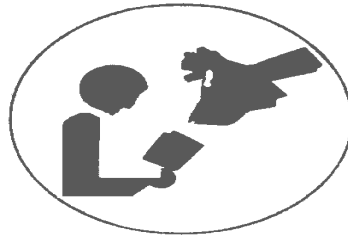


**National Center for Human Resources Development**



# **Factors Affecting Women's Participation in the Private Sector in Jordan**



**Al Manar**  
Your Path for tomorrow

***Prepared by:***

**Dana Peebles  
Nada Darwazeh  
Hala Ghosheh  
Dr. Amal Sabbagh**

**CIDA**

Canadian International  
Development Agency

**Canada**

## Table of Contents

<b>List of Acronyms .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>9</b>
The International Context .....	10
<b>Chapter One: Jordanian Women’s Participation in the Private Sector.....</b>	<b>13</b>
Women’s Economic Activity Rates .....	14
Women’s and Men’s Formal Employment Rates .....	15
Impact of Education on Women’s Employment .....	17
Economic Activity of Single Versus Married Women.....	17
Women’s Refined Activity Rates in Jerash and Mafraq Governorates.....	18
Impact of Income on Women’s Formal Labour Force Participation .....	18
<b>Factors That Influence Women’s Economic Participation.....</b>	<b>18</b>
Labour Law and Regulations .....	18
Maternity Leave .....	21
On-site Childcare .....	21
Retirement Policies .....	22
Social Security Issues .....	22
Lump Sum Compensation .....	22
<b>Summary .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Social And Cultural Factors That Influence Women’s Economic Participation: ...</b>	<b>23</b>
Gender Stereotyping .....	23
Perceptions about Occupations/Jobs Appropriate for Women.....	24
Undervaluing Women’s Capacities.....	25
Gender Bias in Recruitment.....	26
Personal Appearance as a Selection Criteria .....	26
Religious Discrimination in Women’s Recruitment .....	26
Occupational Distribution of Women in the Workforce .....	27
Acceptance of Female Management .....	27
Career Choices Made .....	28
Male/Female Job Priorities .....	28
Factors Needed for Women to be Able to Work outside the Home .....	29
Personal Factors Considered in Recruitment .....	29
Employer Response to Marital Status .....	30
Impact of Discrimination and Social Attitudes on Women’s Employment .....	30
Women Under-represented in Public Sectors Decision-Making Posts .....	32
Private Sector Working Conditions for Women and Men.....	32
<b>Income, Wages And Benefits.....</b>	<b>32</b>
Women’s Average Monthly Wage in Private and Public Sectors .....	32
Wage Differences among Men and Women in Private and Public Sectors.....	33
Low Incomes for Men and Women.....	33
Retirement, Pension and Social Security Benefits .....	34
Women and Men’s Unemployment .....	34
Discriminatory Practices Affecting Women.....	35

Sexual Harassment in the Workplace.....	36
Impact of Preconceived Perceptions on Equal Opportunities and Treatment .....	36
<b>Chapter Two: Case Study of Women’s Participation in the Pharmaceutical, Communications, and Internet Industries.....</b>	<b>38</b>
Research Methodology.....	38
Questionnaire .....	38
Interviews with Human Resources Managers.....	38
Focus Group Discussions .....	38
<b>Background On Participating Sectors .....</b>	<b>39</b>
Pharmaceutical Sector .....	39
Information Technology – ISP Internet Providers .....	40
Communications Sector.....	41
<b>Key Findings.....</b>	<b>42</b>
General Profile of Companies.....	42
Compliance with Labour Law Articles Regarding Working Mothers .....	43
Women Constitute 25% of the Labour Force in Case Study Sectors.....	43
Women’s Participation Highest among the Younger Age Groups .....	44
Women Under-represented in Managerial Positions .....	46
Pharmaceutical Sector: Feminisation of Specific Job Types .....	46
Female Participation Highest in Office-based Work .....	48
Hiring Processes.....	48
<b>Interview Results.....</b>	<b>49</b>
Training Opportunities .....	50
Evaluation and Promotion .....	50
Career Cycle.....	50
<b>Summary .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Chapter Three: Conclusions and Recommendations .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Government Priorities And Concerns .....</b>	<b>55</b>
Jordanian National Commission for Women.....	55
Advocacy .....	55
<b>Recommendations .....</b>	<b>56</b>
Public Sector .....	56
Post-Secondary Institutions .....	57
Private Sector .....	57
Public Sector, Private Sector, Academe and Civil Society.....	58
<b>Annexes</b>	
Annex 1: Companies Interviewed during Case Study Research.....	59
Annex 2: Interview Guidelines .....	60
Annex 3: Focus Group Guidelines .....	62
<b>References.....</b>	<b>63</b>

