



Rule of Law Project  
مشروع سيادة القانون



## TO BE A GIRL IN JORDAN

INFORMATION AND  
RESEARCH CENTER, KING  
HUSSEIN FOUNDATION

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**CONFIDENTIALITY  
AND OWNERSHIP OF  
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY  
RIGHTS STATEMENT**



## ■ ■ ■ Executive Summary

### ■ Project Summary

The state of the girl child in the world is in need of amplified attention. The rights of the girl child in society are often disregarded because existing laws and regulations, customs and practices discriminate against and cause harm to the girl child. The girl child does not always have equal rights and faces discrimination when compared to the boy child. There is a need for civil society and governments to work together to promote a human rights based approach that protects and advances the rights of the girl child.

Through previous projects the Information and Research Center - King Hussein Foundation became aware of some of the issues and challenges facing the girl child. In response the research center initiated a first of its kind national research study with the purpose to contribute accurate data on the status of the girl child and analyze the manner by which cultural ideology practiced by the community influences the formulation of the law. Based on themes and gaps highlighted by stakeholders, based on the analysis of the findings and a human rights based approach, the study has been categorized into the following themes: equality rights and non-discrimination, family rights, girl child education, gender based violence against the girl child, girl child labour, health and early marriage and customs and traditions. The purpose of the analysis of the findings and recommendations will be to contribute effectively to advocacy efforts on behalf of the girl child population in Jordan.

### ■ Background

Customs, traditions, society and the family in Jordan strongly influence the formulation of stereotypical roles for the girl child from conception. Cultural attitudes and practices can impede the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for girls. They create barriers to exercise her full rights such as confining her to the home, driving her out of the social and public spheres, early forced marriage, honour killings, gender based violence, son-preference and girl child labour. Traditional attitudes of a girl as subordinate to boys, prejudices and practices are often used to justify these violations of human rights.

The girl child in society needs to have equal value and worth to the boy child. There is an urgency to do so as the care for a girl child translates into the progression of an entire family unit, the reduction of poverty, an enhancement of health care, declining fertility, and overall improvement in economic performance for the society as a whole.

The girl child's rights must be protected and guaranteed, her human dignity and worth recognized and her interests and needs prioritised. For the future well being of the girl child in Jordan there needs to be a commitment to achieve the goal of equal opportunity and treatment for girls and boys. The role of the family is fundamental in order to improve the status of the girl child. Also laws need to be amended, policies and development programmes need to be developed, to incorporate international standards into concrete action to empower girls to participate actively, effectively and equally with boys in all levels of social, economic, political and cultural leadership. Cultural defined roles can change in response to the above interventions and successfully eliminate all discriminatory practices and attitudes towards the girl child in Jordan.

### ■ The Project and Research Team

#### Research Team

Nermeen Murad – Senior Researcher, Project Director and Managing Director of the Information and Research Centre  
Jasmin Naimi, Noora Al-Werr, Wafa Al-Amayreh, Alaa' Zaidan, Walaa Khamayseh, Ahmad Ata Al Mufleh, Majed Abu Azzam

#### Creative Art Research Team

Reem Abu Kishik (Art Therapist), Raeda Shadfan, Areej Derbas

#### Teflah Website

Ayed Tayyem, Fadi Al Shelleh, Heba Nsour

#### Project Manager

Ayed Tayyem

Special mention goes to Mrs Jessica Harris, a Gender Policy expert, who has advised the team at every stage of the analysis, creating links between research findings and international and national frameworks of reference and ensuring that the IRC produces a thorough documentation of the state of the girl child in Jordan.





## Methodology

### Preparation

The research team took a number of steps as preparatory work in order to inform and prepare for the entire design of the work:

1. Desk review of literature to Jordanian legislation and international frameworks relevant to rights of girls and children.
2. Unstructured in-depth interviews with legal and social experts and key local community persons in Jordan on issues relevant to girls and children and their rights (a full list of these experts can be found in Annex 2).  
The work performed in the preparations phase allowed the research team to draw a comprehensive picture of the key issues that could be further studied by the project and also established a legal and sociological framework for looking at the issues of the girl child in Jordan. The information gained was used in designing the research tools.

### Quantitative Survey

This methodology was used to allow the research team to capture quantitative information on the knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) of parents and community members towards girls in the country. A KAP questionnaire was designed to capture the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of families towards and to contextually map the state of the girl child in Jordan and to analyze the manner by which cultural ideology practiced by the community influences the formulation of the law. More specifically, topics investigated included attitudes towards so-called honour crimes, the right of girls within the family, attitudes towards early marriage, and the right to education, girl child labour, and gender-based violence against the girl child.

### Data Collection Tool

A structured questionnaire was designed to capture this needed information, taking into account the legal and social frameworks established in the preparation phase of the study. The questionnaire contains 64 questions distributed in 4 sections; the demographic data which contains 16 questions; family theme with 26 questions; education theme with 14 questions; and the social theme with 8 questions. The research team conducted interviews with stakeholders to arrive at the themes and gaps highlighted by the stakeholders in order to design the questionnaire based on clear indicators from the field. (The tool can be found at [www.teflah.com](http://www.teflah.com)).

### The Sample

A professional and statistically valid sample that represents households in Jordan's major populations (the governorates of Amman, Zarqa, Irbid, Mafraq, Aqaba, and Karak) was chosen in cooperation with the Department of Statistics (DOS). The sample represents households that have both a male and female caregiver, and girl and boy children under the age of 18. The sample has a 95% confidence rate and was distributed as shown in table 1 (below). The sample was drawn using stratified random sampling such that from each statistical block containing 10 households, 5 questionnaires were filled by the male caregiver and 5 questionnaires by the female caregivers.

Governorate	# of Households	# of Blocks
Amman	960	96
Zarqa	370	37
Aqaba	50	5
Irbid	430	43
Karak	90	9
Mafraq	100	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>200</b>

A total of 2011 (1005 women, 1006 men) households questionnaires were filled and analyzed using the Statistical Program for Social Science (SPSS).

## ■ Qualitative Research

The IRC conducted seven nation-wide Art workshops in seven different districts Sweileh, Karak, Mafraq, Sahab, Zarqa, Aqaba and Irbid with girls between the ages of 14 and 17. The governorates were chosen to represent geographic distribution within the Kingdom. The collage workshops were conducted by a specialized Art and Drama Therapist with research support from the IRC research team. The objective of using the collage methodology for research was to give the girls creative space to express their self perceptions of their role within society.

The workshops were divided into three main parts:

- a) Creation of a collective poem
- b) Completing three different collage images
- c) Sharing work and group discussion

This technique is based on the work of Helen B. Landgarten M.A. The focus is to use photos taken from magazines as a projective technique to explore the inner worlds of participants. The images, which are the stimuli, consist of people and miscellaneous/things and provide the material for future assessment. This technique is culturally biased as images are chosen from the cultural make-up present in the community where the assessment will take place.

The work was based on projective techniques geared at stimulating the thought process of the adolescents, allowing them to select the images that speak to them. This process was then followed by participants telling the group about the images and what they mean to them personally. Finally, the images provided the ground for a more concentrated group discussion.

## ■ Selection of the participants

In the beginning, IRC had chosen twenty adolescents to participate in the Art workshops. After the first workshop conducted in Sweileh/Amman, the IRC saw that the number of participants was too large to be accommodated comfortably within one space or to productively participate in the collage activity and the ensuing discussion. A decision was taken to reduce the number of participants to fifteen in order to give them the necessary space and time to participate in the discussion. The participants were chosen based on specific criteria that ensured that as wide and as diverse a group of adolescents as possible were present. The determining criteria included: gender; socio-economic background; religion; ethnic background (Jordanian-Palestinian); place of residence (rural and urban); and the education level.

A total of 120 adolescents participated in art workshops, most of whom were girls. Due to cultural considerations, only Sahab Center was able to gather both male and female adolescents in the same session. The aim of this session was to be able to compare between male and female perceptions of self and value to highlight any differences that might be found.

Governorate	Number of Participants	Location
Zarqa	15 females	Fatma ALZahra'a Secondary School
Irbid	15 females	Hashemite Jordanian Fund
Karak	22 females	Hashemite Jordanian Fund
Amman-Sweileh	22 females	Institute Of Family Health
Mafraq	16 females	Hashemite Jordanian Fund
Sahab	9 males and 4 females	Hashemite Jordanian Fund
Aqaba	11 females	Hashemite Jordanian Fund



## ■ Roundtables

The research team conducted four roundtables in three target governorates. Two workshops were conducted in Amman, one in Karak, and one in Irbid. These areas were selected in order to create demographic diversity. The roundtables were attended by selected members of the community, who have direct involvement with the girl child, in order to develop practical approaches and implementation methods to improve the well-being of the girl child and the services that are provided for this population sector. The participants were selected from amongst community leaders, religious leaders, social workers, media workers, civil society workers, and legal workers. The workshops were meant to guide and inform the participants on: the girl child's overall wellness; best practice; the effects of biased laws and practices; and bringing back the voice of the girl child - measured through the research project to the service providers.

The selection of the participants was led by the research team and with the cooperation of the partner community-based organizations in the target governorates. The research team invited around sixteen to twenty participants. Around ten to fourteen participants attended the roundtables.

Governorate	Number of Participants	Location
Karak	17	Princess Basma Center
Amman	8	Information and research center
Amman-IFH workshop	10	Information and research center
Irbid	16	Princess Basma Center

The aim of this activity was to mobilize positive change in the community. Each day-long workshop provided three consecutive sessions to brief participants on the legal context, the health context, the results of the art workshops, and the findings of the study with regards to the voice of the girl child. The first session was addressed by the IRC researchers in order to discuss overall findings and maintain a dialogue with the participants. The second was addressed by the Institute of Family Health (IFH) to discuss the input they conducted with regards to the manual, and the last session was addressed by the research team in order to discuss the findings of the collage workshops and to share indicators.

## ● Validation and Expert Consultations

The results of the research were presented before a panel of legal and human rights experts. These consultations had 2 main objectives:

- To contribute to the data analysis with expert opinions on the data generated from the research
- To provide policy and legal recommendations as an output of the study to tackle discriminatory practices and attitudes towards girl children in Jordan

## ● Difficulties faced during the research

**Time limitation:** the research team used a very extensive questionnaire (around 64 questions in 4 sections) in order to cover all the themes and aspects of the topic in seven target governorates. The design of the questionnaire took longer than allocated in the work plan and in retrospect the work plan should have taken into account the complexity of the themes and the fact that it would take a long time to arrive at the most appropriate quantitative tools for the different themes. Despite effort to cover all possible gaps within the questions, during analysis it was evident that some gaps remained.

In the data collection stage, it was found that having developed an extensive questionnaire meant that it would take a long time to complete each one and therefore the data collection stage took longer than initially expected. In turn the 2011 questionnaire collectively needed more time to be coded and analyzed. The very large quantitative data collected needed equally time intensive analysis in order to produce relevant data. The time and resources allocated were insufficient and the IRC had to increase the number of staff assigned to cover the shortfall.

**Cultural boundaries:** the subject was found to be very sensitive culturally. During the roundtables which were conducted in order to introduce and disseminate the findings of the study to stakeholders and develop recommendations, the research team was verbally attacked for receiving foreign funding and accused of lack of credibility for pursuing this type of subject. Some participants found the findings of cultural bias in favour of the boy and limiting the freedom of the girl to be acceptable cultural norms that should not be challenged.



In preparation for the art workshops, the research team could not bring together male and female adolescents in order to compare between male and female perceptions of self and value and highlight differences because parents and social workers objected to mixing the groups. Therefore only one session with both sexes was organised in Sahab Center.

**Changes in the staff:** one of the obstacles faced during the research was changes within the research team. These changes led to temporary problems with flow of work as well as ensuring smooth continuity of the work.

## ■ ■ ■ Main Study Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations by Theme (chapter)

### International and National Frameworks Surrounding the Girl Child

#### Summary of Findings

The internationally agreed goals and commitments have complementary and mutually reinforcing features to advance the rights of girls and women throughout the life cycle. The optimum situation for the girl child in Jordan would be the full implementation of these Conventions and thereby eliminating the remaining areas of discrimination against women and girls in law and practice. This would include lifting all reservations and establishing monitoring and accountability mechanisms, determining the costs of and providing all necessary funding for the implementation. These treaties are important tools for holding governments accountable for the respect for, protection of and realization of the rights of girls.

Jordan has responded to its international commitments in developing several national plans and strategies that to some degree commit to achieving gender equality and thereby commit to improving the status of the girl child. But there is room for improvement and some plans should be used as examples for others. There is a need for political commitment in Jordan in all sectors and at all levels to support gender equality, empowerment of girls and girls' full enjoyment of human rights. In order to protect and ensure children's and women's rights there is a need to develop and undertake more actions and policies in light of the best interests of the girl child. The optimum situation for the girl child would be for her to be prepared to participate actively, effectively and equally with boys at all levels of social, economic, political and cultural leadership.

#### ● Conclusions

One can conclude that the mutually reinforcing nature of CRC, CEDAW, MDGs, 'A World Fit for Children' and the Beijing Platform for Action advances the rights of girls and women throughout the life cycle. They protect the rights, recognize the human dignity and worth and prioritize the best interests of the girl child. Reading these international conventions together is essential for the advancement of children's and women's rights, as this enables a more comprehensive human rights based approach that takes into account both age and gender.

#### ● Recommendations

##### Government Officials and Policy Makers

- Develop awareness for all policy makers at all levels and in all sectors on Jordan's international commitments for the girl child: CRC, CEDAW, MDGs, 'A World Fit for Children' and the Beijing Platform for Action and to understand their mutually reinforcing nature, the linkages between women's rights and children's rights for a more human rights based approach.
- Implement the guidelines for the protection, status, rights of the girl child and actions to be taken by governments from the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action's special section on the girl child at all levels and in all sectors.
- Develop awareness programmes for law makers and policy makers on how cultural ideology can negatively influence the formulation of the law, to understand the impact of cultural factors on gender relations and to recognize the influence of customs and traditions on restricting girls' enjoyment of their rights and their advancement.
- The National Plan of Action for Children should develop a gender plan of action on how to eliminate gender disparities between boys and girls with performance indicators and it should also adopt the action agenda for the girl child in the Beijing Platform for Action.
- All national strategies and plans should be written in a gender sensitive manner, with a commitment to gender equality and include gender analysis and gender planning, monitoring, evaluation and budgeting.



- Given the large number of national strategies for children, this can affect the efficiency of the implementation. These strategies could be gathered in one or two comprehensive strategies, especially since the objectives are similar.
- The national strategies are excellent on the theoretical level, but they should have performance indicators (qualitative and quantitative) in order to measure the progress of the status of women and the girl child in Jordan and to measure the efficiency of implementing the objectives and goals of these strategies. The performance indicators should be monitored and reported by specific entity to insure the quality of the reporting and monitoring

#### **Legislators and Legal Professionals**

- Implement the guidelines for the protection, status, rights of the girl child and actions to be taken by governments from the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action's special section on the girl child at all levels and in all sectors.
- Ensure that both the CRC and CEDAW are incorporated into domestic law and address the concerns and eliminate Jordan's reservations for these two conventions.
- Develop awareness programmes for law makers and policy makers on how cultural ideology can negatively influence the formulation of the law, to understand the impact of cultural factors on gender relations and to recognize the influence of customs and traditions on restricting girls' enjoyment of their rights and their advancement.

#### **Civil Society**

- Lobby and partner with government officials, policy makers, legislators and legal professionals to commit and take action for all of the above.

#### **Equality Rights and Non-Discrimination**

##### **Summary of Findings**

Most of the local experts in the study are in agreement that the girl child experiences discrimination in Jordan. There are clear inequalities that exist between boys and girls, as girls are viewed as a burden, they do not have self confidence, they are viewed as fragile, they cannot take responsibility for themselves, they do not have the ability to make decisions, they are insignificant, and they should marry, become a skilled housewife and a good mother. The girl child is disadvantaged and does not have equal status with the boy child, and she does not have equal conditions, opportunities and responsibilities like the boy child. Girls' daily existence and aspirations are restricted by these discriminatory attitudes and gender stereotypes. Their role in society is socially constructed and influenced by customs, traditions, society and religion.

Girls have the potential to accelerate growth and progress in every sector, to break the cycle of poverty and advance whole economies and societies. But unfortunately they are overlooked and not included in decision making processes and their opinions are not valued.

The value of girls must be shown and be central to government discussions, as they need to be acknowledged as a unique population with particular needs. They are denied their human rights because they are not included in decision making processes in the family, in their community, in society as a whole. Special measures need to be taken to make sure that young women and girls have the skills necessary to participate in all levels of social, cultural, political and economic leadership. The principle of gender equality therefore must be integral to the socialization process.

#### ● **Recommendations**

The majority of the recommendations below are found in the actions to be taken in the Beijing Platform for Action.

##### **Government Officials and Policy Makers**

- Implementation of international agreed commitments, such as CRC and CEDAW; they both have made recommendations to the Government of Jordan on matters concerning the elimination of discrimination against women and girls, which includes eliminating its reservations and taking legislative action to make CEDAW and CRC enforceable in courts.
- Enactment of laws that make cultural practices that discriminate against women and girls illegal.
- Disaggregate information and data on children by sex and age, undertake research on the situation of girls and integrate, as appropriate, the results in the formulation of policies and programmes.

*Beijing Platform for Action, Girl Child, found at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/girl.htm>  
Beijing Platform for Action, Girl Child, found at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/girl.htm>*



- To eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl child the Government of Jordan must develop and implement comprehensive policies, plans of action and programmes for the survival, protection, development and advancement of the girl child to promote and protect the full enjoyment of her human rights and to ensure equal opportunities for girls; these plans should form an integral part of the total development process.
- Utilize a human rights based approach that integrates a gender analysis and international human rights norms for programming to advance women's and children's rights.
- Empower the girl child to be aware of her own potential, her ability to make decisions, to control her own destiny, to be confident, educate her about the rights guaranteed to her under all international human rights instruments, legislation enacted for her and the various measures undertaken by both governmental and non-governmental organizations working to improve her status.
- Educate women, men, girls and boys to promote girls' status and encourage them to work towards mutual respect and equal partnership between girls and boys.
- Promote the girl child's awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life. Provide access for girls to training, information and the media on social, cultural, economic and political issues and enable them to articulate their views.
- Support non-governmental organizations, in particular youth non-governmental organizations, in their efforts to promote the equality and participation of girls in society.
- Awareness campaigns to change perceptions of roles and responsibilities of women and men, boys and girls.

#### **Legislators and Legal Professionals**

- Utilize a human rights based approach that integrates a gender analysis and international human rights norms for programming to advance women's and children's rights.
- Article 6 of the constitution should be amended in order to embody the principle of the equality of men and women.
- Implementation of international agreed commitments, such as CRC and CEDAW; they both have made recommendations to the Government of Jordan on matters concerning the elimination of discrimination against women and girls, which includes eliminating its reservations and taking legislative action to make CEDAW and CRC enforceable in courts.
- Enactment of laws that make cultural practices that discriminate against women and girls illegal.
- Disaggregate information and data on children by sex and age, undertake research on the situation of girls and integrate, as appropriate, the results in the formulation of policies and programmes.

#### **Civil Society**

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- Empower the girl child to be aware of her own potential, her ability to make decisions, to control her own destiny, to be confident, educate her about the rights guaranteed to her under all international human rights instruments, legislation enacted for her and the various measures undertaken by both governmental and non-governmental organizations working to improve her status.
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- Promote the girl child's awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life. Provide access for girls to training, information and the media on social, cultural, economic and political issues and enable them to articulate their views.
- Support non-governmental organizations, in particular youth non-governmental organizations, in their efforts to promote the equality and participation of girls in society.
- Disaggregate information and data on children by sex and age, undertake research on the situation of girls and integrate,

UNICEF, *State of the World's Children 2011, Adolescence an Age of Opportunity*, pages 74-75.

Beijing Platform for Action, found at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/girl.htm>







as appropriate, the results in the formulation of policies and programmes

- Awareness campaigns to change perceptions of roles and responsibilities of women and men, boys and girls.
- Lobby and partner with government officials, policy makers, legislators, legal professionals, leaders in education system, health professionals, religious leaders and families and parents to commit and take action on recommendations.

#### **Leaders in Education System**

- Utilize a human rights based approach that integrates a gender analysis and international human rights norms for programming to advance women's and children's rights.
- Empower the girl child to be aware of her own potential, her ability to make decisions, to control her own destiny, to be confident, educate her about the rights guaranteed to her under all international human rights instruments, legislation enacted for her and the various measures undertaken by both governmental and non-governmental organizations working to improve her status.
- Educate women, men, girls and boys to promote girls' status and encourage them to work towards mutual respect and equal partnership between girls and boys.
- Promote the girl child's awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life. Provide access for girls to training, information and the media on social, cultural, economic and political issues and enable them to articulate their views.
- Disaggregate information and data on children by sex and age, undertake research on the situation of girls and integrate, as appropriate, the results in the formulation of policies and programmes
- Awareness campaigns to change perceptions of roles and responsibilities of women and men, boys and girls.

#### **Health Professionals**

- Utilize a human rights based approach that integrates a gender analysis and international human rights norms for programming to advance women's and children's rights.
- Disaggregate information and data on children by sex and age, undertake research on the situation of girls and integrate, as appropriate, the results in the formulation of policies and programmes

#### **Religious Leaders**

- Educate women, men, girls and boys to promote girls' status and encourage them to work towards mutual respect and equal partnership between girls and boys.
- Promote the girl child's awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life. Provide access for girls to training, information and the media on social, cultural, economic and political issues and enable them to articulate their views.
- Awareness campaigns to change perceptions of roles and responsibilities of women and men, boys and girls.

#### **Families and Parents**

- Promote the girl child's awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life. Provide access for girls to training, information and the media on social, cultural, economic and political issues and enable them to articulate their views.

#### **Rights in the Family**

##### **Summary of Findings**

The role of the family is fundamental in order to improve the status of the girl child. Parents and family members are responsible for the development of the girl child and must understand how the current unequal treatment within the family is unjust and unfair. The family should not give preferential treatment to boys and the girl child should have equal value, worth and prestige in the family. The girl child deserves to not be objectified, to have the freedom to play, to determine her own destiny, to be empowered to be productive in society, to not be considered weak, incapable and dependent on others to make decisions on her behalf. The girl child's upbringing is influenced by customs and traditions that in turn contribute to the dominant culture that influences the formulation of laws that are supposed

*Jordanians shall be equal before the law. There shall be no discrimination between them as regards their rights and duties on grounds of race, language or religion.*



to protect her from all forms of discrimination; even those that are based on beliefs of the child's parents, i.e. family honour, son preference, obedience to male siblings, restricted freedom of movement etc. The attitudes, prejudices and stereotypical roles that exist within families produce discrimination and hinder the girl's full enjoyment of her rights because they influence current laws and procedures governing the treatment of the girl child in Jordan.

## ● Recommendations

### **Government Officials and Policy Makers**

- Promote and protect the rights of the girl child within the family, increase awareness with mothers, fathers, brothers, family members of how to recognize the human dignity and worth of the girl child, how to foster respectful relationships with girls, awareness of the girl child's potential, interests and needs.
- Provide awareness programmes for Jordanian families on topics that relate to the girl child, with an important focus on the poorest areas, also a focus on the man, father, brother and husband. (Recommendation from Roundtable in Karak)
- Promote a culture of dialogue between generations. (Recommendation from Roundtable in Karak)
- Raise awareness of disadvantaged situation of girls within the family to policy makers, planners, administrators, implementers, households and communities.
- Ensure that the girl child is aware of her rights within the family and in society.
- Disaggregate information and data on children and families by sex and age, undertake more research on the situation of girls within families in Jordan.
- Promote the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the National Strategy for the Jordanian Family, so that it clearly promotes and wants to achieve the goal of equal opportunity and treatment for girls and boys.

### **Legislators and Legal Professionals**

- Enact and strengthen legal frameworks that promote gender equality and the empowerment of girls and prohibit discrimination against girls, ensuring that CRC and CEDAW are enforceable in courts and cultural practices within the family that discriminate against women and girls become illegal.
- Ensure that the girl child is aware of her rights within the family and in society.
- Disaggregate information and data on children and families by sex and age, undertake more research on the situation of girls within families in Jordan.

### **Civil Society**

- Promote and protect the rights of the girl child within the family, increase awareness with mothers, fathers, brothers, family members of how to recognize the human dignity and worth of the girl child, how to foster respectful relationships with girls, awareness of the girl child's potential, interests and needs.
- Provide awareness programmes for Jordanian families on topics that relate to the girl child, with an important focus on the poorest areas, also a focus on the man, father, brother and husband. (Recommendation from Roundtable in Karak)
- Promote a culture of dialogue between generations. (Recommendation from Roundtable in Karak)
- Raise awareness of disadvantaged situation of girls within the family to policy makers, planners, administrators, implementers, households and communities.
- Ensure that the girl child is aware of her rights within the family and in society.
- Disaggregate information and data on children and families by sex and age, undertake more research on the situation of girls within families in Jordan.
- Lobby and partner with government officials, policy makers, legislators, legal professionals, leaders in education system, health professionals, religious leaders and families and parents to commit and take action on recommendations.

### **Leaders in Education System**

- Promote and protect the rights of the girl child within the family, increase awareness with mothers, fathers, brothers, family members of how to recognize the human dignity and worth of the girl child, how to foster respectful relationships with girls, awareness of the girl child's potential, interests and needs.
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- Promote a culture of dialogue between generations. (Recommendation from Roundtable in Karak)
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- Ensure that the girl child is aware of her rights within the family and in society.
- Disaggregate information and data on children and families by sex and age, undertake more research on the situation of girls within families in Jordan.

#### **Health Professionals**

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- Ensure that the girl child is aware of her rights within the family and in society.
- Disaggregate information and data on children and families by sex and age, undertake more research on the situation of girls within families in Jordan.

#### **Religious Leaders**

- Promote and protect the rights of the girl child within the family, increase awareness with mothers, fathers, brothers, family members of how to recognize the human dignity and worth of the girl child, how to foster respectful relationships with girls, awareness of the girl child's potential, interests and needs.
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- Promote a culture of dialogue between generations. (Recommendation from Roundtable in Karak)
- Raise awareness of disadvantaged situation of girls within the family to policy makers, planners, administrators, implementers, households and communities.
- Ensure that the girl child is aware of her rights within the family and in society.

#### **Families and Parents**

- Promote and protect the rights of the girl child within the family, increase awareness with mothers, fathers, brothers, family members of how to recognize the human dignity and worth of the girl child, how to foster respectful relationships with girls, awareness of the girl child's potential, interests and needs.
- Promote a culture of dialogue between generations. (Recommendation from Roundtable in Karak)
- Raise awareness of disadvantaged situation of girls within the family to policy makers, planners, administrators, implementers, households and communities.
- Ensure that the girl child is aware of her rights within the family and in society.

#### **Girl Child**

- Ensure that the girl child is aware of her rights within the family and in society.
- Promote and protect the rights of the girl child within the family, increase awareness with mothers, fathers, brothers, family members of how to recognize the human dignity and worth of the girl child, how to foster respectful relationships with girls, awareness of the girl child's potential, interests and needs.

#### **Girl Child Education**

##### Summary of Findings

Although the gender gap is narrowing in the education sector, there are still gender disparities, especially for girls' right to choose their area of study, to have the freedom to study at an excellent school outside their area of residence, their right to quality education, access and transportation to school, right to participate in recreational activities and for rural girls' access to education. If girls have access to quality education and are empowered to make decisions about



their educational paths, they will marry later, have fewer children, be better paid in the workforce and will participate more as equal partners with men in society, in social, economic and political decision making. Girls also need to be educated about their rights and how they can contribute effectively to society and that it is not simply their destiny to get married and not participate in the public and social spheres. Education is the most powerful tool that can be used to attain gender equality in society.

● **Recommendations**

**Government Officials and Policy Makers**

- Set up educational programs and develop teaching materials and textbooks that will sensitize and inform adults about the harmful effects of certain traditional or customary practices on girl children.
- Eliminate harmful prejudices such as “the only reason to educate a girl is so that she can attract a good husband,” “that it is a girls’ destiny to get married and there is no need to educate female children.”
- Focus on educating parents on the importance of girls’ physical and mental health and well-being, including the elimination of discrimination against girls in education.
- Develop and adopt curricula, teaching materials and textbooks to educate around the equality of sexes, to develop the respect of children for human rights and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, to improve the self-image, lives and work opportunities of girls, particularly in areas where women have traditionally been underrepresented.
- Develop formal and informal education programs that support girls and enable them to develop self-esteem and know it is their right to choose their educational preference and suitability.
- Develop awareness raising training for teachers and students on bullying and violence against children, including verbal abuse.
- Provide scholarships and bursaries for rural female students to cover the costs of transportation, books and uniforms.
- Provide quality education for the girl child, so that she can access classrooms that are not overcrowded and quality teaching.
- Promote the benefits of the girl child’s participation in school recreational activities to boys, girls, teachers and parents.
- The Ministry of Education must work on providing more than a social counsellor in the same school, especially in schools that have a large number of students. (Roundtable in Karak)
- There is a need to work on activating the role of social counsellor in schools, through the provision of rehabilitation programs and special intervention, and allocating a share in the compulsory curriculum in the subject of social guidance. (Roundtable in Karak)
- There is a need to improve the image of a social counsellor in schools and with students by activating their awareness and education role. (Roundtable in Karak)
- The need for coordination with the Ministry of Education in the mechanism of using the manual -which was prepared in this project, in educational institutions such as kindergartens. (Roundtable in Amman)
- Need to work on curriculum development with respect to educational institutions in proportion to age groups. (Roundtable in Amman)
- The need to organize the school day for students, so that it contains more than rest, such as food, sports. (Roundtable in Amman)
- The need for sexual awareness, either through family, school or media. (Roundtable in Amman)

**Legislators and Legal Professionals**

- Develop and adopt curricula, teaching materials and textbooks to educate around the equality of sexes, to develop the respect of children for human rights and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, to improve the self-image, lives and work opportunities of girls, particularly in areas where women have traditionally been underrepresented.
- Enact a law that prohibits anyone from determining the educational path of anyone else.

**Civil Society**

- Eliminate harmful prejudices such as “the only reason to educate a girl is so that she can attract a good husband,”





“that it is a girls’ destiny to get married and there is no need to educate female children.”

- Focus on educating parents on the importance of girls’ physical and mental health and well-being, including the elimination of discrimination against girls in education.
- Develop formal and informal education programs that support girls and enable them to develop self-esteem and know it is their right to choose their educational preference and suitability.
- Develop awareness raising training for teachers and students on bullying and violence against children, including verbal abuse.
- Promote the benefits of the girl child’s participation in school recreational activities to boys, girls, teachers and parents.
- Work to address discrimination against girls in education and professions, there are academic disciplines and professions almost devoid of girls. (Roundtable in Amman)
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- The need for sexual awareness, either through family, school or media. (Roundtable in Amman)
- Lobby and partner with government officials, policy makers, legislators, legal professionals, leaders in education system, health professionals, religious leaders and families and parents to commit and take action on recommendations.

#### **Leaders in Education System**

- Set up educational programs and develop teaching materials and textbooks that will sensitize and inform adults about the harmful effects of certain traditional or customary practices on girl children.
- Eliminate harmful prejudices such as “the only reason to educate a girl is so that she can attract a good husband,” “that it is a girls’ destiny to get married and there is no need to educate female children.”
- Focus on educating parents on the importance of girls’ physical and mental health and well-being, including the elimination of discrimination against girls in education.
- Develop and adopt curricula, teaching materials and textbooks to educate around the equality of sexes, to develop the respect of children for human rights and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, to improve the self-image, lives and work opportunities of girls, particularly in areas where women have traditionally been underrepresented.
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- There is a need to work on activating the role of social counsellor in schools, through the provision of rehabilitation programs and special intervention, and allocating a share in the compulsory curriculum in the subject of social guidance. (Roundtable in Karak)
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- The need to organize the school day for students, so that it contains more than rest, such as food, sports. (Roundtable in Amman)
- The need for sexual awareness, either through family, school or media. (Roundtable in Amman)

#### **Health Professionals**

- Focus on educating parents on the importance of girls' physical and mental health and well-being, including the elimination of discrimination against girls in education.
- The need for sexual awareness, either through family, school or media. (Roundtable in Amman)

#### **Religious Leaders**

- Eliminate harmful prejudices such as "the only reason to educate a girl is so that she can attract a good husband," "that it is a girls' destiny to get married and there is no need to educate female children."
- Focus on educating parents on the importance of girls' physical and mental health and well-being, including the elimination of discrimination against girls in education.
- Promote the benefits of the girl child's participation in school recreational activities to boys, girls, teachers and parents.

#### **Families and Parents**

- Eliminate harmful prejudices such as "the only reason to educate a girl is so that she can attract a good husband," "that it is a girls' destiny to get married and there is no need to educate female children."

### **Gender Based Violence against the Girl Child**

#### **Summary of Findings**

Gender based violence is rooted in Jordan's patriarchal culture. Traditional attitudes, prejudices and practices influence how girls are socialized to be subordinate to boys, more obedient, subservient, have limited freedoms, are controlled and thereby are more subject to exploitation and face varying degrees of violence especially from their own family members. The study shows how violence is present in their daily lives. The violence causes negative effects for the physical and mental health of the girl child and deprives them of their right to participate in family life and public life on the basis of equality.

There are still laws which discriminate against women and girls and this is an ongoing fundamental challenge confronting all those who want to improve the status of women and the girl child. Girls and women need protection from gender based violence, such as honour crimes in the law. A nation-wide survey aimed at determining the actual incidence of gender based violence 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.

#### ● **Recommendations**

##### **Government Officials and Policy Makers**

- Appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures are urgently needed to protect the girl child, in the household and in society, from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.
- Develop and implement comprehensive policies, plans of action and programmes for the survival, protection, development and advancement of the girl child to promote and protect the full enjoyment of her human rights and to ensure equal opportunities for girls; these plans should form an integral part of the total development process.
- Formulate policies and programs to help the family, in its supporting, educating and nurturing roles, with particular emphasis on the elimination of intra-family violence and discrimination against the girl child.
- Develop safe and confidential programmes and medical, social and psychological support services to assist girls who are subjected to violence.
- Have the 2004 Child Bill Act adopted by the National Assembly.
- The government should identify the nature and extent of attitudes, customs and practices that perpetuate violence





against women and girls. Measures should be taken to overcome these attitudes and practices, such as education and public information programmes to help eliminate prejudices that hinder women's equality.

- Develop comprehensive national system for detection, reporting, referral and intervention for children victims of abuse.
- Research and gather reliable data on prevalence of gender based violence effects of such violence.
- The need to define violence in Jordan as it is defined globally ( Recommendation from Stakeholder's Roundtable Discussion in Irbid)
- Provide awareness of the extent of the harm inflicted by psychological violence on girls, and that in some cases it is worse than physical violence. (Recommendation from Stakeholder's Roundtable Discussion in Amman)

#### **Legislators and Legal Professionals**

- Appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures are urgently needed to protect the girl child, in the household and in society, from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.
- Develop and implement comprehensive policies, plans of action and programmes for the survival, protection, development and advancement of the girl child to promote and protect the full enjoyment of her human rights and to ensure equal opportunities for girls; these plans should form an integral part of the total development process.
- Implement law on protection against domestic violence. Enact and enforce legislation protecting girls from all forms of violence.
- Eliminate discriminatory law in Articles 340, 98, 99 of Jordanian Penal Code which provide for a reduction in penalty for the so called honour crime cases.
- Remove Article 62 of the penal code which exempts the father from legal responsibility if punishment is used for common discipline conditions and as allowed by general acceptable norms.
- Have the 2004 Child Bill Act adopted by the National Assembly.
- Amend Jordanian Penal Code so that complaints from a child can be accepted without support of parents or guardian and so that complaints from teachers and social workers can also be accepted.
- Human rights education, legal awareness is needed for families, teachers, schools, so that children learn that violence is inexcusable and violation of their rights.
- Research on impact of legal measures to address violence against children.
- The need to define violence in Jordan as it is defined globally ( Recommendation from Stakeholder's Roundtable Discussion in Irbid)

#### **Civil Society**

- Appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures are urgently needed to protect the girl child, in the household and in society, from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.
- Develop and implement comprehensive policies, plans of action and programmes for the survival, protection, development and advancement of the girl child to promote and protect the full enjoyment of her human rights and to ensure equal opportunities for girls; these plans should form an integral part of the total development process.
- Formulate policies and programs to help the family, in its supporting, educating and nurturing roles, with particular emphasis on the elimination of intra-family violence and discrimination against the girl child.
- Human rights education, legal awareness is needed for families, teachers, schools, so that children learn that violence is inexcusable and violation of their rights.
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- Research on impact of legal measures to address violence against children.
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- Lobby and partner with government officials, policy makers, legislators, legal professionals, leaders in education system, health professionals, religious leaders and families and parents to commit and take action on recommendations.

