

## **Paying “Lip Service” to Gender Equality: The Hollow Implementation of Gender Mainstreaming in Jordan**

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### **Abstract**

Gender equality became one of the focal points of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Jordan after the establishment of the Jordanian National Commission for Women in 1992. While civil society is typically considered to be a separate entity from the state, the relationship between the state, civil society, and the monarchy in Jordan creates an intertwined space for gender equality programming and advocacy. Based on a sample of 23 international, state-led, royal, and non-royal affiliated CSOs in Jordan, our findings suggest that gender equality is used as rhetoric more than as implementable policy or practice. Few CSOs take a holistic gender-responsive approach, and interventions aimed at reducing gender inequality are often fragmented and ad hoc in nature. We argue that the blurred line between domestic CSOs (with or without the support of international organizations), the monarchy, and the defensive democratization pursued by the state also undermine the potential for CSOs to engage with the social and political roots of gender inequality.

**Keywords:** Jordan, Gender Equality, Civil Society, Gender mainstreaming

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### **Introduction**

“Gender mainstreaming” has attracted international attention since the 1990s, surging in popularity after the Fourth UN World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, after which the European Commission took on a leading role promoting it as a means to achieve gender equality (Hafner-Burton et al. 2009; Charlesworth 2005). After decades of uneven implementation of gender mainstreaming programs, a significant body of literature has emerged from the European context suggesting that these programs have been largely ineffective in targeting the root causes of gender inequality (Meier and Celis 2011; Daly 2005; Mósesdóttir and Erlingsdóttir 2005; Hafner-Burton et al. 2009; Charlesworth 2005).

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region continues to be identified as one of the most gender-

unequal regions in the world in terms of women's ability to access employment, property ownership, and political participation. Though a few studies assess the extent to which gender mainstreaming has been effective in the MENA region, there lacks a systematic assessment of gender and development programming conducted by civil society organizations (CSOs) in Jordan, where the relationship between the state, civil society, and the monarchy create a uniquely complex and intertwined space for gender equality programming and advocacy. While the term civil society typically refers to a sector of society separate from the state and market, inclusive of, but not limited to, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (United Nations, n.d.), this distinction is not evident in the Jordanian context. In this article, we use the broader umbrella term CSO interchangeably with NGO, since the former is inclusive of the latter. We rely on a diverse sample of 23 interviews with international, state-led, royal, and non-royal affiliated CSOs in Jordan, as well as an extensive review of the literature produced on CSO gender programming in the MENA region.

### **“Democratization” and the emergence of an apolitical civil society**

In Jordan, it was not until 1989 that CSOs began to proliferate after the period of political liberalization initiated during the late King Hussein's reign, which included parliamentary elections and the drafting of a national charter (Clark and Michuki 2009; Robinson 1998). This was part of Jordan's 1990s transition into a “façade democracy,” wherein the democratization process was controlled by the King's political agenda, and thus power remained in the hands of the monarchy (Milton-Edwards 1993, 201). Under this system, the monarchy allows for moderate liberalization that veils a populist authoritarianism, which includes restrictions on women's organizations, and an avoidance of changes to laws that would elevate women's political and social status (Jad 2004; Wiktorowicz 2000, 1999). Political change during this time took the form of modest attempts at liberalization that were regime-initiated, and without any sustained pressure from social movements (Wiktorowicz 2000). Robinson (1998, 387) characterizes this process in Jordan as a case of “defensive democratization” under the Hashemite regime. In other words, the state implemented preemptive reforms to distract the population from the economic crisis of the 1980s, while maintaining the dominant political culture. Hence, the process of democratization was led by the ruling elite to placate citizens and quash political unrest. Defensive democratization in Jordan required little reordering of power, or fundamental societal or economic changes. This defensive political reform was simply a reshuffling that aimed to prevent more radical social change (Robinson 1998); it ensured citizens' economic security and access to social services in exchange for granting the regime autonomy and control (Gubser 2002; Wiktorowicz 2002). Thus, NGOs, development agencies, and other CSOs emerged not as contentious actors, but as a means of exerting state control in exchange for economic resources, social services, and limited political freedoms (Wiktorowicz 1999, 2000). As such, CSOs were rendered apolitical.

The emergence of this depoliticized CSO sector in Jordan has resulted in an absence of space for political opposition. This depoliticization has undermined any potential for collective political action in general, and particularly for the women's movement. Prior to independence and during state-formation in Arab countries, women's movements were actively engaged in the struggle for women's rights, and they were well-connected to emerging international women's movements (Jad 2004; Al-Ali 2003). However, in the 1960s, the newly emerging state of Jordan strongly opposed independent women's organizations (Jad 2004). Moreover, the process of defensive democratization was effective in depoliticizing CSOs in general and women's organizations in particular by creating a culture of fear in

relation to political engagement (Ferguson and Apsani 2013).

Donor-driven development agendas further complicate this, making it difficult to “carve out an autonomous space” that allows organizations to pursue their own agendas (Chowdhury 2011, 415). The international donor community has therefore been complicit in exerting power over local CSOs’ agendas: “NGOization leads to the transformation of a cause for social change into a project with a plan, a timetable, and a limited budget, which is “owned” for reporting and used for the purposes of accountability vis-à-vis the funders” (Jad 2007, 627-628). Social movements, including women’s movements (Ferguson and Apsani, 2013), have been replaced with institutionalized, development-focused interventions that are ineffective in fostering systemic change. Similarly, the professionalization of these organizations “produce upward rather than downward accountability, exclusion rather than inclusion; and ‘scaling up’ brings with it bureaucratization” (Friedman 1992, 142 as cited in Jad 2007). The professionalization of CSOs includes, for example, a recruitment process that favors those with subject-specific technical knowledge and academic training over those with experience in activism and engagement (Clark and Michuki 2009).

In Jordan, for example, CSO employees are generally highly educated, English speaking women of a different social class from the constituencies they are meant to represent (Clark and Michuki 2009), which creates dissonance and a disconnect from the low-income and even middle-class women that CSOs are meant to advocate for. In order to exert some form of political and moral influence over governments and societies at large, women’s organizations must be able to represent middle class and poor women’s needs and interests (Jad 2004), which CSOs in Jordan have largely failed to do. Their efforts are largely based on social welfare and education, and are operationalized through top-down approaches that do little to foster voluntarism, participatory decision-making, or grassroots mobilization, all of which are important for collective action (Jad 2003). For example, Ababneh (2016) examines how daily wage workers in Jordan were inspired by the Arab Spring to organize and mobilize for better wages and working conditions despite the lack of support from the formal professional women’s rights CSOs in Jordan. Ababneh uses this example to argue that mass political mobilization around gender issues in Jordan will probably not happen within the constraints of the institutionalized CSO sector. Mass mobilizations are more likely to emerge around issues important to poor and marginalized women within the context of more flexible grassroots movements, as was the case with the daily wage labor movement. These issues are compounded by the various restrictions delimiting civil society organizations in Jordan.