## List of Tables

	<b>Page:</b>
Table 1: Female labour force participation in MENA Region	14
Table 2: Percentage distribution of employed persons aged 15 and above by employment status and sex, 1979 and 2004	16
Table 3: Refined activity rate for the population aged 15 and above by sex and educational level 2006	17
Table 4: Refined activity rate by marital status, 2006	17
Table 5: Summary of labour laws and regulation	19
Table 6: Comparison between private and public conditions of employment of women 19	31
Table 7: Employed persons aged 15 and above by number of actual weekly working hours, monthly income and sex, 2002	34
Table 8: Employers perceptions of male and female work performance	36

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Percentage distribution of employed Jordanians aged 15 and above by work, sector and sex, 2002	16
Figure 2: Percentage of employed by occupation and sex, 2005	27
Figure 3: Percentage of employed by main current industry in 2005	31
Figure 4: Employed Jordanians, age +15 by sex and monthly wage, 2005	33
Figure 5: Duration of unemployment by sex, 2004	35
Figure 6: Percentage of female staff according to sector	43
Figure 7: Total number of male and female employees in the	44

participating companies

Figure 8: Employment by sex and age	45
Figure 9: Percentage of females in management positions/ Pharmaceuticals	46
Figure 10: Percentage of females in management positions/ Communication	46
Figure 11: Percentage of females in management positions/ IT	46
Figure 12: Percentage of females in selected jobs within the Pharmaceutical sector	46
Figure 13: Percentage of females in selected jobs with the Communication sector	46

## List of Acronyms

ADSL	Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
APM	Arab pharmaceutical Manufacturing
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
HQP	Hikma Quality Pharmaceutical
HR	Human Resources
HRDIS	Human Resources Development Information System
IT	Information Technology
ISP	Internet Service Provider
JAPM	Jordanian Association for Manufacturers of Pharmaceuticals and Medical Appliances
JOSWE	Jordan Sweden Medical and Sterilization Co.
JNCW	Jordanian National Commission for Women
JPM	Jordanian Pharmaceutical Manufacturing
MENA	Middle East and North Africa Region
NCHRD	National Centre for Human Resources Development
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation

## Executive Summary

The National Centre for Human Resources Development in Jordan, through the Al Manar Human Resources Development Information System project, has been conducting research on women's participation in the private sector in the country. The purpose of this research was to document the current situation of women in the private sector in Jordan, to identify the key issues affecting their participation and to examine specific conditions for women employees in three specific sectors using a case study format. The three sectors covered by the case study include pharmaceuticals, communications and Internet Service Providers.

Al Manar decided to conduct this study due to a recognition that importance of women's participation in the Jordanian labour market is growing and the fact that women's participation is often hindered by social perceptions, practices and sometimes legislation. There are also conflicting statistics about what women's participation levels in the private sector are, ranging from 16 to 25%, highlighting the need to develop more consistent and effective means of labour force measurement. The research study was therefore designed to help Jordanians better understand the conditions under which women work in the private sector, and of the practices, perceptions and attitudes of private sector employers towards female employees.

The study involved a four-person research team, including three Jordanian and one international gender and labour specialists.

The research project's stages included:

- ✍ Conducting a literature review to determine the current status and situation of Jordanian women working in the private sector.
- ✍ Distributing and analyzing an initial survey of Human Resources Managers in a sample group of companies in three economic sectors in which there has been rapid growth over the past 10 – 15 years.
- ✍ Verifying the key findings of this survey through an initial round of focus group discussions and interviews with diverse groups of women working in the private sector.
- ✍ Holding interviews with the Ministries of Labour and Social Security and with civil society groups working to support women's economic participation.
- ✍ Conducting case studies on the factors affecting women's participation in the pharmaceutical, communications, and IT industries.
- ✍ Making recommendations to the Jordanian government, private sector employers and employees, relevant civil society groups and academic institutions based on the research results.