#### **Leaders in Education System**

- Appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures are urgently needed to protect the girl child, in the household and in society, from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.
- Formulate policies and programs to help the family, in its supporting, educating and nurturing roles, with particular emphasis on the elimination of intra-family violence and discrimination against the girl child.
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#### **Health Professionals**

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- Provide awareness of the extent of the harm inflicted by psychological violence on girls, and that in some cases it is worse than physical violence. (Recommendation from Stakeholder's Roundtable Discussion in Amman)

#### **Religious Leaders**

- Appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures are urgently needed to protect the girl child, in the household and in society, from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.
- Formulate policies and programs to help the family, in its supporting, educating and nurturing roles, with particular emphasis on the elimination of intra-family violence and discrimination against the girl child.

#### **Girl Child Labour**

##### **Summary of Findings**

The unequal division of labour and division of benefits influences negatively on the status of the girl child. Based on gender, society prescribes different roles, responsibilities and activities for boys and girls. Girls are assigned reproductive work within the household and once women marry their primary focus is on the care of their children.

There is discrimination within the family as girls are restricted from playing outside, from having leisure time because they are exploited for household labour. This division of labour and benefits is unfair. The girl child has a right to be protected from economic exploitation. She also has the right to the same employment opportunities and to a profession.

##### **Recommendations**

###### **Government Officials and Policy Makers**

- Raise awareness on the issues of girl child labour and its negative effects on the girl child's physical and psychological development.
- Address the poor economic conditions that force young girls to work on farms by reintegrating working children into schools and offering education and training bursaries and scholarships.





- Develop policies, in education to change attitudes that reinforce the division of labour based on gender in order to promote the concept of shared family responsibility for work in the home.
- Conduct research to better understand the scope of girl child labour in Jordan.
- Provide support services and facilities, such as on-site child care at workplaces and flexible working arrangements.

#### **Legislators and Legal Professionals**

- Amend and strengthen legislation governing the work of children to eliminate exploitation of girl child labour in unofficial sectors such as agriculture, the household and family enterprises. Provide for appropriate penalties and monitoring to ensure effective enforcement of the legislation.
- Ensure, through legislation, opportunities for women and men to take job-protected parental leave and to have parental benefits, promote the equal sharing of responsibilities for the family by men and women.
- Provide support services and facilities, such as on-site child care at workplaces and flexible working arrangements.

#### **Civil Society**

- Raise awareness on the issues of girl child labour and its negative effects on the girl child's physical and psychological development.
- Design and provide educational programmes through innovative media campaigns and school and community education programmes to raise awareness on gender equality and non stereotyped gender roles of women and men within the family.
- Conduct research to better understand the scope of girl child labour in Jordan.
- Lobby and partner with government officials, policy makers, legislators, legal professionals, leaders in education system, health professionals, religious leaders and families and parents to commit and take action on recommendations.

#### **Leaders in Education System**

- Raise awareness on the issues of girl child labour and its negative effects on the girl child's physical and psychological development.
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#### **Health Professionals**

- Raise awareness on the issues of girl child labour and its negative effects on the girl child's physical and psychological development.

#### **Religious Leaders**

- Raise awareness on the issues of girl child labour and its negative effects on the girl child's physical and psychological development.

#### **Media**

- Design and provide educational programmes through innovative media campaigns and school and community education programmes to raise awareness on gender equality and non stereotyped gender roles of women and men within the family.

#### **Health – Early Marriage**

##### **Summary of Findings**

Child marriage is a violation of the girl child's economic and social rights to health and education. The study has found a growing awareness of the failure of early marriages. But child marriages still take place in Jordan. Some early marriages are forced for children in grades 7 and 8. The norm of polygamy also continues in some communities. The study found that early marriage still happens out of economic necessity, because of the exceptions within the law, because it is a girl's destiny, because of the influence of customs and traditions and religion or because a girl is an orphan. Many early marriages end up in divorce because of the girls' lack of maturity and lack of understanding

on how to deal with the responsibility of marriage. This causes many social and psychological problems for the girl child. Many times child marriages deny the girls' right to continue her education; it denies her right to work; impacts economic development of the country and forces her to bear children early.

It is important to eliminate all discrimination against girls from conception and in all matters relating to marriage. One rarely hears of early marriages for the boy child. Laws should not contain any measures which discriminate against women and girls that are based on norms, customs and socio-cultural prejudices. It is important to challenge the cultural practices of early marriage. Gender disparities in marriage undermine efforts to empower girls and women. The advancement of girls and women and the achievement of equality between men and women are a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and the only way to build a just society. The persistent discrimination against and the violation of the rights of the girl child cannot continue. The health of girls is dependent on guaranteed rights. Gender equality and the empowerment of women cannot be achieved without promoting and protecting the right of the girl child to enjoy the highest standard of health.

## ● Recommendations

### **Government Officials and Policy Makers**

- Disseminate information; provide training on and awareness of all international commitments, CRC, CEDAW and Beijing Platform for Action to children, parents, teachers, social workers, and other professionals working with or for children.
- Eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl child and the root causes of son preference, which result in harmful and unethical practices such as increasing use of technologies to determine fetal sex.
- Implement recommendations of CRC, CEDAW and Beijing Platform for Action, showing the activities intended for implementation; the measures to evaluate and monitor and the enforcement and effect within domestic law.
- Withdraw reservations for CRC and CEDAW, i.e. for nationality law and polygamy.
- Provide training and programs with a special focus on early marriage, the adverse health problems of early marriage, access to health information, on premature pregnancy, right to freely choose a spouse and spacing of children, for children, parents, teachers, social workers, and other professionals working with or for children.
- Establish family health centers for boys and girls, where they have access to reproductive health services (that do not ban entry of men), that integrate family planning, sexual health and health care services. Family planning for unmarried women must be included and the removal of the uterus of the disabled girl child should be prohibited.

### **Legislators and Legal Professionals**

- Disseminate information; provide training on and awareness of all international commitments, CRC, CEDAW and Beijing Platform for Action to children, parents, teachers, social workers, and other professionals working with or for children.
- Implement recommendations of CRC, CEDAW and Beijing Platform for Action, showing the activities intended for implementation; the measures to evaluate and monitor and the enforcement and effect within domestic law.
- Withdraw reservations for CRC and CEDAW, i.e. for nationality law and polygamy.
- Discourage and prohibit customs and traditions that are harmful to the health of women and children and that violate their rights.
- Incorporate relevant provision of the Covenant in the Jordanian legislation of the UN Committee on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights.
- Change legislation on early marriage and amend the Personal Status law to safeguard the girl child's rights and eliminate any exceptions allowed for marriage under the age of 18 years old.

### **Civil Society**

- Eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl child and the root causes of son preference, which result in harmful and unethical practices such as increasing use of technologies to determine fetal sex.
- Disseminate information; provide training on and awareness of all international commitments, CRC, CEDAW and Beijing Platform for Action to children, parents, teachers, social workers, and other professionals working with or for children.
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access to health information, on premature pregnancy, right to freely choose a spouse and spacing of children, for children, parents, teachers, social workers, and other professionals working with or for children.

- Planning and implementation of programs that take into consideration the needs of adolescents, youth friendly reproductive health services and comprehensive sexuality education.
- Lobby and partner with government officials, policy makers, legislators, legal professionals, leaders in education system, health professionals, religious leaders and families and parents to commit and take action on recommendations.

#### **Leaders in Education System**

- Disseminate information; provide training on and awareness of all international commitments, CRC, CEDAW and Beijing Platform for Action to children, parents, teachers, social workers, and other professionals working with or for children.
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#### **Health Professionals**

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#### **Religious Leaders**

- Eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl child and the root causes of son preference, which result in harmful and unethical practices such as increasing use of technologies to determine fetal sex.

#### **Families and Parents**

- Eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl child and the root causes of son preference, which result in harmful and unethical practices such as increasing use of technologies to determine fetal sex.

#### **Media**

- The media should play a role in awareness around the issues of early marriage.

#### **Culture and Traditions**

##### **Summary of Findings**

It is clear from the study's findings that the Girl Child in Jordan is culturally disadvantaged from many perspectives but most importantly in the system facilitating the influence of misinformed and negative beliefs drawn from what is termed as traditions and customs. These have been found to play a large part in the marriage of a girl and her family's control of that decision as well as influencing the decisions over education and even going out of the house. The girl, according to custom and tradition espoused by the society and family, is considered responsible for the family honour. Our societies appear to hang onto the concept of 'ird (family honour that is related to the behaviour of the girl).

Because the girl is still believed to have a primary role as a homemaker and is therefore confined and trained for that role from a very young age, society continues to look at the girl as if she is a project – either it is a successful and rewarding project or a losing one – either it succeeds in bringing in the rewarding marriage and social status that comes with it, or it doesn't. The social positioning is very important in influencing the girl's education and her education has a larger influence on that than laws.



This does not deny the equally important finding that the situation of the girl child has changed considerably from a legal perspective but despite many amendments and improvements in the laws that govern her life there are still loopholes that affect the girl child's rights negatively.

The misinterpretation of Islam in some cases and the prevalent tendency to mix between religion and law and link tradition and culture is how we excuse the way we behave with our daughters and where we place them within the family structure denying them the freedom to choose their destiny. The collective system that pulls together parents, families, tribes and society at large appear to cooperate to ensure that girls are kept within an enshrined framework where they are put through an intensive socialization and indoctrination process that aims to keep them "protected" socially and micro-managed by multiple "guardians" including fathers, mothers, brothers, family and societal elders.

This does not mean that girls shouldn't receive guidance from their families but guidance is different from the outright control that we see in our societies.

We haven't arrived at an optimum situation – based on an internationally prescribed framework of rights which Jordan is a signatory to -nor will we as long as we have a kind of 'cultural religion' where our traditions dictate how we utilize our religion. This continues to have a huge impact on the way our Arab society functions and therefore we need to work with the policy makers, legislators, social workers, teachers and parents to continue to try to challenge and change the environment around the girl child until we create change for her.

### Conclusions

- Culturally, stereotypical attitudes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men still constitute an impediment to the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by girls.
- There is a substantial [negative] impact on the girl child from prevailing traditions, society and family, and cultural factors.
- The girl child study strongly demonstrates how traditions, society and family influence people's opinions and practices related to the girl child, and the effect is found to be considerable.
- The impact and influence of cultural factors on gender relations, socio-cultural heritage, and the traditional view of girls' and women's roles and capacities, takes shape in the stereotypes, customs and norms which give rise to multiple constraints for the advancement of girls-legal, political and economic growth.
- The social environment has a strong role and we can honestly say that our society is led by traditions and customs much more than religion or law".
- In stark contrast to the strong evident concluded from findings related to the effects of culture and tradition, family and society, the girl child study strongly demonstrates how the law, media and tribe only 'slightly' influence people's opinions and practices related to the girl child.
- The "Islamically blamed" segregation between boys and girls has resulted in under-representation of girls and has made public space a male dominated territory.
- The social sphere is highly male dominated and suppressive towards girls

### ● Recommendations

#### Government Officials and Policy Makers

- Encourage and support, as appropriate, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations in their efforts to promote changes in negative attitudes and practices towards girls.
- Set up educational programmes and develop teaching materials and textbooks that will sensitize and inform adults about the harmful effects of certain traditional or customary practices on girl children.
- Develop and adopt curricula, teaching materials and textbooks to improve the self-image, lives and work opportunities of girls, particularly in areas where women have traditionally been underrepresented, such as mathematics, science and technology.
- The National Plan of Action for Children plan should adopt Jordan's international commitment from CRC, CEDAW and Beijing, such as commitment to promote awareness, protect and eliminate negative cultural attitudes and practices against boys and girls.
- The government should identify the nature and extent of attitudes, customs and practices that perpetuate violence against women and girls. Measures should be taken to overcome these attitudes and practices, such as education



and public information programmes to help eliminate prejudices that hinder women's equality.

- Discourage and prohibit customs and traditions that are harmful to the health of women and children and that violate their rights.

#### **Legislators and Legal Professionals**

- Jordan should adopt all international commitments from CRC, CEDAW and Beijing, such as commitment to protect against negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls within domestic laws.
- Prohibit customs and traditions that are harmful to the health of women and children and that violate their rights.

#### **Civil Society**

- Encourage and support, as appropriate, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations in their efforts to promote changes in negative attitudes and practices towards girls.
- Set up educational programmes and develop teaching materials and textbooks that will sensitize and inform adults about the harmful effects of certain traditional or customary practices on girl children.
- Discourage customs and traditions that are harmful to the health of women and children and that violate their rights.
- Lobby and partner with government officials, policy makers, legislators, legal professionals, leaders in education system, health professionals, religious leaders and families and parents to commit and take action on recommendations.

#### **Leaders in Education System**

- Encourage and support, as appropriate, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations in their efforts to promote changes in negative attitudes and practices towards girls.
- Set up educational programmes and develop teaching materials and textbooks that will sensitize and inform adults about the harmful effects of certain traditional or customary practices on girl children.
- Develop and adopt curricula, teaching materials and textbooks to improve the self-image, lives and work opportunities of girls, particularly in areas where women have traditionally been underrepresented, such as mathematics, science and technology.
- Discourage customs and traditions that are harmful to the health of women and children and that violate their rights.

#### **Health Professionals**

- Discourage customs and traditions that are harmful to the health of women and children and that violate their rights.

#### **Religious Leaders**

- Take steps so that tradition and misinterpretation of religion and their expressions are not a basis for discrimination against girls.
- Encourage and support, as appropriate, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations in their efforts to promote changes in negative attitudes and practices towards girls.
- Discourage customs and traditions that are harmful to the health of women and children and that violate their rights.
- Encourage and train religious leaders, at universities and in theological colleges, to incorporate a positive spirit towards the rights of the girl child within religious history and text
- The Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs needs to train and empower religious leaders and imams to break away from the "cultural religion" which allows custom and societal pressures to bend the true message of religion
- Take steps so that tradition and misinterpretation of religion and their expressions are not a basis for discrimination against girls.

#### **Families and Parents**

- Discourage customs and traditions that are harmful to the health of women and children and that violate their rights.



**TO BE  
A GIRL  
IN JORDAN**

**INFORMATION AND  
RESEARCH CENTER, KING  
HUSSEIN FOUNDATION**



# INTRODUCTION



## Information and Research Center (IRC)

The Information and Research Center (IRC) is an independent multi-disciplinary research body mandated primarily to conduct research into the various means of human development policy, the rights of young people and children, and legislation concerning gender rights especially for women. The IRC has made significant contributions by bringing public attention to a number of issues related to social development in Jordan and the region, particularly concerning children's rights, education, poverty, and gender-based violence. The IRC's mission is to serve as a catalyst for socio-economic transformation through research, information and dissemination of knowledge. The objectives of IRC include the following: conducting and disseminating multidisciplinary research and analysis for practitioners, policy makers and advocates to improve the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities; providing and disseminating quality research and information in both Arabic and other languages; maximizing the impact of program implementation by highlighting the role of research throughout the project's phases; promoting research methodologies and ethics appropriate to the culture of Jordan and host countries; networking and knowledge sharing with national and international institutions; and training as a continuous process of internal capacity building and a service to external stakeholders.

### Project Background

Customs, traditions, society and the family in Jordan strongly influence the formulation of stereotypical roles for the girl child from conception. Cultural attitudes and practices can impede the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for girls. They create barriers to exercise her full rights such as confining her to the home, driving her out of the social and public spheres, early forced marriage, honour killings, gender based violence, son-preference and girl child labour. Traditional attitudes of a girl as subordinate to boys, prejudices and practices are often used to justify these violations of human rights.

The girl child in society needs to have equal value and worth to the boy child. There is an urgency to do so as the care for a girl child translates into the progression of an entire family unit, the reduction of poverty, an enhancement of health care, declining fertility, and overall improvement in economic performance for the society as a whole.

The girl child's rights must be protected and guaranteed, her human dignity and worth recognized and her interests and needs prioritised. For the future well being of the girl child in Jordan there needs to be a commitment to achieve the goal of equal opportunity and treatment for girls and boys. The role of the family is fundamental in order to improve the status of the girl child. Also laws need to be amended, policies and development programmes need to be developed, to incorporate international standards into concrete action to empower girls to participate actively, effectively and equally with boys in all levels of social, economic, political and cultural leadership. Cultural defined roles can change in response to the above interventions and successfully eliminate all discriminatory practices and attitudes towards the girl child in Jordan.

The Information and Research Center - King Hussein Foundation has initiated a national study to accurately assess the state of the girl child in Jordan (defined as a girl under the age of 18 by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)), and has contextualized the dimensions by which to measure the state of the girl child in order to assess the relationship between dominant culture and the legislative system governing their rights. The project tackles the aforementioned issues by contributing accurate data on the state of the girl child in the law, by addressing stakeholders, legislation, mobilizing positive change, and formulating a comprehensive book, manual, and database.

### Project Objectives

Through this project, the IRC has:

- a) Contextually mapped the state of the girl child in Jordan
- b) Determined the manner by which cultural ideology practiced by the community influences the formulation of the law
- c) Contributed effectively to advocacy efforts on behalf of the girl child population in Jordan through the launch of a book, website, and manual

### Project Activities

**Activity 1:** Assess and describe current policy and institutional framework applying to the girl child in Jordan.

The IRC conducted desk research that included a literature and legislative review, with the aid of a legal consultant. The research assessed and described the current policies and frameworks that are applicable to the girl child in Jordan.

**Activity 2:** Investigate roles of tribal law, *urf*, sharia law, and other socio-economic factors in shaping the law.

The IRC conducted systematic in-depth interviews to accurately investigate the role of culture, specifically religious, tribal, and socio-economic culture, in influencing the formulation of legislation. The target groups were: tribal leaders; community leaders; shari'a experts; civil society workers; sociologists; and economists. The interviewees were selected from the north, south, and





middle of Jordan, in order to diversify the pool and include tribal, rural and urban representatives as well as different income levels in order to capture a national perspective.

**Activity 3:** Execute a National KAP (Knowledge, Attitude, Practice) study, on culture and the environment in which girls are raised

The IRC carried out a national KAP study in the form of in-depth interviews and surveys, with girl children in the context of their households, legal representatives directly implementing the law regarding girl children, and members of the House of Representatives who formulate the law which affect girl children across the Kingdom. The size for each target group included: 201 households; 12 legal representatives; and 12 members of the Parliament. Detailed sampling was provided by The Department of Statistics (Amman, Jordan) which covered the areas in the north, south and central regions (Karak, Aqaba, Zarka, Greater Amman, Irbid, and Mafraq) to ensure a national coverage of socio-economic and ethnic factors including tribal, rural, and urban, as well as different income levels.

**Activity 4:** Hold nation-wide art workshops (for girls to express their perceptions of themselves in society)

The IRC organized seven nation-wide art workshops each with 15 participants using a magazine photo collage method, and a multicultural assessment and treatment technique, involving girls from six cities across the kingdom, in the north, south and central regions (Karak, Aqaba, Zarka, Amman, Irbid, and Mafraq) to ensure selection of a national sample group across the Kingdom so that they may express their self perceptions through art.

The magazine photo collage focused on the participants' projections of self-perceptions of their role within society. The Assessment began at the start of the workshop. On a number of the collages they were given the opportunity to write some words, or thoughts that emerge. Following the collage work, the participants shared their work with the group.

**Activity 5:** Plenary Conference

The IRC organized a plenary conference, with participants from civil rights groups, advocacy groups, the Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Health, civil society organizations, legal aid NGOs, women's rights organizations, child rights organizations, among others, who are local and nationwide. The conference was conducted in Amman, in order to share the results of the aforementioned activities with strategic members of the community who work directly with or who directly affect the state of the girl child in Jordan. The dialogue addressed the current procedures and reviewed the overall state in light of the findings.

**Activity 6:** Round Table Workshops

The IRC conducted three round table workshops (Irbid, Amman and Karak) with selected members of the community who have direct involvement with the girl child, in order to develop practical approaches and implementation methods to improve the well-being of the girl child and the services provided for this population sector. The participants were selected from amongst community leaders, religious leaders, social workers, media workers, civil society workers, and legal workers. The workshops were meant to guide and inform the participants on the girl child's overall wellness, best practice, and the effects of biased laws and practices as well as bringing back the voice of the girl child- measured through the research project - to the service providers.

This activity mobilized positive change in the community. Each day-long workshop provided three consecutive sessions to brief participants on the legal context, the health context, and results of the art workshops as well as the findings of the study with regards to the voice of the girl child.

**Activity 7:** IFH Workshop

This workshop was targeted at health workers, in order to provide training on the manual, to use it for the implementation of change in their field. The participants were selected from the health NGO's nationwide. The manual incorporated comments from this workshop.

**Activity 8:** Website

An easy-access website and database featured on the web, The website included all research, manual for health workers, interviews, findings, reports, and recommendations, as well as art, photographs, national and international links, and international studies, and featured on the web for mass access. This domain registered for the website: [www.teflah.com](http://www.teflah.com).

**Activity 9:** Closing ceremony: launch of "Book", Website and Manual

The IRC conducted a closing ceremony which included launch of the book, website and the manual. The ceremony served

7 Youth Advocate Program International, *Girl Child*: <http://www.yapi.org/girlchild/>

8 The UN Fourth World Conference on Women, *Beijing Platform for Action, Global framework*, September 1995, found at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/plat1.htm#framework>

9 UNIFEM, "Pathway to Gender Equality: CEDAW, Beijing and the MDGs," page 22.

10 Report by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly (2000), pages 20-21.





as a platform in which the findings were discussed, network opportunities formulated, and press coverage served to increase awareness of the project, its aims, and its goals.

## INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS SURROUNDING THE GIRL CHILD

### International Frameworks

The United Nations has helped negotiate more than 70 human rights treaties and declarations and many are focused on the rights of vulnerable groups such as women, children, minorities and indigenous peoples. The standards articulated in the international covenants and conventions have been reinforced through declarations and plans of action that have emerged from a series of World Conferences organized by the United Nations. These conferences have gained importance as real forums for deciding on national and international policy regarding human rights. They focus world attention on women's and children's rights and place them on the global agenda.<sup>7</sup>

Gender equality, the empowerment of girls, girls' full enjoyment of human rights and eradication of poverty are essential for economic and social development. Girls play a vital role as agents of development. Forms of discrimination against the girl child around the world are numerous and can be influenced by the traditions, history and culture of a society. Girl children in particular are subjected to multiple forms of oppression, exploitation, and discrimination due to their gender. They often enjoy fewer rights, opportunities and benefits of childhood and adolescence compared to boys. The lives of millions of girl children are often subjected to life-threatening practices, various forms of sexual and economic exploitation, violence, early marriage and honour killings. «For the girl child to develop her full potential she needs to be nurtured in an enabling environment, where her spiritual, intellectual and material needs for survival, protection and development are met and her equal rights safeguarded.»<sup>8</sup>

For the IRC girl child study, one of the goals is to map the status of the girl child in Jordan. To do so, it is important to first be aware of Jordan's internationally agreed development goals and commitments for the girl child, which include the Millennium Development Goals. In particular Goal 3 promotes gender equality and empowering girls and women. Achieving Goal 3 is essential to the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals. Jordan's other international commitments to the girl child include: the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), "World Fit for Children" UN General Assembly 2002-Special Session on Children.<sup>9</sup>

The Convention Committees for CEDAW and CRC have raised concerns and highlighted how Jordan can improve the status of the girl child. The government of Jordan recognizes the implementation gaps in achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of girls.<sup>10</sup> For example it identifies that there are strong discriminatory attitudes and gender stereotypes which perpetuate the discrimination against girls and women. This study is important as it hopes to strengthen the political commitment and leadership of all stakeholders, at all levels and across all sectors to support gender equality, the empowerment of girls and girls' full enjoyment of human rights. Cultural practices concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men, boys and girls, can be an impediment to full implementation of its internationally agreed goals and commitments.

The IRC conducted interviews with stakeholders throughout the country in order to map out a more accurate picture of the status of the girl child.

Dr Asma Khader, the President of the Jordan National Commission for Women shared her knowledge and gave examples on some of the discrimination facing the girl child in Jordan:

Early marriage, school drop outs, forced education choices, prioritization of the upbringing of the girls to become mothers and wives at the expense of their own personal needs, priorities and wishes. Different conditions are placed on a girl from her brother and there are many restrictions on her movement and speech with the aim of protecting her instead of helping her become responsible for her behaviour. There is a limiting of the kind of play allowed for the girl with clear discrimination against the girl. All her toys are pink and the boys get the blue. What is expected of the girl is different from what is expected from the boys. She is expected to be soft and

*Child Rights Information Network, "Follow-up to 'A World Fit for Children' and the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children," page 1.*

*Convention on the Rights of Child, 1989, found out: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>*

*Convention on the Rights of Child, 1989, Article 1.*







weak while he is expected to be strong and protective and never allowed to appear weak. Household chores are the remit of girls alone and she is expected to serve her brothers and look after her younger siblings. She is lent out to other family members such as aunts and older sisters to help them in household chores. The division of labour between girls and boys is not fair.

Other stakeholders such as Dr. Suleiman Al Ma'aytah, an economist disagrees and thinks that the status of the girl child in Jordan is improving:

There is no discrimination between the girls and the boys. The way of seeing the girl has changed. Now we look to the girl within the Islamic context. Some people still have old or traditional thoughts with regards to the girl and her rights. Both education and religion contribute in changing the perception toward the girl. In the past, people did not give woman her right to inheritance, but now 75-80% of people give women her inheritance. Nowadays girls also work outside the governorates, although there are some professions that are still reserved by families for boys such as working in private sector companies.

### **Convention on Rights of the Child**

Another key international legal framework for the girl child is the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The area of child rights has been informed by the World Summit for Children (1990), as well as by the World Conference on Education for All (1990), the World Conference on Human Rights (1993), the World Summit for Social Development (1995), the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), the Millennium Summit (2000), and the World Summit and Special Session on Children (2005). The 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, in particular, recognized that the human rights of children constitute a priority for action within the United Nations system. At the 2005 Special Session on Children, Member States committed themselves to improving the situation of children.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the first legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights, civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. In 1989, world leaders decided that children needed a special convention. The leaders wanted to make sure that the world recognized that children have human rights too. The CRC reaffirms the need for legal and other protection of the child before and after birth, the importance of respect for the cultural values of the child's community, and the vital role of international cooperation in securing children's rights.

The Convention sets out these rights in 54 articles and two Optional Protocols. The CRC, ratified by the General Assembly on 20 November 1989, builds upon the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) proclaiming "a child is entitled to special care and assistance". In its preamble, the CRC states that a "child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society...and in particular in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity". It further defines a child as "every human being below the age of eighteen"

The Convention protects children's rights by setting standards in health care; education; and legal, civil and social services. One of the most important features of the CRC is the protection of the girl child. By ratifying or acceding to the Convention, national governments, such as Jordan have committed themselves to protecting and ensuring children's rights and they have agreed to hold themselves accountable for this commitment before the international community. States parties to the Convention are obliged to develop and undertake all actions and policies in the light of the best interests of the child. It is important to highlight that the «girl child» is not specifically mentioned, but Article 2, relates to non-discrimination and states how: The Convention applies to all children, no matter what their cultural, religious, or ethnic background. It is important to note that the Government is responsible for protecting children from any discrimination.

### **The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**

CEDAW applies to women of all ages, which includes the girl child; therefore it is also a key international legal framework for the rights of the girl child. CEDAW entered into force on 3 September 1981 and by 1989, almost one hundred nations had agreed to be bound by its provisions. The Convention represented the work of the United Nations Commission on

*Convention on the Rights of Child, 1989, Article 2.*

*Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, found at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/history.htm>*

*CEDAW, found at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm#intro>*

*CEDAW, Article 5, found at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm#article5>*

*UNIFEM, "Pathway to Gender Equality: CEDAW, Beijing and the MDGs," page 5.*



the Status of Women, which was set up in 1946 to monitor the situation of women and to promote women's rights. The Convention establishes an international bill of rights for women and girls, but also an agenda for action by countries to guarantee the enjoyment of those rights. CEDAW has been instrumental in bringing to light all the areas in which women are denied equality with men.

CEDAW is one of the most important international legal frameworks to consider because one of the goals of the study is to determine the manner by which cultural ideology practiced by the community influences the formulation of the law. The agenda for equality in CEDAW is specified in fourteen articles and covers civil rights and the legal status of women in great detail. It is also concerned with the impact of cultural factors on gender relations. The Convention aims at broadening our understanding of the concept of human rights. It formally recognizes the influence of culture and tradition on restricting women's and girls' enjoyment of their fundamental rights. These influences take shape in stereotypes, customs and norms which give rise to the multitude of legal, political and economic constraints on the advancement of women and girls. The preamble of the Convention states «that a change in the traditional role of men as well as the role of women in society and in the family is needed to achieve full equality of men and women». This means that Governments like Jordan are obligated to work towards modifying social and cultural patterns of individual conduct in order to eliminate «prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women.»

### **MDGs**

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) evolved from the Millennium Declaration, which was an unprecedented global consensus attained in 2000 by 189 member states of the United Nations. The Declaration has a global vision for improving the conditions of humans worldwide, in the areas of poverty eradication, protection of the environment, peace and security and for human rights and democracy. It is important to note that the advancement of women's right to gender equality is viewed as critically important for progress and is a cross cutting theme for all of the MDGs. It recognizes the critical importance of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment as a way to eradicate poverty and ensuring sustainable development. Gender equality plays a central role in the Millennium Declaration. MDG #3 specifically commits to: «Promote gender equality and empower women.» MDGs are a new vehicle for the implementation of CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action and they are integrally connected.

### **“A World Fit for Children”**

“A World Fit for Children” is the official text of the outcome document approved at the Special Session of the General Assembly on Children on 10th May 2002. The document was officially adopted by 180 nations. It also resulted in a strong agenda focused on four key priorities: promoting healthy lives; providing quality education for all; protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence; and combating HIV/AIDS. The outcome of the Special Session includes a Declaration and a Plan of Action for the next ten years. It reaffirms leaders' obligation to promote and protect the rights of each child, acknowledging the legal standards set by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols. All of society is called upon to join a global movement to build a world fit for children. The Plan of Action sets out three necessary outcomes: the best possible start in life for children, access to a quality basic education, including free and compulsory primary education, and ample opportunity for children and adolescents, to develop their individual capacities. There are strong calls to support families, to eliminate discrimination and to tackle poverty.

Many of these goals correspond very closely to or directly support the longer-term Millennium Development Goals and the Millennium Declaration. A World Fit for Children provides a stepping-stone both for reaching those goals and for achieving the ideals and standards set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols. Jordan's response to the World Fit for Children Declaration, the Millennium Declaration and the ratification to CRC, is a commitment towards and efforts to achieve a “Jordan Fit for Children,” and the Jordanian National Plan of Action for Children (2004-2013).

- UNIFEM, “Pathway to Gender Equality: CEDAW, Beijing and the MDGs,” page 6.
- UN General Assembly, “A World Fit for Children -27th Special Session.”
- UN General Assembly, “A World Fit for Children,” found at: <http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/>
- Jordan's Efforts in Response to the “World Fit for Children” and MDGs during the period 2002-2006.
- UN Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995, page 2.
- UN Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995, found at: <http://www.un.org/women-watch/daw/beijing/platform/girl.htm#diagnosis>
- UNICEF, “Women's and children's rights in a human rights based approach to development,” page 2.



### **The Beijing Platform for Action**

The Beijing Platform for Action is relevant for the status, rights and protection guidelines for the girl child. At the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, an action plan was developed for equality, development and peace. The objective of the Beijing Platform for Action is the empowerment of women and girls. The global framework of the Platform for Action specifically mentions how the girl child of today is the woman of tomorrow. It also highlights how if women are to be equal partners with men, it is the time to recognize the human dignity and worth of the girl child and to ensure the full enjoyment of her human rights. But yet there is evidence all over the world of discrimination and violence against girls that begins at the earliest stages of life and continues throughout their lives.

The Platform for Action upholds the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and builds upon the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, as well as relevant resolutions adopted by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. There are a total of 12 critical areas identified in the Platform for Action, which includes a critical area for the girl child. It has nine strategic objectives that have a special section on the Girl Child. The linkages between children's rights and women's rights are powerfully articulated in the Beijing Platform for Action. It states:

Girls are often treated as inferior and are socialized to put themselves last, thus undermining their self esteem. Discrimination and neglect in childhood can initiate a lifelong spiral of deprivation and exclusion from the social mainstream. Initiatives should be taken to prepare girls to participate actively, effectively and equally with boys at all levels of social, economic, political and cultural leadership.

One can conclude that the mutually reinforcing nature of CRC, CEDAW, MDGs, 'A World Fit for Children' and the Beijing Platform for Action advances the rights of girls and women throughout the life cycle. They protect the rights, recognize the human dignity and worth and prioritize the best interests of the girl child. Reading these international conventions together is essential for the advancement of children's and women's rights, as this enables a more comprehensive human rights based approach that takes into account both age and gender. It must be stressed that the protection of women's rights is important for the achievement of children's rights and vice versa.

Mr. Omar Albtouch, Imam of a mosque, a religious leader and author of several books on Islam and interfaith tolerance commented during the stakeholder interviews how Islam is compatible with International Conventions such as CEDAW. He explained that:

These conventions are important initiatives that are not in disagreement with Islam. Furthermore, the Arab countries should be exposed to what is happening in other countries, where certain steps have been taken to give women more rights, freedoms and respect. If Islamic countries understood Islam well, they should be the ones initiating these international agreements. In my eyes, real Islam has even higher standards than CEDAW.

### **Jordanian Frameworks Surrounding the Girl Child**

Jordan has committed to the rights of the girl child through several international agreements, but the follow up into actual national implementation of these commitments is crucial for the girl child to exercise her rights in the country. The girl child study aims to draw attention at the national level to the influences that produce discrimination and that do not allow the girl child to fully enjoy her rights. At the level of strategic planning, there have been several national strategies and plans directly related to the rights of the child implemented in Jordan:

- (a) The Jordanian National Plan of Action for Children for the years 2004-2013 launched in October 2004;
- (b) The Early Childhood Development Strategy in Jordan launched in December 2000 and the subsequent Plan of Action for the years 2003-2007;
- (c) The National Youth Strategy for Jordan for the years 2005-2009 adopted in December 2004;
- (d) The Government's Social and Economic Development Plan (2004-2006) and;
- (e) The National Strategy for Jordanian Women
- (f) The National Strategy for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour 2002;
- (g) The National Health Strategy
- (h) The National Strategy for the Jordanian Family

These initiatives cover the entire spectrum of child welfare in the Kingdom. In addition to these strategies, there are

*The Jordanian National Action Plan for Children (2004-2013), found at: [http://www.unicef.org/jordan/resources\\_2025.html](http://www.unicef.org/jordan/resources_2025.html)  
National Youth Strategy for Jordan (2005-2009), found at: [http://hdr.undp.org/docs/network/hdr\\_net/jordan\\_Summary\\_NYSP.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/docs/network/hdr_net/jordan_Summary_NYSP.pdf)*



constitutional laws that define and protect the girl child. Conversely, there exist some laws that are detrimental to the girl-child predicated on cultural norms and practices. Some of these initiatives will be detailed below and others will be covered in subsequent chapters.