### **The relationship between the state, the monarchy, and CSOs in Jordan**

Officially registered NGOs in Jordan fall into three broad categories: (1) non-governmental organizations that were established independently of the state, but are subject to strict state oversight and control; (2) semi- or quasi-governmental organizations established by the government; and, (3) royal organizations established by royal decree and headed by a member of the royal family (Clark and Michuki 2009). It is important to note that quasi-governmental and state-founded organizations can be categorized as “government organized NGOs” (GONGOs), yet they are not, by definition, “non-governmental” entities (Carapico 2000, 14). Despite varying levels of independence, all NGOs in Jordan are bound by state control, having either been created by or “severely restricted and controlled by the state” (Al-Ali 2003, 222). For example, the second largest NGO in Jordan is one that provides

programming in gender and development, but it is a Royal NGO (RONGO) headed by Queen Noor, and includes a board of directors that is appointed by “royal decree” (Wiktorowicz 2002, 86). Even for the seemingly independent CSOs and national chapters of international development organizations, the state exerts a high level of social control through surveillance and administration.

Several legal statutes in Jordan, namely the Law of Public Meetings (60), the Law of Societies and Social Organizations (33), and the Political Party Law (32) have meant that women’s NGOs are restricted to apolitical work, which means they can only “provide social services without any intention of [...] political gains” (Wiktorowicz 2000, 51). Law 32 restricts political activities to those within political parties, which renders civil society more broadly apolitical (Wiktorowicz 2000). Under the vague umbrella of “political affairs,” Law 60 provides the authorities broad purview to control and police collective participation (Wiktorowicz 2000, 50). The law stipulates that any public gathering regarding politics must have advanced written consent from authorities, and must meet many stringent regulations or face being dispersed by violent means if necessary (Wiktorowicz 1999; 2000). This results in civil engagement that is controlled by the state, and is thus an extension of state power, rather than a countervailing influence upon it. Organizations must adhere strictly to the state-imposed controls or face dissolution or the reorganization of their board and activities as the state deems fit (Wiktorowicz 2002).

Law 33 also defines a rigid operational space for NGOs through the surveillance and control of their operations, ranging from their objectives and conditions for membership to their funding and audit requirements (Wiktorowicz 2000, 2002). This includes the requirement to submit detailed NGO records, including those concerning finances, board meetings, and membership, and gives the government the right to perform inspections of NGOs at any time (Wiktorowicz 2002). Within this system, bureaucracy becomes a substitute for more overt forms of oppression (Wiktorowicz 2000). Moreover, NGOs in Jordan are centralized and overseen by a monitoring arm of the regime, the General Union of Voluntary Societies (GUVS), which polices its member NGOs and requires substantial annual fees that can drain the funds of smaller organizations (Wiktorowicz 2002). The state also draws its power from the fact that it is a source of potential funding for NGOs, which is dispensed at the discretion of the GUVS. These arrangements facilitate self-regulation and self-monitoring of NGOs, which allows the state to save on surveillance costs (Wiktorowicz 2000). The ultimate result of these laws and administrative bureaucracy is that the state has strict control over collective action. In fact, this system has been identified as a form of “domestic colonization,” wherein social control is enforced through the administrative arm of the state (Wiktorowicz 2000, 48). State control of CSOs and NGOs, unsurprisingly, limits the political scope of these organizations’ work and encourages short-term interventions that are limited to education and poverty alleviation (Wiktorowicz 2002, 1999, 2000; Al-Ali 2003). These laws have also weakened the potential for political mobilization specifically for the women’s movement since its demands for social, political, and economic equality tend to be viewed as disruptive of established familial and societal patriarchal structures and hierarchies.

### **Gender Mainstreaming: Theory versus practice**

Gender mainstreaming is both a theoretical concept and a model for practice that has gained large-scale traction in a relatively short period of time, perhaps because of its symbolism as a progressive approach to addressing gender inequality (Daly 2005; Walby 2005). Gender mainstreaming seeks to

“institutionalize equality by embedding gender-sensitive practices and norms in the structures, processes, and environment of public policy” (Daly 2005, 435). Gender mainstreaming aims to address and challenge “deeply embedded norms and assumptions about gender relations” which shape gender inequality (Daly 2005, 440). In practice however, its implementation varies greatly from one country to another. Additionally, gender mainstreaming often fails to consider *gender*, and focuses on women instead. This approach is not comparable to engaging with gender as it fails to adequately consider the ways that gender is constructed and embedded within social systems (Harding 1995). Ultimately, by focusing on women’s disadvantages, gender mainstreaming often fails to dismantle structures of inequality (Daly 2005).

A second concern about gender mainstreaming is that it tends to be operationalized in terms of breadth, but not depth (Daly 2005). This “horizontal” implementation does not fulfill the intent of mainstreaming, which is to deeply embed and institutionalize gender equality (Daly 2005, 444). This may explain why mainstreaming often does not exhaustively shift policy makers’ thinking around gender, thereby perpetuating the focus on women (Daly 2005). Eveline and Bacchi (2010) suggest that it may be the conceptualization of gender as a noun rather than as an action that has resulted in policy focused on women, to the detriment of gender. Instead, conceptualizing gender as a verb would refocus policymakers’ attention on gendering as a social process, one that is “ongoing, contested, and incomplete” (Eveline and Bacchi 2010, 87). Zalewski (2010) points to the deeper problem that “gender mainstreaming suffers from a disconnect with its feminist theoretical groundings” insofar as it remains stuck within the “male-female dichotomy” (24-25).

Another important theoretical criticism of gender mainstreaming is the underlying assumption that state institutions will be open and willing to change. As Daly (2005) explains, it is problematic to assume that “once policy-makers are “enlightened” and the range of policy actors broadened, then gender inequality will be combated,” without considering the power dynamics inherent to issues of gender inequality (446). In practice, changes are not simply adopted, but rather contested and negotiated, which is reflective of the inherent tension between the goal of gender equality and the current mainstream (Walby 2005). Finally, even if the state achieves exemplary gender mainstreaming, the question remains as to whether state policy alone can sufficiently change deeply-rooted gender inequalities within society.