The primary findings of this research process have been as follows:

1. Government officials and other labour experts think that the official labour statistics are under-reporting women's participation in both the private sector and in the Jordanian economy in general.

Jordan has highly progressive labour laws which protect women with regard to working conditions and maternity leave, but which in some cases, unintentionally

2. have led to some employers discriminating against women's recruitment as a means of avoiding the cost of implementing these laws.
3. Jordan's social security laws tend to be based on the premise that women are dependents as opposed to independent economic actors in their own right. In some companies this perception has led to women and men receiving different benefits, particularly if they are married.
4. Unemployment rates are significantly higher for women than for men.
5. There is considerable discrimination against married women in the private sector in terms of recruitment and promotions as it is generally believed that they will not be as committed to their jobs as married male employees. This is due to women generally being expected to be responsible for all family care regardless of whether they work outside the home or not.
6. This discrimination takes the form of asking personal questions related to marriage and pregnancy plans during job interviews, systematic harassment in some companies to encourage newly married female employees to quit, and the allocation of most training and promotion opportunities to male staff.
7. These factors all contribute to the majority of the female work force in the private sector being under 29, and less than 1% of women being over 50.
8. Women tend to predominate in paid occupations that are closely associated with women's more traditional roles in the household and are seriously under-represented at the management level.

The case study research in pharmaceuticals, communications and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) confirmed many of these findings. It also uncovered a few surprising findings. These included:

1. The large companies reported that the cost of maternity leave is not a major factor that they take into account in their hiring decisions. It appears to still be a more significant cost and issue for small and medium enterprises.
2. Employers perceive the primary challenge they have in working with female staff as the fact that the career-related decisions women make are often determined by male family members and are not based on job-related issues.
3. Even if it were legal, women tend not to want to apply for jobs that require night shifts.
4. Many private sector companies do not have formal human resource policies or if they do, they base them directly on Jordan's formal labour laws.
5. Women made up approximately 25% of private sector employees in the three sectors studied.

Many of the challenges that face Jordanian women in terms of accessing private sector employment appear to be based on social and family attitudes about what women and men's roles are in general. Therefore if Jordan wants to increase women's participation in the private sector, it will be necessary to address this issue from multiple perspectives. At the government level key actions needed to promote positive change include a review of labour laws that restrict women's employment and to eliminate social security laws based on the premise that women are dependents. The government also needs to work closely with the private sector to assist companies develop equitable and fair human resource policies and practices. NGOs and the government need to work with female employees and with employers to create greater awareness of their labour rights and obligations and to advocate for change. Academic institutions could also be called upon to conduct further research in the key areas where there remain gaps about women's participation in the private sector and to provide expertise in labour force development and management to both the government and employers.



## Introduction

The Al Manar project is managed by the National Centre for Human Resources Development (NCHRD) and funded by Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The project was designed as a pilot to provide technical assistance for the development of a Human Resources Development Information System (HRDIS) and has recently been extended for another two years. It aims at increasing the efficiency of Jordan's use of training and educational resources by building closer links with the private sector. The project also seeks to meet industrial needs by providing Jordanian businesses and industries with access to information on skilled labour. HRDIS, known in Jordan as Al-Manar (Arabic for "The Lighthouse"), has been recognized as a national project that is contributing to the development of a knowledge-based society and economy. It also serves to complement government e-government and e-learning initiatives.

While Al Manar is not a gender-focused project, it has incorporated several gender components. It recognises both the growing importance of women's participation in Jordan's labour market and the fact that this participation is often hindered by social perceptions and practices plus in some cases also legislation. In 2004, the refined activity rate for women was estimated at 10.4%<sup>1</sup> while women's actual participation in the labour force was estimated at 13.1%. These figures are relatively low both for the region and for middle-income countries.

There is limited data available on the reasons for women's low economic participation rates in Jordan's private sector. Therefore Al Manar conducted a study on the different factors affecting women's participation in the private sector. The research was designed to help Jordanians better understand the conditions under which women work in the private sector, and of the practices, perceptions and attitudes of private sector employers towards female employees. The study also sought to support Al Manar's efforts to institute mechanisms that will promote equal opportunity principles in human resources planning and development in Jordan among private sector employers.