### **The Jordanian National Action Plan for Children (2004-2013)**

The National Plan of Action for Children puts the best interests of children first, in the families, communities and the precious homeland. One of the overall goals of the National Plan is to:

Reduce gender and geographical disparities by increasing access to quality services that guarantee a secure life for all children.

It is very encouraging that reducing gender disparities is mentioned as an overall goal of the National Plan. But there is no clear Gender Plan of Action on how the gender disparities between boys and girls will be reduced. In the other aims of the National Plan, there is no mention of gender and the girl child. The National Action Plan for Children should adopt the actions to be taken by governments for the girl child in the Beijing Platform for Action.

### **National Early Childhood Development Strategy**

Unlike the National Plan of Action for Children, there is no mention of reducing gender disparities and nothing specifically stated for improving the conditions and the status of the girl child. This government strategy is not written in a gender sensitive way. It is important for the future of the girl child, from early childhood, that the commitment to gender equality be included in all government strategies. It is important to formulate a planning strategy that promotes and wants to achieve the goal of equal opportunity and treatment for girls and boys. One of the key elements of gender planning is gender analysis, as our own attitudes, prejudices and assumptions about girls' roles, responsibilities and aspirations can pose obstacles to the promotion of equality between boys and girls.

### **The National Youth Strategy**

The National Youth Strategy for Jordan aims to provide an organized framework for the efforts of those concerned with the care and development of Jordanian young people, seeking to unify the efforts undertaken in this area, and setting the work priorities in order to reach a common vision for national youth development. The strategic goals and themes that include the girl child include:

**Participation and Young People:** focuses on the creation of a safe and conducive environment for young women and men to participate fully in all the fields of national activities.

**Civil Rights, Citizenship and Young People:** has two objectives that relate to the girl child: firstly to develop young people to be well aware of their rights, obligations and responsibilities, and are active participants in the democratic life in Jordan; secondly to enhance the civil and political rights and responsibilities of Jordanian young women and men.

**Recreation Activities, Leisure Time and Young People:** seeks to enhance these personal, institutional and community benefits through increasing the options and spaces available to young women and men; and to create enabling youth friendly environments for young people to access quality recreational activities with a focus on young women.

**Media, Culture and Young People:** empowers Jordanian young women and men to participate fully in the formulation of national media.

This strategy is written in a more gender sensitive manner. It mentions a safe and conducive environment for both young women and men. There is also a section that focuses on awareness of their rights. The other encouraging section is where youth activities should be developed that focus specifically on young women. Therefore there is some gender awareness within the strategy for young women, and it is understood for example how they are often restricted to remaining only within the household and not encouraged to participate in outside youth activities.

By including the young women in the strategy and having a special focus on them, this will advance their rights and improve the status of girls.

National Social and Economic Development Plan (2004-2006), found at: <http://www.mop.gov.jo/>

JNCW, National Strategy for Jordanian Women (2006-2010)

UNICEF, Women's and Children's Rights in a Human Rights Based Approach to Development, page 1.



### **The National Social and Economic Development Plan (2004 – 2006)**

Policies and Procedures that relate to gender and the girl child include:

- To provide equality in educational opportunities and services, from an early childhood stage, in addition to promoting further education and lifelong knowledge.
- To continue to develop curricula and textbooks to fulfill the changing needs of the individual and society, and to continue to include contemporary educational concepts, for example health, population, environment and occupational education, and to project a balanced picture of the family in general and women in particular.
- To prepare and implement programs aimed primarily at eliminating disparities between the sexes in school participation, and eliminating gender discrimination in education laws, scholastic curricula and subjects studied whether they are derived from discriminatory practices, social or cultural positions or legal or economic circumstances.
- To activate the gender concept through forming the Women Leading Role Committee at the center and to aim at incorporating this concept within policies and programs, and to develop an institutional culture supporting women's empowerment and increasing women's participation in middle and upper management positions at the center and field levels.

This National Social and Economic Development Plan acknowledges the gender disparities and has a clear plan on how it will work towards achieving gender equality. This plan is encouraging for the girl child in Jordan, as it clearly aims to achieve a curricula and textbooks with a balanced picture of the family. It also specifically mentions eliminating disparities between sexes and eliminating gender discrimination in education laws, school curricula and subjects even if they are from discriminatory social and cultural practices. This clearly demonstrates that there is an awareness of gender discrimination in Jordan and that measures need to be taken to improve the conditions for the girl child.

National Strategy for Jordanian Women for 2006 – 2010

The National Strategy for Women does not have any special section for the girl child. But we can assume that women's rights also include girls' rights. This strategy should definitely include a section relating to the girl child, as efforts to combat discrimination must begin in childhood. The pursuit of gender equality among children must be the first step towards gender equality among men and women. Stereotypes negatively impact women's and girls' lives. The linkages between women's rights and children's rights in context of the CRC, CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action should be examined more carefully as the protection of children's rights is important for the achievement of women's rights.

The Vienna Declaration and Platform for Action clearly articulates this point below:

The human rights of women and the girl child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of human rights. The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic social and cultural life, at the national, regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community.

## EQUALITY RIGHTS AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Access to gender equality is a strategic interest for women and girls. Empowering women and girls to have more opportunities, greater access to resources, and more equal participation with men in decision-making are examples of strategic interests. One of the overall goals of the study is to promote equality rights and non-discrimination for girls in Jordan. This is one of the reasons that it was classified as a major theme. But it is also a major theme as some of the research findings have indicated that girls in Jordan do not always have equal rights and face varying degrees of discrimination.

Jordan's official commitment made to international conventions highlights the crucial importance of promoting the rights of girls and women throughout the life cycle, from protection at birth, childhood, motherhood and beyond. The empowerment of girls and women is a long term process that requires changes in the behaviour and attitudes of women and men and in the ideology or sets of ideas that societies hold about gender. The solution is the empowerment of girls and for girls to exercise their rights.

Equality rights apply equally to men and women and all children irrespective of gender. A human rights based approach that integrates gender analysis and international human rights norms should be used for effective programming by States to advance women's and children's rights. At the operational level, the core principles that follow from a rights-based approach have been identified as:

**Equality and Non-Discrimination:** All human beings are equally entitled to their rights, whether political, social, etc., regardless of gender, race, religion, etc.

**Participation and Inclusion:** Particular attention must be paid to the empowerment of vulnerable groups so that they can claim their own rights.

**Accountability and the Rule of Law:** Rights can only be upheld if there are mechanisms to enforce the duty-bearers' obligation to meet the claims of right-holders.

Lawyer Samira Zaytoun describes discrimination against girls in Jordan :(Where is the lawyer Samira Zaytoun from JH)  
(After checking she has private office AZ)

Discrimination against girls is usually harsher from the women themselves. There is discrimination against women from childhood. There is discrimination from women towards females. Many times a man is kinder to his daughter than her mother. This preference has a strong relationship with customs and traditions, ignorance, and misunderstanding of laws and rights.

Dr Asma Khader, President of Jordan National Commission for Women states how:

Upbringing and education consolidates the concept of discrimination against girls. Girls are exploited for household labour. The limits and negative pressures on the girl had the positive results of increasing the number of women in higher education with better academic records than their male counterparts. Laws need to be reviewed to amend discrimination against women.

### International and National Frameworks Relating to Equality Rights

#### ● Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

Article 2 of the CRC assures protection of the rights set forth in the convention irrespective of "the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status." It further states that "parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members."

#### ● Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

The Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has defined the term discrimination against women to mean "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital



status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.” CEDAW acknowledges that “extensive discrimination against women continues to exist.” CEDAW gives positive affirmation to the principle of equality by requiring States parties to take “all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men”(Article 3).

● **Beijing Platform for Action**

**Strategic Objective L.1.** Eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl child

**Strategic Objective L.3.** Promote and protect the rights of the girl child and increase awareness of her needs and potential

**Strategic Objective L.8.** Promote the girl child’s awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life

**National Implementation:**

**Jordanian Constitution:**

**Article 6**

Jordanians shall be equal before the law. There shall be no discrimination between them as regards their rights and duties on grounds of race, language or religion.

An important starting point is for gender to be mentioned and included in the Jordanian Constitution. Jordan needs to embody the principle of the equality of men and women in the national constitution.

**Gender Discrimination within Research Findings**

The interviews with local experts revealed that the majority were of the opinion that girls experience discrimination in Jordan.

Sumaya Al Jabber, Guidance Counsellor, Um Amarah Secondary school for Girls in Amman was asked about the major problems facing the girl child, they include:

Oppression of the girl because of money and the culture of the family (the girls are not allowed to come and go or express their opinions).

She was also asked how girls view themselves:

They have no self confidence. They are unable to give voice to their selves. They are oppressed. The authority of the big brother strongly impacts on their lives.

Other experts voiced a different opinion, such as a tribal leader, Sheikh Fawaz from Mafraq:

That social customs and traditions that used to pressure girls to marry early have changed. The girl has freedom to choose her husband and has the right to reject or accept an offer of marriage. The percentage of educated women in the Bedouin areas has increased to 75 per cent. There used to be discrimination between boys and girls but now there isn’t. The girl has now achieved all her rights to education, play, dress and there training courses for girls in computer and sewing in the Badia area.

In the past people would receive the news of the impending arrival of a daughter with a sullen face and they would be unaccepting of this delivery because of their ignorance and lack of understanding of religion. Now this outlook has changed, people are happy to receive a daughter and there is no discrimination. There are no restrictions on the girl and she receives all her rights. The situation of the girl in the Badia has moved from bad to better and the girl now can play in public and private gardens

Deputy Khoulood Marahla from Karak shares her thoughts:

I don’t think there is legislative bias against the girl child except in issues of inheritance..I don’t even think there is a social bias.

*UN Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995, found at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/girl.htm#diagnosis>*

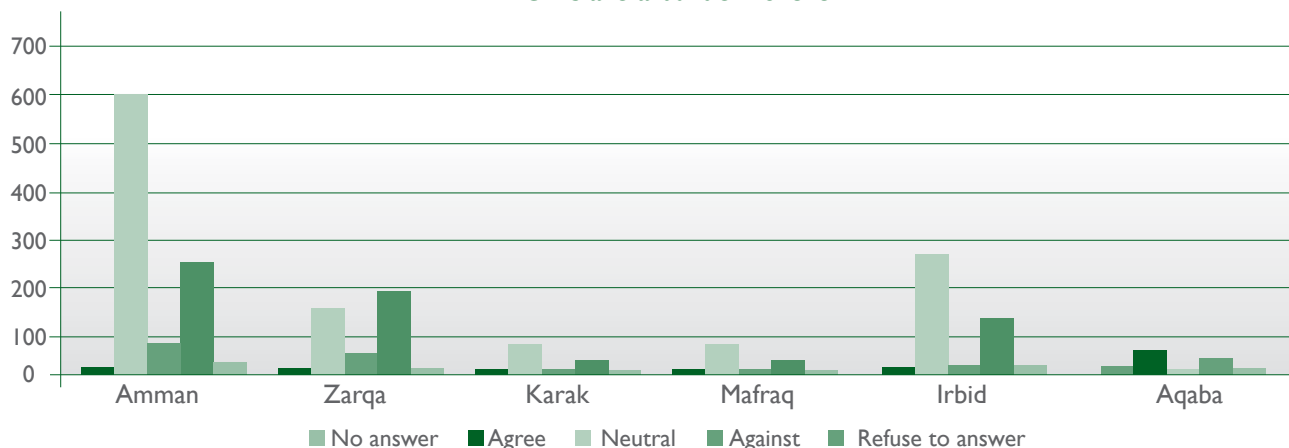
### Quantitative Survey

The unstructured in-depth interviews with legal and social experts and key local community persons in Jordan on issues relevant to girls and children and their rights informed how the survey questions were written. The questions were posed with the aim of giving a measure of gender discrimination for the purpose of analysis.

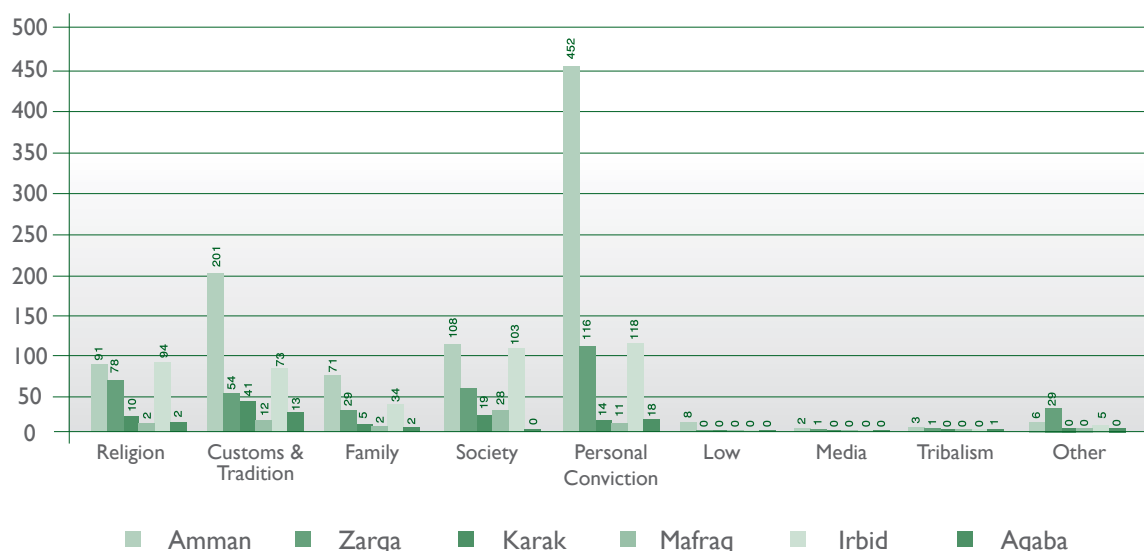
The goal of the quantitative survey was to capture information on the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of parents and community members towards girls in the country. A KAP questionnaire was designed to capture the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of families towards the issues of education, health, social lives, leisure time, and wellbeing of girls. The sample represents households in the governorates of Amman, Zarqa, Irbid, Mafraq, Aqaba, and Karak.

The below responses shed light on the inequalities that exist between boys and girls and the discrimination by which that hinders a girls' full enjoyment of her rights. These indicators measure gender discrimination within the survey. The findings were also arranged in cross tabs based on gender and governorates. This was done to compare and determine if there were any differences between the wives and husbands' responses and between the different governorates.

#### Girls are a burden forever



#### Source of Conviction (Girls are a burden forever)





### ‘Girls are a burden forever’

One of the most alarming responses in the survey of 2,000 households was the response by fathers and mothers to the question if the respondents consider girls a burden forever. An overwhelming 60.5% of the respondents agreed. Their sources of conviction included: customs and traditions 19.6%, society 15.7% and religion 13.9%. There was no real difference in responses based on gender; between mothers and fathers and therefore they have similar opinions.

This response demonstrates how the girl child does not have equal status in the family and society if she is viewed as a burden. It is a clear indicator of the disadvantaged situation of the girl child. The socially constructed role of the girl child is a burden, so she does not enjoy the same status and have equal conditions, opportunities, and responsibilities like the boy child. This is relevant because it reveals how girls’ subordination is socially constructed, influenced by customs and traditions, society and religion. Efforts need to be made to promote changes in such negative attitudes and practices towards girls. In order to improve the status of the girl child, it will require structural modifications in behaviour and attitude.

### Differences between Governorates

If one compares the findings between the governorates, one can conclude that the majority of the respondents agree with this statement. But one can see that most of the respondents in Zarqa actually disagreed with statement, while almost all of the respondents agreed in Karak and Mafraq. Their sources of conviction differed in that respondents in Amman and Zarqa were more influenced by their personal conviction and religion, while respondents in Karak were more influenced by customs and traditions and Mafraq more influenced by society.

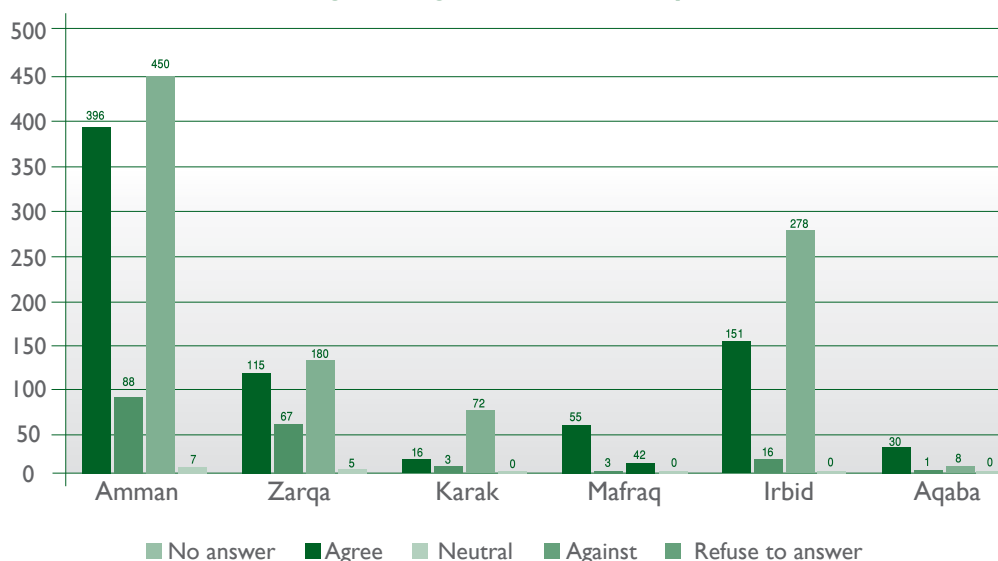
Some of the opinions of the local experts support the above findings. Lubna Douani, from the International Center for the Support of Women gives her opinion on the status of the girl child:

Society is ignorant of the law and especially laws relevant to women. The authority of brothers over their sisters is a societal one and not a legal one. Oppression and miscommunication are of the most important problems facing girls in families. Male authoritarianism in our culture is one sanctioned by society and not the law and it affects how a girl is brought up and how life defining decisions are made.

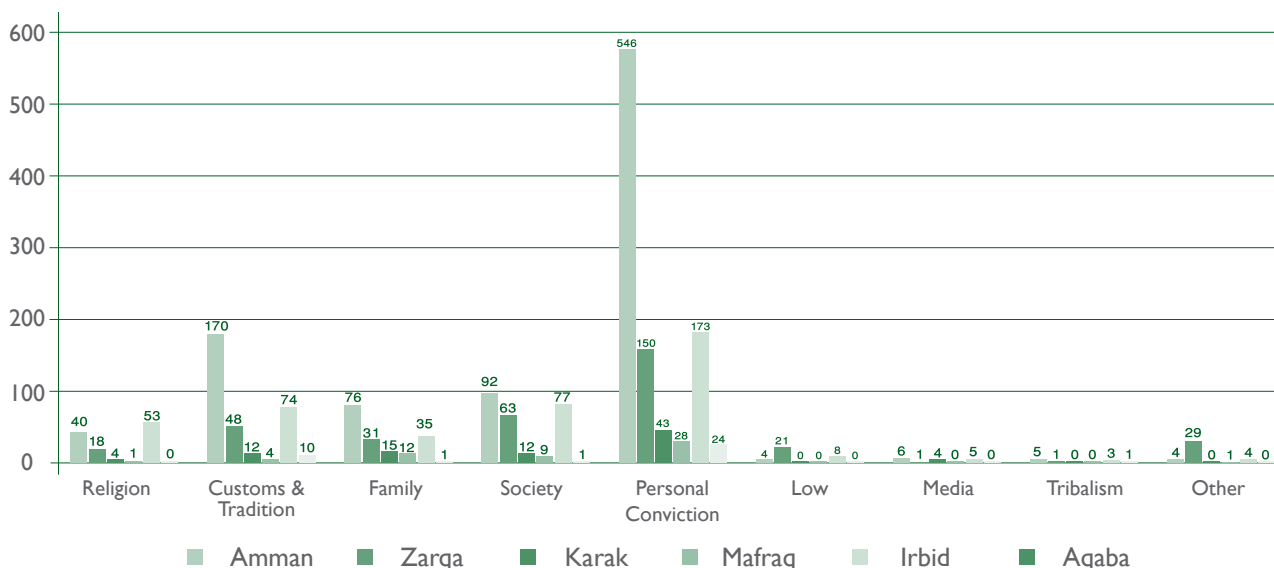
Former Senator Nadia Bushnaq Head of the Family Guidance and Awareness Center in Zarqa states how:

Girls suffer from being forced to marry, marry early, denial of her children after divorce, physical and sexual abuse, denial of education, denial of her salary if she is working and denial of her inheritance as well as giving privileges to the boys at her expense within the family context. All these factors affect her negatively and contribute to her losing her confidence and developing emotional and psychological problems. Girls from broken families especially suffer from violence.

**The Girl is a fragile being and cannot be responsible of herself**



**Source of conviction (The girl is a fragile being and cannot be responsible for herself)**



**‘The girl is a fragile being and cannot be responsible for herself’**

Another worrying response for girls’ attainment of gender equality and non-discrimination by husbands and wives was that 37.9% agreed that ‘the girl is fragile and cannot be responsible for herself.’ For some the sources of conviction included: customs & traditions 15.8%, society 12.6% and family 8.5%. The wives are slightly more influenced by customs and traditions, which demonstrates that women themselves perpetuate gender stereotypes. Compared to their wives, the husbands were a little more influenced by religion and society.

It is important to emphasize how gender equality means that girls need to have the power to control their own lives and have the ability to make decisions. They also must be empowered to be able to control their own destiny. If girls are viewed as being fragile beings that cannot be responsible for themselves, then this is a barrier to enabling them to realize their human rights and potential. Girls need to be empowered to have a positive sense of self worth and self confidence and realize they are strong and can be responsible for themselves.

**Differences between Governorates**

The majority of the respondents agreed with this statement in Mafrq, while the majority disagreed in Karak. Approximately 40% in Amman agreed and 30% in Zarqa. In Mafrq it is interesting that the source of conviction is not clear as the majority of the respondents did not give an answer. All the governorates were mostly influenced by their own personal conviction. But in Amman, customs and traditions were also an important influence, while in Zarqa, society played an important role.

Some of the opinions in the interviews with local experts reiterate girls’ lack of self confidence and control over their lives:

Maisoon Abdo, School Social Guidance Counselor, Umm Habeba Secondary School in Amman informed the researchers how girls perceive themselves:

The girls see themselves as insignificant. They don’t have an opinion that is their own and cannot express themselves properly. There is no margin for independence.

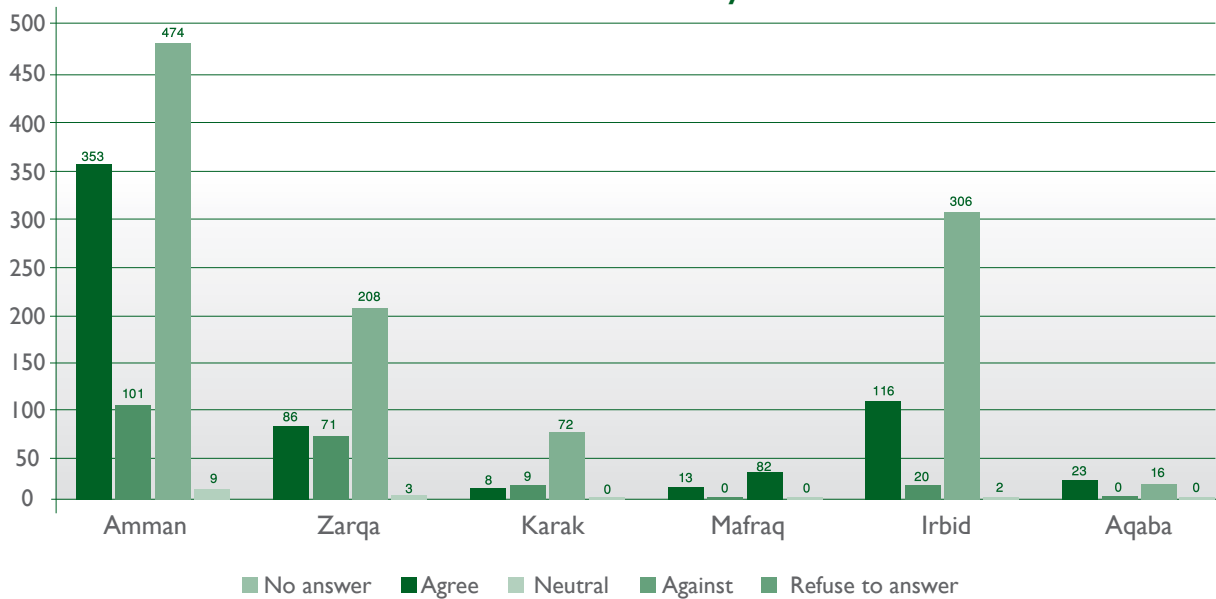
Faris Naimi, Director of YES (Youth Energies Society), local NGO offering programs for youth in the Zarqa refugee camp and in other underprivileged areas in Jordan talks about the discrimination that girls face:

The Jordanian culture nurtures the feeling of superiority of man from early childhood, and that girls and boys are treated differently. Girls have a lack of freedom and control and can be seen with examples of early marriages of girls I have been working with. Girls have been educated to be obedient, they often don’t think about their own wishes and that many have accepted injustices.

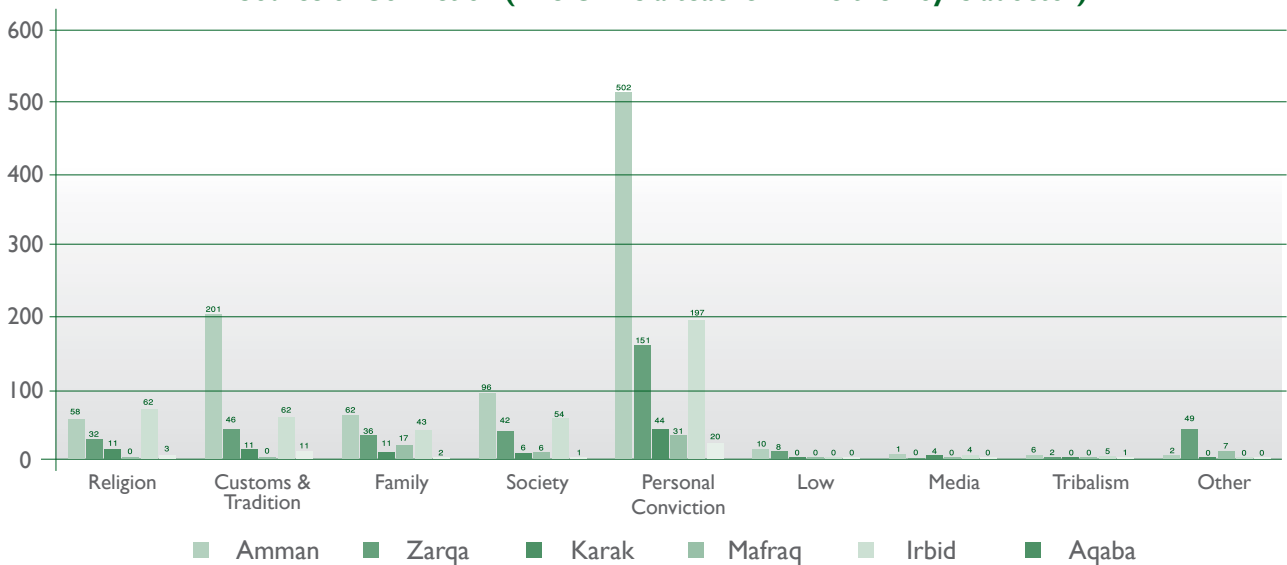




**The Girl is a teacher while the Boy is a doctor**



**Source of Conviction (The Girl is a teacher while the Boy is a doctor)**



**‘The girl is a teacher while the boy is a doctor’**

The household survey also revealed that 29.8% of husbands and wives agree with the above statement. This is a concern because it shows that there is a stereotype threat within Jordanian society. In terms of gender roles it defines that a girl is a teacher, while a boy is a doctor. The most influential factor was their own personal conviction, so this means that the gender roles are engrained individually. But there is also a strong influence from customs and traditions, society and family.

**Differences between governorates**

Overall 29.8% of respondents agree with this statement. In Amman 37% of respondents agree with this statement. While in Karak 79% and in Mafraq 82% disagree with this statement. Overall 47% were influenced by their own personal conviction, but 16.5% of the respondents are influenced by customs and traditions. In Mafraq the family is more of an influence, while in Zarqa and Amman, customs and traditions and society play a role in their decision making. When you compare the wives and husband’s responses, they are mostly influenced by their own personal conviction. But the women are more influenced by customs and traditions than the men and the men are more influenced by society than women.



Some of the local experts talked about stereotypes and social bias:

Judge Suhair Al Toubas' stated the need:

To activate the implementation of laws, work on creating awareness and change existing social stereotypes.

Deputy Wafa Bani Mustapha from Irbid shares her perspective on the bias against the girl child:

In Jordanian law there is no discrimination against women except in inheritance within the personal status law. The root of this discrimination in Islamic sharia and I support this type of discrimination because it fits in with Islamic Sharia and my own personal convictions. The girl child from a while back started to receive her right in primary health care and parental care on equal footing with the male child. The bias against the girl child in Jordanian society is primarily a social bias born out of the fact that she doesn't carry her family's name like the male son and therefore there are practices that favour the boy child over the girl. There are cultures that suffer from discrimination against the girl child but we in Jordan work hard to arrive at equity by building our justice and legislation on the dictates of the constitution and that is why – in general – we find that our legislation is not gendered.

### Gender Stereotype Threat within Open Ended Questions

The questionnaire contained open ended questions in order to know how the parents picture their sons and daughters in the future. The majority of the respondents (husbands and wives) agreed that they picture their male sons as successful individuals with strong personalities, respected professions, a decent social status and a good level of education. On the other hand they picture their daughter as well educated housewives married to a man who can protect and take care of her. Even though they all wish a better life for their boys and girls; the discrimination in the gender roles between the boys and the girls is obvious.

### Quotes from open-ended questions

#### Boys:

*"I hope my son has a decent certificate, prestige, social status and money"*

*"I hope my son has money, certificate and good reputation to be proud of him"*

*"I hope he will have a strong personality, good/ decent social status, money and a respected profession"*

*"Like the others, career, apartment and a wife"*

*"To be a doctor, to get married and have children"*

*"I wish he has good reputation"*

*"to be a good father"*

*"to be a pilot"*

*"to be an engineer"*

#### Girls:

*"I hope she will be educated and marry the person who will be able to protect her"*

*"I hope my daughter will get a good education and get married and may Allah protect her, sutra"*

*"I hope she becomes a teacher and a skilled housewife"*

*"To be a good mother who can be able to raise her children well"*

*"I hope that she finds a good husband and marry him"*

*"I hope for her (sutra) and to have good children"*

*"To be a teacher and to take care of herself and I hope her dignity be preserved"*

*"to an ideal housewife"*

*"to be a teacher"*

For the advancement of girls and the equality of girls, girls and boys need to be portrayed in non-stereotypical, diverse and balanced manner and by respecting the dignity and worth of the human person. Throughout their entire life cycle, girls and women's daily existence and aspirations are restricted by discriminatory attitudes and gender stereotypes which perpetuate discrimination against girls and stereotypic roles of boys and girls.

*Protection of the reputation and the honour of the girl*





### **Gender Inequality and Discrimination within Art Workshops**

The goal of the art workshops was to have some insight as to how adolescent girls perceive their role in society. The workshops took place in Sweileh, Karak, Zarqa, Irbid, Mafraq, Sahhab, and Aqaba. The total number of adolescent girls that attended the workshops amounted to roughly 120. The workshops were divided into three main parts: a) Creation of a Collective poem; b) Completing 3 different Collage images; c) Sharing work and group discussion.

One of the findings from the discussions was that the adolescent girls view their roles as limited and that they see that society at-large does not engage with them on matters of true substance.

When the girls were asked if they had a voice, the vast majority said no unless it was regarding issues pertaining to the traditional, domestic role of the kitchen.

They were also asked if they felt their opinions mattered or were important. In Irbid and Mafraq the participants joked that their opinions only mattered when it came to cooking and food; in Karak 18/22 participants said we have no role in society, “أكل، شرب، نام، Ihna akala, shariba, nama” We eat, drink, sleep; in Zarqa the participants spoke of never having any free time, possibly meaning that they were never asked about their opinions. Despite this depiction at least half of the participants said they would vote when eligible.

One of the more interesting images captured was the difficulties that the participants perceive or even face. One picture captured a stone wall and in commenting the participant said “We are facing a brick wall and the only way to get through is through direct confrontation”, in Karak the majority of the participants agreed with this statement. It is hard to imagine their lives at this age being so difficult and requiring such confrontation.



## RIGHTS IN THE FAMILY

Rights in the Family is also a major theme as the research findings have indicated that girls experience discrimination within the family, that gender stereotypes are prevalent, that there is a tendency towards son preference, and that girls lack freedom and do not fully enjoy their rights. Rights in the family should recognize the common responsibilities of both parents for the upbringing and development of the child. Policy formulation must support a family environment that enables shared parental responsibility for children and the reversal of gender stereotypes which segregate and subordinate women and girls in the family and public life.

Although the content of much of modern Jordanian life has changed, there has been relatively little change in the degree of gender differentiation in households and society at large. Available studies indicate that the traditional attitude regarding women and gender roles have a strong hold in Jordan even among women themselves. Some girls suggested that gender equality exists within the families, but when discussing further they almost always admitted that boys had more freedom than girls: freedom to move freely outside, freedom to spend leisure times with friends, freedom to express their opinion, and freedom to make their own decisions.

Son preference also exists in Jordan and is often manifested as the neglect, deprivation or discriminatory treatment of girls to the detriment of their physical and mental health and development. Studies have shown that son preference takes on two forms: the desire to birth a son and “preferring” the son over the daughter in the family regardless of order of birth. Regarding the former, Clelland et al. show overwhelming preference for sons in Syria and Jordan demonstrated in increased fertility in women in the Middle East. For example, the lack of having a son may incline families to keep trying until a son is born. Findings from Al Qudsi indicate that preference for male offspring and religious beliefs positively influence the number of births. In terms of the latter, a general belief is that the son will be the family member to take care of the parents when they can no longer care for themselves. Families, who barely have enough money to educate one child, prefer to invest in the son as the families may need the work and help from their daughters in the home and in the farm, so they prefer to let her stay at home.

### International and National Frameworks Relating to Family Rights

Convention on the Rights of the Child

#### Article 2

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child’s parents, legal guardians, or family members.

#### Article 18

States Parties shall use their best efforts to ensure recognition of the principle that both parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child. Parents or, as the case may be, legal guardians, have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. The best interests of the child will be their basic concern.

### The Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

#### Article 5

(a) To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women;

(b) To ensure that family education includes a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, it being understood that the interest of the children is the primordial consideration in all cases.

Beijing Platform for Action:

Strategic Objective L.9. Strengthen the role of the family in improving the status of the girl child

### National Implementation

#### National Strategy for Jordanian Family

The Strategy was developed in line with Jordanian laws and legislation, international conventions and the Millennium

*UNICEF, “Women’s and children’s rights in a human rights based approach to development,” page 22.*

*Save the Children Sweden, Pernilla Ouis, “Woman or Child?: Voices of teenage girls in the Middle East”, 2005: Lund University, Sweden.*





Development Goals, which Jordan is committed to. It is based on a national vision that upholds religious and inherited values.