Within the MENA region specifically, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2014) reports that all countries have adopted some form of gender mainstreaming strategy, particularly in their international commitments, yet this is rarely systematic and is challenged in terms of implementation due to a lack of enabling legislation. A review by UN Women identified a significant gap between gender-responsive planning and its operationalization in Arab countries (Adhane 2015). The report notes that although legislation and constitutional amendments have been made in favor of advancing education, health, and economic empowerment for women, a wider gap exists between policy and practice in the MENA region than in other parts of the world, especially regarding the political empowerment of women. Much of this is attributed to broader cultural attitudes towards women and traditional conceptions of women’s roles (UN Women 2015). In Egypt, for example, gender specialists working in the non-profit sector identified “cultural traditions” as part of the challenge in implementing gender mainstreaming, alongside the failure to involve men in attempts to shift cultural norms (Shash and Forden 2016, 80). Furthermore, the organizational structures of nonprofits in different parts of the

world, including the MENA, are such that gender mainstreaming is done in order to “tick a box” rather than to create real change (Shash and Forden 2016, 79). As Baruah (2005) explains, gender is often used in this way as “as an additive category,” meaning that women are “added” to development programming, and gender is simply “stirred into” existing programs, rather than used as a lens to approach and understand issues of power and inequality (680). Such an additive approach includes, for example, counting how many men or women attended a training, took a loan, or participated in a program. But increased numeric representation of women program beneficiaries is not equal to intersectional and structural gender equality.

The prevalence of this additive approach in gender programming in Jordanian civil society is reflective of the broader pattern of the lag between gender and development theory and its implementation in practice (Baruah 2005; Cornwall 2003). Despite legislation enabling gender equality, such as the 2013-2017 National Strategy for Jordanian Women, the OECD (2014) reported that Jordan had no national gender mainstreaming strategy, suggesting that a more comprehensive government-wide approach is necessary. As one of our interviewees notes, this strategy is not focused on gender but on *women* and includes no concrete action plans. Other than this national strategy, it is unclear to what extent gender is mainstreamed within CSOs in Jordan. To the best of our knowledge, there is no peer-reviewed literature that assesses CSO gender programming in Jordan. While many international organizations operating in Jordan have global gender mainstreaming strategies and training (see for example GIZ 2013; IDRC and IFAD 2009), an independent assessment of the extent to which this informs their activities and operations in Jordan has not been undertaken. Beyond broad assessments of how gender mainstreaming has been conducted at the regional level in MENA countries (see for example Jad 2003; OECD 2014), it is important to understand and document how gender equality programming has been taken up and implemented in specific countries, including Jordan. This is particularly important given the diverse political realities in the region, and that is precisely the gap that this study in Jordan aims to address.

## Methods

The findings presented in this paper are based on semi-structured interviews completed in 2015, 2017, and 2019 with staff from 23 international development organizations and CSOs in Jordan. Each interview lasted between 20-60 minutes. We have included international development organizations based in Amman in our study because they rarely work directly with the beneficiaries’ country of operation. Rather, they implement their programs through various Jordanian CSOs contingent upon the provision of funding. Furthermore, some organizations, such as the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), work directly with governments and CSOs and influence development policy at the national level, which justifies their inclusion in this study. Since this study was conducted under the aegis of an intergovernmental agricultural organization—the International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA)—we primarily sought out organizations working on agriculture, food security, climate resilience, and water management in Jordan. All organizations included in this study have offices in Amman, which is where we conducted the interviews. Gender focal points, gender unit staff,<sup>14</sup> and senior staff members were interviewed wherever possible. The full list of names of organizations and their mandates appears in Annex 1.

A total of 31 respondents are included in this study. The sample includes seven international

organizations (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit—GIZ, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), CARE International, FAO, World Food Program (WFP), Mercy Corps, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)) that fund local initiatives, including non-profits, NGOs, humanitarian organizations, and UN-affiliated organizations; eight royal foundations or organizations (Hashemite Fund for the Development of Jordan Badia, Jordanian National Forum for Women, Jordan River Foundation, King Hussein Foundation, Noor Al Hussein Foundation, Tamweelcom, The Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD), Queen Zein Al Sharaf Institute for Development (ZENID)); five government programs, corporations or ministries (ERADA, Agricultural Credit Corporation (ACC), Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIIC), Vocational Training Corporation (VTC)); two regional intergovernmental organizations (Arab Women Organization of Jordan (AWO), Regional Centre on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development for the Near East (CARDNE)); and, one non-royal affiliated NGO (Microfund for Women).

Interviews were mostly conducted in English; two interviews were conducted in Arabic and subsequently translated to English. Most interviews were audio recorded; two interviewees declined to be audio recorded, therefore these interviews were documented through our own interview notes. Interviews were not transcribed verbatim. Instead, notes were taken based on themes identified through inductive content analysis (Elo and Kyngäs 2008). In this approach, data is classified in an iterative manner depending on the researcher's interpretation.

To share findings from our interviews in this paper, we have honored requests for anonymity from some individuals and organizations. Where permissible, we identify the name of the organization that provided the information, but we never identify individual interviewees. Since only one staff member was interviewed from most organizations, even identifying the name of the organization would be tantamount in some cases to revealing the identity of an informant who may have requested anonymity. We follow what are called Chatham House Rules in reporting interview findings. This is standard practice for reporting data drawn from groups meetings and interviews while abiding by anonymity requests.

## **Findings and Discussion**

We have organized this study's findings under five broad themes: the widespread use of an additive approach to gender and development; a strong focus on anti-poverty and efficiency approaches; community and household-level approaches; the limited engagement of men in gender programming; and the role of Royal NGOs (RONGOs) in simultaneously promoting and obstructing gender equality. Four additional subthemes emerged under the theme of anti-poverty and efficiency approaches: women's economic empowerment, microcredit, entrepreneurship, and home-based businesses for women. We discuss them one at a time, while cognizant of the fact that there are overlaps and commonalities between all the themes and subthemes under which we have organized study findings.