The study was set up in four stages and involved a four-person research team, which included three Jordanian and one international gender and labour specialists. The first stage of the study involved a literature review to determine the current status and situation of Jordanian women in the private sector. Based on this analysis, Al Manar then organized a survey of Human Resources Managers in a sample group of companies in three economic sectors in which there has been rapid growth over the past 10 – 15 years. The key findings of this survey were then verified through an initial round of focus group discussions and interviews with diverse groups of women working in the private sector. Interviews were also held with the Ministries of Labour and Social Security and civil society groups working to support women's economic participation. This was followed by research on the factors affecting women's participation in the pharmaceutical, communications, and IT industries. The results of this research and the three case studies were then used to develop recommendations to the Jordanian government, private sector employers and employees, relevant civil society groups and academic institutions.

The research report is organized as follows:

---

<sup>1</sup> Jordan in Figures: 2004. The Refined Activity Rate refers to the actual workforce compared to the potential candidates available for entry into the workforce.

- ? Chapter One: The Status of Women Working in the Private Sector in Jordan
- ? Chapter Two: Results of the Pilot Case Study Research
- ? Chapter Three: Conclusion and Recommendations

## The International Context

Each of the four phases of the study made it clear that Jordanian women either interested in or currently working in the private sector encounter multiple challenges. Addressing these challenges will require support from all the stakeholders involved – the public sector, private sector employers, both female and male employees in the private sector, their families and spouses, as well as civil society organizations that work on labour and/or gender issues and academic institutions.

The Jordanian government currently supports private sector development as a priority to sustain economic growth and national development. To successfully foster this growth, both the public and private sectors need to be able to draw upon a diverse group of workers from the existing labour market. Currently, women are significantly under-represented in the private sector. Their official participation in the sector is cited at 16% and is unofficially estimated as being closer to 25% by government officials. This latter figure is also the same as the average female economic participation rate documented in the three industries studied. It is still five percent lower than women's general economic activity rates in other countries in the region, which stand at 30.4%.

There is an even greater contrast with other middle-income countries where women's overall economic activity rate in all economic sectors is 46.1%.<sup>2</sup> Comparative statistics for other countries in the region are 31.6% for Algeria, 36% for Egypt, 30.5% for Iran, 49.5% for Israel, 36.2% for Kuwait, 20.3% in Oman, 22.4% in Saudi Arabia, 35.7% in the Sudan, and 30.9% in Yemen. In three key middle-income countries, women's economic participation rates are much higher, standing at 43.7% for Brazil, 72% for China and 42% for India.<sup>3</sup>

Women's low participation rates in the economy and in the private sector present a high cost to the Jordanian economy, particularly in a context where many of its women, particularly the younger women are very well educated. This means that currently there is a considerable wastage of human and national resources in Jordan.

The economic under-representation of women in Jordan is also a limiting factor for the private sector itself and one which can carry a high price. For example, a recent study on 353 of the Fortune 500 companies in the USA found that the group of companies with the highest representation of women in their top management teams experienced significantly better financial performance than the group of companies with the lowest representation of women. The overall return on equity for top quartile was 17.7% while the total return to shareholders was 127.7% compared to 13.1% and 95.3% respectively for the bottom quartile<sup>4</sup>. The greatest difference with regard to the higher levels of female top management and economic performance were found in the field of discretionary

---

<sup>2</sup> Gender, Institutions, and Development Database. <http://www.oecd.org/dev/institutions/GIDdatabase.OECD2006>

<sup>3</sup> Gender, Institutions, and Development Database. <http://www.oecd.org/dev/institutions/GIDdatabase.OECD2006>

<sup>4</sup> Catalyst. 2004. *The Bottom Line: Connecting Corporate Performance and Gender Diversity*. New York

consumption (consumption of non-essential household or personal items) and consumer staples and the lowest in the area of information technology and telecommunications. The main reasons for these differences include women often having a different perspective on management and marketing than men and having a better understanding of specific types of consumer markets. Women managers also bring in different networks of contacts and experience. These same strengths apply to employees in companies. Therefore the greater the diversity in terms of male/female employees, particularly at the management level, the more likely a company is to benefit financially. Although Jordan's specific social and cultural context differs considerably from that of the United States, the above example does demonstrate the unique economic benefits that can result when business structures support women's participation at higher levels. These success stories can provide a useful framework from which Jordan could draw while still working within the local context to develop business strategies that would fit the Jordanian context.

