Women, the action plan for which is consistent with national and regional socio-economic realities. In any case, more effective coordination at the regional level is called for in order to disseminate the outcomes of experimental initiatives and facilitate exchanges of experience.

7. Jordan has made great strides in promoting equality for women and encouraging them to participate actively in economic, social and political aspects of the public life of the country. Its efforts have attracted support and coordination from many international organizations, especially in the form of financial assistance and technical training, and these, given the difficult economic situation currently besetting Jordan, have been of crucial significance in making it possible for many projects aimed at addressing women's issues to go forward. If further projects of this kind are to be implemented, more coordination and more financial and technical support will have to be forthcoming.

Actions to address challenges

Under the national action plan for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, a number of basic areas were targeted for concentration over the past five years, while the Millennium Development Goals constitute a general framework for many plans that have been executed by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, the Ministry of Social Development and various institutions with competence in the area of the status of women. Many programmes and projects designed to cover the above-mentioned basic areas have been developed, but have remained in abeyance because other issues have become more pressing in view of Jordan's

current economic and political situation. The issue of poverty and the economic empowerment of women has not yet been adequately addressed, especially the matter of women's economic circumstances. Unemployment among women remains high at 20.3 per cent, and the unemployment rate for educated women is higher than the corresponding rates for uneducated women or women with only a little education. In view of the continuing application of the economic reform programme and the impact of globalization, it is imperative to devote particular attention to the empowerment of women in the fields of investment and small business entrepreneurship as a matter of priority.

While decisive action has been taken to promote political participation by women, actual participation has remained more of a hope than a reality. However, special measures such as quotas for women and appointing women directly to decision-making posts have proved effective, and consequently it is clear that more pressure is needed, in the form of higher quotas and more appointments. Concurrently, action to develop women's leadership capacities and alter culturally stereotyped images of women's role and abilities is essential.

Women's rights and human rights are an urgent issue at the present time, when political development is increasingly being discussed and means of stimulating popular participation and inculcating awareness of the bases of citizenship are being sought. The time is ripe, from a political standpoint, and it is essential to strike while the iron is hot. Accordingly, JNCW is working in coordination with the Ministry of Political Development to affirm and strengthen human rights, women's rights and citizenship rights in relation to women, both conceptually and in practice, and to reinforce political participation by women in the Government, in Parliament, in political parties and in other civil society institutions.

Jordan's action plan for the immediate future will rely on the updated National Strategy for Women, which identifies the themes outlined below as calling for action in the years ahead and at the same time representing urgent priorities for Jordanian women: (1) legislation (with a focus on women's civil and political rights), (2) economic empowerment, (3) participation in public life, (4) human security and social protection (including women with special needs, women heads of families, older women and so on), and lastly (5) the media.

Programmes and projects devised under each of these themes in the updated Strategy will cover both the public and private sectors, and will focus basically on cooperation and coordination with governmental and non-governmental organizations with a view to:

1. Contributing to the administrative reform programmes of public sector institutions through further initiatives aimed at integrating a gender perspective in national institutions;
2. Executing more awareness enhancement and information programmes, especially in the area of civic education, violence against women, health and reproductive health, participation and management;
3. Making gender-disaggregated statistics available through periodic reports, of which the first was a report on the status of women. In addition, JNCW will seek to bring pressure to bear on national institutions in an effort to induce them to issue gender-disaggregated statistics as well;

4. Integrating a gender perspective in national plans and national institutions;
5. Promoting the political development of women by various means (notably special measures);
6. Recommending further legislative amendments advantageous to women;
7. Conducting a review of the Political Development Strategy. Within that framework, JNCW will endeavour to ensure that good governance, characterized by accountability and transparency, is on the agenda of the Ministry of Political Development and the agendas of the committees responsible for making changes to the Strategy. Transparency, especially the availability of reliable data on various resources and those who benefit from them (both men and women), will serve to promote gender equity, which is desirable from the standpoint not only of Jordanian women but also of Jordanian men. Accountability will mean that national institutions concerned with monitoring unfair treatment and discrimination will be able to call the offending agency to account, and this will mean more equality and an end to discrimination.

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Annex

The information in this report is based on comments and data supplied by representatives of national institutions and non-governmental organizations who participated in meetings held for the purpose of preparing this report. The following is a list of those institutions and organizations:

1. Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation
2. Ministry of Political Development and Parliamentary Affairs
3. Ministry of Foreign Affairs
4. Ministry of Education
5. Ministry of Labour
6. Ministry of Health
7. Ministry of Finance
8. Ministry of Social Development
9. Ministry of the Interior
10. Civil Service Department
11. Department of Personal Status and Passports
12. Department of Statistics
13. Department of Lands and Surveys
14. Supreme Population Council
15. Supreme Media Council
16. Family Protection Department/Public Security Directorate
17. National Centre for Human Rights
18. National Council for Family Affairs
19. King Hussein Foundation
20. Queen Zein Al Sharaf Institute for Development
21. Noor Al-Hussein Foundation
22. General Federation of Jordanian Women
23. Jordanian Women's Union
24. National Association of Jordanian Women's Committees
25. General Union of Young Men's Christian Associations
26. Jordan Forum for Business and Professional Women
27. Arab Women Media Centre
28. Arab Women Organization
29. International Institute for Women Solidarity
30. Society for the Development of Rural Women
31. International Women's Forum
32. Women's Studies Programme – University of Jordan
33. Association for the Empowerment of University Women, Jordan
34. Women's Development Society
35. Human Forum for Women's Rights
36. Women's Organization to Combat Illiteracy
37. General Union of Charitable Associations
38. Pharmacists' Association of Jordan
39. Doctors' Association
40. Jordanian Engineers' Association
41. Agricultural Engineers' Association