### **1. An additive approach to gender and development**

Many of the Jordanian organizations we interviewed adopt an "add women and stir" approach to

development programming. This ensures that a certain number of women are included in their activities, and that there is a somewhat equal gender balance amongst their employees. For example, the FAO office in Jordan reportedly takes a “light” approach to gender mainstreaming insofar as having a “fair balance” of women represented amongst both their staff and their projects’ beneficiaries. The FAO interviewee also revealed that the organization has no dedicated gender staff, no internal trainings on gender, and no collaborations with gender-focused organizations. Mercy Corps also focuses on gender balance among their program beneficiaries, which simply means including the same number of men and women in their programs. However, doing so does not necessarily address the underlying ideologies and conditions that result in gender inequality. For example, although its loan programs are open to applications from men and women, Mercy Corps tends to target “heads of households” as a “matter of tradition.” The premise is that targeting the head of households would automatically lead to benefits for other members in the household, thereby rendering the majority of women who are in male headed households invisible, and their needs unaddressed. Therefore, while the organizations may work with both women and men, implicit gender biases often prevent them from implementing gender equitable programming. Similarly, the Hashemite Fund for the Development of Jordan Badia limits its gender equality strategy to ensure that at least 30% of its staff and project beneficiaries are women. No further effort is made to explore how and whether women benefit from their programming. In reference to their project “Water Wise Women,” which is housed at the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, a GIZ interviewee noted that there is no gender strategy at the level of the ministry; rather, gender mainstreaming is a donor-driven initiative. The interviewee goes on to suggest that “the primary need is to work on attitudinal change [...] at the individual level,” thereby firmly placing the responsibility for change outside of GIZ’s institutional purview. The Jordan River Foundation (JRF) takes an anti-poverty approach to its work, which translates into primarily income-generating activities based on skills traditionally acquired by women, such as cheese-making, and targeting women as beneficiaries for their loan program.

Overall, gender programming within most organizations in Jordan does not appear to be implemented in a deliberate, proactive, or organized way. Although most of the organizations interviewed note the importance of gender in their programming, there is often little concrete action to support this claim: they do not ensure regular gender trainings, hire gender focal points, or develop and operationalize gender equality strategies. During our interview with ERADA (“will power” in Arabic), respondents emphasized that gender equality is the organization’s main concern in all areas of operation in Jordan. Although ERADA’s commitment to gender equality is always emphasized in its monthly and annual reporting, staff members, when asked, were unable to provide details of how a commitment to gender equality is incorporated into specific aspects of ERADA’s work, beyond the fact that its vocational training and capacity building programs also include some women. Thus, perhaps justifiably, there is no mention of gender programming or mainstreaming on ERADA’s website. Similarly, ACC staff reported carrying out gender equality activities “all the time” as they are “highly recommended” by government institutions, yet the interviewee could not provide a specific example of gender equality programming or training offered by the organization. Likewise, the King Hussein Foundation (KHF) does not have a formal or explicit gender strategy, though when interviewed, their staff stated that their projects aim to achieve economic and social empowerment for women. The KHF interviewee considered women’s involvement to be implicitly addressed and embedded in KHF’s work though she did also emphasize that the organization lacks the tools and deliberate strategies to ensure that they are consistently gender-aware and responsive: “We do it because it’s part of our commitment, but we don’t do it in an



organized manner.”

The lack of a formal approach to, and strategy for, achieving gender equality is worrying, given that projects are affected by internal biases of project/program managers, and organizational staff more generally. The effects of such biases have already been documented. In their review of gender programming in the MENA region, the OECD (2014) highlighted that gender mainstreaming is often resisted by certain senior staff members and decision-makers within the organization, who object to more progressive approaches to gender equality. In the case of Egypt, staff members similarly resisted gender mainstreaming because of individual biases and prejudices, as well as rigid organizational structures (Shash and Forden 2016). In Jordan, Ferguson (2017) found that women’s organizations avoid political engagement, as many of their leaders have strong ties to the Jordanian regime and appear preoccupied with maintaining their social status rather than enacting change.

Moreover, our findings indicate that gender trainings for organization and program staff are generally outdated or inadequate, and in some cases non-existent. Unsurprisingly, this contributes to a poor operationalization of gender programming, even when gender is a stated priority. At the Hashemite Fund for the Development of Jordan Badia, the interviewee noted that the lack of gender training is the most significant barrier to improving gender mainstreaming within the organization.

Organizational structures of NGOs and the availability of funding, which is generally tied to project-based cycles, also present limitations for meaningful programmatic engagement with gender equality. These funding cycles shape priorities, as projects require measurable and quantifiable results within the relatively short duration of the project. As noted by Shash and Forden (2016), organizations must go beyond short-term approaches, as gender mainstreaming requires long-term planning that targets “resistance and sexist organizational culture” (79). This is precisely the issue that Jad (2003) recognizes in her critique of NGOs in the Middle East, which remain development- and project-oriented, and therefore ineffective in fostering systemic change. As Jad (2003) explains, projects are often “limited, localized, and implemented by professionals” with narrow responsibilities, divorced from practical concerns like budgeting and organization, and strategic concerns such as the overall mission (44). Accountability to timetables, budgets, and funders constrain the potential for larger-scale movements (Jad 2007). Recent findings from Jordan confirm that contemporary women’s movements remain institutionalized as NGOs, which are tightly bound by state-mandated parameters (Ferguson and Apsani 2017).

Furthermore, the lack of accountability for implementing gender equality transcends organizational and national levels. For example, the interviewee from MOPIC noted that, with respect to the National Strategy for Jordanian Women, there is no “action plan to implement this strategy and this is a problem for all of our strategies—that we have strategies and we have good documents, but we can’t implement them.” She suggested that this is because of a lack of financial resources, and because of more systemic structural issues around regulation and reporting. Similarly, staff members are unlikely to integrate gender into their work if there are no hard reporting requirements. These limitations are not unique to Jordan or the MENA region. For example, Hafner-Burton and Pollack (2009) found that when it comes to the adoption and operationalization of gender mainstreaming within the European Union, soft incentives are not nearly as effective as hard incentives with consequences, be they negative or positive.

It is also important to note that while some international organizations such as the World Food Program (WFP) have gender strategies and gender training at the global and international levels, our interviewees confirmed that they do not impose any gender requirements on their national partners for diplomatic reasons. Therefore, the national partner of WFP is not responsible for the implementation of any gender equality activities in Jordan. Overall, our findings indicate that despite having many more resources to support gender equality than local organizations, international organizations such as FAO, GIZ, UNDP, Mercy Corps, and WFP employ some of the weakest gender mainstreaming initiatives in Jordan. They often do not have any gender equality strategy in Jordan beyond the imperative of “balancing” the gender of their staff. Therefore, the availability of funds and resources within international development organizations often does not translate into concrete strategies and action in support of gender equality in the Jordanian context.