1. Enhancing the family structure and unity.
2. Empowering the family to efficiently and sufficiently carry out its roles and responsibilities.
3. Enhancing the cultural role of the family and its ability to deal with the cultural consequences of globalization.
4. Contributing to the formulation of legislative policies that provide a favourable environment to establish unified family and protect it from disintegration.
5. Ensuring that the policies and programs developed for the family are in tune with demographic, social and economic programs and policies.

This strategy aims to enhance the family structure and unity and protect the right of the family and its members, which would include the girl child. The strategy deals with the family in general. It does not mention the girl child and gender equality. It states how it is based on a vision that upholds religious and inherited values, but some can be discriminatory against women and girls. The strategy has also ignored the Millennium Development Goal 3, which specifically commits to promote gender equality and empower women. This commitment is missing within this national strategy. The strategy does not include performance indicators in order to be able to measure improvements and the progress on the status of the women or the children.

#### **Gender Discrimination within Research Findings: Collective Poem**

The Collective poem produced many interesting personal truths how girls view themselves within the family:

At the age of 5, the participants namely spoke of playing and life being promising. It was a happy time. Worth noting was the significant number of responses that mentioned that at the mere age of six, and with the commencement of school, their daily routine had shifted significantly and while there was an initial excitement to starting school and making new friends, there was also boredom and homework. By ten-years-of-age they were being told that they were grown up and should cover their heads and assume more home responsibilities.

By the age of 12, they were being told of how their bodies were changing and that soon they would become brides. They were told that now they must be more careful, cannot go out and play. Yet they wanted to be able to tell their parents and families that they were still young, they were still children and they still wanted to play!

At the ages of 14-15-16 they mention that when they dream, some think of graduating school, others of their future husband, but most are hopeful that their futures will be positive.

#### **Quantitative Survey**

The below indicators shed light on the inequalities that exist between boys and girls within the family and the discrimination by which that hinders a girls' full enjoyment of her rights. These indicators measure gender discrimination within the survey. The findings were also arranged in cross tabs based on gender and governorates.

*UNCHR, Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Geneva, January 2002.*

*Clelland J., Verral, J., and Vaessen, M., "Preferences for the sex of children and their influence on reproductive behaviour", WFS Comparative Studies, Vol. 27, 1983, Voorburg, Netherlands: International Statistical Institute.*

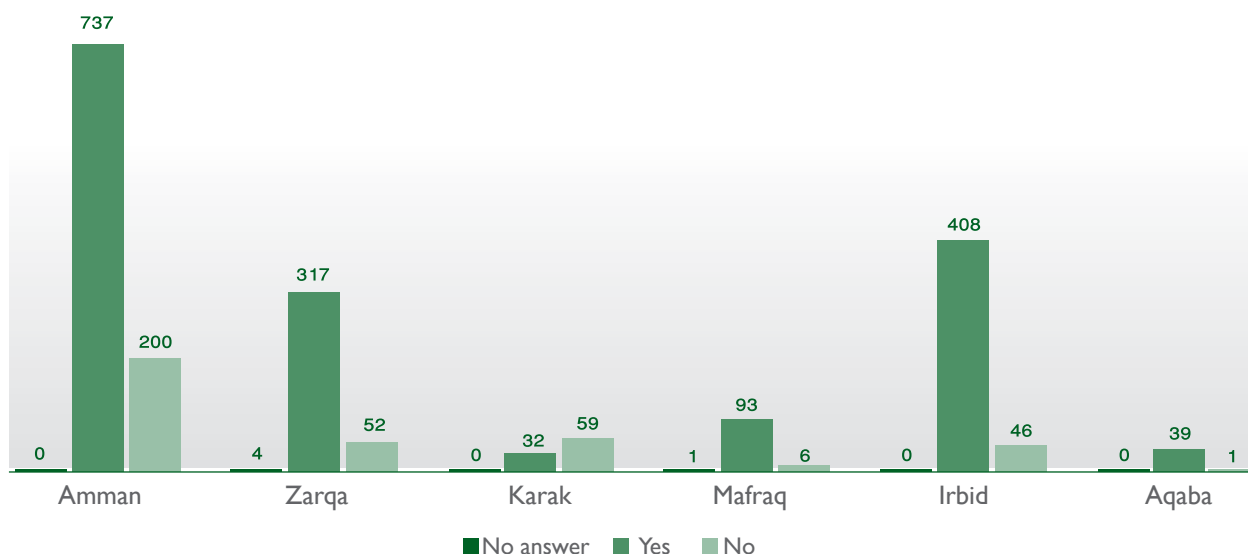
*Al-Qudsi, Sulayman, "The Demand for Children in Arab Countries: Evidence from Panel and Count Data Models", Journal of Population Economics, Vol. 11, No. 3, 1998, pg. 435-452.*

*Save the Children Sweden, Pernilla Ouis, "Woman or Child?: Voices of teenage girls in the Middle East", 2005: Lund University, Sweden*

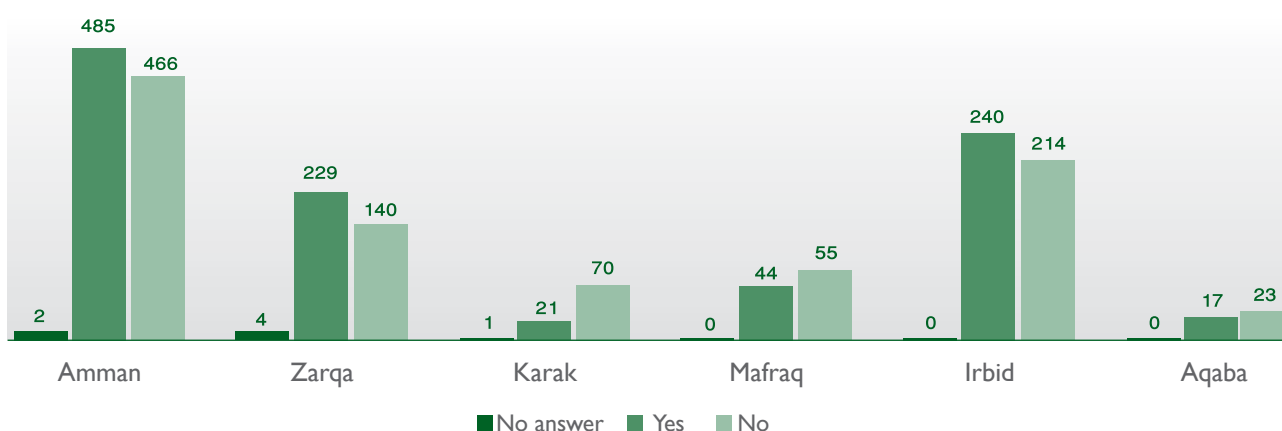




**In your opinion, who are the people who are most influential in your girl child's life? (Mother)**



**In your opinion, who are the people who are most influential in your girl child's life? (Father)**



**In your opinion, who are the people who are most influential in your girl child's life? (Mother or Father)**

The survey demonstrates how the mother is the most influential person in the girl child's life, while the husband is also influential. When asked, most of the wives viewed that they were the most influential, while when the men were asked, about half of them viewed themselves as the most influential person in their girl child's life. This is important as the parents are the most influential in the girl child's life and they are also the ones responsible for her development and equal treatment within the family. In order to improve the status of the girl child, the mother will play the most influential role. Programs need to be developed to educate and encourage parents to treat girls and boys equally, to eliminate stereotyped roles for men and women and to ensure shared responsibilities between girls and boys in the family.

**Differences between Governorates**

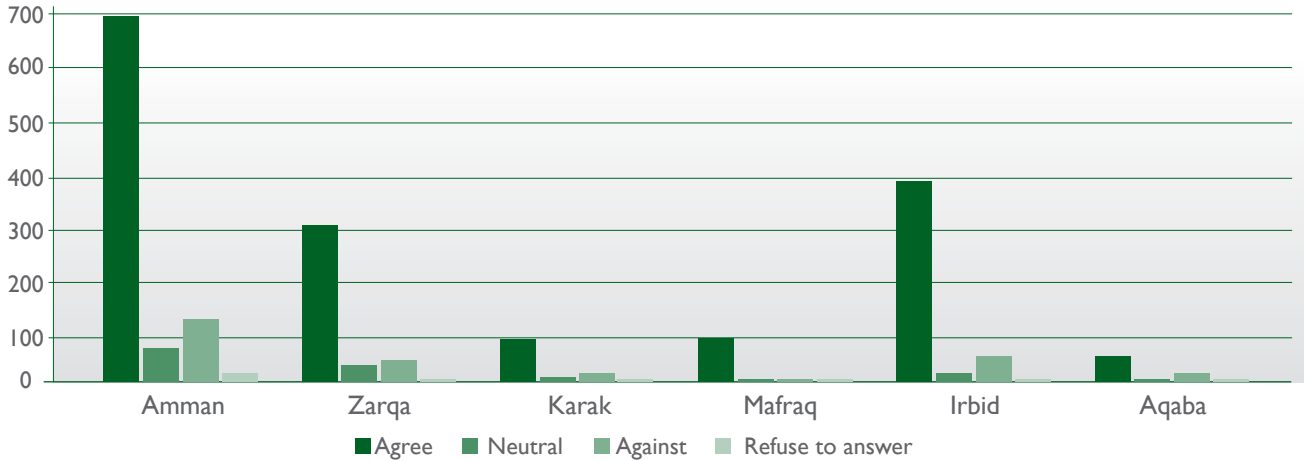
There are not many differences between the governorates. Only in Karak when asked, most of the husbands and the wives did not view themselves as the most influential person in their girl child's life.

Deputy Wafa Bani Mustapha from Irbid, one of the stakeholders interviewed, shared her views on the influence of the family for the girl child:

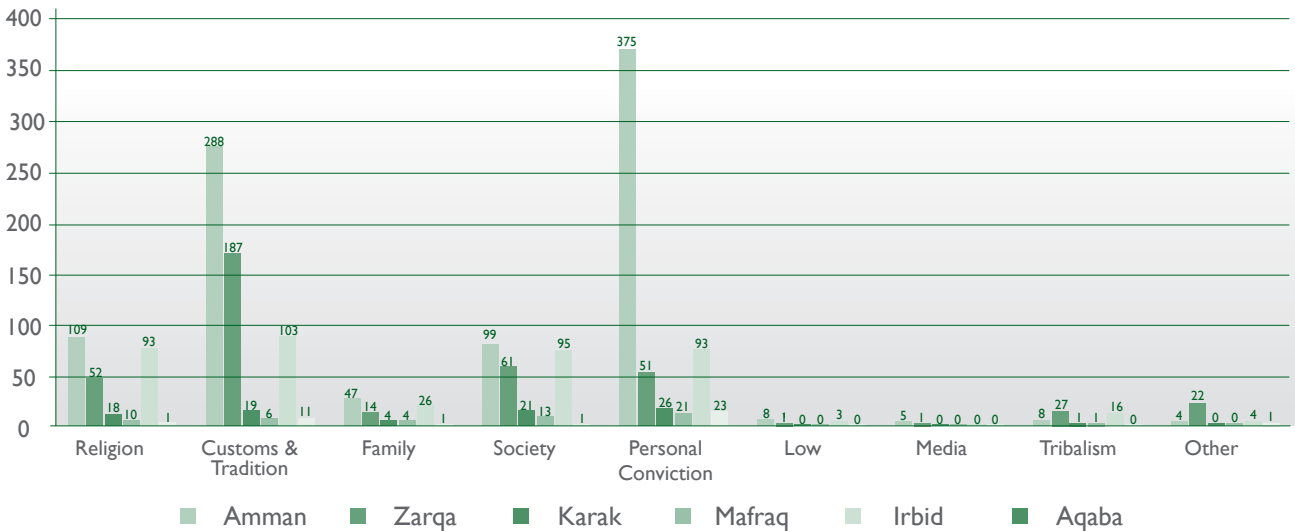


What plays a large role in the way girl child is dealt with is the family. The family in turn can affect the behaviour of the tribe. I as Wafa Bani Mustapha came from a family that doesn't differentiate between boys and girls in upbringing or education or inheritance. I arrived at the highest echelons of political power through my tribe. But there are tribes that will not even allow the discussion of these issues. Therefore the tribe sometimes has a positive role or a negative role depending on how the small family deals with the issue. I personally was supported by my small family and then my larger family (the tribe) and without the support of both I wouldn't have arrived at this seat in parliament

**Protecting a girl's honor means protecting the family honor**



**Source of convicting (Protecting girl's honor means protecting family honor)**



**Protecting a girl's honour means protecting the family honour**

The study revealed how 81% of the parents believe that protecting the females means protecting the family honour. Their sources of conviction include: customs and traditions 28%, society 14.4% and religion 14%. They are most influenced by customs and traditions. This is relevant because of the frightening phenomenon of so called honour killings for the girl child in Jordan. Women, frequently adolescent girls, are murdered by their families because they are perceived as having shamed family honour through illicit relationship or loss virginity. It also illustrates how the reputation of a girl is also held in high regard and to damage one's reputation shames the girl and the family.

This cultural pattern of conduct for women and girls is based on the idea of the inferiority of the female and the superiority of the male. There is also clear unequal treatment within the family, as the boy child's reputation does not have the same effect and the consequences for a boy child's actions would not result in death. The girl child must be protected against these forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of customs and traditions of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

### Differences between Governorates

There are not many differences between the governorates, except the strongest supporters of this indicator; nearly 100% were in Mafraq.

Many of the stakeholders spoke about this theme of family honour. Dr. Rula Qawas, Professor from Amman, gave the example of:

“صوت المرأة عورة” – the woman is not allowed to speak up or to break the silence – and how this affects the way a woman looks at herself: “Ultimately she looks at herself as a dwarf – somebody really very small, somebody little, as if she had no voice, no entity, no existence, as if she was only essential, but not existential.” She mentioned other common expressions that demonstrate the differential treatment of girls and boys and the second-class citizenship of women and explained how in a “culture of shame” the woman becomes the custodian of the family’s honour; and thereby is objectified. She is going to be in a house, she is going to be a wife one day, she is going to raise children, and that’s it. This is something that is indoctrinated by the society we live in, and in a way the woman absorbs this as a child.

She also suggested that we go into the:

“culture of shame” and its effects on the upbringing of females, and the culture of fear as well. “It is the culture of shame that becomes the woman’s second skin, she becomes the custodian of the family’s honour; and thereby she is objectified, she is not a human being with a soul, with a heart, with a mind, she is commoditised or objectified, she is looked at as honour. So if anything happens, blood has to be shed to cleanse the family’s honour. This is the culture the girl child is brought up in. “ديرو بالكو على شرف العيله”...

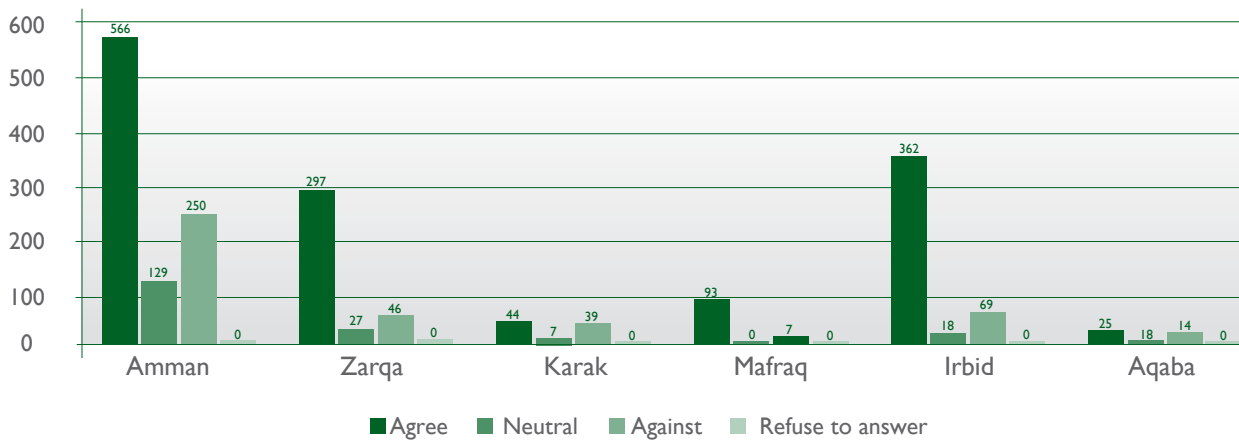
Dr. Suleiman Al Ma’aytah, Economist also commented about family honour:

Culture and tradition protect the girl and the woman. The girl is weak and it is our duty to protect her. She is at the center of our honour.

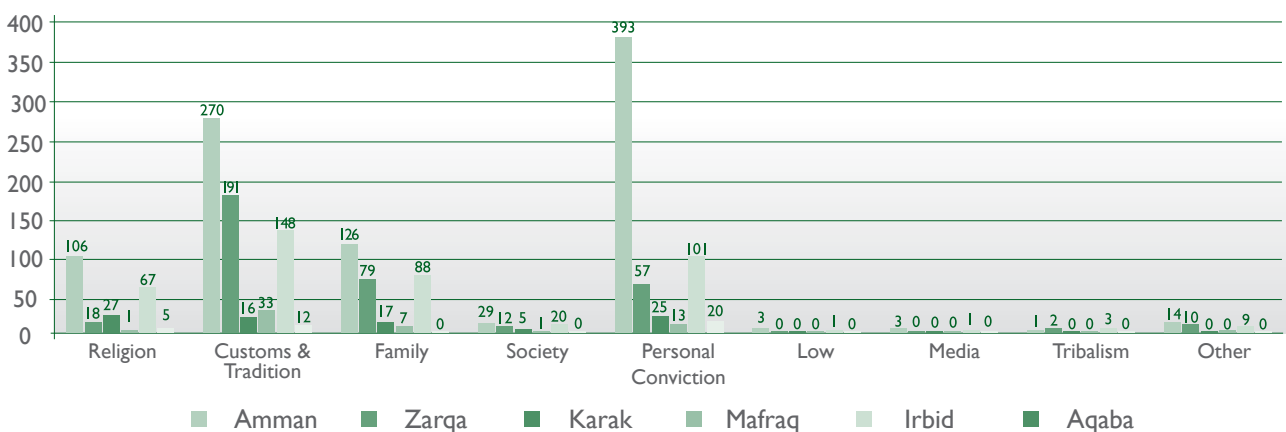
Dr. Hussein Mahadeen, a Sociologist from Karak said:

The Eastern mentality is always centred on the woman’s body as the source of a family’s honour.

### The girl child expected to be obedient her male siblings



### Source of convicting (The girl child expected to be obedient her male siblings)



**The girl child is expected to be obedient to her male siblings**

The study revealed how 89% of the parents from the 2,000 households believe that the girl child should be obedient to their brothers. This highlights the son preference within families and how male siblings have power and control over their female siblings. It is a gender stereotype threat as it appoints stereotypical roles for the boys and girls to play at a very young age. It is unequal treatment as the same does not apply for male siblings to be obedient to their female siblings.

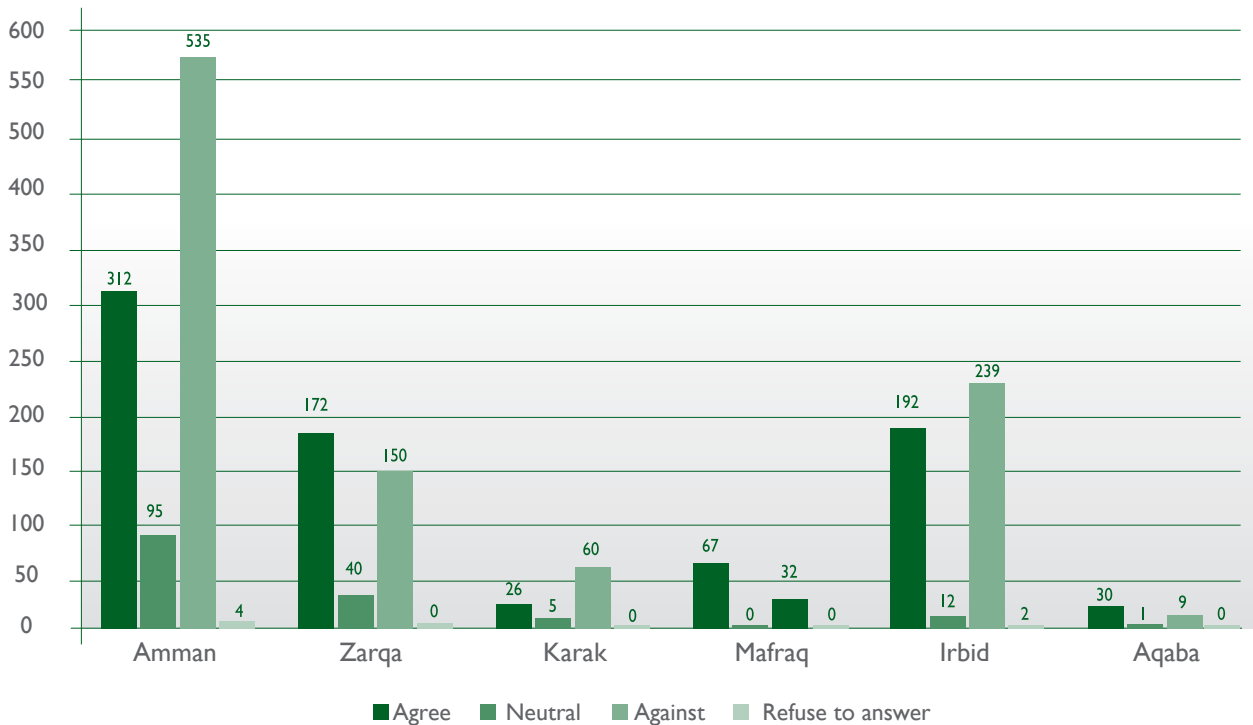
**Differences between Governorates**

In Mafraq 93% agreed with this statement, while 92% agreed in Zarqa, while 43% in Karak disagreed and 30% disagreed in Amman. Their most influential sources of conviction included: personal conviction, customs and tradition, family and religion. This custom and tradition discriminates against girls and women. The girl learns at a very young age that there are certain power relations within the family and that she has the least amount of power.

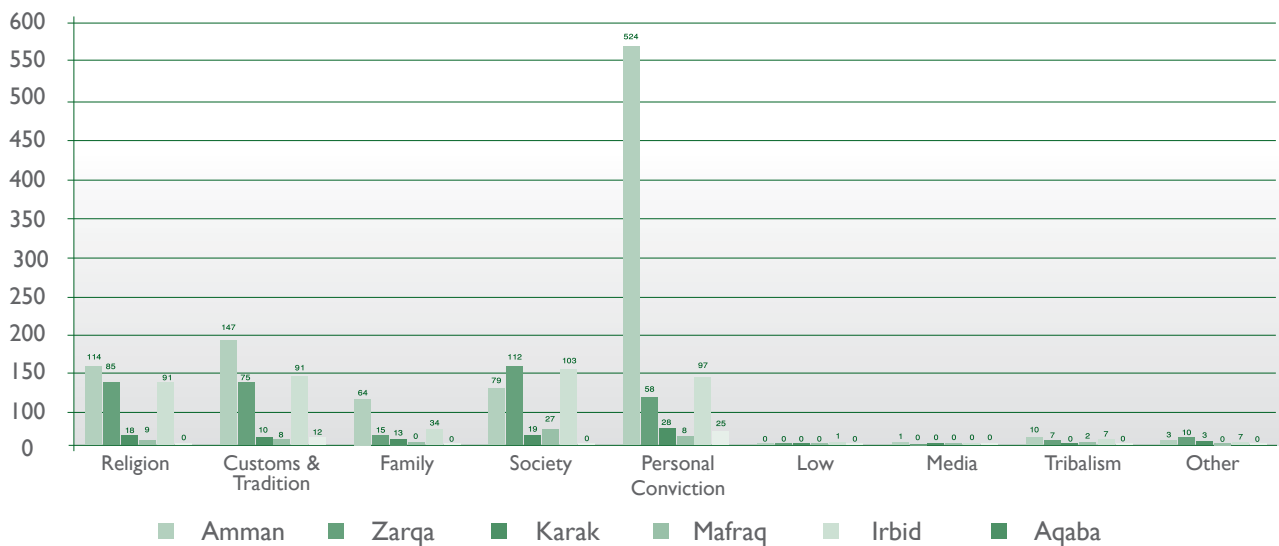
Myassar Itbishat, a Social Worker in Irbid comments about the influence of customs and traditions on the family:

As for relationships the girls here are obviously teenagers and they struggle between what they are told is custom and tradition and what they see around them. The school is very close to the university and many of them find that when they leave school at the end of day they are able to witness first hand behaviour that is not necessarily reflective of what we told her on how she should behave. There is a huge contradiction in society and the girls often wonder whether the rules that families set based on tradition and custom are right or should they turn and behave as they see in front of them. The rules of the families and their traditions are quite old fashioned.

**The more a father has male children the more prestigious he is**



Source of conviction (The more a father has male children the more prestigious he is)



**The more a father has male children the more prestigious he is**

The household survey has revealed how 38% of husbands and 41% of wives agree that the more a father has male children the more prestigious he is. The women are more influenced in order by society, customs and traditions and religion, while the men are most influenced in order by religion, customs and traditions and society. This illustrates approximately how 40% of the 2,000 families prefer sons. Girls are therefore less valued as they do not bring the same kind of prestige to the family. This places girls in a subordinate position and teaches her that she does not have equal worth or value are her male siblings, simply on the basis of her gender.

**Differences between Governorates**

In Mafraq and Zarqa, the majority agree with this statement, while in Amman only 32% agree. For the sources of conviction, in Mafraq the majority did not respond to the question and some were most influenced by society. In Irbid and Zarqa the biggest influences were society, religion and customs and traditions. In Amman, Karak and Aqaba, most were influenced by their own personal conviction, but also by customs and traditions. There is a clear perception in that male children bring more prestige to a family, simply because of their gender. Girls are placed in an inferior position to boys from birth.

Dr. Moneer Karadsheh, a Professor in Irbid commented on gender stereotyping:

The family is male dominated and therefore prefers to produce male children. There is a gendered stereotyping in social roles for the girl and the boy within the one family which leaves the girl trapped inside the house

Senator Nadya Boshnaq from Zarqa illustrates the differences between boys and girls within the family:

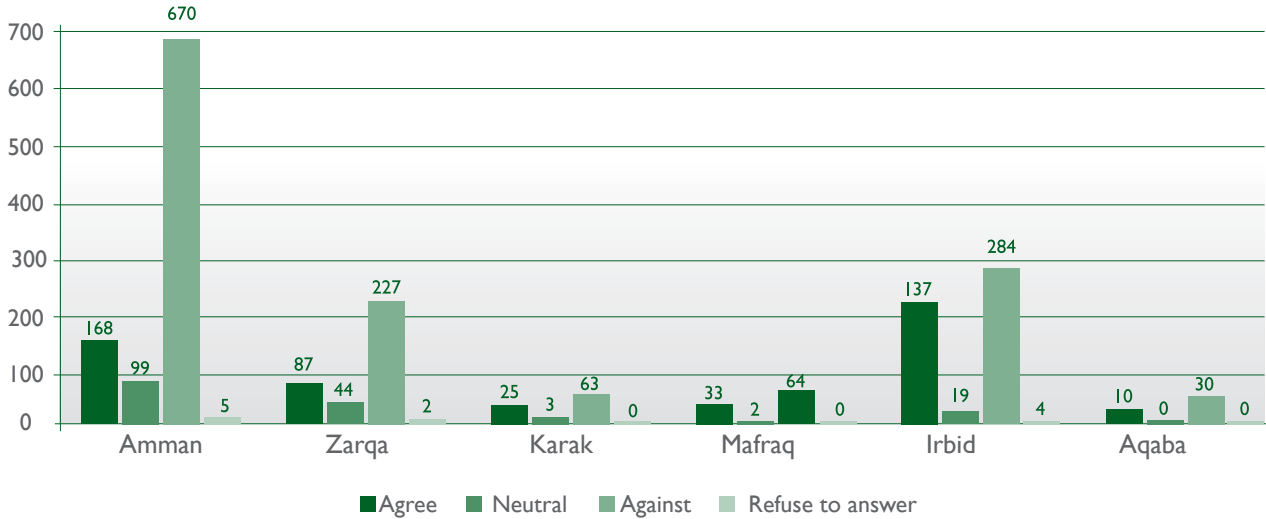
Differences between boys and girls happen because of the current social and traditional frameworks adopted by society at large. The patriarchal and male dominated approach to upbringing in our society – beginning with the extreme happiness at producing a male child and giving that child extensive privileges that are not given to the daughter – as well as the ingrained belief system among both men and women that favour the boy and over protect the girl. This discriminatory upbringing affects how girls perceive themselves and produces girls that lack in self confidence. The fact that democracy is not practiced within the family context negatively impacts their relationship among themselves.

Upbringing is at the root of positive development of a human being. That upbringing needs to include the values as well as the rights and duties of each person and will affect wider circle of his/her influence to how they interact with their civil and political rights within society.

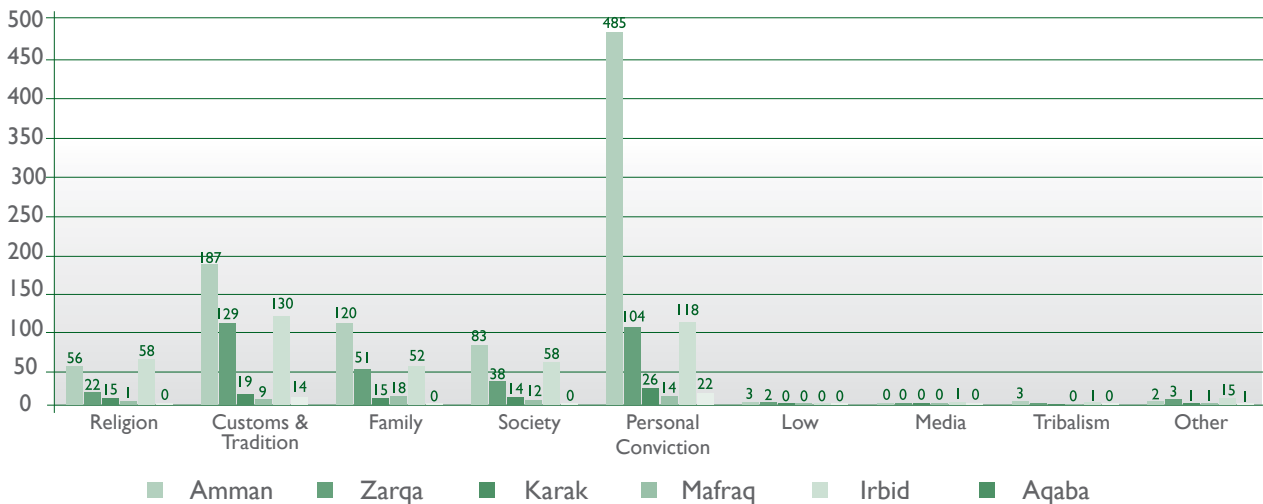
It is important that we as a society redistribute roles within the family with a clear cultural foundation that is ingrained in human civilisation



**A female child is given the same freedom to leave the house as her male siblings are (from the same age)**



**Source of convicting (A female child is given the same freedom to leave the house as her male siblings are (from the same age))**



**A female child is given the same freedom to leave the house as her male siblings are (from the same age)**

The survey revealed that 66.7% are against this statement. The most influential sources of conviction besides their personal conviction include: customs & traditions 24.3%, family 13.2%, society 10.2%. This demonstrates how the freedom of movement of the girl child is restricted when compared to her male siblings because of influences from customs and traditions, the family and society in general. Families receive pressure from these influences and the girl child is expected to remain within the private sphere and cannot go out on her own into the public sphere, for fear of damaging her reputation, thereby damaging the family's honour. This kind of prescribed gender role for the girl child is damaging, as it does not allow her to fulfill her potential and can limit her opportunities. For example it does not empower the girls to participate in any leadership roles in the public domain, like politics, as she is taught that the public space is not for women and girls. It limits her access and control over resources and benefits.

**Differences between Governorates**

Amman and Karak are most influenced by their own personal conviction, then customs and traditions, followed by the family. While Zarqa and Irbid are most influenced by customs and traditions and Mafraq is most influenced by the family.



### **The Freedom of the Girl in Jordanian Society**

Hansen, Bauer et al. found that Jordanian women's freedom of movement is severely restricted to close proximity to their homes, even when they sought to visit relatives in another town. The restriction of movement is further tightened by the fear of bringing shame to the girls' family if found to be inappropriately out in public; boys have the freedom of movement and the girls feel they were discriminated against. The reputation of a girl is also held in high regard and to damage one's reputation shames the girl and the family. In discussions with girls, Ouis revealed a repeated theme of how "people talk" about them as girls. In studying a rural high school, Adely found that since extracurricular activities are not necessary, people will talk badly about girls who partake in such activities. Being out in public to go to and from school is appropriate behaviour for an adolescent girl, yet any extracurricular activity is not and could entice "talking" which damaging to a young girl's reputation.

As part of the study, interviews were conducted with various stakeholders such as: religious judges, representatives of parliament, legal representatives, school counsellors, Sharia experts, tribal leaders, community leaders, sociologists, economists and civil society workers. Many of the stakeholders agree that the biggest problem facing the girl child is her lack of freedom.

Rania Shamout, a lawyer said the following:

Oppression and the small margin of freedom given to girls are the main problems facing girls. The margin of freedom allowed girls is one of the most important challenges faced by girls today. The family resort to pressuring and limiting their daughters under the excuse of protecting them instead of creating awareness. The most important problem facing the girl child is the issue of freedom of space that is given to the girl. There are many restrictions imposed on girls with regard to dress, mixing with people and mixed weddings, all this lead to a restricted freedom of movement for girls.

Sumaya Al Jabber, Guidance counsellor at the Um Amarah Secondary School for Girls in Jordan recalls a story about the restricted freedom for girls:

A girl was very polite, hardworking and good. One day she left school and returned home an hour late. Her mother found out when she compared with her neighbour who returned earlier. After that the father refused to send her to school. In time we were able to talk to him and convince him to return her to school. During the holidays the girl apparently went to Amman and took her younger sister with her at night. I found out later that her parents had given her no freedom at all, they had strangled her freedom of movement and everything is not allowed, they would search her school bag and hit her and so on. Anyway the father finally made her quit school, he handed her books back to the school and I still have them. She hasn't been allowed to return.

Sadiq Al Omari, Head of International Cooperation, Department of Family Protection, Public Security Department in Amman comments on this lack of freedom for girls:

The most important problem faced by the girl child especially during teenage years is limited freedom and the best way to handle a girl is to give her a responsible and reasonable margin of freedom with supervision from the family.