There are also other research findings in other parts of the world that indicate significant advantages that companies stand to gain when they give women and men equal access to employment. Since the 1990s, studies in different countries and cultural contexts have shown that organizations which apply diversity and gender equality management programs also experience the following benefits:

- ? Improved performance/productivity<sup>5</sup>
- ? Higher quality of service delivery
- ? Increased creativity/flexibility<sup>6</sup>
- ? Higher quality problem solving
- ? A broader range of skills utilized
- ? Improved understanding/penetration of diverse base markets<sup>7</sup>
- ? Increased staff morale and job satisfaction
- ? Less absenteeism
- ? Improvements in trained staff retention
- ? Less turnover resulting in increased savings for the organization<sup>8</sup>

All these also add up to increased profits for the private sector. In addition, the increased participation of women can have a positive impact on the private sector's ability to market its services or products. The reason for this is that women either make or strongly influence many major family consumption decisions.<sup>9</sup> They also often have quite different tastes, needs and priorities than men. A lack of understanding of these

---

<sup>5</sup> Agocs C. and Burr C. "Employment equity, affirmative action and managing diversity: assessing the differences". *International Journal of manpower*, Vol. 17, No. 4, pp30-45, 1996. and Richard O. "Racial diversity, business strategy, and firm performance: A resource-based view" *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol 43, pp 164-177, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Cox T. and Blake S. "Managing Cultural Diversity: implications for organizational competitiveness". *Academy of Management Executive*, Vol. 5, No.3, pp45-56, 1991.

<sup>7</sup> Robinson G. and Dechant K. "Building a Business Case for Diversity" *Academy of management Executive*, Vol 11, No. 3, pp21-31, 1997.

<sup>8</sup> Devlin and Associates Canada, "Workforce Diversity: A Royal LePage Relocation Services Training Seminar", 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Chrysler Daimler's market research indicated that women either strongly influence or make up to 70% of consumer decisions regarding car purchases. Presentation by Chrysler Daimler, Businesswomen's Trade Mission to Washington, 1997. Real estate agents also note that women are the primary decision-makers influencing the purchase of homes. J.Jasey, Presentation on Buying Real Estate in Toronto. Remax Real Estate. Toronto. May 2006.

differences can lead to lost market opportunities. Companies with a predominantly male work force are generally not as well placed to take advantage of this knowledge.

Employees also benefit when they work in a workplace that is relatively gender-balanced. These benefits include:

- ? Improved interpersonal skills resulting in a sense of belongingness
- ? Increased communication and willingness to cooperate
- ? Increased self-confidence leading to higher productivity
- ? Reduced stress and frustration
- ? Greater access to recruitment opportunities and promotion.<sup>10</sup>

Given these multiple benefits for both employers and employees, it is in everyone's interest to seek effective ways to develop a more equitable gender balance in the workplace. This is the underlying rationale for this research – to help identify the key factors that have been limiting women's increased participation in the formal labour force. It is also designed to identify positive measures the public and private sectors can put into place to increase women's participation at multiple levels.

The key research findings reveal that a number of Jordanian companies have already embraced fair and equitable employer's practices while still operating within the legal, cultural and social frameworks of the country. Jordan's current economic growth is also taking place within a context of increasing globalization of business practice and trade. It is striking therefore that one of the companies that participated in the study indicated that they make a conscious effort to be perceived as good corporate citizens to help them remain competitive internationally. As a part of their corporate practice they see definite advantages in ensuring that they offer a fair workplace to both their female and male employees. Another company stated that they were in favour of company-financed maternity leave as they saw it as a part of their duty towards supporting Jordanian society.

This is partly a reflection of a growing trend towards increased corporate social responsibility. Increasingly, companies have now expanded their definition of their group of stakeholders to include not just the company shareholders, but also the communities in which they work. The bottom line is no longer simply financial. It is also based on the national and international image the company portrays and how it relates to the different groups that make up its workforce, its potential customers and the local community. Companies are taking growing pride in the contribution they can make to the communities with which they interact.