While our findings indicate an overall weak operationalization of gender mainstreaming, it is important to note that a few organizations are aware of how their institutional structures and place in Jordanian civil society limit their ability to effectively institute more progressive gender strategies. For example, the Arab Women’s Organization (AWO) explained how their activities have changed from a rights-based approach to a more project-based approach, which is consistent with the NGOization of the Arab women’s movement as described above. The movement became more institutionalized beginning “in the 1990s when there was promotion in Jordan for civil society organizations [...] and so we started thinking of aggregating the efforts of women’s NGOs” (Interviewee, AWO). This made it easier for the AWO to operate in Jordan, given the size and strength of the country’s CSO sector, but AWO continues to advocate for political and legal rights—seemingly one of the few organizations in Jordan that do so. Overall, women’s organizations in Jordan remain largely isolated from other organizations and larger movements; they are depoliticized and conservative, restricted by mandates limited to social assistance and poverty alleviation (Ferguson 2017).

## **2. A strong focus on anti-poverty and efficiency approaches to gender and development**

Although gender and development theory has moved on from welfare, anti-poverty, and efficiency-based approaches—which focused on women’s reproductive and productive roles as wives and mothers, and their instrumentality in achieving development goals—to approaches focused on questioning and challenging unequal structural power hierarchies and relations between women and men, these earlier approaches to development persist in practice (Adnane 2015; Baruah 2005; Chant and Sweetman 2012; Cornwall 2003). They have also been reinstated more recently under the guise of “smart economics,” which advocates “investing” in women for their utility in addressing broader national and global human development goals (Chant and Sweetman 2012, 517). This approach results in projects that simply address the gap between men and women’s material conditions by integrating women into existing economic structures, as opposed to addressing women’s position in society that is contingent upon that very same economic structure (Baruah 2005). That this approach provides relatively easy policy and technical fixes for the issue of gender inequality also explains its popularity in government and CSO programming. Further, the inclusion of women as a means to improve development effectiveness places the burden of development on women, and suggests that women are “merely instrumental” to development goals (Baruah 2005, 678). As summarized by Chant and Sweetman (2012), relying on women “to guarantee business as usual, let alone transform the world, demands super-human sacrifices in terms of time, labor, energy, and other resources” (521).

Our results confirm Ferguson's (2017) finding that many CSOs in Jordan have a narrow focus that is limited to addressing social welfare issues, specifically women's economic empowerment. The focus of most organizations in our study continues to be on poverty alleviation, the provision of loans, entrepreneurship, and vocational training, as opposed to social mobilization, advocacy, or rights-based approaches. Of the 23 organizations interviewed for this study, 11 were involved in some form of microcredit or loan program as part of their activities. Some organizations, such as KHF, have also shifted from non-monetary support for income-generating activities, including vocational and skills training, to financing-only approaches, focused on revolving micro loans. The ACC and JRF use microcredit programs to curb poverty through income generation and limiting unemployment. The Microfund for Women, whose entire mandate focuses on improving the lives of women, also takes a narrow income-based approach, aiming to socially and economically empower women by improving their economic contributions to their families. Similarly, Tamweelcom understands gender equality as primarily achievable through the inclusion of women in the economy, beyond which no attempt is made to change the position or roles of women within the household or the community. The majority of their beneficiaries are women, who are granted small business loans to support traditional activities such as handicrafts, livestock rearing, and cheese production, which accommodate, rather than alleviate, the burden of reproductive labor, which is disproportionately borne by women. Though some organizations focus on improving family income by other means, they tend to defer to integrating women into existing institutions and social hierarchies. For example, the Vocational Training Corporation, Hashemite Fund for the Development of Jordan Badia, and the Jordanian National Forum for Women also take an efficiency-oriented approach, focusing on incorporating women into the wage economy through skills and employment training.

In the pages that follow, we lay out some specific patterns and practices that emerge as a result of Jordanian CSOs' concerted focus on anti-poverty and efficiency approaches to gender equality and development.

### *Women's economic empowerment*

When women are only viewed as economic contributors to the family, the extent to which an improvement in their income will lead to a transformation of existing gender dynamics is debatable. Yet, many of the organizations we interviewed seemed to subscribe to the instrumental and apolitical understanding of women's empowerment. For example, the Noor Al Hussein Foundation and the Queen Zein Al Sharaf Institute for Development (ZENID) interviewees emphasized that economic empowerment is the most effective strategy for changing the gender roles of women within both the household and society. They believed that when a woman is economically empowered, it changes "her way of talking, her way of thinking [...] her relationship with her family, with her husband. They support each other, he gives her time to work and he performs other roles [...] that are expected from women." They also advance the assumption that women gain a sense of achievement from income generation that changes household power dynamics, decision-making, gender roles, and the allocation of resources. Despite such assertions about the importance of women's economic empowerment, we found that there was little support from the same NGOs for Jordanian women who are already engaged in economic activities that are lucrative but traditionally deemed masculine (Najjar, Baruah, and Al-Jawhari 2019). The implementation of programs aimed at women's economic empowerment by CSOs in Jordan appear to be strongly influenced by entrenched patriarchal societal norms that view women

as helpers to their husbands but not as co-breadwinners.

Contrary to the frequent assertion that the mere inclusion of women in income-generating projects contributes to women's empowerment, the interviewee from JOHUD pointed out that men are often responsible for selling and marketing goods, and may therefore control the flow of income even when women are producing the goods. She acknowledged that this may limit the extent to which household dynamics of power and control may be altered even when women contribute to the household economically. Furthermore, the Jordanian National Forum for Women interviewee noted that when women earn an income, they tend to invest money in the family's immediate economic needs, while men may want to invest their own as well as their wives' income in property or vehicles. Since men often purchase such items in their own names, even when they are using their wives' savings, earning an income may not translate into assets in a woman's name, and therefore may not mean a better bargaining position for her within the household. The JRF also confirms that while women make up 60% of its beneficiaries, they often rely on male relatives as guarantors; therefore, the extent to which women exert control over their business and income is questionable. This is consistent with findings in other contexts where women take on the liability and risk of debt, while the loan tends to be primarily controlled by their male relatives (Goetz and Gupta 1996).

These findings support Chant and Sweetman's (2012) suggestion that it is an oversimplification to "assume a much smoother and easier transition between individual "economic empowerment" and engaging with the social and political structures which constrain individuals" (523). Similarly, Ababneh (2016) argues that economic issues are too often considered separate from political issues. By depoliticizing poverty, we obfuscate the "political nature of neoliberal economic policies" (89). Thus, while anti-poverty and efficiency-based approaches have been criticized for their narrow apolitical approach, some projects focused on improving the economic livelihoods of women in Jordan can spur political mobilization if the issue is of immediate and practical concern to women.