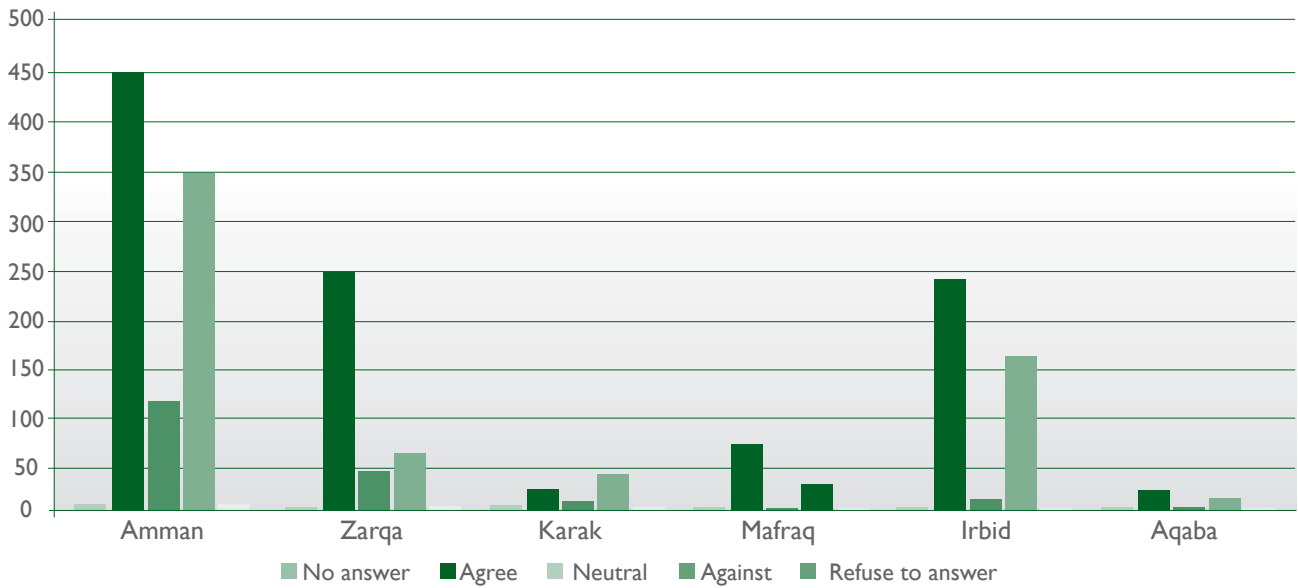
Lubna Douani, from the International Center for the Support of Women also highlights this problem:

Oppression and limiting freedoms are the main problems faced by girls; add to that lack of communication with their families. In the case of boys there is communication and dialogue, oppression is reduced and problems are reduced with it.

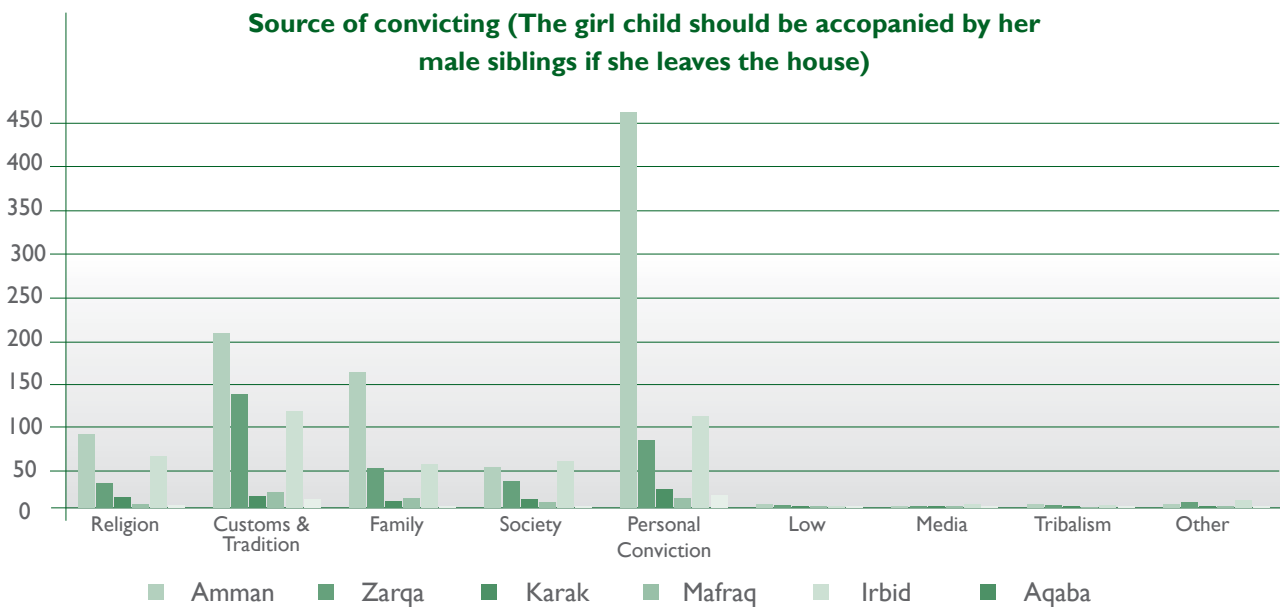




**the girl should be accompanied her male siblings if she leaves the house**



**Source of convicting (The girl child should be accopnied by her male siblings if she leaves the house)**



Hanssen-Bauer, Jon, Pedersen, Jon and Tiltnes, Ages, "Jordanian Society: Living Conditions in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan", Fafo Institute for Applied Social Science, 1998: Oslo, Norway.



### **The girl child should be accompanied by her male siblings if she leaves the house**

This is another research finding that highlights the son preference in the family and the gender stereotypical role of brother to have to accompany his sister if she leaves the house. The majority of the respondents agree with this statement. The most influential sources of conviction are personal, customs and traditions and the family. Again this places girls in a subordinate position.

### **Differences between Governorates**

Most of the respondents in all the governorates agree that the girl child should be accompanied by her male siblings if she leaves the house, except most disagreed with this in Karak. The majority were most influenced by their own personal conviction and then by customs and traditions. In Zarqa, most were influenced by customs and traditions.

Deputy Khoulud Marahla in Karak talks below about the control male siblings can have over their sisters:

In my house I see that my sons are very happy when they exercise their authority over their sisters. He is the boy and she the girl must not go out alone or come alone..if you want to go out I will go with you..if you want something (from the shops) I will buy it for you..I am against this because whether it is a boy or a girl they should be receiving the upbringing that gives them self confidence, ambition and the ability to depend of themselves and understand right from wrong. I let my child know that I trust them and that I have a modern outlook because from my own personal perspective whether it is male or female I feel that they must – and do- have an opinion that must be respected. I know our traditions and culture discriminate between boys and girls..I prefer the modern way of dealing with my male and female children

### **Son Preference Theme in the Art Collage**

The vast majority of the young female adolescents commented on the interference of their male family members especially brothers, both older and younger, in many aspects of their lives including most significantly their dress code and their outings. The most extreme case was a fifteen-year-old girl stating that her three-year-old brother interfered by simply crying and throwing a temper tantrum if she was stepping out of the house. This was translated into her having to take him with her where ever she went. Her parents would simply comment that 'he wants to go with you take him'.

This expectation that a girl must always have a constant male chaperone, especially when the chaperone is much younger, feeds into a belief that a female cannot take care of herself and only in the presence of a male is she safe. This belief is carried throughout her life and continues to dis-empower females of all ages. As females, they are taught early on that their brothers are their protectors and that as females are truly not capable of caring for themselves. This emphasis on the female needing to be directly dependent on male figures throughout her life is important to factor in when addressing her role in society.

The majority of the girls were also outspoken of the influence their brothers played in making them wear the Hijab. The brothers seemed to carry a greater weight in comparison to fathers who weren't necessarily pushing the girls to cover their heads (Karak, Zarqa, Sahab, Mafraq, Aqaba). The outstanding majority of the female participants wore the Hijab. The brothers enforce it as being in the 'best interest' of the female, etc.

Journalist Fathi Al Huwaimel, Head of the National Committee for Social Development commented on this interference of the family:

Girls suffer from the authoritarian attitudes of adults and the interference of the extended family. Many people interfere in the lives of girls and determine her destiny.

The stakeholders have powerfully summarized below the importance of the family on influencing the respect and promotion girls' rights. For the status of the girl child to improve in Jordan, there is work to be done for the elimination of intra-family discrimination against the girl child respect and promote the potential of the girl child. Parents should treat girls and boys equally.

Tribal Leader Dr Qablan Al Khreeshah states:

As a state and an official institution we have one source of legislation which is the Quran and the Hadith and as we know God assigned much respect for the human and preferred him on other species with intelligence. The Jordanian girl child lives and grows up within a family and this family is part of the Jordanian society and I see that most families discriminate between the sons and daughters. There are cases when the parent's education places them in a position

*Save the Children Sweden, Pernilla Ouis, "Woman or Child?:Voices of teenage girls in the Middle East", 2005: Lund University, Sweden.*

*Adely, Fidly, "The Mixed Effects of Schooling for High School Girls in Jordan: The Case of Tel Yahya" Comparative Education Review, Vol. 44, No. 4, 2004, pg. 353-373.*





where they understand that they shouldn't discriminate but in families where discrimination is prevalent it is due to the low level of educational attainment or the huge effect of society's and that particular geographic area's traditions on that family.

**Imam Omar Abdullah Albtoush, a Muslim cleric in Amman states his opinion about the status of girl child in Jordan and how the process takes place within the family:**

I see the girl child in Jordan as an individual who has lost most of her rights. It is as a result of inherited norms that portray the girl as weak, incapable and completely dependent on other people to take decisions for her. She lost her educational and her cultural rights. Throughout her life she is instructed what to do, what is right and what is wrong. She doesn't receive proper education to be empowered and productive in society like men. It can be seen as reverse or backward or negative education; she is taught that women are weak, women are incapable, and women are created to serve men. The woman that comes out of this educational process is a weak and passive woman. This process takes place in the family, in the school, even in universities. The educational curriculum throughout all stages does not respond to different needs due to gender differences.



## GIRL CHILD EDUCATION

In order to promote equality rights and non-discrimination for girls in Jordan, many of the stakeholders mentioned the importance of girl child education. The girl child must be educated about her rights and so must boys, family members and society in general. This is why it was classified as a major theme. It is also a major theme as some of the research findings have indicated that although there have been great improvements, girls in Jordan do not always have equal rights when it comes to education. The girl child study examined how the girl child often cannot study the specialty of her choice and cannot study outside her city. Also even if a girl becomes educated, the majority of parents believe that it is her destiny to get married.

The Arab Human Development Report 2004 by the United Nations expressed a deep concern over access to education by girls and women in the Arab world, which is generally attributed to the meagre resources available to individuals, families and institutions (United Nations Development Programme, 2003). Jordan however, seems to be a positive exception. In terms of girls, the “gender gap” in the educational system is closing. The Jordanian government has provided more public day care centers and there is a notable improvement in the number of public preschools from 101 in 2001/02 to 311 in 2005/0.

Economist Dr. Awni Mufleh’s overall perception is:

The gap is narrowing and signals education as being the biggest factor in eliminating any remaining prejudices towards the girl-child.

Yet Jordan is still faced with its fair share of discrimination in education. The fact that girls usually work harder and longer hours in the home than boys raises the opportunity cost of their education. Adely argues that school is the scene of competing discourses and practices, which in some respects mirror inconsistencies and/or conflicts in the society at large. Access to school in and of itself provides a legitimate forum for participation in public life, a forum for debate and discussion about a girl’s place in society. This opens up opportunities that might not otherwise be available to girls. Her research indicates that for girls, going to school is a religious duty and will not give one a bad reputation. However there are other studies suggesting communities prefer that a girl should study specific educational fields which facilitate having a suitable job in a non-mixed environment, such as teaching.

It is important to advocate for quality education for all, with an emphasis on gender equality and eliminating disparities of all kinds. Educated girls are likely to marry later and have fewer children, who in turn will be more likely to survive and be better nourished and educated. Educated girls are also better paid in the workplace and more able to participate in social, economic and political decision-making.

### **International and National Frameworks Relating to Girl Child Education** **Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The CRC clearly defines provisions for the right to education of children in Article 28 and for ways to achieve this right. It also stresses the importance of education around equality of sexes.

#### **Article 29**

- (a) The development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
- (b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;
- (c) The development of respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;
- (d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;

UNESCO, “Comparative, Regional Analysis of ECCE in Four Arab Countries (Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and Sudan)”, Arab Resource Collective, 2007.

UNICEF, “Girls at Work”, UNICEF New York, May 1998.

Adely, Fidly, “The Mixed Effects of Schooling for High School Girls in Jordan: The Case of Tel Yahya” *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 44, No. 4, 2004, pg. 353-373.

Al-Jribi’a, Mohammed, “An Evaluative Study for the Project: Badia... Worthy of its Women”, Amman, 2009.

UNICEF, *State of the World’s Children 2011*, Adolescence An Age of Opportunity, pages 74-75.



## **CEDAW**

CEDAW outlines educational provisions in Article 10 which states that “parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education”. It particularly refers to equality in conditions for career and vocational guidance; access to curricula; and benefit from scholarships and other study grants.

## **Beijing Platform for Action**

Strategic objectives L.4 is to eliminate discrimination against girls in education, skills development and training.

## **National Implementation Constitution**

Jordan has a strong commitment to universal education. When the constitution was revised in 1952, Article 20 proclaimed that primary education was to be compulsory and free in the public schools and open to all nationals. The State party has been known to spend 20.6 % of public expenditure on education (Committee Report, 2006). The most significant legislation on education was the Law of Education No. 16, enacted in 1964. This law dealt with the overall philosophy of education in Jordan, specifying the objectives of the compulsory cycle as well as those of secondary schools and educational institutions.

There is however, no reference to non-discrimination in the acts regarding education. Although primary education is to be compulsory for all nationals there has existed a traditional underrepresentation of girls in the classroom (although this trend is changing). There is no legal gender discrimination, and social norms encourage families to enrol their children in schools and universities.

## **Gender Discrimination within Research Findings The Theme of Education in the Art Workshops**

A number of issues surrounding schools and the education system surfaced in the collages and the discussions. Several collages depicted bullying that occurs in schools. Participants from Karak commented on the bullying with one participant also referring to the verbal abuse she has felt from teachers “I wish the teacher hit me, it would be easier than the verbal abuse”. Other collages spoke of students needing the help of a teacher, as though to say that s/he was unavailable.

The education system was also lacking with participants commenting on how schools did not provide for the development of students talents. “Classes are in a row with no time for a break... classes are boring.”

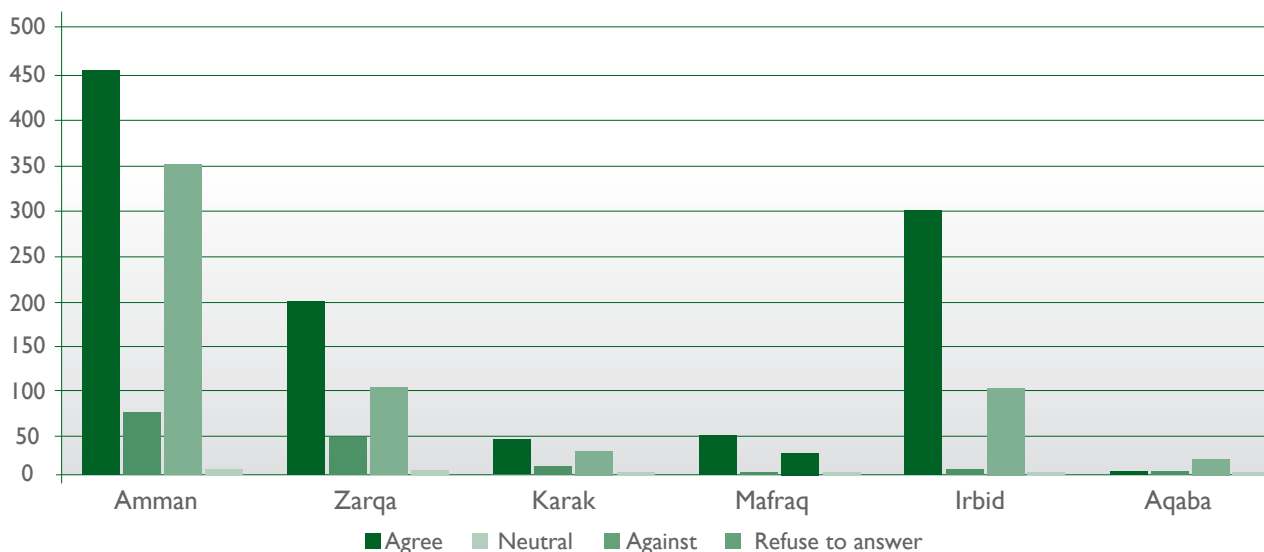
In Irbid the participants commented on the distance that they have to travel to get to school, noting that it takes them a whole hour to get to school. Furthermore there are 43 girls in class! During a visit by one of the Education system supervisor’s, the issue of space was raised and the supervisor’s response was “what is better to eat bread or wait 2 months to get bread”, this was interpreted by the students to mean that it is hopeless to expect that an additional school or classrooms will be built.

The number of students in a classroom is not surprising as it exists all over the Kingdom, most significantly in the more urban areas. This puts into serious question the quality of education provided to the students. How can we expect students to excel in their thinking or learn to utilize their imaginations? In the collective poem it was established that girls from a very early age are stopped from playing, most significantly outdoors, but also indoors as they are expected to assume so many of the house chores. Playing helps to build imagination and supports the learning process. Children learn to solve problems, make sense of the world from playing. Clearly we are failing our students, not only are teachers overwhelmed with the numbers of students, but the school settings are not conducive to creative learning and education, and girls are not provided with enough physical education.

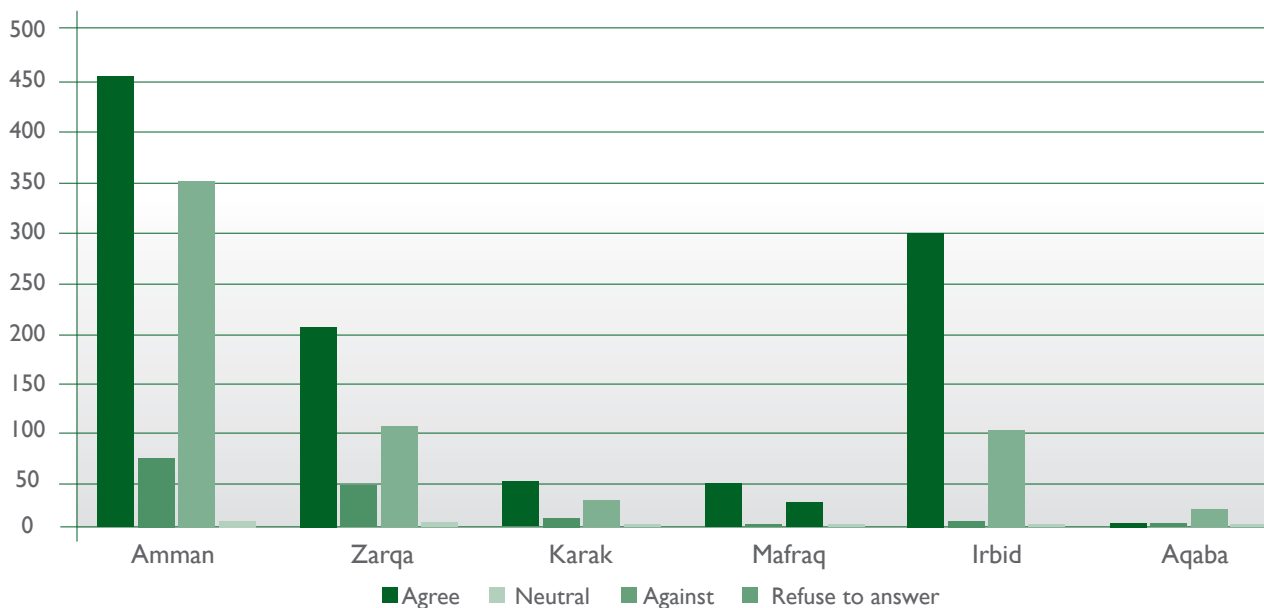
## **Quantitative Survey**

The quantitative survey indicated gender equity for some aspects of education and a gender bias for others.

**I allow my daughter to study whatever he desires even if it conflicts with the family preference**



**I allow my son to study whatever he desires even if it conflicts with the family preference**



**I allow my daughter/son to study whatever she/he desires even if it conflicts with the family preference**

Approximately 54.9% of respondents agree with this indicator for girls and 34.3% are against. The numbers for the sons are almost the same with 57.2% in agreement and 34.2% against. The respondents are most influenced by their own personal conviction and the family. There does not appear to be much of a gender bias in terms of allowing sons and daughters to study whatever they desire, as over 50% agree. So the freedom to study whatever he or she desires is almost equally restricted for both at around 34%. The wives were in slightly more agreement compared to their husbands for both their daughters and sons. Both boys and girls should have access and control to choose their area of study. They should have the ability to make decisions about their education.



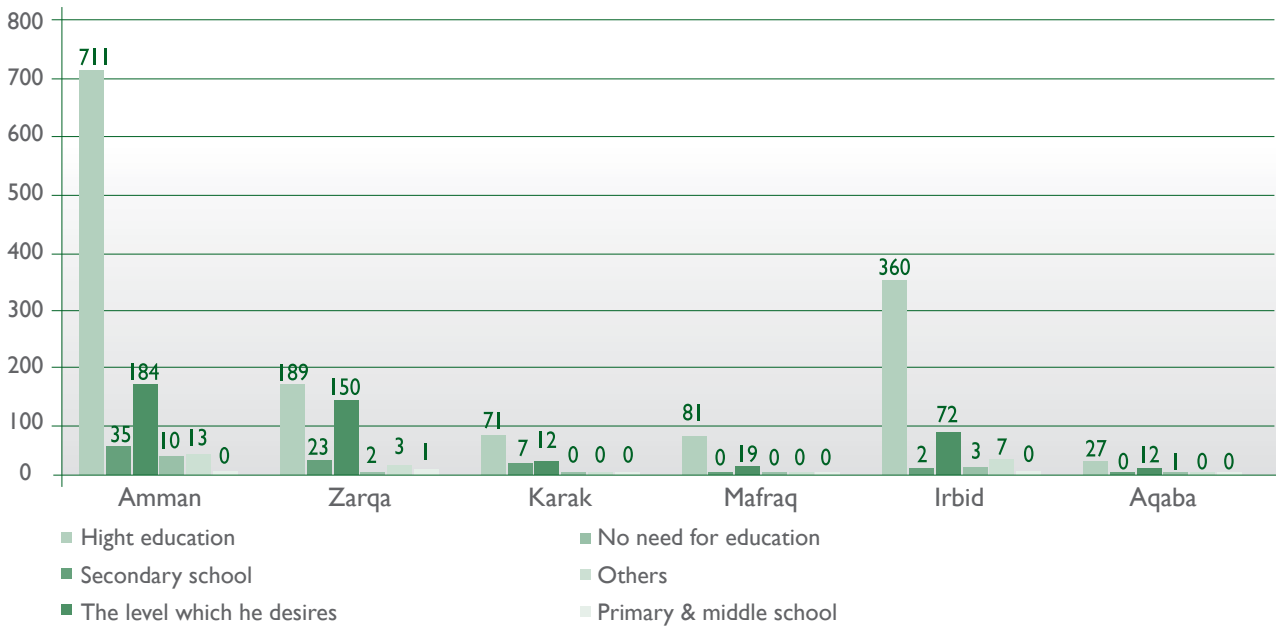
**Differences between Governorates**

The majority agree to allow their daughters/sons to study whatever they desire, except the majority were against this in Aqaba.

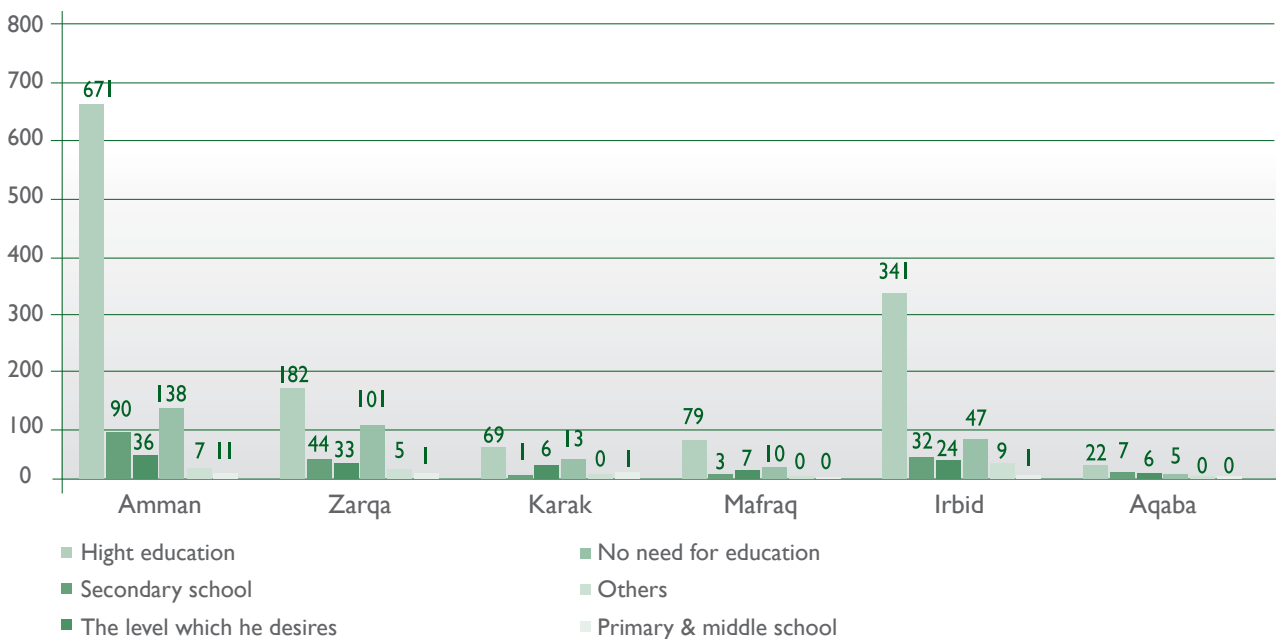
Lawyer Rania Shamout comments how:

As for education, there are no laws that allow anyone to determine the educational path of anyone else. But some parents pressure their children and force them to undertake certain courses of study without an understanding of the child's right to choose his/her education preference and suitability.

**What is the level of education the you male child sho archieve?**



**What is the level of education the you female child sho archieve?**





### What is the level of education that your male/female child should achieve?

Again these findings do not show a gender bias in terms of the level of education that families expect their sons and daughters to achieve. For the male child 71.6%, thought the male child should achieve higher education and 67.8% for the female child. The differences were that for the male children, 22.3% had the freedom to achieve the level of education which he desires. But the finding that did highlight some gender bias was that 15.6% of respondents said that there was no need for education for their female child.

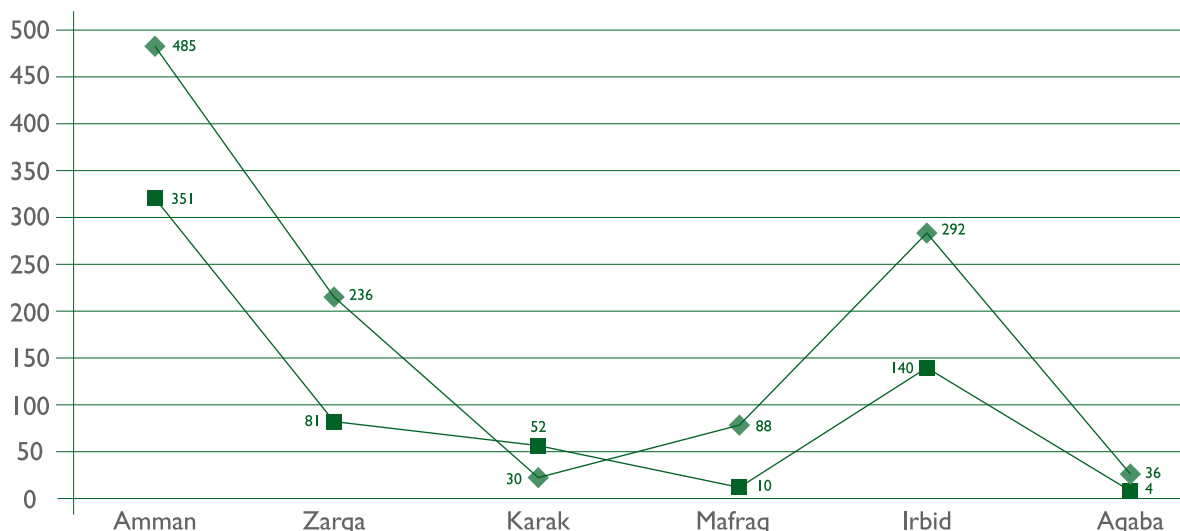
### Differences between Governorates

In Zarqa, there were quite a few respondents that believe there is no need for education for their female child and a number in Irbid and Amman as well. One does not see these numbers for the male child.

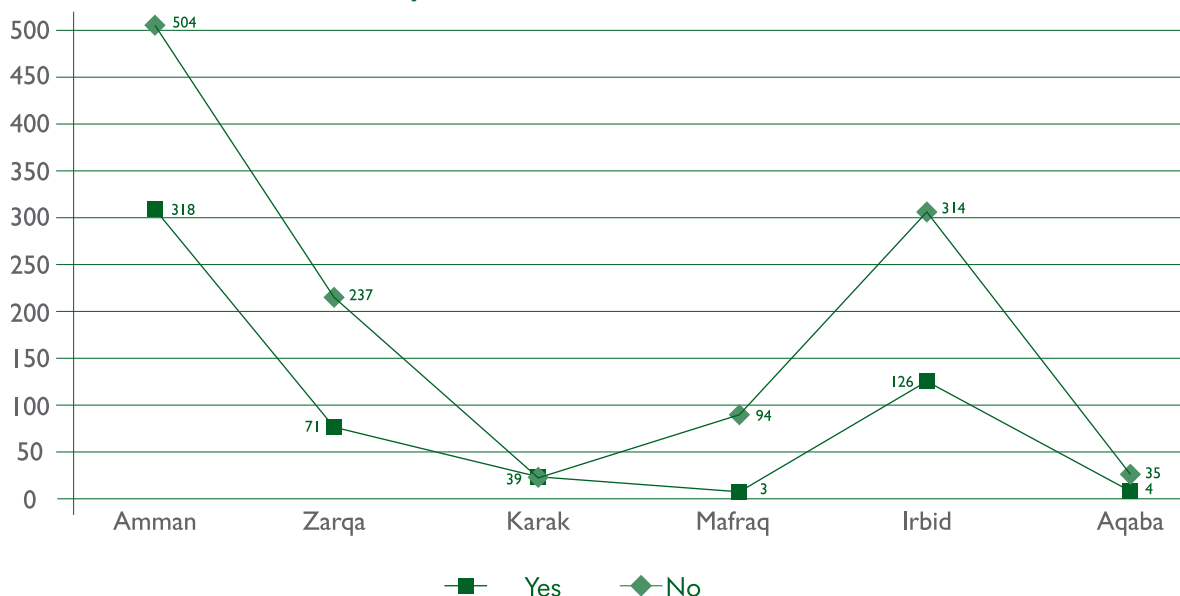
Tribal Leader, Dr Qablan Al Khreeshah states how education is important for girls, in order to attract a husband:

Educating girls has become important because first this is her right and secondly it impacts her own social status and social growth in that she would be able to attract a better husband. Young men these days look for well educated wives because the wives have a pivotal role in bringing up the sons of the future.

### Does your male child to a mixed school?



### Does your female child go to a mixed school?



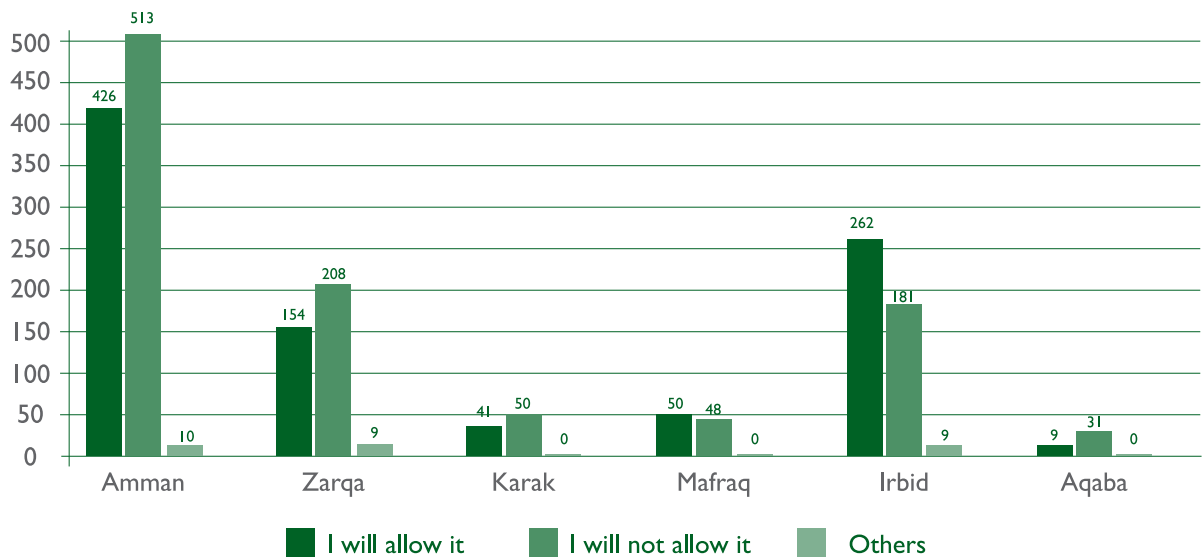
**Does your male/female child go to a mixed school?**

There were no major gender differences when comparing if male or female children attended a mixed school. For boys 31.7% did and for girls 27.6% did and for both about 60% did not.

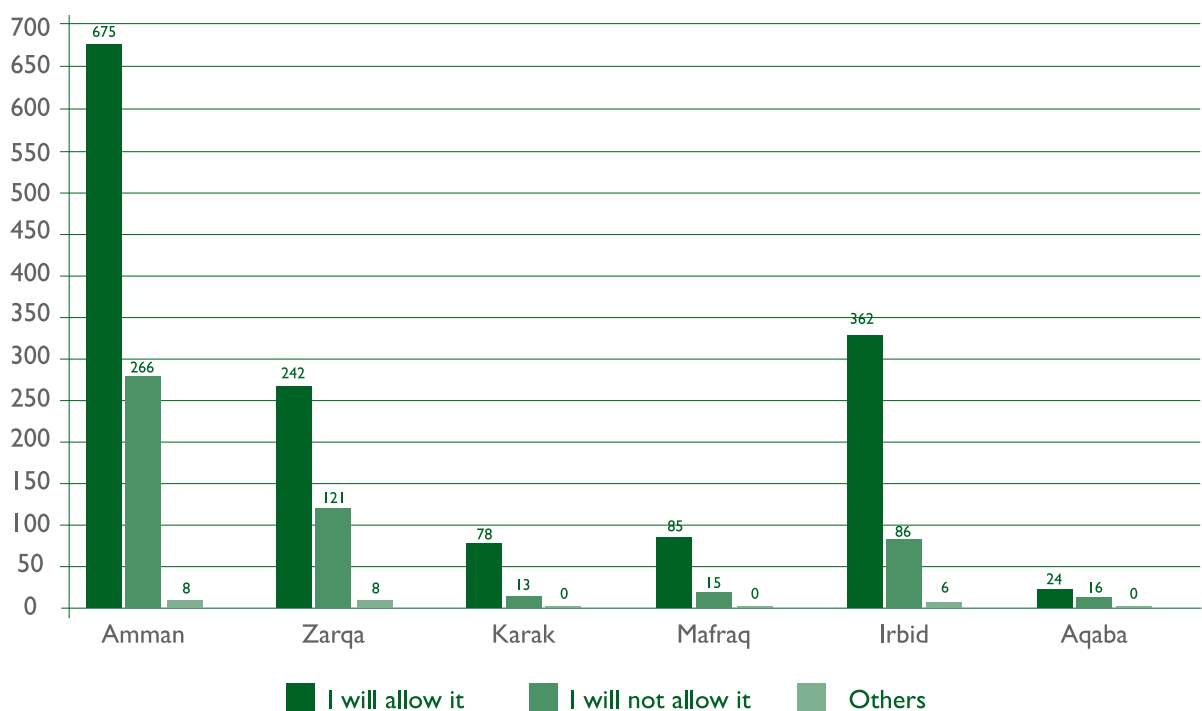
**Differences between Governorates**

The only clear difference can be found in Karak, where 52% of boys attend a mixed school but only 39% of the girls attend one.