#### *Micro-credit programs*

The theoretical debate about the usefulness of livelihood generation and economic improvement to gender equality is no more relevant than in the case of micro-credit programs, which remain popular among the organizations included in this study. Such programs typically channel small amounts of money for low-income families, through women, to survive on while ignoring the structural factors that create poverty and inequality in the first place. Based on evidence from beneficiaries of microcredit programs in Egypt, Drolet (2011) concludes that while these programs help women meet some of their immediate practical needs, they do not empower women in the longer term, as they often only support women's work in the informal economy, and therefore cannot replace formal employment. The women in Drolet's study found that their income did not lead to any changes in their position or decision-making power within their households; they also received no recognition or assistance for their unpaid reproductive work (Drolet 2011). Interestingly, however, Kabeer's (2001) work in Bangladesh highlights how empowerment as a result of loan programs can occur both through the process and outcome of women taking out loans. She argues that empowerment is a complex notion that requires a more nuanced analysis of how a woman's "*range of choices*" is expanded through microfinance, which has the potential to improve *some*, but not all, women's lives (Kabeer 2001, 81). We found no evidence of such critical reflection on the potential and limitations of microcredit and its variable potential for

women's empowerment in our interviews with Jordanian organizations, demonstrating the need for more reflexivity as part of their practice.

### *Entrepreneurship programs*

Among the organizations included in this study, there was a major focus on promoting entrepreneurship among beneficiaries. This is deemed desirable because it encourages people to not rely on salaried employment, even as it places the onus on individuals to support themselves while freeing the state and the private sector of their responsibilities to create and provide secure employment. For example, the National Jordanian Forum for Women supports women's entrepreneurship through a strategy that specifically encourages people to rely less on government employment and to return to live in rural areas of Jordan. While providing the skills and support to improve people's livelihoods is undoubtedly important, such approaches raise questions around whether encouraging survival entrepreneurship, in other words entrepreneurship motivated by poverty and lack of other viable employment opportunities (Langevang, Namatovu, and Dawa 2012), may be a way for the state to absolve itself of its responsibility for job creation. Further, migration to urban areas may boost enterprise and agricultural development in rural settings through remittances (Abdelali-Martini and Hamza 2014). Therefore, encouraging people to return to rural areas after acquiring vocational skills may not be the only effective strategy of enabling rural development. The reality of entrepreneurial motivations is complex as there is an interplay between structural forces and agency in such decision-making, particularly in countries where labor laws and job security are poor (Langevang, Namatovu and Dawa 2012). Our analysis suggests that organizations in Jordan pushing for entrepreneurship fail to take a nuanced or reflexive approach that sufficiently recognizes both the agency of beneficiaries and significant structural constraints, such as poverty and high levels of unemployment in rural areas. Some have suggested that these tensions could be addressed through critical engagement between civil society and the state, a role which international organizations are well-placed to facilitate (Sholkamy 2010), but there is presently no evidence of such engagement taking place in Jordan.

### *Home-based livelihoods for women*

The interventions described by our interviewees are also designed to help women earn an income without leaving their homes, thereby reinforcing rather than challenging the unequal familial and social positions of men and women. Such an approach meshes well with existing cultural and religious traditions in Jordan that still firmly place women within the home as domestic caregivers (Alfarhan 2015). Many of the CSOs interviewed in this study tailored their programs to encourage women to integrate into the productive economy through entrepreneurial home-based businesses, so as not to interfere with their current position and role within the family. Some CSOs justified this based on the need to appeal to heteronormative nuclear family values, which are central to Jordanian identity. Similar types of appeals to patriarchal familial norms were used to justify the need for women's involvement in economic activities over other approaches that demand the rights and entitlements of women as individuals or citizens. For example, an ERADA interviewee noted that the organization focuses on women's work because the "security of the family is the main concern of the woman, not the man." Women are not viewed as separate from the family unit to which they belong, and therefore the rationale is that they must also make contributions to family income. One CARE interviewee noted that community-based projects have the best results, precisely because women are restricted in terms

of mobility, and home-based businesses are more socially acceptable. Some organizations, such as ACC and JOHUD, also seemed to endorse patriarchal family values by downplaying the fact that women may experience disadvantages in terms of earning and controlling income. Speaking about their livestock support program for women, JOHUD emphasized that requiring women to open bank accounts (as a means to secure direct access to and control over their income) is unnecessary since the money will ultimately be spent on the household, regardless of who is in control. Other organizations acknowledged the complexity of the issues involved in gender and family relations. The ZENID interviewee, for example, notes that all economic empowerment projects for women are located within the home, at least initially, because women themselves prefer this approach, and because it is unrealistic to assume that women need to be completely independent: “We cannot start with the assumption that we need the woman to be independent without any effect on the males in her house, because it will not work, because they are a family, because they are living together, and they should share everything together.” They saw women as part of a couple and a family first, and highlighted the importance of working with men to avoid alienating them and “breaking up the family.” Several interviewees emphasized that such a strategy can also strategically help “empowered” women avoid backlash from the family and community. Yet, focusing on home-based businesses as the sole means to empower women does not address or even engage with the current imbalances of intrahousehold power between women and men (Baruah 2005).

### 3. Community and household level approaches

Community-based approaches aimed at income generation are popular in Jordan due to widespread assumptions that women are more effective at leading change within communities. This was a recurring theme in our interviews, where women were often perceived as more serious (ACC; UNDP); reliable (CARE); responsible (Mercy Corps); productive (ERADA; JOHUD); credible and committed (CARE); and more community-oriented (JRF) than men, especially when it comes to loan repayment. Other interviewees note women have the “drive to prove themselves,” and are “committed initiators” who are “dedicated” to improving the lives of their children (The King Hussein Foundation). This focus on women’s social roles as care workers and community organizers is also evident in the approach of the JRF, whose interviewee suggested that women propose more equitable, care-focused projects that are of greater benefit to the community, while men tend to suggest projects that are individualistic and benefit fewer people. This is a good example of an efficiency-based approach that leverages women’s “essential” qualities to improve interventions. Indeed, much of the literature on microfinance notes that women are perceived as more trustworthy, and therefore more likely to pay back loans, and have greater community impact (Agarwal, Goodell and Selleck 2015; Agier and Szafarz 2010; Kabeer 2001). Agarwal et al. (2015) note that this assumption is not empirical. Rather, it rests on the assumption that women are naturally more responsible, especially in relation to familial and household affairs. While women may be conditioned to be more compliant in loan repayment (Kabeer 2001), the assumption that women are more reliable and responsible places the heavier burden of development on women (Jackson 2002; Chant and Sweetman 2012). This is exemplified by the Jordanian National Forum for Women’s assertion that they are often required to adopt projects where organizations have downloaded project responsibility onto communities that do not have the capacity to continue them, many of which are focused on low-paid feminized economic activities, such as yogurt-making, cheese-making, or gardening. Moreover, approaches that essentialize women are also problematic because they do not recognize that one woman’s needs may differ from another, and from those of men in the

same families (Baruah 2010). Organizations that further such narratives may purport to mainstream gender in their work, however in practice their approaches may do the opposite.

Some organizations interviewed here, such as the ACC, did not recognize the need for individual or intrahousehold approaches, noting that, “Jordanians are like a family, we are family... a man and a wife, children... We are not talking about problems for a single member of the family.” In other words, ACC’s loan programs are not designed to meet the priorities of women, but rather the needs of the entire family, and the development of the economy as a whole. Similarly, the Jordanian Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) interprets gender equality and women’s empowerment as “the raising of the living standard for the whole family, and allowing women to play a role in increasing income.” As an example, this interviewee emphasizes that one of MOA’s most successful projects was a home gardening training program that allowed women to “run a project around [their] house, meaning [they were] able to raise [their] kids and work at the same time.” This is indicative not only of the failure of such programs to consider women’s needs as individuals, but also their tendency to create additional labor for women, and to have their needs absorbed into the needs of the whole household. Nonetheless, the MOA does acknowledge that there is a strategic advantage to framing its work this way since it can serve to increase men’s buy-in if the project is presented as being beneficial for the family rather than as an issue of women’s rights. Other authors have emphasized that there may be less resistance to women taking part in income-generating activities because they are considered a win-win for the family (Agarwal 2003). While men may not challenge such activities at all, they are likely to be far more resistant to deeper economic and political demands from women—for independent land and property rights, for example—that challenge their traditional privileges and entitlement to resources. While framing projects within existing gender norms is a way to make progress on women’s practical needs, the issue remains that, in Jordan, there are no separate women’s organizations or movements working towards the strategic changes needed to facilitate a social and political shift in the position of women (Jad 2003; Ferguson 2017).

#### 4. Does “gender and development” programming also include men?

Although the inclusion of men is necessary for challenging unequal gender norms, CSOs in the MENA region still tend to take a “women-only” approach to development and gender equality (Adnane 2015). This is perhaps part of the persistent legacy left by the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985), and the integration of women in development, as a response to male bias in the development process (Chant and Gutmann 2002). Our findings confirm that most organizations in Jordan continue to take a women-only approach. This is evident even at the national level. The interviewee from MOPIC noted that the National Strategy for Jordanian Women focuses only on women, whereas “a gender approach means that we should look at women and men.” As discussed in the introduction of this paper, focusing solely on women, as opposed to gender relations, undermines the potential breadth and relevance of the gender and development approach as it fails to adequately consider the ways in which gender inequality is embedded in social systems (Harding 1995). Moreover, it contributes to the assumption that women are solely responsible for issues such as gender violence, childcare, or family planning, thereby placing the burden of dismantling the patriarchy in the hands of women alone, and not men (Chant and Gutmann 2002).

Very few organizations included in this study seemed to appreciate the importance of addressing

gender inequality rather than just “women’s issues.” The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD) recognize the need to focus on gender relations in a way that engages both men and women. However, in practice, they seemed to consider gender only insofar as the gender balance of their employees and beneficiaries is concerned. Despite the inclusion of both men and women in equal numbers in their programs, this example reflects how, in practice, gender mainstreaming remains stuck within the gender binary. The Arab Women’s Organization takes a more political approach that goes beyond simply integrating women into existing projects by, for example, pushing for quotas for women in the government and advocating for equal salaries, pensions, and health insurance for both women and men. Although their focus is still solely on women, this form of advocacy does engage gender relations by acknowledging the structural economic and political disadvantages faced by women. The Noor Al-Hussein Foundation also recognizes the importance of engaging men in gender equality work. The interviewee from the organization explained that many Jordanian women tend to internalize oppressive gender roles and hierarchies. She suggested that engaging men may help address the issue of girls’ school attendance and completion, as it is often mothers who, having themselves not benefited from a formal education, encourage their daughters to drop out of school. This is consistent with Kandiyoti’s (1988) view that Middle Eastern women often become complicit in enforcing gender norms intergenerationally. Beyond these limited examples of willingness to consider gender, rather than just women, we found very little evidence of engagement with men or structural inequality in Jordanian CSOs. The continued reliance on women-only approaches to gender equality suggests a continued lag between the theory and practice of gender and development (Baruah, 2005).

## 5. Royal NGOs and gender mainstreaming

Finally, our findings suggest that the relationships and interactions between the state and CSOs in Jordan are complex. On the one hand, it appears that the monarchy sometimes implements progressive gender policies. For example, the mainstreaming of gender in JOHUD, albeit in its limited apolitical form, was at the behest of the King of Jordan. Furthermore, several royal organizations seem to take a somewhat more critical approach to gender issues, such as the Noor Al-Hussein Foundation (founded by royal decree) and the Arab Women’s Organization (AWO), whose Jordanian Executive Council Member is part of the royal family. These royal organizations seem to be filling a void in gender mainstreaming that has not been advanced by, for example, international organizations, which are often assumed to pursue more progressive and democratic gender strategies. For example, the AWO takes a more strongly political position, advocating for gender equity in government employment, equal salaries, pensions, and health insurance for women, an approach that acknowledges the structural disadvantages faced by women. Unlike other organizations included in this study, the Noor Al Hussein Foundation takes care to include men, as well as women, in their attempt to “change mindsets,” which is an important aspect of gender mainstreaming. However, for a variety of financial and practical reasons, such organizations have simultaneously shifted towards project-based interventions aimed at women, and away from rights-based approaches that engage gender relations.