**if your female child was accepted in an excellent school which requires here to move from area of residence, what would your reaction be?**



**if your male child was accepted in an excellent school which requires here to move from area of residence, what would your reaction be?**





**If your male/female child was accepted into an excellent school which requires him/her to move from his area of residence, what would your reaction be?**

A gender bias was discovered with the responses from husbands and wives about whether they would allow their female or male child to move from their area of residence because they were accepted into an excellent school. For the male child 72.9% would allow it, while 46.9% would allow it for the girl child. Most respondents believe that allowing their male child to attend an excellent school is important for his future. Girls must be given equal opportunities in education and they must have equal access to reach their full potential. They do not have the same freedom to pursue education as the male child.

**Differences between Governorates**

The most encouraging numbers for equal access to education were found in Mafraq with a close majority, whereby 51% of the parents would allow their daughters to attend an excellent school outside of their area.

**Interviews with Stakeholders**

The interviews with the local experts provided further insight into the girl child's education. Deputy Khoulood Al Marahleh commented on the situation of girls' education in Karak:

In Karak we have problems with this sometimes when we are in faraway rural areas. The girl would study at the primary school nearby and then for secondary school she would have to travel to the village next door, so you find that her family would not pay the extra costs and therefore many girls are denied education.

Journalist Fathi Al Huwaimel adds how:

Most girls in the Ghor leave school early because of socio economic problems, particularly a large number of family members (10-15 on average) which increases the burden on families which are unable to financially support all their members. This leads to families taking their daughters out of school and sending them to work in local farms. Most girls leave school after elementary schools. This is primarily for economic reasons since the family cannot take on the cost of books, transportation and uniform. For the same reason the families cannot take on costs of colleges and universities.

Sadiq Al Omari, Head of International Cooperation, Department of Family Protection, Public Security Department in Amman tells the story about a challenge faced by a girl child:

Our societies are patriarchal and the girl child within this system loses some of her rights and faces oppression and restriction of her freedom and is not allowed responsible liberty. For example there is a 16 year old girl who is a high achiever at school with averages above 90 per cent in her studies. She ran away from home and came to family protection because her brothers won't let her go to school because some youth hang around the school and harass the girls as they come out. We talked to the father and the brothers and after prolonged dialogue and discussion with the social workers the family was convinced and the problem was solved. It was important to make them understand that trust has to be built and that that can be fortified with responsible protection of the girl.

Dr. Rula Qawas, Professor in Amman believes that:

Education is the key: you can do wonders with education, you can change the mindset.





## **GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST THE GIRL CHILD**

According to the international Convention for Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, “The definition of discrimination includes gender-based violence, that is, violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty.” The term violence against women was defined as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”

Findings of a UN General Assembly study by Pinheiro show that violence against children cuts across the boundaries of culture, class, education, income, gender, ethnic origin and age and identifies gender as playing a key role. The study takes a global approach to violence against children highlighting violence at home, in schools and at the workplace. A UNICEF study on violence against children in Jordan has shown that around 50 per cent of children are physically abused by parents and one in every 1,000 children is subjected to a degree of violence that requires intervention by the responsible authorities. Girls were more frequently subjected to constant abuse than boys while more boys were subjected to physical abuse. In some societies, girls are considered more disposable and therefore more subject to exploitation. In addition, girls are socialized to subservience and obedience, leaving them open to multiple abuses including sexual exploitation.

One of the overall goals of the study is to promote equality rights and non-discrimination for girls in Jordan. Throughout the interviews with the stakeholders the theme of gender based violence against the girl child was raised as an issue. This is why it was categorized as a major theme. Some of the research findings have indicated that girls in Jordan are experiencing varying degrees of gender based violence, especially from their own family members.

Sadiq Al Omari, Head of Department of Family Protection in Amman supports this statement:

Girls become victims of physical violence and harm within the family is perpetrated primarily by their male siblings. Limiting freedoms and oppression is at the core of the girls troubles. Most of these problems occur during teenage years. There is a huge deficiency in sexual education and awareness and there is a need to work on this gap especially during teenage years. There is bodily harm from the father, mother and brothers who all think they are doing it to discipline and improve the behaviour of the girl. All bodily harm is directly linked to the margin of freedom that the girl is allowed. Most physical abuse cases and beating of the girl child is perpetrated by her brothers. If a girl is hit within a family, the problem is followed by social workers and attempts are made at amending the situation and following up with her family. There are cases where the girl feels fear or unsafe to return home and these cases are referred to Dar Al Wefaq Center. Most cases are resolved through social work and the law is only used as a final step.

Gender based violence causes many negative effects on the physical and mental integrity of girls and deprives them of their equal enjoyment, exercise and knowledge of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Gender-based violence helps to maintain girls in subordinate roles. Gender based violence involves differences in power and the perpetrators of violence often use it as a mechanism to have power and control over their victims. Girls in Jordan have a right to enjoy a life free of violence and society should work hard to keep girls free from violence, abuse and exploitation.

Maisoon Abdo, School Social Guidance Counsellor, at the Umm Habiba Secondary School in Amman shared how violence is one of the biggest barriers facing the girl child:

Domestic violence, verbal violence from teachers, the control over the girls from the family, the father, the mother, older brother, the control of the teachers over the girls, the lack of communication between the family and school. The problem of addiction leads to cases of social and family violence. More violence occurs within the family especially against girls.

*CEDAW found at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm#recom19>*

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*Pinheiro, Paulo Sergio, “World Report on Violence Against Children”, United Nations Secretary General’s Study on Violence Against Children, 2006: Geneva, Switzerland.*

*Khalil, Elayyan, “Violence Against Children: Study in Jordan Summary”, UNICEF, 2007*

*Dottridge, Michael and Friedman, Sara Ann, “Invisible Girls- Invisible Work”, Prepared for the ILO Conference on Invisible Child Labour, 1997.*



Deputy Khoulood Marahla from Karak voiced her concern about domestic violence:

I worry about the different manifestations of domestic and interfamily violence.

### **International and National Frameworks Relating to Equality Rights Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The CRC contains a provision regarding violence against children. Article 19 states that “parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.”

### **CEDAW**

#### **General Recommendation No. 19**

Gender-based violence, which impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of human rights and fundamental freedoms under general international law or under human rights conventions, is discrimination within the meaning of article 1 of the Convention.

#### **Articles 2(f), 5 and 10(c)**

Traditional attitudes by which women are regarded as subordinate to men or as having stereotyped roles perpetuate widespread practices involving violence or coercion, such as family violence and abuse, forced marriage, dowry deaths, acid attacks and female circumcision. Such prejudices and practices may justify gender-based violence as a form of protection or control of women.

#### **Article 16 (and article 5)**

Family violence is one of the most insidious forms of violence against women. It is prevalent in all societies. Within family relationships women of all ages are subjected to violence of all kinds, including battering, rape, other forms of sexual assault, mental and other forms of violence, which are perpetuated by traditional attitudes. These forms of violence put women’s health at risk and impair their ability to participate in family life and public life on a basis of equality.

#### **Beijing Platform for Action:**

Strategic objective L.7. Eradicate violence against the girl child.

#### **National Implementation**

While there are no comprehensive national systems for the detection, reporting, referral and intervention for children victims of abuse, there are a number of programmes such as those implemented by the Family Protection Department (FPD), part of the Public Security Directorate, which investigates and handles cases of sexual violence and abuse of children, and Ministry of Health-initiated Child Protection Committees at major public hospitals whose role is to investigate suspected cases of child abuse. In 2000, the Jordan River Foundation, with the support of Ministry of Social Development, set up Dar Al Aman, a specialised centre for the protection of abused children.

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*CRC found at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm#art19>*

*CEDAW found at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm#intro>*

*Beijing Platform for Action found at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/girl.htm#object7>*

*Save the Children found at <http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/content/library/documents/child-rights-situation-analysis-middle-east-and-north-africa-region>*





According to the Sixth Annual Report of the National Center for Human Rights, the year 2009 has witnessed a host of measures that contributed to providing legal and preventive protection for children, including:

- A) Preparing a draft regulation for protection against domestic violence initiated by the Ministry of Social Development with the participation of the National Center for Human Rights and the National Council for Family Affairs. The draft law aims to issue regulatory measures to implement the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence number 6 for the year 2008. The protection of children is one of the goals of this law.
- B) The Cabinet ratified on 17 November 2009 an amended regulation for Civil Services for the year 2009 with the aim of toughening the disciplinary penalties against those who physically abuse children held in government institutions, including educational, rehabilitation, or training institutions as well as welfare and protection shelter houses in order to discourage the use of violence in dealing with children.
- C) The National Council for Family Affairs has taken upon itself the task of overseeing the efforts made by the ministries, institutions, and organizations concerned with protection of families and children. For this reason, it set up a team that was tasked with investigating the death cases of children and following them with the concerned authorities such as the Family Protection Department/the Public Security Directorate or any other authority with the aim of raising the standards of children's protection

### **Jordanian Penal Code**

According to the Child Rights Situation Analysis for Middle East and North Africa in 2008, The Jordanian Penal Code contains provisions that severely punish violence towards children, particularly sexual exploitation, and the 2004 Draft Child Bills Act, still awaiting adoption by the National Assembly, will make punishments even tougher. Already, the amendments introduced to the Juveniles Act No.24 of 1968 were specifically made to guarantee protection and care for children who are exposed to abuse by one or both parents. The Juvenile Act No. 11 mandates judges the right to supervise and inspect juvenile centres affiliated with the Ministry of Social Development every three months

Children however continue to be vulnerable to abuse and violence, especially in homes. There are no reliable data on the prevalence of domestic violence – the only available data are the number of children whose cases are treated or received assistance. For example, in 2005, the FPD dealt with 622 cases of sexual assaults involving children, and 97 cases of physical assaults of minors. Due to societal and family pressures, the reporting of child abuse and prosecutions against perpetrators are low. In addition, under Jordanian penal code, complaints from a child can only be accepted if the parents or guardian supports them, while complaints from third parties – teachers and social workers – are not accepted. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has expressed its concern about the lack of research on the impact of legal measures to address violence against children, and the general absence of reliable data and information.

Jordan still has a significant problem of domestic and gender based violence. Although most is illegal according to the laws of the country, there are a couple of anomalies. A hugely discriminatory law exists in Articles 340, 98 and 99 of the Jordanian Penal Code, which provide for a reduction in penalty for the so called “honour” crime cases. Article 340 states that “he who discovers his wife or one of his female relatives committing adultery and kills, wounds, or injures one of them, is exempted from any penalty”. Where the crimes do occur Article 98 provides further protection, stating that “he who commits a crime in a fit of fury, caused by an un-rightful and dangerous act on the part of the victims, benefits from a reduction of penalty.”

Nadya Khalife, women's rights researcher at Human Rights Watch said:

The current law is nothing less than an endorsement for murdering women and girls. The women of Jordan need protection from these vicious acts enshrined in law, not preferential treatment for their killers. Furthermore, physical punishment in the home remains culturally accepted and notably, Article 62 of the Penal Code permits parents to discipline their children within the limits established by “general custom”.

Judge Mohammad Tarawneh in his interview spoke about Article 62:

As for hitting children by parents, there is a proposal to amend article 62 of the penal code which currently exempts the father from legal responsibility if “punishment is used for common discipline conditions and as allowed

Save the Children found at

<http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/content/library/documents/child-rights-situation-analysis-middle-east-and-north-africa-region>

Human Rights Watch found at:

<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/09/01/jordan-tribunals-no-substitute-reforms-honour-killings>

by general acceptable norms." It is evident that many cases of abuse resulted last year including four that led to the death of the children who were beaten by their fathers under the excuse of disciplining them. There has been a proposal to remove this article completely because it includes too many generalities and hitting can vary from light hitting on the hand to burning and inflicting physical damage. Many mothers beat their children or prick them with needles or even burn them sometimes apparently to toilet train them. As for boys hitting their sisters, this practice has its roots in the patriarchal culture which is perpetuated by the father and mother. In fact that concept is perpetuated by women more than the men.

### National Plan Protecting Children in Difficult Circumstances

This component of the Jordanian National Action Plan for Children (2004-2013) aims at protecting children from all forms of violence, neglect, physical, sexual and psychological abuse. The aims include:

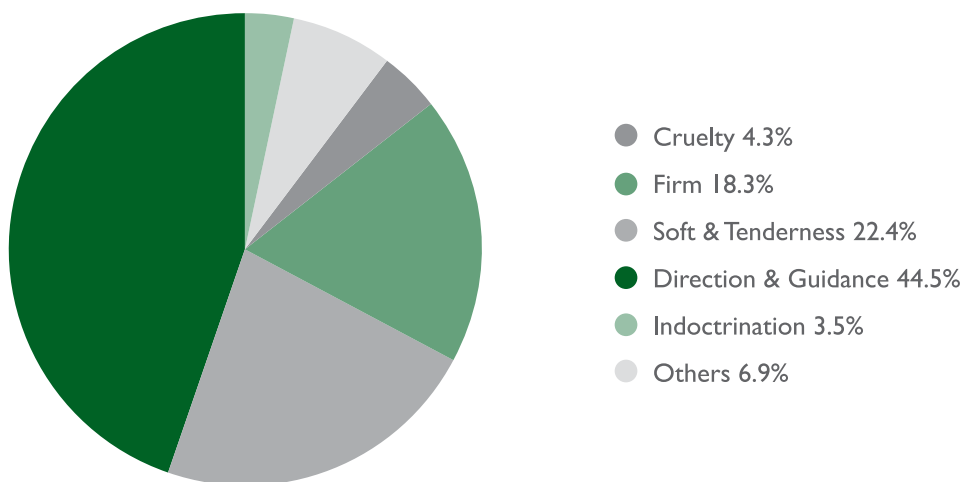
1. Decrease cases of child abuse in all their forms, physical, psychological or sexual, and neglect, through expanding preventive measures.
2. Develop and improve the quality of services offered in this field, such as shelters, counselling, health, legal and police services.
3. Eliminate child pornography, commercial sexual exploitation of children and trafficking.
4. Protect children with special needs from discrimination, abuse, exploitation, negligence and violence.

The Jordanian National Action Plan for Children aims to decrease the cases of child abuse, but it does not clearly articulate what the mechanism for implementation and is and what are the performance indicators. There is no mention of protection from all forms of gender based violence, of the prevalence of violence within private households, nor on gathering better data and information on the prevalence of domestic violence. This plan is also silent when it comes to addressing the traditional attitudes that may justify gender based violence. In order to better protect the girl child, the plan needs to include a commitment to achieving gender equality and thereby eliminating discrimination against the girl child, i.e. gender based violence.

### Gender Discrimination within Research Findings Quantitative Survey

The goal of the quantitative survey was to capture information on the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of parents and community members towards girls in the country. The below responses shed some light on the theme of gender based violence. For this sensitive theme, the survey questions are more indirect in their approach and approach the theme through the methods that parents use to discipline their children.

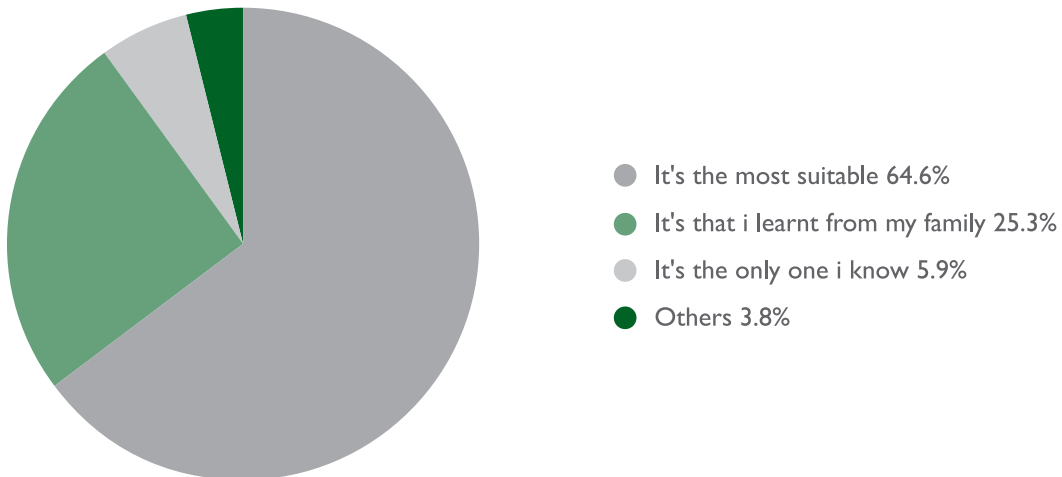
#### What method do you use in disciplininiig you daughter?



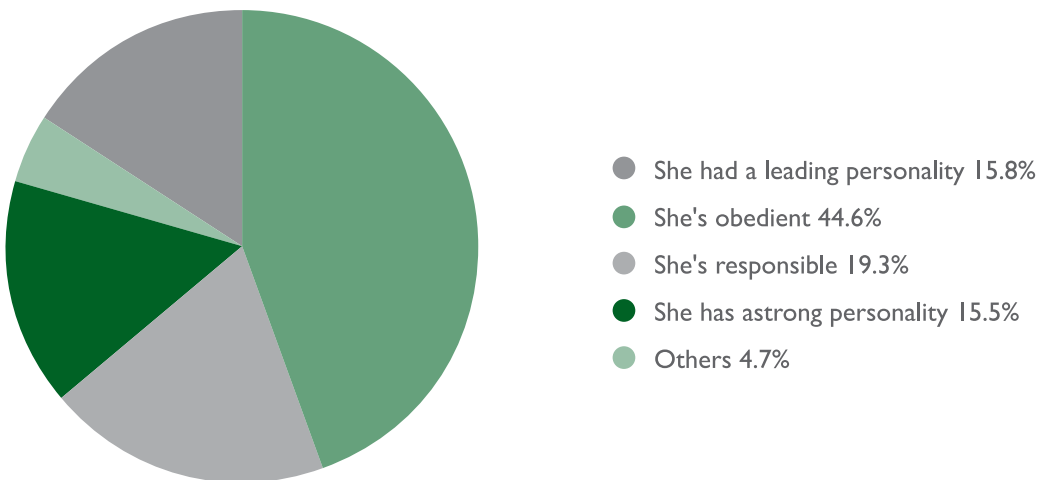
UNICEF Jordanian National Action Plan for Children 2004-2013, found at: [http://www.unicef.org/jordan/resources\\_2025.html](http://www.unicef.org/jordan/resources_2025.html)



**What do you use this method?**



**How does this method affect your daughter's personality?**

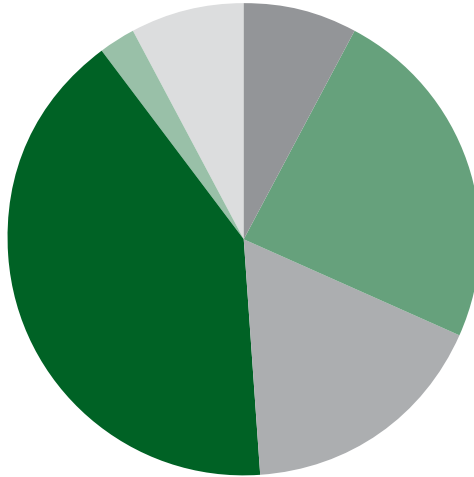


**What method do you use in disciplining your daughter?  
Why do you use this method?  
How does this method affect your daughter's personality?**

Most of the parents stated that they would use direction and guidance (44.5%) for disciplining their daughters, next was soft & tenderness (at 22.4%), then firmness (at 18.3%). A small percentage (4.3%) said they would use cruelty as a means of discipline. Their reason for using these forms of discipline were mostly because they felt that it was the most suitable (64.6%) or it is what they learnt from their families (25.3%).

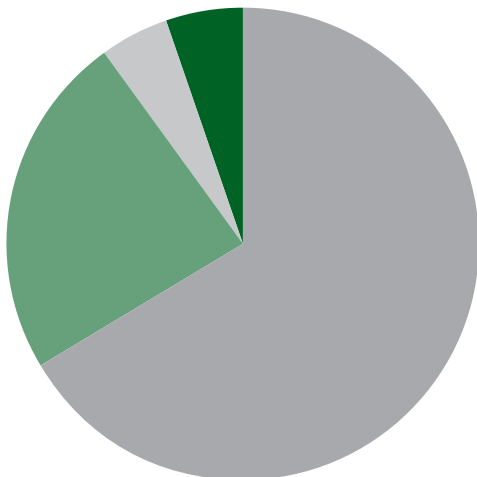
In terms of affecting their daughter's personality, 44.6% said that their daughter is obedient or she's responsible (at 19.3%). The husbands tended to use more softness and tenderness and firmness when compared to their wives. The wives used more direction and guidance than their husbands. It is worrisome that some parents would use cruelty as a method of discipline for their daughters. One can assume that this would involve some form of physical and/or emotional verbal abuse. Family members that use cruel methods as a way to discipline their children are violating the rights of their child.

**What method do you use in disciplining your son?**



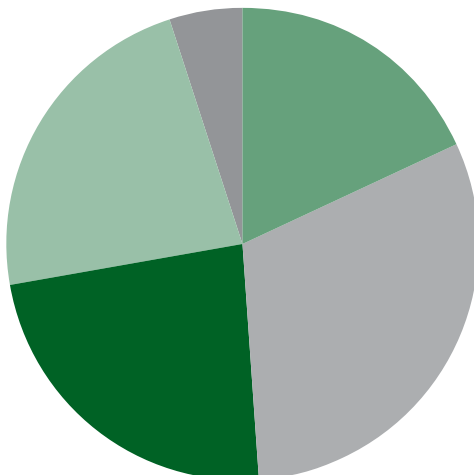
- Cruelty 7.9%
- Firm 23.9%
- Soft & Tenderness 17.1%
- Direction & Guidance 41%
- Indoctrination 2.4%
- Others 7.6%

**Why do you use this method?**



- It's the most suitable 66.4%
- It's that i learnt from my family 23.6%
- It's the only one i know 4.7%
- Others 5.1%

**How does this method affect your son's personality?**



- He has a leading personality 18.1%
- He's obedient 30.9%
- He's responsible 23.3%
- He has astrong personality 22.6%
- Others 4.9%

**What method do you use in disciplining your son?  
Why do you use this method?  
How does this method affect your son's personality?**

The parents' responses for the boys were slightly different when compared to girls, in that more firmness was used (23.9%) and more cruelty (at 7.9%). The other difference was in how it affects your son's personality, as 30.9% found their sons obedient a lower number compared to 44.6% for girls. Also the numbers were higher for boys in terms of having a stronger personality (at 22.6%) compared to girls (15.8%). The husbands responded more that they were more firm than their wives and that their sons had strong personalities. This shows how girls are socialized to be more obedient than boys, while the boys are socialized to be strong. It also demonstrates how boys receive more firm and cruel punishment from their families when compared to girls. Physical punishment within the home is a violation of the rights of the child.

### **Differences between Governorates**

There were no major differences for both sons and daughters in the governorates. Most responded to using direction and guidance and then firmness as a way to discipline their children. The one difference was in Aqaba where most respondents said they would use cruelty as a form to discipline their sons. This demonstrates that the boy child also experience violence. In terms of how it would affect their son's personality, in Aqaba the majority stated that their sons had a leading personality, while in Amman, Karak and Mafraq their sons were obedient and in Zarqa most of the sons were responsible.

### **Gender Based Violence against the Girl Child within Art Workshops**

A number of girls mentioned that it was their brothers who took it upon themselves to discipline their sisters, often times with no provocation. In Karak and Zarqa the girls noted that they were beat up by brothers on a daily basis while the father did nothing. We cannot infer from the discussions alone that they have a higher prevalence of violence in comparison to other areas.

Many images captured the violence present in the participants' surroundings. In order to make the discussion safe, the consultant approached the subject by projecting what they may have seen or heard at the 'neighbors,' removing it from their immediate setting. This paved the way for an open discussion. Most notable were the workshops in Karak and Zarqa where there was a lot of talk of various types of violence. For example in Zarqa 8 out of 15 adolescent girls spoke of rape cases that they 'personally' knew of in their neighbourhood.

Lubna Douani, International Center for the Support of Women is of the opinion that:

Legal awareness would reduce the incidence of violence. Oppression and miscommunication are of the most important problems facing girls in families. Legal awareness is needed in schools to reduce violence and discrimination against women. Awareness would also reduce family violence especially violence against women.

Senator Nadya Bushnaq, a civil society activist from Zarqa elaborates on the negative effects of gender based violence:

Discriminatory upbringing of girls finally affects how they grow into women. These women grow up hesitant and they tend to blame themselves for mistakes, they find excuses to explain violence against them, they are unaware of their rights and if they knew their rights then they are afraid to demand them. These women are unable to determine that violence against them is inexcusable and is in fact abuse. Studies have found that 70 per cent of the violence against women in Jordan happens within the household.

Information and Research Center, "MENA Child Protection Initiative, the report on Amman" Arab Urban Development Institute and Information and Research Center / King Hussein Foundation, March 2004.

UNICEF, "Girls at Work", UNICEF New York, May 1998.

Ouis, Pernilla, "Woman or Child?: Voices of teenage girls in the Middle East", Save the Children Sweden, 2005: Lund University, Sweden.

CAWTAR, "The Second Arab Women Development Report Arab Adolescent Girls: Reality and Prospects", Al Raïda, Vol. 21, No. 106, 2005.

Fargues, Philippe, "Women in Arab Countries: Challenging the Patriarchal System?", Reproductive Health Matters, Vol. 13, No. 25, 2005: Reproductive Health Matters.



## GIRL CHILD LABOUR

The prevailing cultural and social attitude about girls' role and the division of labour in everyday life influence girls' status immensely. Gender division of labour does not only segregate tasks, but also allocates different values to different tasks. This differential value of tasks works against equality between men and women, underestimating the value of women's work and hence the value of women. Central to gender relations, society has allocated different roles, responsibilities and activities to men and women, girls and boys, according to what is considered appropriate. There is differential access to and control of work. Girls and women tend to be responsible for reproductive work resources (cooking, washing, cleaning, looking after children etc.), the care and maintenance of the household. The reproductive work done inside the household is not counted as work. There is a tendency to value paid work more than unpaid work.

The large majority of women in the labour force in the Middle East are under 25, and the reported unemployment rates of 16–25-year-olds are 78 percent. This reflects a prevailing sentiment that once a woman marries her primary focus should be on caring for children and the home.

Ouis suggests that one of the most serious discrimination against girls in this region is within the family, i.e. girls being restricted in every possible sense and expected to be on duty for domestic work almost 24 hours a day. Child labour is prevalent with teenage girls being requested to help with domestic duties and to look after their smaller sisters and brothers many hours after school.

Yet an emerging group of young never married women is in the Middle East, mostly attributed to education and employment. "Unattached years" are years for education and growth and marriage may not be a priority once employment is engaged. Fargues argues this trend as a slow challenge to the patriarchal system in the Middle East.

Dr Asma Khader, President of Jordan National Commission for Women states how:

Girls are exploited for household labour. Household chores are the remit of girls alone and she is expected to serve her brothers and look after her younger siblings. She is lent out to other family members such as aunts and older sisters to help them in household chores. The division of labour between girls and boys is not fair. There is a need to review the labour law.

### International and National Frameworks Relating to Girl Child Labour Convention on the Rights of the Child

#### Article 32

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.
2. States Parties shall take legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to ensure the implementation of the present article. To this end, and having regard to the relevant provisions of other international instruments, States Parties shall in particular:
  - (a) Provide for a minimum age or minimum ages for admission to employment;
  - (b) Provide for appropriate regulation of the hours and conditions of employment;
  - (c) Provide for appropriate penalties or other sanctions to ensure the effective enforcement of the present article.

#### CEDAW

#### Article 11

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:
  - (a) The right to work as an inalienable right of all human beings.
  - (b) The right to the same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment.
  - (c) The right to free choice of profession and employment, the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service and the right to receive vocational training and retraining, including apprenticeships, advanced vocational training and recurrent training.



- (d) The right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equality of treatment in the evaluation of the quality of work.

**Beijing Platform for Action**

**Strategic objective L.6.**

Eliminate the economic exploitation of child labour and protect young girls at work

**Strategic objective F.6.**

Promote harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men

**International Labour Organization Convention**

Jordan ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991 and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention No.138 which specifies the minimum working age. In 2000 Jordan ratified ILO Labour Convention No.182 that prohibits the worst forms of child labour. In 1996, Jordan amended the labour law to raise the minimum age for entry into labour from 13 to 16 years, and the minimum age for undertaking hazardous jobs to 18 years. Jordanian law states that children should not work for more than 6 working hours per day. The law also prohibits children from working from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. The law, however, did not protect children working in the unofficial sectors (agriculture, households and family enterprises). The Ministry of Labour undertakes supervision visits to monitor the situation of children in the workforce. Amongst the important achievement in this regard is the establishment of a Child Labour Unit in 2001 in cooperation with the ILO, and the formation of a national strategy to eliminate the worst forms of child labour in 2003.

**National Strategy for Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour**

The National Plan aims to:

1. Eliminate the worst forms of child labour in Jordan by the end of 2013, and decrease the number of child labourers under 16 years of age.
2. Rehabilitate and reintegrate working children in schools and secure their right to free primary education and appropriate vocational training.
3. Conduct studies to better understand the scope of child labour in Jordan, especially those working in hazardous jobs. Studies should focus on the magnitude, geographical allocation, patterns, reasons and consequences.
4. Offer alternatives for increasing the income of families of children who work.
5. Develop national legislation that is in harmony with international conventions on the prevention of child labour, and ILO Convention No.182 on the prevention of the worst forms of child labour.
6. Raise awareness on the issue of child labour and its negative effects on the child's physical and psychological development.

The strategy does not mention protecting children working in the unofficial sectors such as agriculture, households and family enterprises.

The girl child is not protected in agriculture in Jordan. Some of the experts interviewed give examples of girl child labour in their governorates. Journalist Fathi Al Huwaimel, Head of the National Committee for Social Development in North Al Ghor, Karak highlights the problem of girl child labour on farms:

There is a problem with absenteeism in schools because of the current economic conditions, problem of girl labour on farms, early marriage and girls and women as a labour force in the valley. The percentage of girls working in the farms far exceeds the percentage of boys, the girls work to raise funds to spend on themselves because the families are unable to spend on them or the girls give their salaries to their families so that they can help support the family in meeting the cost of basic expenses. A girl in the Jordan valley would receive JD 5 a day for working in the farm. She accepts that wage but boys will not work in farms for several reasons: insufficient pay, no health insurance, no social security, so boys prefer to look for proper and stable jobs. Farming is a seasonal job that lasts between 3-9 months.

**Lawyer Rania Shammout also highlighted the problem of girl child labour in agriculture in Jordan:**

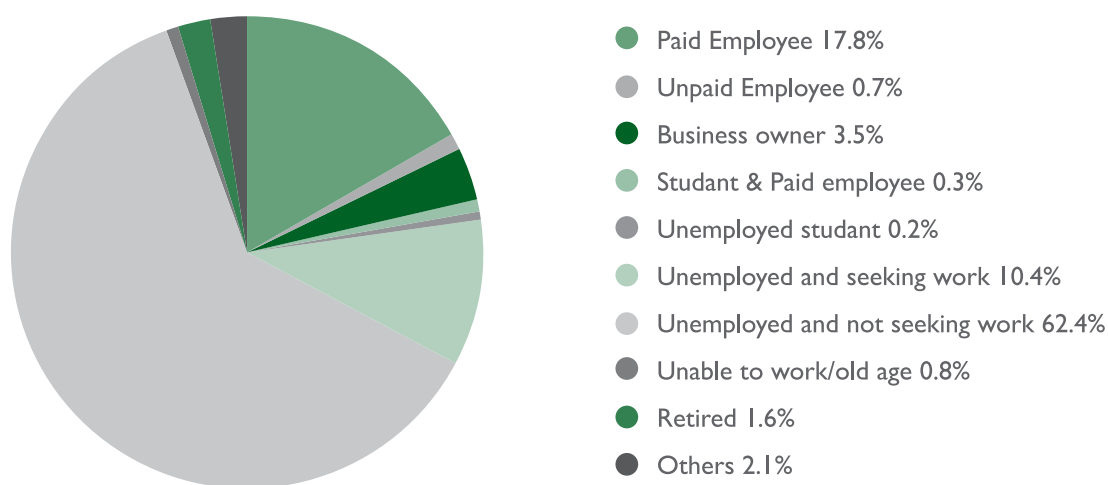
There are loopholes in laws governing child labour that allow abuse of the exceptions. The law is insufficient with regards to child labour because it exempts agricultural labour and other sectors which have enabled the abuse of these exceptions.



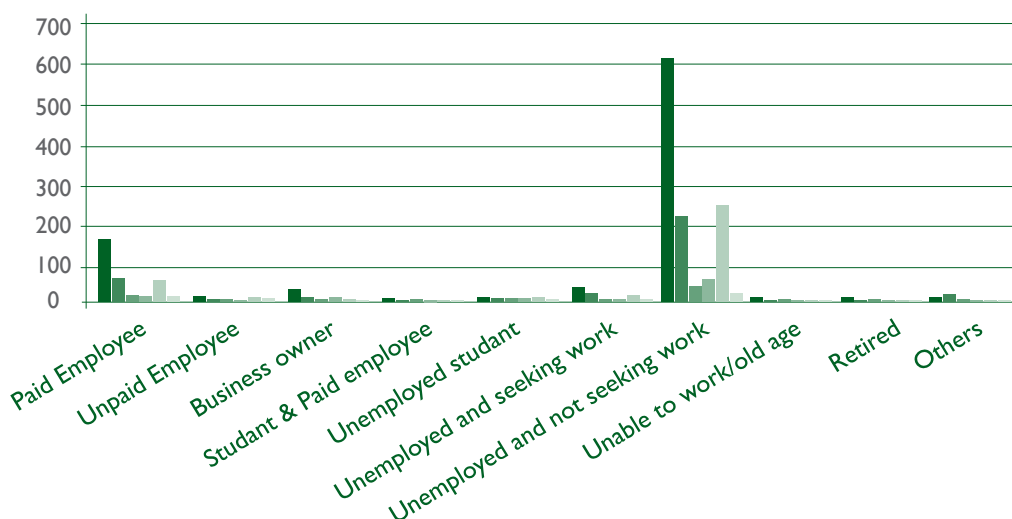
**Gender Discrimination within Research Findings  
Quantitative Survey**

The research findings reaffirm the present gender division of labour and division of resources and benefits in Jordan, such as the freedom to pursue personal interests, leisure and time. A scarce resource for women and girls is time. Findings of the girl child study highlight how women and girls are responsible for most of the household chores/domestic labour, they have little leisure time, free time outside and this violates their rights because it curtails their potential to reach their full capacity. Traditional gender roles are practiced with regards to household chores. When it comes to leisure time within and outside the household, the girl is restricted and does not have any free time, while the boy does. She does not have the same freedom of movement as her brother.