It is also important to critically evaluate the extent to which gender programming driven by RONGOs may be part of the façade of democracy. Our findings confirm the continued role of the state in controlling the operations of CSOs. For example, JOHUD reported that the government wanted to engage women as community spokespersons to disseminate certain messages to their local



communities for a water conservation initiative. Though JOHUD advised the government against using women as “soldiers for extending the reach of the government,” this example illustrates the ongoing influence of the state over CSOs as well as the tendency to engage women to advance state objectives. Interestingly, the Noor Al-Hussein Foundation considers itself a non-governmental, “grassroots” organization despite its alignment with the monarchy, further illustrating how the lines between “non-governmental” organizations and state operations become blurry. This blurring is also evident from the fact that relatives of presidents and ministers in the Arab world, Jordan included, often establish their own CSOs to provide services relinquished by the state (Jad 2003). This raises concern as to whether and how gender mainstreaming is being leveraged to pay lip service to progress while obstructing real change. Further research and scholarly inquiry into RONGOs in Jordan is highly recommended.

## 6. Conclusions

Gender equality became a focus in Jordan after the establishment of the Jordanian National Commission for Women in 1992, alongside a broader “gendering of the agenda” at global conferences throughout the early 1990s, particularly since the 1995 UN Beijing Women’s Conference (Friedman 2003, 313). This was the beginning of what is now a global focus on developing and implementing policies and strategies that mainstream gender. Despite 30 years of gender equality programming, practice still lags behind theory, and very little progress has been made in the operationalization of gender mainstreaming in Jordan. Our findings suggest that an apolitical, additive approach to gender remains dominant among Jordanian CSOs. Many organizations pay “lip service” to the idea of more progressive gender approaches, but these remain unfulfilled in the absence of gender mainstreaming at the organizational level. Income-based and anti-poverty approaches remain the most prevalent tools for pursuing gender equality in Jordan, whereby women are integrated into economic initiatives for the instrumental purpose of improving family income and “lifting” Jordanians out of poverty. Such approaches may have some merit in modestly alleviating poverty and improving living standards, but they tend to conflate gender inequality solely with poverty, and are buoyed by essentialist assumptions about women’s sincerity, reliability, and altruism. Very few organizations take an approach to gender equality that explicitly targets social and political power imbalances based on gender. Most organizations do not engage men or the state in their gender equality programming; these exclusions further undermine the breadth, relevance, and sustainability of gender equality initiatives. Finally, our findings suggest that the structures and hierarchies within which Jordanian CSOs operate are themselves deterrents for the advancement and implementation of progressive gender equality agendas. The blurred line in Jordan between domestic CSOs (with or without the support of international organizations), the monarchy, and the defensive democratization pursued by the Jordanian state have undermined and stifled the potential for greater CSO engagement with a broader repertoire of social, political, and legal gender inequalities. We hope that the issues identified in this study will provide the grounding and detail against which future research and advocacy for gender equality programming within CSOs in Jordan can be tested, verified, and advanced.

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## Annex 1

### **Full names and mandate of organizations included in the study**

- (1) Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) focuses on water and waste management, resource conservation, as well as education, vocational training, and education.
- (2) The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is focused on the eradication of poverty, acceleration of structural transformations, and the building of resilience to shocks and crises. As part of the sustainable development goals, empowerment and gender equality is also one of its focal points.
- (3) CARE in Jordan focuses on poverty and social justice, microfinance, and improving market access.
- (4) The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is focused on income generation and food security through the support of the agricultural sector, including through climate smart agriculture, and building capacity in water use and arable land.
- (5) The World Food Program (WFP) works on humanitarian support, social protection programs, and improving food security through livelihood support and income-generating programs.
- (6) Mercy Corps provides vocational, educational, and entrepreneurial training and support, as well as working on changing behaviors.
- (7) The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) works on climate change resilience in Jordan, and is committed to supporting community water, energy, and environmentally-friendly farming initiatives.
- (8) The Hashemite Fund for the Development of Jordan Badia has the objective of contributing to the sustainable development of the Badia (arid areas) through environmental, social, and economic projects, as well as support of CSOs.
- (9) The Jordanian National Forum for Women (JNFW) is headed by Princess Basma and identifies itself as a grassroots women's movement that aims to advocate for women's rights, and increase women's participation in decision-making.
- (10) The Jordan River Foundation (JRF) works on community economic development by increasing household income, as offering business and entrepreneurship training, and supporting social enterprises, particularly for women (e.g. micro-enterprises).
- (11) The King Hussein Foundation encompasses the Noor Al Hussein Foundation and Tamweelcom, and aims to create economic opportunities and build capacity for self-reliance through national and regional level programs.
- (12) The Noor Al Hussein Foundation focuses on improving livelihoods through poverty alleviation, job creation, micro-enterprises, income-generating enterprises, business development, sustainable community development, and advocacy.
- (13) Tamweelcom is a micro-credit organization whose objective is to empower small and micro-entrepreneurs through providing business and retail loans.

(14) The Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD) is a royal-affiliated non-profit organization that operates 51 community development centers. While in the past it focused on poverty and women's rights through social and community development programs, more recently, it prioritizes youth unemployment and marginalization.

(15) The Queen Zein Al Sharaf Institute for Development (ZENID) operates under JOHUD and provides development training, capacity building, and research.

(16) ERADA, funded by MOPIC, is a nation-wide program focused on enhancing social and economic productivity in small businesses and offering entrepreneurial support such as training and marketing services.

(17) The Agricultural Credit Corporation (ACC) operates under the Ministry of Agriculture and is focused on agricultural rural development through the provision of capital to finance agricultural projects.

(18) The Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) is comprised of three sub entities, namely the National Centre for Agriculture and Extension (NCARE), the Agricultural Credit Corporation (ACC) and the Jordanian Cooperative Corporation. They are focused on improving agricultural efficiency and development, sustainably managing the environment and natural resources, providing financing for agricultural projects, and establishing cooperative associations.

(19) The Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation's (MOPIC) goal is to improve standards of living through participatory planning at local and national levels, for instance, through poverty reduction and sustainable growth.

(20) The Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) aims to provide vocational training to all Jordanians regardless of education, to improve efficiency in the labor market.

(21) The Arab Women Organization (AWO) is an intergovernmental organization affiliated with the League of Arab States. It is dedicated to women's political and economic empowerment.

(22) The Regional Centre on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development for the Near East (CARDNE) is an autonomous intergovernmental organization that works through a network of national institutions on issues related to agrarian reform and rural development.

(23) The Microfund for Women (MFW) is a private non-profit company that is focused on providing financial services to income small business owners, particularly women.

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<sup>[4]</sup> A gender focal point is the most senior staff member who is responsible for implementing gender equality within an organization. Gender unit staff are general staff members assigned to gender units within organizations.