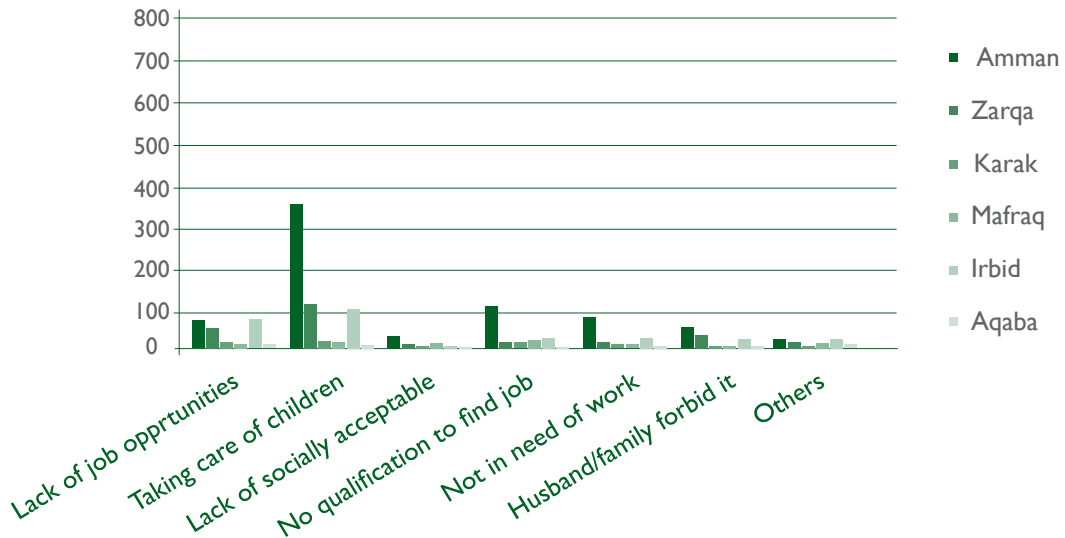
**Occupation of wife**



**Occupation of wife**



**Reasons why mothers are not working**



**Occupations of Mothers and Fathers  
Why the mothers are not working?**

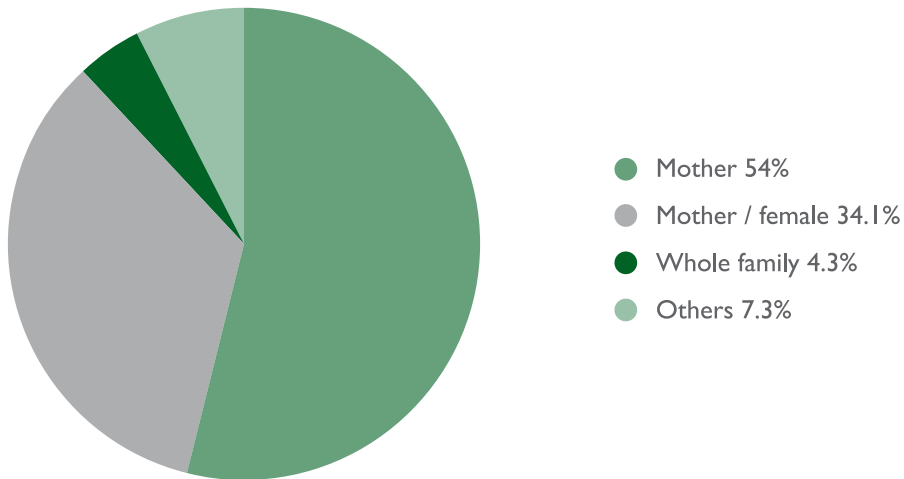
The survey looked at the occupations of the mothers and fathers and the findings show how the majority of women are unemployed and not seeking work 62.4%, while the majority of the fathers are employed, 79.6%. The majority of the women said they were not working because they are taking care of the children 37.3% and 7.7% because the husband or family forbid them to work. The majority of the men were paid employees or business owners.

One can see the clear gender division of labour of how the women are responsible for the unpaid reproductive work within the private sphere and the men are employed in paid employment in the public sphere. These prescribed gender roles influence the upbringing of boys and girls, because both witness within their households their expected roles in society. The stereotype of women being housewives is what the girls see as their role models and they are not encouraged to pursue careers and paid employment. If women do not access to and control over resources and benefits, their decision making is also limited.

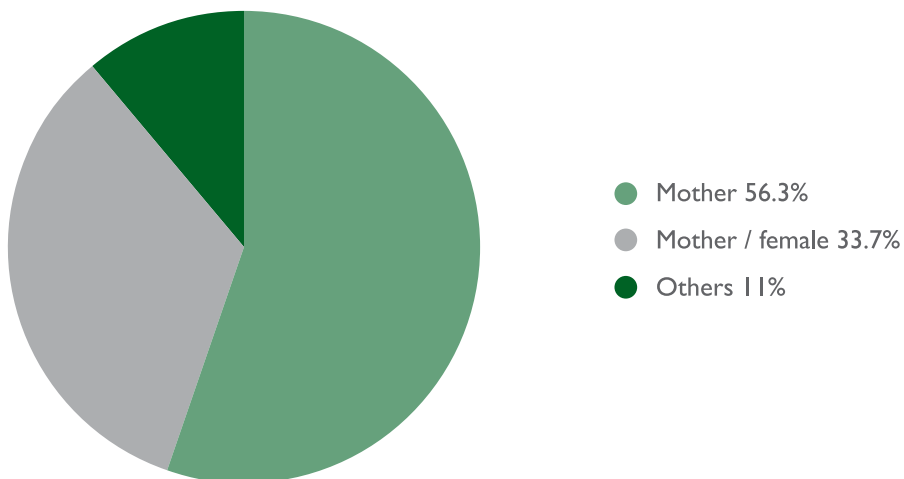
**Differences between Governorates**

There are more women that are paid employees in Amman, when compared to the other governorates. There are very few women as paid employees in the other governorates. There was a higher incidence of husbands forbidding their wives to work in Zaraq and women in Irbid not working because of lack of job opportunities. There were also a number of women who felt they did not have the right qualifications to find a job. Most women are not working in paid jobs because of their child rearing responsibilities. The attitudes and stereotypes of prescribed gender roles need to be transformed to recognize the role that both parents play in child rearing and shared parenting and the importance of the father's role in a child's life should be promoted. If attitudes and prejudices about the roles of women changed, if employers provided more child care, the burdens of domestic work were equalized, women would have more opportunities to pursue education and training and be empowered to participate in the work force.

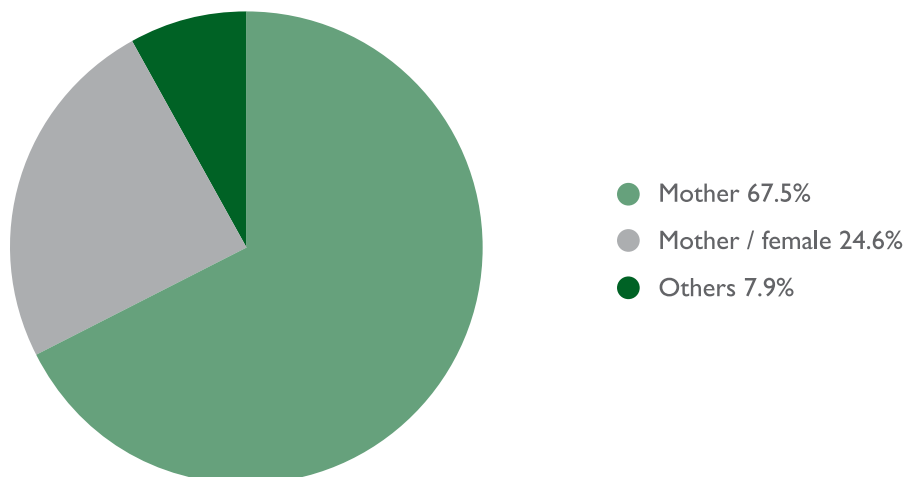
Who is responsible for the cleaning and arrangement of the house?



Who is responsible for washing the dishes?



Who is responsible for washing the dishes?







**Who is responsible for cleaning and arrangement of the house?**

**Who is responsible for washing the dishes?**

**Who is responsible for cooking and food preparation?**

These findings indicate how the mother and female are responsible for the reproductive work within the household, such as cleaning, washing dishes and food preparation. Reproductive role involves the care and maintenance of the household and its members including caring of children, food preparation, housework and family health care. The fathers and males are not participating in the reproductive work therefore the household responsibilities are not shared equally within the family. The men and the males are not participating in the household economies and this can be viewed as a form of economic exploitation. Only for cleaning and arranging the house 4.6% responded the whole family was responsible.

These roles and responsibilities of family members are socially accepted in Jordan. Carrying the burden of all the reproductive work constrains women and girls from participating equally in society. It is important to challenge the gendered division of labour within the household. This unequal treatment within the family is unjust and unfair. The family should not give preferential treatment to men and boys. All family members have equal responsibility to contribute to the running of the household.

**Lawyer Rania Shammout shares her opinion on girl child labour within the household:**

As for using children for labour within the household, it is important to make parents aware of the needs of their children because it is difficult to draft a law that specifically deals with a girl child's labour within the house. Therefore it is important to create awareness that the girl should not be exploited at home in a manner that is not sensitive to her age and her physical and emotional needs.

**Girl Child Labour Theme within the Art Workshops**

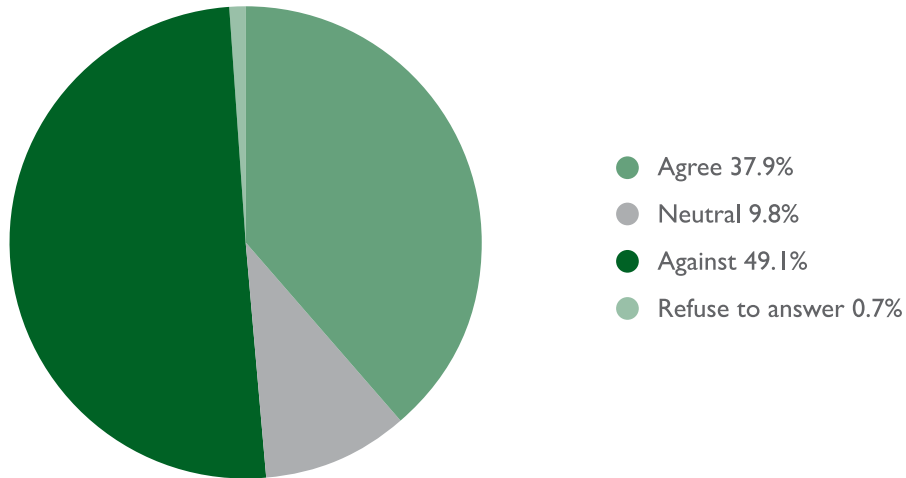
Girl child labour was an interesting theme that was raised within the art workshops. There is a fine line between children carrying out household chores and when it borders with actual unrecognized child labour. The vast majority of the adolescent girls all spoke of the added responsibilities that they assumed especially once they turned 10-years-old. The girls spoke of having to assume responsibility for cleaning the house, laundry, preparing meals, especially dinner for their brothers, ironing, preparing baths for brothers, laying out clothes for their brothers, helping siblings to do homework. The majority of participants from Zarqa spoke about being directly responsible for the home.

The adolescent girls were asked to write one sentence to describe the different stages in their lives, a timeline at different ages for what changes were taking place. Below the girls in Amman were asked what was happening in their lives once they were 10 years old. The different ideas, feelings formed collective poems and offer great insight to how they are responsible for the household chores and for taking care of their siblings, how their responsibilities have greatly increased.

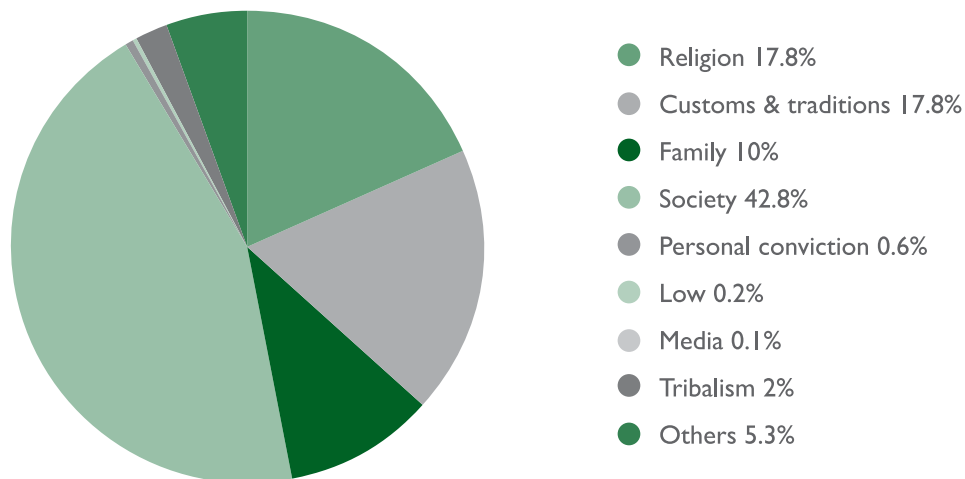
**When I was 10 years old I was told that I had grown up, so I have to.....**

- Pray and to depend on myself, when I review lessons
- Many duties and responsibilities
- Do a lot of homework
- I have to be polite with people
- Great responsibility
- Extra tasks and duties
- To bear responsibility
- Now I have to do the house work
- Many duties
- You have to be a responsible person, and to stick to religious duties and pray
- You have to take care of your study
- And your appearance
- You have to help your brothers and your sister, to tidy the house, to take care of the children
- You have to work out your duties
- More duties and bigger stress
- You have many responsibilities, and you have to take care of your future
- You have to prepare yourself for Tawjihe
- You have to clean the house

**The girl child can play outdoors in her free time**



**Source of conviction (The girl child can play outdoors in her free time)**



**The girl child can play outdoors in her free time  
The male child can play outdoors in his free time**

Only 37.9% of respondents agreed that a girl child can play outdoors in her free time, while 67.8% agreed that boys can do so. The source of conviction is from their own personal conviction but also a strong influence from customs & traditions, family and society. This illustrates a gender disparity between boys and girls, as girls are not given the same freedom to play outdoors, nor the same amount of leisure time. There is a gender division of benefits, as leisure is considered a benefit. This is another example of son preference and therefore a form of discrimination. The girl child may not be given as much free time as the boy child, since she is more responsible for helping in household activities. Girls do not have as much access as boys to this benefit of being able to play outdoors in their free time. The girl child does not have the freedom to pursue personal interests and leisure and customs and traditions influence this access and control of benefits.



## **HEALTH-EARLY MARRIAGE**

The health of girls in the Middle East is dependent on guaranteed rights such as access to nutrition and food yet there are also cultural factors which are detrimental to the health of a young girl. Dejon argues that in order to strengthen factors that protect young people's health and to reduce their risks, political leaders in the region need to address young people's need for information, education, and services, investing in national programmes to support the health and development of young people. Jordan is amongst the first countries in the region to have developed a comprehensive early childhood development strategy and plan of action beginning in 2001 with the formation of the National Council for Family Affairs. Included in the strategy are health care for women during pregnancy, health care services, and child culture as well as the role of family and local community.

Early or child marriage refers to marriages where one or both partners are under the age of 18. There are health consequences for early marriage, as it can often lead to early childbirth. In Jordan, available statistics indicate that in 2000 the percentage of married girls under the age of 19 was 6%, which is considered low when compared with other Arab countries, such as Egypt (14%) and Syria (25%). With the aim to redress the situation, in 2001 an amendment introduced to the personal status law raised the legal age of marriage from 15 to 18 for women and 16 to 18 for men; however, a few months later, the Supreme Judge Department released a list of exceptions to the law, permitting judges to marry people under the age of 18 under certain circumstances. This again later changed under pressure from civil society to leaving the decision to a special committee as well as the chief justice.

The negative physical and psychological effects of early marriage have been explored within a regional and global context. Early marriage is strongly associated with early childbearing, which in some cases put young girls at high risk of dying. There have been numerous studies about the health of girls in the Middle East relating mostly to issues such as early marriage and pregnancies. The consequences of early marriage include susceptibility to sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and difficulties in childbearing. Epidemiological surveys and field research show that pregnancy and childbearing at an early age have serious health consequences for women. Women's risk of reproductive ill health and death increases dramatically with women who are still under the age of eighteen. Maternal mortality rates of this group are extremely high.

For the girl child study local experts were interviewed and were asked about early marriage and its effects on the girl child in Jordan, lawyer Rania Shammout states her opinion below:

Early marriage is an injustice to girls and there is no excuse for marrying off an orphan girl early. Underage marriage is an injustice to the girl and is tantamount to killing her alive. The marriage of an orphan girl under the excuse that there is no one to care for her is not excusable and should not be sanctioned. Girls that age have no understanding of the responsibility of marriage and to many the whole concept of marriage is not entirely clear. There is obviously a struggle between the law and the current mindset which underlines the need to increase the effort to create awareness through schools and civil society organisations.

**Journalist Fathi Al Huwaimel, the Head of the National Committee for Social Development in north Al Ghor Kerak shares how some girls in his region marry early because of economic necessity:**

Early marriage is one of the options available to girls. As a result of difficult economic conditions and the large family size, families marry their daughters early and in some cases even force them to marry early to reduce the number of dependents. Many of these cases end up in divorce because of the number of social problems and the intervention of the families and the lack of maturity of the girl and her inability to deal with the responsibility of marriage.

**Sulaiman al Maaytah, Advisor to the President of the University of Matak informs on another consequence of child marriage:**

Early marriage denies the girl the right to continue her education and in turn denies her the right to work which also in turn negatively impacts economic development and the economy in general.

**Dr. Manal Tahtamouni, the Director of the Institute for Family Health (IFH), links early marriage with reproductive health of girls:**

Early marriage is part and parcel of the reproductive health of the girl. We don't hear of early marriage for boys. We know of girl children who are divorced already and with child. We have therefore created a social and psychological problem not only for her but also for her child all because she married early. This is not even to mention the adverse health problems associated with this kind of marriage. The laws have been amended but the fact that there are

exceptions allowed under the law meant that people have been using that loophole to force girls to marry early. The fact that this continues to exist means that the legislator is not working to safeguard the girls or change the social system and create awareness of this problem because the legislator at the end of the day is part of society.

### **International and National Frameworks Relating to Health and Early Marriage Convention on the Rights of the Child**

Health is addressed in the CRC in Article 24 and states that the child has a right to “the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health.” Furthermore, there are measures provided which are particular to the girl-child that include, diminishing infant and child mortality; ensuring appropriate pre-natal and post-natal health care for mothers; access to education in the use of basic knowledge of child health and nutrition, the advantages of breastfeeding, hygiene and environmental sanitation and the prevention of accidents; and developing preventive health care, and family planning education and services. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services.

#### **CEDAW Article 12**

CEDAW has a guarantee of healthcare equality in Article 12 and provides specific measures with respect to pregnancy. It states that “appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period, granting free services where necessary, as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation.” States parties are required by article 12 to take measures to ensure equal access to health care.

In some States there are traditional practices perpetuated by culture and tradition that are harmful to the health of women and children. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning.

#### **Article 16**

States parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

- (a) The same right to enter into marriage;
- (b) The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent;
- (c) The same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution;
- (d) The same rights and responsibilities as parents, irrespective of their marital status, in matters relating to their children; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;
- (e) The same rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights;

### **General Recommendation No. 21 Equality in marriage and family relations Polygamous marriages**

Polygamy is practised in a number of countries. Polygamous marriage contravenes a woman’s right to equality with men, and can have such serious emotional and financial consequences for her and her dependents that such marriages ought to be discouraged and prohibited. The Committee notes with concern that some States parties, whose constitutions guarantee equal rights, permit polygamous marriage in accordance with personal or customary law. This violates the constitutional rights of women, and breaches the provisions of article 5 (a) of the Convention.

#### **Beijing Platform for Action: Strategic objective C.1.**

Increase women’s access throughout the life cycle to appropriate, affordable and quality health care, information and related services.

#### **Strategic objective C.2.**

Strengthen preventive programmes that promote women’s health.

**Strategic objective L.5.**

Eliminate discrimination against girls in health and nutrition.

**National Implementation  
Jordanian Constitution**

Jordan has a well-developed health care system and demonstrates a continuous effort to provide all children with access to health care services. However, the Jordanian constitution contains only one provision Article 23 (e) which deals with health explicitly and it relates to the health safeguards in workshops and factories. The lack of legislation is a concern to some organizations with the UN's Committee on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights, stating that Jordan had "given little attention to incorporation of relevant provisions of the Covenant in its legislation."

**Personal Status Law**

Recent amendments to Jordanian laws have raised the minimum age of marriage to 18 years, but the chief justice in agreement with a specialized committee retains discretion to permit the marriage of anyone who is at least 15 years old if it is deemed to be in his or her interest. While the Hanafi school of Islamic law, dominant in Jordan, does not require a male guardian to conclude a marriage contract on behalf of an adult Muslim woman, the Jordanian government elected to adopt the position of the Maliki school in this matter. The consent of a Shari'a judge is required to conclude the marriage if the woman's guardian opposes the marriage without lawful justification. Furthermore, the Personal Status Act of 2001 sets the minimum age for marriage at 18 years for both sexes and yet this law is undermined by a judge and specialized committee agreeing that marriage at a younger age acceptable.

Article 10 stipulates exceptional cases in which the marriage of females between the ages of 15 and 18 years old is allowed. It was made clear by the Supreme Judge that such marriages are only granted in exceptional cases that might involve pregnancy out of wedlock or dire poverty. He also stated that marriages of females below the age of 18 years old only constitute 1.7 percent of all marriages. It was stressed that marriage to minors will be treated as a last resort. The social policies committee recommends that Article 10 be broken down into two articles so that the first stipulates the rule of 18 years old as the legal marriage age, and the second stipulates for exceptional cases. It is also recommended that in cases of marriage to minors a committee of judges be consulted so that the decision is not left up to one judge. Furthermore, in light of early marriage due to dire poverty, it must be pointed out that there are many other alternatives that include assistance provided from the Ministry of Social Development and monetary assistance from the National Aid Fund.

Judge Suhair Al Toubasi addresses the suitable age a girl to be married below:

The same applies to the marriage. Do we think that a girl below 18 understands the responsibility of marriage. During my work and through my experience with juveniles I find it is necessary to raise the age of marriage and protection

The Mufti of Jordan Sheikh Abdul Kreem Al Khassawneh explains more about the age for early marriage:

There are clear instructions on how to deal with the cases of early marriage whether through the personal status law and the role of the judge to ensure that there is benefit to the girl from that marriage and estimate her ability to take on the responsibility of building a healthy family in partnership with the husband. Good qualities of a good husband are very important.

It is important to ensure that both sides, the groom and the bridegroom, are both judged and weighed out to see if the marriage is suitable and that judgement of the man should fall under the different shari'a categories which include that an act is a duty, should be discouraged, or is haram (forbidden in Islam).

There are many reasons for the high rate of divorce among early marriage couples which are not solely dictated by the age of the bride. Family guidance is important to limit the incidence of divorce, the importance of a medical test before marriage and for accurate study into divorce incidence among early marriage couples.

The physical maturity of the girl for marriage is important and early marriage also happens in western countries.

Lubna Douani from the International Center for the Support of Women feels there have been some improvements for legislation on early marriage:

There is general consensus that there has been positive change on gender relevant legislation for example marriage under 18 for girls previously only needed the approval of the judge and the percentage increased to nearly 14 per cent and therefore it wasn't considered an exception. Now the girls cannot be married under 18 unless there is a committee approval as well as the approval of the judge.



There are many cases that try to utilize the clauses that allow exception to the early marriage restrictions. For example I received a case where the mother wanted her 13 year old daughter to get married because the mother wants to save her from what she said was the authoritarianism of her step brothers especially after her father died. The mother said that she doesn't see a problem with early marriage. She married early and she doesn't see a reason why her daughter shouldn't.

**Mr. Omar Albtoush, Imam of a mosque feels there are disadvantages to early marriage:**

There are certain conditions and requirements for both the man and the woman that need to be fulfilled in order for it to be successful. One is that the man and the woman have to be of a certain age, so they are mature and responsible enough for marriage. In Islam there is no specific age mentioned, as it depends on the culture and the specific conditions. But as a general rule, early marriage has more disadvantages than advantages and is therefore not recommended. The Muslim judge needs to make sure that both are mature and capable for the marriage – if not, he would be considered guilty in the eyes of Islam and the marriage is not right.

**Judge Mohammad Tarawneh also views that there have been improvements in terms of legislation for early marriage, due to Jordan's international commitments and pressure from civil society:**

The new amendments on laws have put stronger restrictions on cases allowing marriage of girls who are under 18. The issue is not decided by a judge alone but requires the committee's approval on a case by case basis. The incidence of early marriage has been reduced significantly from what it was about 20 years ago due to extensive national efforts especially from civil society. The reason why there were amendments is the increase in awareness and the documentation of the failure of early marriages as well as pressure from civil society organisations as well as Jordan's commitment to adhere to international conventions including CEDAW.

**Jordanian Nationality Law**

Article (3) of Jordan's Nationality Law (No. 6 of 1954) declares, "Any child born of a father with a Jordanian nationality shall be Jordanian Wherever born." A Jordanian woman is allowed to retain her nationality after marrying a non-Jordanian; however, Jordanian women married to non-Jordanians are not permitted to confer their citizenship on their children. Furthermore, the Law of Residency and Foreigners' Affairs (No. 24 of 1973) does not facilitate residency for foreign men married to Jordanian women nor to their children, even though this law grants foreign wives of Jordanian men preferential treatment.

The CEDAW Committee has recommended that Jordan withdraw its reservations for the nationality law. The law prevents a Jordanian woman from passing on her nationality to her children if her husband is not Jordanian. A child has the right to nationality.

**National Health Strategy (2008-2012)**

The National Health Strategy aims at:

- Extending health insurance to all citizens.
- Ensuring equality in gaining access to and obtaining health services regardless of the Ability to pay.
- Providing efficient, high-quality health care services in accordance with international Standards.
- Increasing financial support allocated to primary health care services in order to ensure sustainability in services provided.
- Unifying, standardizing, and computerizing administrative, financial and information retain the benefits and systems at all levels of service providers.
- Strengthening intersectoral partnership in order to create a distinguished health care system based on integration and expenditure control.
- Developing and updating first-aid and emergency system within the Kingdom.
- Activating reproductive health programs conforming to all established strategies.
- Supporting the most vulnerable groups, particularly the poor and the elderly.

Institutionalizing national health accounts and public expenditure review as a reference for drawing up financial policies. Strengthening the abilities of primary health care services to preserve gains, overcome weaknesses, and enhance strengths, while at the same time focusing on: Meeting the needs of special categories in the community, such as children, women, those who are getting married, elderly, those with special needs, and those subjected to violence.



The National Health Strategy includes activating reproductive health programs and strengthening its services for children, women and for those who are getting married. It does not mention working towards eliminating gender discrimination in health. It should include an aim to increase girls' access to health information, awareness of the failure of early marriage and the consequences of premature pregnancy, access for youth to reproductive health services and access for children to sexual education.

Dr. Manal Tahtamouni, the Director of the Institute for Family Health (IFH) at the Noor Al Hussein Foundation NHF highlights some of the gaps relating to children and health in Jordan:

In the health sector we find the needs of youth are not addressed, especially the youth who may be passing through sexual problems. There is a lack of awareness of the importance of sharing reproductive health knowledge with this age group and especially boys. Society around us makes it uncomfortable to come forward with their concerns. In order to break the barriers in society against discussion of sexual issues or youth relevant issues we need to establish clinics that don't have a controversial label such as "clinic for teenagers" because that certainly would make mothers shy away from going to such a place but if it was called "family health clinic" then women would not be labeled as having engaged in sexual acts to be there.

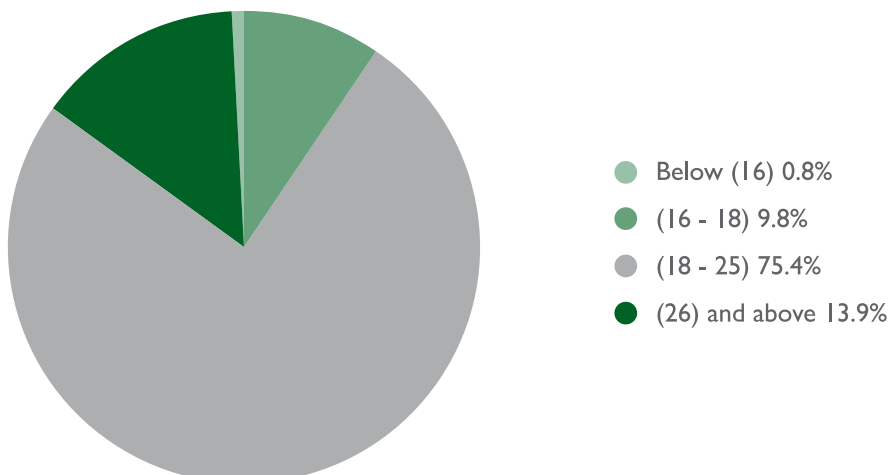
We also have a prejudgement of an unmarried girl who comes to a family planning clinic. Service providers mostly decide not to give family planning advice to unmarried women and concentrate instead of giving advice on AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. Boys also suffer in this regard. There are no reproductive services for boys and in fact some health centres have signs banning the entry of men and others have a red line to keep men out. Which means that men are not being involved in the reproductive cycle of the female and although they are primary decision makers in her life, they are being kept out from the process therefore their decisions are not based on knowledge which is sometimes dangerous such as when there are dangerous pregnancies etc. Also in birth control decisions the men's lack of involvement makes the woman hesitant and unable to take a decision based on mutual conviction.

There is the issue of removing the uterus of the disabled girl child. There are an unbelievable acceptance from the service providers and families. The argument goes that if she is disabled and not going to have children what need do we have for her uterus. We as health workers know that that organ is part of a whole interlinked system that needs to operate properly to ensure her health and psychological health. Even when women have to remove it for health reasons at the age of 40 and older they suffer. Can you imagine if it was done to a child?

### Gender Analysis of Research Findings Quantitative Survey

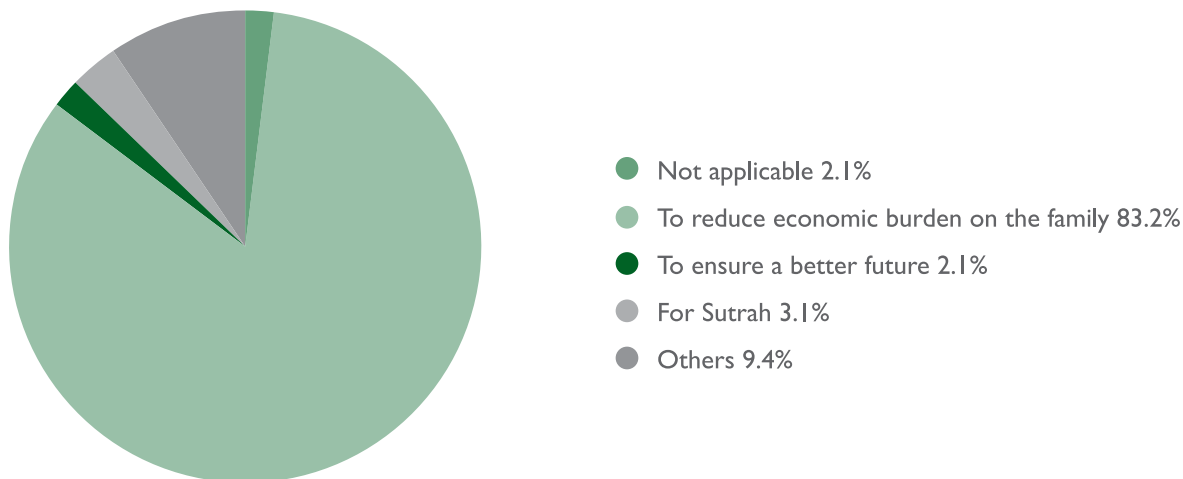
When a girl child marries, there is a real impact on girls' health and education and the psychosocial effects are enormous. The unstructured in-depth interviews with legal and social experts and key local community persons in Jordan raised early marriage as an issue facing the girl child. Therefore some of the questions posed in the quantitative survey relate to this theme and further our understanding of this issue facing the girl child.

#### What is the suitable age for marriage in your family?





**If the answer is less than 18 years old, why?**



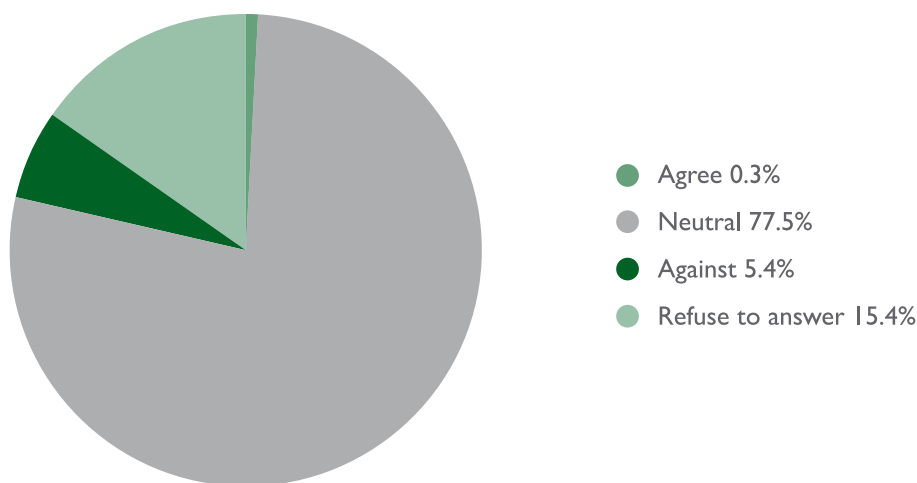
**What is the suitable age for marriage in your family?  
If the answer is less than 18 years old, why?**

The household survey indicates that the majority of wives and husbands, at 75.4% thought that the suitable age for marriage was between the ages of 18-25 years old. Some at 13.9% even thought that above 26 years old was suitable and 9.6% believed the suitable age to be between the ages of 16-18 years old. This indicates that most families do not support child marriage. But there is the 9.6% of households where awareness needs to be raised on the harmful effects of early marriage. The majority of the households that support early marriage for below 18 years old, gave the primary reason was for Sutrah at 9.4%.(Have a footnote or explain meaning of sutrah and explain if it is discriminatory against girls?)

**Differences between Governorates**

In Amman, Irbid and Zarqa the reason for early marriage was because of Sutrah. In Zarqa also one of the main reasons for early marriage was because this would lead to a better future. In Aqaba most respondents believed the suitable age for marriage to be 26 years old and above.

**No matter how educated a female is her destiny is to get married**

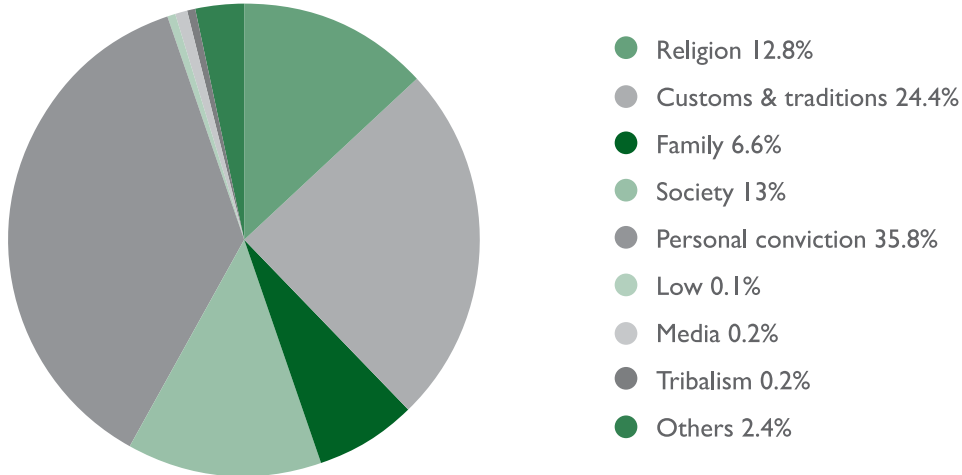


*The same applies to the marriage. Do we think that a girl below 18 understands the responsibility of marriage. During my work and through my experience with juveniles I find it is necessary to raise the age of marriage and protection*





**Source of conviction (No matter how educated a female is her destiny is to get married)**



**No matter how educated a female is her destiny is to get married**

This indicator shows how no matter how educated a female may be, that her destiny is to get married, an overwhelming 77.5% of wives and husbands agreed. Their source of conviction was mostly their own personal conviction at 35.4%, but 24.4% were influenced by customs & traditions 24.4%, society 13% and religion 12.8%. Compared to their wives, the husbands were more influenced by society and religion.

This clearly shows the prescribed gender role, that a female's role in society is to get married and be a mother. Even if the female is highly educated, her destiny is not for example to be a successful leader and have a successful and meaningful career. This role constrains females to the household and does not encourage them to participate in society. Such a gender gap constitutes a fundamental challenge to the task of achieving complete equality or parity between men and women in Jordan.

There have been some important gains in the area of education, but 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 having a negative impact on families' socio-economic circumstances and health. It has negative consequences for the economic development of the country, because you have an educated female population that is not being utilized.

**Differences between Governorates**

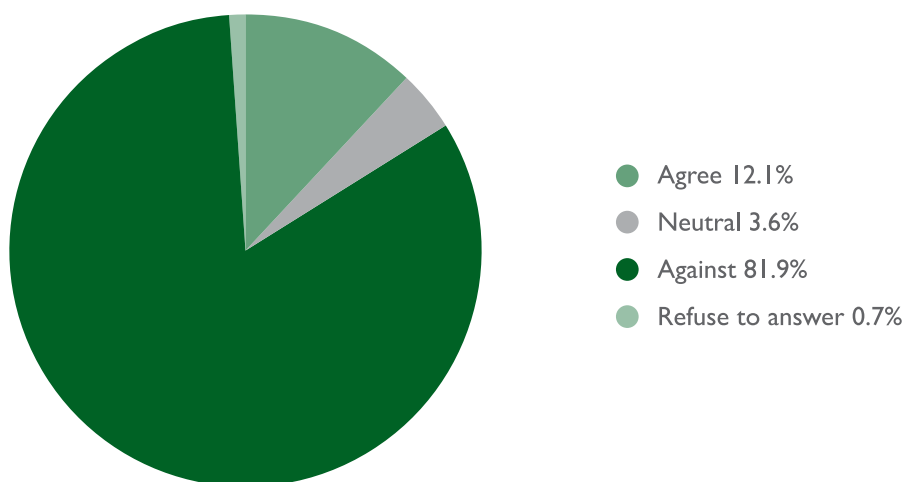
In Aqaba and Mafraq there was almost 100% agreement and in Zarqa there was also very high agreement. In Karak more were against that no matter how educated a female, it is her destiny to get married.

Dr. Abdul Mahdi al Soudi, a Sociologist at Jordan University supports this prescribed gender role for women:

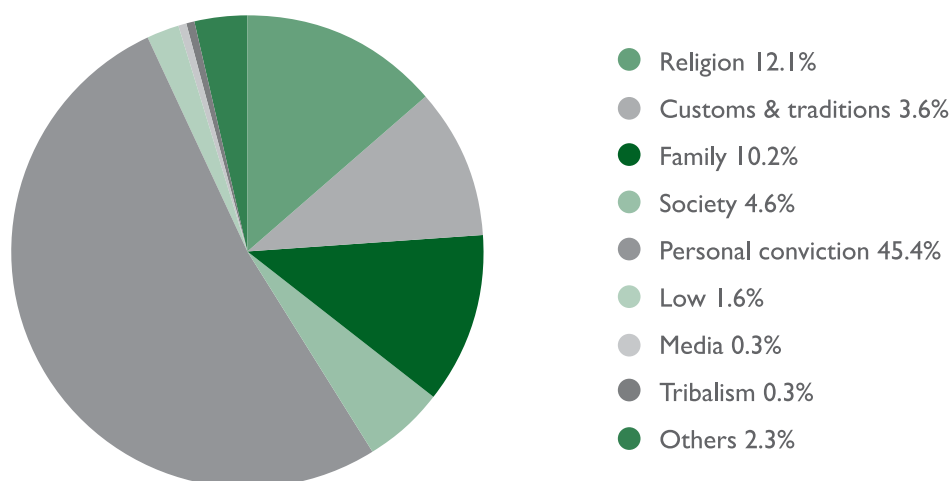
The girl must work inside the house so she becomes ready for the marriage stage in her life since this is her role in her family. One of the reasons for the increase of divorce is the inability of the girl to run her household and because she is not very familiar with housework.



**I will marry off my son at an early age even if he doesn't want to**



**Source of conviction (I will marry off my son at an early age even if he doesn't want to)**



**I will marry off my son at an early age even if he doesn't want to  
I will marry off my daughter at an early age even if she doesn't want to**

There was not much of a gender bias found for these indicators. For the daughters 10.2% would marry them off at an early age even if they did not want to and 12.1% agreed for their sons. The majority disagreed at 82% for both. Their source of conviction was more personal conviction at around 45% and 21% were influenced by religion. The wives agreed more than their husbands and were also influenced highly by customs and traditions and family.

A woman's right to choose a spouse and enter freely into marriage is central to her life and to her dignity and equality as a human being. Neither boys nor girls should be forced into marriage on the basis of custom, traditions and religious beliefs. Other countries allow a woman's marriage to be arranged for payment or preferment and in others women's poverty forces them to marry foreign nationals for financial security. A girl's and boy's right to choose when, if, and whom she will marry must be protected and enforced by law.

**Differences between Governorates**

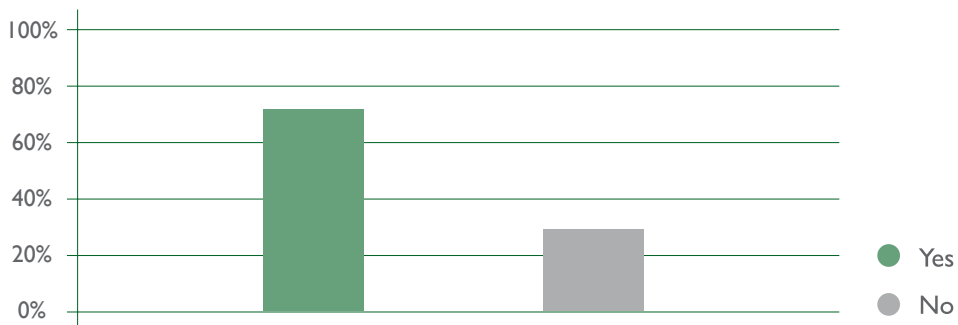
There were not many differences between the governorates. Zarqa and Irbid were more influenced by religion and family.

Dean of the Sharia and the Islamic Studies in Yarmouk University, Dr. Mohammad Oqleh speaks about the influence of religion on early marriage:

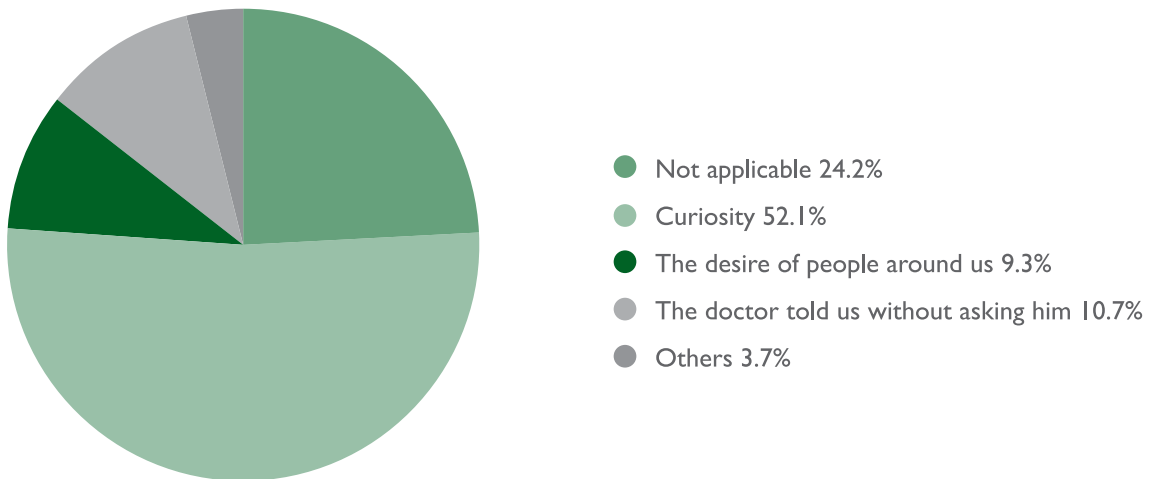


Islam tied the age of marriage to the age of puberty which means that she must be physically and mentally ready for the marriage. The law was that 18 was the minimum age for marriage and now it is 15 which is when a girl arrives at puberty and Islam believes that this is a suitable age for the marriage of a girl.

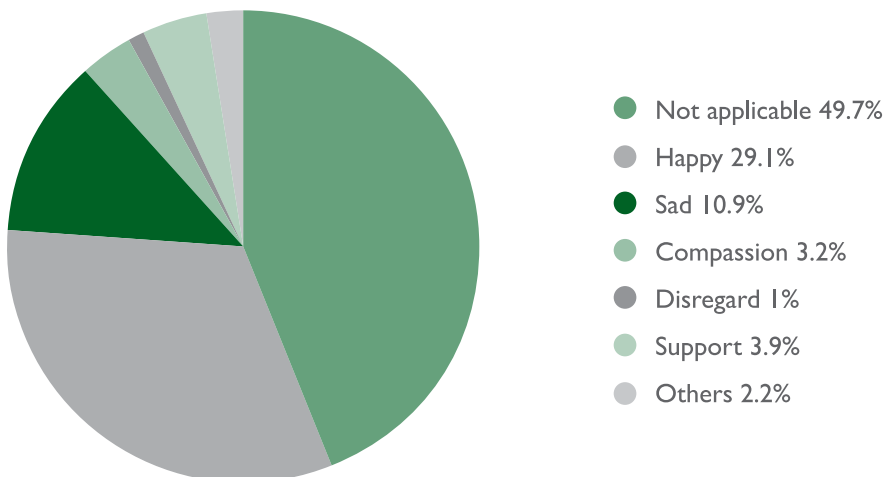
**Do you try to Know the gender of your unborn child?**



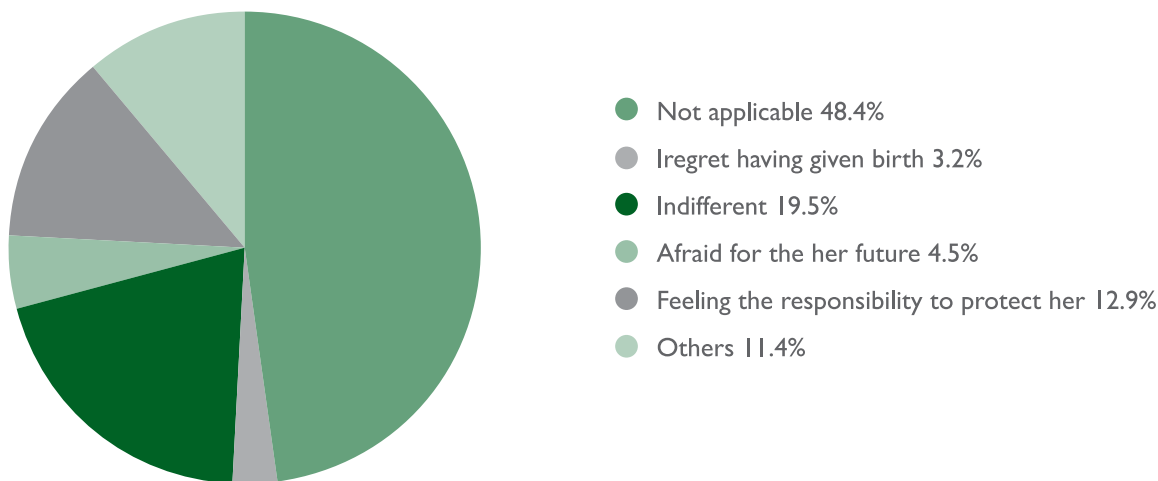
**Why you try to know the gender of your unborn child?**



**What was the reaction of the people around you, when they knew that the third born was a girl/female?**



**How did the reaction affect on you?**



**Do you try to know the gender of your unborn child? If yes,why?**

**What was the reaction of the people around you, when they knew that the third born was a girl/ female?  
How did the reaction affect on you?**

It was found that 71.3% of respondents try to find out the gender of their unborn child. The main reason was out of curiosity. The reaction of people around them when they found out that the third born was a girl, only 29% of the people being happy and 10.9% being sad. In terms of how their reaction affected them 19.6% were indifferent, 12.9% feeling the responsibility to protect her and 4.5% afraid for her future. A small percentage regretted giving birth at 3.2%. The fact that only 29% of people were happy when the third born was a girl, shows a preference for the male child, therefore a gender bias.

It is worrying that some respondents were afraid for the girl child’s future and that they regretted giving birth. The responsibilities that women have to bear and raise children affect their right of access to education, employment and other activities related to their personal development. They also impose inequitable burdens of work on women. The number and spacing of their children have a similar impact on women’s lives and also affect their physical and mental health, as well as that of their children. For these reasons, women are entitled to decide on the number and spacing of their children. The woman should not feel pressure about the spacing of her children if she does not have a boy, she should not be forced to bear more children just to have a male child.

**Differences between Governorates**

In Zaraq more respondents did not know the gender of their unborn child. For the reaction with the third born as a girl, more respondents in Zaraq, Amman and Irbid were sad. More respondents in Zarqa, Amman, and Irbid also regretted giving birth. In Mafraq there was a stronger responsibility to protect the girl child.

Dr. Manal Tahtamouni, the Director of the Institute for Family Health (IFH), Noor Al Hussein Foundation NHF spoke about the discrimination facing the girl child from conception:

Discrimination doesn't begin at birth but actually begins at conception. There are a lot of practices that depend on the arrival of a male or female child in a family. Many national studies have shown that many prenatal services are linked to the presence of a male child such as family planning. Studies have shown that families that have a son are more likely to use family planning methods than one that doesn't. The feeling is if the mother doesn't have a son then she should continue having children till she does. This leaves the mother under a heavy social pressure. Most questions by would be mothers are centered on how to conceive a male child. There are new issues now for example choosing the sex of the child. And sadly this practice is being misused in Jordan which is unaccepted both from an ethical and religious points of view.

A doctor at a conference in Jordan recently explained the technology behind this and said that they had 100 cases of which 98 asked for boys and the ones who asked for girls were not from Jordan and not Arab. During pregnancy the discrimination continues especially when the family has limited financial resources, the family gives preference for spending on protecting the male embryo whether it is in the number of times they come to see a doctor, whether



they chose to use free government services or use a private doctor. This all depends on whether the baby is going to be a boy or a girl.

**Fadi Dawaghreh, from Family Protection Society in Irbid also spoke of the discrimination girls face from conception:**

The role of a girl is determined from conception. When the parents find the sex of the child, when they know it is a girl, the father is sad and the mother is embarrassed to say that she is about to have a girl. But when they are having a boy then they are happy and they start preparing clothes and toys in blue. In our society we deal with many divorced women. When we study their cases we find that a high percentage of these women were married off early. This is the outcome of the lack of awareness and the effect of those cultural habits on the girl.

### **Theme of Marriage in the Art Workshops**

The thought of marriage was very much alive amongst the adolescent girls in the art workshops. The art workshops revealed how society instills a clear message about marriage for girls from a very young age. The collective poem made reference to the point that girls are told “Now you are getting older (age 10 on) and soon you will be a bride.” Many images surfaced of the bride in the white wedding gown, and the comment that this was the most important day in her life. That belief that it is the most important day is not specific to these participants or to this geographic region.

The art workshops revealed that for most participants that this is one of the only things to truly look forward to in one’s future, the only ‘escape’ path as noted by some participants. The adults who influence the girl child need to step back and think of the messages that are given to our daughters.

Early marriage was not taboo for the participants and openly discussed, and, in one case one of the participants from Sahhab spoke of being divorced by the age of 16. One participant from Mafraq talked of her interest to get married solely in order to leave the country. The majority of participants from Zarqa (13/15) commented on the norm of polygamy in their community.

Many of the participants had selected portraying picture-perfect happy families, while their comments in the discussion referred to the unhappy families, family discord (Karaq and Mafraq). In Sweileh a majority of participants (17/22) commented on the non-stop nagging that occurs or rather the complaints of men that women are always nagging (nak’).

One image that appeared in numerous collages was that of the bride in the white wedding gown, with the caption of “the most important day of my life”. They spoke of the desire for a happy relationship, but had no concept of what that would entail. Other comments made by a number of participants referred to how the picture of a beautiful family did not capture the reality, and that underneath the picture, there was discord. Many commented on both males and females questioning their choice of a partner. There were many images of motherhood.

**Faris Naimi, Director of YES (Youth Energies Society) gives an example of how the girl child is socialized to believe that marriage is the most important day in their lives and all they should aspire to:**

There is one girl, someone proposed to her. She is a beautiful girl and attractive – a burden, she needs to get married early. She got married at the age of 15 to a person she had never met. She was very happy! She was educated to seeing marriage as the ultimate success of her life. I think maybe she also needed attention and love and wanted to escape her family situation. It is the same with other girls: they are proud to get married. You know, it’s not like they are free and by getting married they are suddenly committed, rather they are slaves in the home and sometimes they are beaten. Girls have to work at home, cook, clean, serve brothers, parents and guests.

**Dr. Moneer Karadsheh adds further information on the effects of early marriage:**

There are two kinds of religion, popular and official. When families want to marry their girls off early they use religion to facilitate the early marriage and taking the girl out of education. Society believes that “your son is yours but your daughter isn’t” in reference to the concept that she leaves the house to her husband’s home when she marries and therefore she brings no benefit to her family but to her husband’s.

Early marriage is a problem on many levels. Firstly the girl is immature biologically and therefore the percentage of prenatal and post natal mortality is high. Most early marriages end up either in divorce, remarriage or early widowship. Girls at 16 also are at a high fertility stage of their lives and therefore they produce more children and become unhealthy with it. There must be a role for the media in creating awareness of the problems of early marriage and the legal body must also understand its role and raise the years of compulsory education even though people are working around the law.



### Interviews with Social Counsellors

Many of the Social counsellors had stories to tell of early marriage and some of the effects. Many girls were forced to leave school, faced difficulties if they remained in school, while some were committed to their education.

Myassar Itbishat, from the Jumana school in Irbid tells the story of an early marriage case:

There is a student who got married and left school and then returned after a while. She has a son and she wanted to leave him in the nursery but at the end they placed him with her mother. She sometimes comes late and at other times she doesn't show up at all because her son gets ill quite often. She struggles a lot and we try to support her by treating her as a special case especially as she clearly still wants to study and is really quite young at just 18.

**Mais Al Fuqaha, from the Hawara School in Irbid said:**

Those who marry early don't stay at school and most of them marry in grades 7 or 8. I had presented an awareness session on early marriage for the mothers and even brought a speaker from the women's union in Irbid to explain the dangers of early marriage.

**Maisoon Abdo, from the Umm Habiba School in Amman stated:**

There are two cases of early marriage and both are in secondary school. They don't face any problems and we have agreed with the husbands to support them through university. We don't have a single case of sexual harassment.

**Khawla Al Halhoul, from the Al Rabbah School in Karak shares a story:**

Yes there is one case. A girl in the first year of secondary got married and her husband forced her to leave school and she did. After a while she got divorced and returned to school.

**Walaa Al Bustangi, from the Arwa School in Karak speaks about the cases of early marriage in the school:**

Yes we have married and pregnant students but they are committed to the school. The percentage of official engagements in the school is quite high. Most of the married or engaged students are in the first secondary year or Tawjihi. There is one married Tawjihi student, one who was between tenth grade and first secondary year got married and left school. One got married, pregnant and miscarried so she left school. We deal with married students differently. She needs more time to look after home and school so sometimes she is late for school and we excuse her.

## CULTURE AND TRADITIONS

The girl child study strongly demonstrates how traditions, society and family influence people's opinions and practices related to the girl child, and the effect is found to be considerable. The impact and influence of cultural factors on gender relations, socio-cultural heritage, and the traditional view of girls' and women's roles and capacities, takes shape in the stereotypes, customs and norms which give rise to multiple constraints for the advancement of girls-legal, political and economic growth.

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 and politicians. 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 lower women's role in private life (pages 20, 21, Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action).

It is clear therefore that, culturally, stereotypical attitudes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men still constitute an impediment to the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by girls.

Perhaps surprisingly, and in stark contrast to the findings related to the effects of culture and tradition, the girl child study strongly demonstrates how the law, media and tribe only 'slightly' influence people's opinions and practices related to the girl child.

The image of the Arab child is often that of a "good" child, one who is polite, obedient, disciplined, should be seen not heard, and conforms to the values of the group (UNESCO, 2007,9). Ouis (2005) argues that in general Arab Muslim girls have difficulties in expressing their voice and participating fully in society. In interviews with girls across the Middle East, Dr. Ouis found that all girls said that their brothers' opinions were taken much more into consideration, but not theirs. She points to the "Islamically cherished" segregation between boys and girls which has resulted in under-representation of girls and has made public space a male dominated territory.



Also, the social sphere is highly male dominated and suppressive towards girls. This restricts social bonds and friendships related to the aforementioned conditions. For female adolescents in particular, friendships include relationships with sisters (sisters being friends at the same time) and with relatives (female cousins on both the father's side and the mother's side). Friendship between opposite sexes is limited in the poor, rural and conservative milieu (CAWTAR, 2005).

Professor Rula Qawwas, Feminist Literature Professor and former head of the Women's Studies Department at the University of Jordan, explains the impact of culture and misrepresentation of religion on the sense of self value of Arab Muslim Girls:

This will affect the way a woman looks at herself, how she is NOT represented in society, how she is imposed upon by the society and culture she lives in, and ultimately she looks at herself as a dwarf – somebody really very small, somebody little, as if she had no voice, no entity, no existence, as if she was only essential, but not existential. She is an appendage, she is going to be in a house, she is going to be a wife one day, she is going to raise children, and that's it. This is something that is indoctrinated by the society we live in, and in a way the woman absorbs this as a child.

## **International Commitments**

### **Convention on the Rights of the Child**

#### **Article 2**

1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

#### **Article 5**

States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child, to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the present Convention.

#### **Article 14**

1. States Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
2. States Parties shall respect the rights and duties of the parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to provide direction to the child in the exercise of his or her right in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child.
3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

#### **Article 24**

1. States Parties shall take all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children.

#### **Article 29**

1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:
  - (a) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;
  - (d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;





### **Article 30**

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.

### **Article 31**

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

## **CEDAW**

### **Article 5**

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures:

- (a) To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women;
- (b) To ensure that family education includes a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, it being understood that the interest of the children is the primordial consideration in all cases.

### **Article 10**

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

- (c) The elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging coeducation and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods;

### **Article 13**

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:

- (a) The right to family benefits;
- (b) The right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit;
- (c) The right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life.

## **The Beijing Platform for Action**

The platform has three strategic objectives that correspond: to eliminate negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls; to strengthen the role of the family in improving the status of the girl-child; and to promote the girl child's awareness and participation in social, economic and political life. The socio-cultural heritage and especially the traditional view of girls' and women's roles and capacities, constitutes a fundamental obstacle to the achievement of gender equality and implementation of the Beijing objectives. The full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is essential to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

### **Strategic objective L.2.**

Eliminate negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls

#### **Actions to be taken by Governments**

- Encourage and support, as appropriate, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations in their efforts to promote changes in negative attitudes and practices towards girls;
- Set up educational programmes and develop teaching materials and textbooks that will sensitize and inform adults about the harmful effects of certain traditional or customary practices on girl children;





- Develop and adopt curricula, teaching materials and textbooks to improve the self-image, lives and work opportunities of girls, particularly in areas where women have traditionally been underrepresented, such as mathematics, science and technology;
- Take steps so that tradition and religion and their expressions are not a basis for discrimination against girls.

### **National Implementation**

The National Plan of Action for Children

1. Increase the percentage of children (according to age group) who are able to articulate knowledge of clearly defined spiritual, religious and moral understandings.
2. Encourage children to appreciate the beauty of the Arabic language and to use it in different aspects of their lives, and to enhance their appreciation of their Arab and Muslim identity as it is linked to the Arabic language.
3. Increase children's knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, and in particular their civil rights, according to defined standards
4. Create an artistic environment for performing arts in all its forms (theatre, music, art, and dancing) to be the core elements in creating a national artistic identity.
5. Increase children's knowledge of their positive cultural heritage and their knowledge of the experiences of Jordanian and Arab pioneers.
6. The plan should adopt Jordan's international commitment from CRC, CEDAW and Beijing, such as commitment to promote awareness, protect and eliminate negative cultural attitudes and practices against boys and girls.

The National Plan of Action for Children plan should adopt Jordan's international commitment from CRC, CEDAW and Beijing, such as commitment to promote awareness, protect and eliminate negative cultural attitudes and practices against boys and girls.

### **Study findings**

The quantitative study extensively measured the source of the parent's attitudes and practices towards their sons and daughters in order to pinpoint the source of conviction and facilitate advocacy efforts to create awareness of the negative of positive messages championed by that source.

Without a doubt the influence of culture, family and society combined far outweigh the influence of other sources of conviction including religion. The chart below shows how influences from the immediate environment including customs (15.6), family (11.76) and society (9.3) totalling (36.6) add up to almost three times the influence of religion (14.41) and the miniscule impact of the media (0.22) or the law (0.6). Worryingly 41% of the parents referred to their personal conviction, a largely unknown and subjective quantity, as the source of their attitude and practices.

The influence of religion is diminished even further when the three questions related to the state of the physically or mentally challenged child are removed from the formula. In those questions the religion was found to be the most influential factor in forming perceptions.

It is clear to many interviewees that the teachings of Islam can be a rich source of practical wisdom which can serve to guide parents and wider society in the care for children, not just after birth, but before that as well. Religion shows a particular understanding of the cultural framework that treats the arrival of a girl child with disappointment and teaches that all children should be welcomed and celebrated at birth, with the holy Qur'an specifically condemning those who express sadness or dismay when a girl is born, or who fail to treat children with absolute equality.

But despite the clarity of teachings vis-a-vis the value of a female child and the insistence on providing her with equal opportunity, Islam has been used to explain away the exclusion of female children – and later women – from the public and social space from a very young age thereby predetermining her destiny as a non participant whether it is socially, in the labour market or in politics.

Mr. Omar Albtoush, Imam of a mosque and religious leader, criticises directly the trend to mix culture and Islam and utilize the powerful influence of Islam to perpetuate the bias and ostracisation of women

People in general connect this culture to Islam, but it is actually far from Islam, in fact there is a big difference between this culture and Islam. But because religion is very influential, it is used to market such cultural norms and to make women accept and adopt them.

**Professor Rula Qawwas agrees that Jordanians are linking culture to Islam:**

We should study books and articles about the specificity of Arab cultures, because the position of the girl child in society in Arab countries is different from other countries. We should study the ideology of “andro-crazy” (andro is greek and means man) and understand its complexity. Furthermore it is important to understand tribal factors and their positive and negative implications, as well as people’s understanding of religion (not religion itself) and the representation of the woman, which are all very important in shaping the culture. Culture springs from religion.

Conversations with Islamic experts have highlighted that “Sharia” law insists on equal educational opportunities for boys and girls alike as well as breast-feeding, hygiene, immunization against illness, as well as birth spacing which allows the mother to regain her strength after each pregnancy, and parents to take good care of the young infant. Parental example rather than violence, Islamic teachings insist, help in instilling values in children. All forms of physical, moral and psychological abuse of children are condemned, and indeed society has obligations in caring for the weak, the destitute, orphans and abandoned children. Child labour is prohibited, and the right of children to play and recreation is acknowledged. Islam not only encourages education but stipulates that learning is a duty that should accompany a good Muslim lifelong.

The mufti of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Sheikh Abdul Kareem Al Khassawneh strongly commended the effort to study the situation of the girl child in Jordan admitting that there are gaps in societal interpretation that leads to bias in contravention of Shariaa teachings. The Grand Mufti of Jordan cited from the history of Prophet Muhammad an occasion in which the prophet promised entry into heaven and protection from the fire of hell to those who brought their daughter up well, educated her well and gave her of the monetary wealth God had bestowed upon them.

**Religious Leader Omar Al Btoush leader speaks at length of the prevalent cultural misconception assigned to Islam and its teachings:**

The culture portrays the girl as weak and incapable. For example of a widely accepted notion is that a woman is a source of fitna (seduction or temptation), which underlies many norms supposedly aiming to protect society from such negative influence. For example, the woman should not work outside the house. There is even a saying that the woman should not go outside the house except for two times: to go to her husband's house when she gets married; and to go to her grave. Here you can see that she is not seen as a human being. And this they connect to Islam!

This has nothing to do with Islam. Prophet Muhammad said that men and women are siblings “النساء شقائق الرجال” – meaning equal. This is the essence of how Islam looks at the relationship between man and woman. It shows that the woman is equal to man in terms of her capacities, her duties, and her responsibilities, and in terms of what she has got to offer society.

In the Quran it also says that “ولقد كرمنا بني آدم” - we have been created as noble human beings, and “human beings” includes both men and women. Both have the same station in the sight of God. Another verse often cited is that the man is higher than the woman “الرجال قوامون على النساء”. He understands the meaning of this verse as saying that the man should take care of the woman. It is superiority not in terms of station, but in terms of who should take care of the other. It shows man’s responsibility, not a higher station. To prove this he mentions another tradition by Prophet Muhammad that says men should take good care of women “أوصيكم بالنساء خيراً”. Furthermore, when Prophet Muhammad was dying he reminded his companions of two things: prayers and women. They should remember the prayers and take care of the women “وما ملكت أيمانكم”. That he reminded the Muslims of these two things in his last minutes shows how important they are.

To further illustrate the contrast between Islam and the current culture where people say that women should not work and should not go out of the house, he goes back to the days of the Prophet. When He died, his wife Aisha was 19 years old and she was conducting classes in Islam, Medicine, and Poetry, and dozens of Muhammad's followers graduated from her school, where she taught and interacted with them. Also during the wars in the early days of Islam, the women were the nurses and the ones taking care of the men. They had an important role and men and women were interacting.

These examples further show that women can be leaders and men can learn from them. There are many more examples showing that women were active in all fields – they were productive.

**Asked why there is such a difference between the real teachings of Islam and the practiced culture, Imam Omar Albtoush mentions three main reasons:**

- 1) Widespread ignorance of the real teachings of Islam. He mentions that this was actually prophesized by the Prophet who said that when the judgment day draws near, knowledge will fade and ignorance will spread – meaning knowledge of Islam.
- 2) Islam was revealed among Arabs and the Arab tribes had strongly rooted traditions and norms of disrespecting and despising women. One example is that widows were treated as part of the inheritance and another one that girl children were buried. Islam came to fight traditions like the burying of girls, but these traditions were not completely eliminated with Islam, and with the passage of time and with the spread of ignorance, this culture reappeared more strongly. But ironically this culture was marketed with Islam, clothed as religion. Nowadays girls are not actually buried under the ground, but morally and psychologically that is exactly what happens to them. A very common and widely adopted saying, even by religious leaders, is “Consult with women, and do the opposite.” “شاوروهن وخالفوهن”.
- 3) The third reason is the women themselves, because they take such norms and practices for granted. They defend them saying this is what they are used to, this is our culture. Of course this has to do with how they were raised and educated. But women should participate in fighting for their rights and changing this culture. He gives the example of parliamentary elections. You can find women running for elections who are capable, educated and knowledgeable, and the first people to let them down are the women who don't elect them because they don't believe in them. Therefore, in order to change this culture, we should empower women, and they should know their rights and their real place and role in society.

But in contrast, culture, custom and tradition in Jordan does not draw on the rich history of Islam as a source of wisdom in their dealings with children, but give precedence to other sources of practice of tradition in ways that are not always positive in their impact on the young girls. As shown in the eight chapters recounting the attitudes and practices of parents in Jordan, misinformed practices and customs do not find their roots in religion but in society's and family's customs and the parents' fear of criticism by society which could translate into the family rejecting their daughter and limiting her marriage choices.

**Dr. Hussein Mahadeen, Sociologist and well known socio-political commentator explains:**

Religion should be the foundation but what we see is that the social factor and social customs and traditions have sidelined the influence of religion and stressed the social considerations more. Although there are now many more opportunities for the education and work of a girl, we still manage to keep her in the Eib (cocoon) of old age customs and practices

**Dr. Issam Mansour – Sociologist – Applied Sciences University, concurs:**

Our customs and traditions are what our families hold onto and against those religions the law has no value and is not recognized by the family. Even religion that they claim to adhere to is manipulated to suit their own customs and interpretations.

While some critics of the influence of culture on women and in particular girls have maintained that it is difficult to capture what a child means to a mother and to a father in Jordan, the study shows that that meaning differs according to the gender of the child because the path drawn or envisioned for that child's future is markedly different depending on its gender. Children have of course been regarded differently across time and cultures (James, Jencks & Prout, 1998; May, 2000; Brooker, 2005). In the West, for instance, children have been viewed as chattel for whom the state has no interest or rights of intervention (pre-1900s); as social capital for whom state investment in health and education was intended to create a useful adult citizen and prevent social disorder (post-1900s); as a psychological being whose mental health required support and understanding by parents and institutions, leading to a more sane society (post-1945); and as a citizen who had rights derived from a fairer society (post-1970s).

**Dr. Moneer Karadsheh, Sociologist from Yarmouk University, believes we have not come forward very far from considering girls as chattel:**

Traditions and customs play a large part in the marriage of a girl and her family's control of that decision. Tradition and custom is influential as well in the decisions over education, marriage and even going out of the house. The girl is considered responsible for the family honour. Our societies appear to hang on the concept of 'ird (family honour that is related to the behaviour of the girl). The society also looks at the girl as if she is a project - either it is a successful and rewarding project or a losing one - either it succeeds in bringing in the rewarding marriage and social status that comes with it, or it doesn't. The social positioning is very important in influencing the girl's education and her education has a larger influence on that than laws.

He adds that:

We haven't arrived at an optimum situation nor will we as long as our cultural religion and traditions dictate how we utilize our religion. This continues to have a huge impact on the way our Arab society functions and therefore we need to work with the policy makers and continue to try to change the environment around the girl child until we create change for her.

**Lubna Douani of the International Center for the Support of Women argues that awareness and forward looking legislation are necessary ingredients for moving forward:**

What should happen is that legislation would reflect society. However to ensure the rights of an individual in a changing society, the importance of raising awareness of the rights and duties is evident. That type of awareness would reduce the discrimination between the two sexes and would consolidate respect for women, and human rights in general.

**Professor Rula Qawas takes this conversation several steps further:**

The laws are very important and need to be changed, but if we change the laws and not the culture, nothing will change. To change the mindset of the people is the hardest thing ever: It has to go side by side. "We changed laws related to women's mobility and residency, and we have removed the reservations to CEDAW, which is really very good. But if a 19-year old wants to rent an apartment and live by herself – who allows this? We changed the law, but do we exercise the right? In Islam, the woman can say no if she doesn't want to get married to a certain man, but do women do this? In Islam marriage is a contract and you can write any conditions you want (she gave examples). They have the right, but how many exercise that right? Many women know their rights when it comes to health, education, civil laws or whatever, but there is a difference between knowing one's rights and exercising one's rights. I cannot just change the law and then let it sit on the shelves collecting dust, I have to make people act on that law. And how do I do that? By changing the culture. And culture is made by man in Arab countries.