As a part of this approach, companies are starting to examine ways to ensure that there is a greater gender balance in their workforce, such as adopting family-friendly human resource policies. In the process, they have often found that new policies designed to attract and retain qualified female employees also have a positive impact on their male staff, and ultimately on overall company productivity. As such, the cost of ensuring that the workplace is more women-friendly is generally more than offset by the benefits of having a more diverse workforce.

---

<sup>10</sup> Devlin and Associates Canada, "Workforce Diversity: A Royal LePage Relocation Services Training Seminar", 2001.

## **Chapter One: Jordanian Women's Participation in the Private Sector**

This chapter provides a summary of the results of an extensive literature of the existing research on women's participation in the private sector in Jordan complemented by data collected through a sample survey of Human Resources managers from selected companies, interviews with relevant government officials and interviews and focus group discussions with a range of private and public sector employees, job seekers, women's organizations, and women working in the private sector.

The primary findings from the literature review were supplemented by a series of interviews held with:

- ? Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW)
- ? Ministry of Labour
- ? Social Protection Unit- Ministry of Labour
- ? Social Security Corporation
- ? A sample group of job seekers
- ? IT employees in the public sector

The researchers also held focus group discussions with:

- ? The Women's Committee Union
- ? Young, female employees from the private sector.

The literature review identified several important employment-related gender issues in Jordan. Most commonly, they examined the adverse impact of social security and labour legislation and practices and of social perceptions on women's advancement and economic empowerment. The relevant studies on women's economic participation focused on an analysis of:

- ? the current situation of women in the economy and profiling working women and unemployed women;
- ? the factors that influence women to join the economy;
- ? family and social attitudes towards women's employment;
- ? women's participation in the formal and informal sectors; and
- ? the conditions of working women in specific economic sectors.

These studies largely concentrate on women's participation in the public sector since this is the data that is readily available. The Department of Statistics compiles data on the private sector about trends and patterns on women's economic participation rates in different parts of the Jordanian economy, but this is mainly quantitative in nature. A few studies also analyse the situation and conditions of working women in the private sector, but most of these are sector specific. The research showed that a more in-depth qualitative analysis of the practices, attitudes and perceptions of working women within the private sector was missing. In particular, more studies are needed to help identify good practices that private sector companies can use to attract and retain women employees. There is also a need to analyse why women choose to leave or avoid the private sector when in fact, it actually offers more employment opportunities than the public sector.

The key findings from this initial research are summarized in the sections that follow.

## **Women's Economic Activity Rates**

Educational and health conditions of Jordanian women have improved steadily over the past several decades. Regrettably, however, women's participation in the labour force and public life has not shown much corresponding positive change. In fact, women's participation in the labour force and public life (i.e., in parliament, political parties, civic organisations, and decision making positions) remains low. This phenomenon is unusual given that many studies emphasise the generally strong correlation between women's improved health and education and increased employment. In Jordan, the support provided to increasing women's access to health and education appears to have helped women to fulfil their maternal and reproductive roles more than to encourage them to enter the formal labour market. In general, women's social status remains secondary to men's and their capacity as productive citizens continues to be either overlooked or unrecognized.

The key factors that have an impact on women's economic activity levels in Jordan include both legal frameworks and socio-cultural perceptions. The following sections provide a summary of the relevant Jordanian labour laws affecting women's employment, as well as an analysis of how perceived notions of society in general currently shape the nature and type of women's economic contribution in the private sector.

There are widely varying estimates about women's participation rates in the economy, all of which indicate low economic participation levels. Estimates range from 12% - 26% depending on the source of information.<sup>11</sup> A review by Jakline Wahba, on Women in the MENA Labour Markets (2003) shows that while women's participation in the labour force is higher in Jordan than in some Gulf countries, it is still relatively lower than in neighbouring countries (refer to Table 1 below).

**Table 1: Female Labour Force Participation in MENA region<sup>12</sup>**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Rate of participation for 2000</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Rate of participation for 2000</b>
Algeria	28	Morocco	35
Bahrain	21	Oman	17
Egypt	30	Qater	15
Iran	27	Saudi Arabia	16
Kuwait	31	Syria	27
Lebanon	30	Tunisia	32
UAE	15	Yemen	28
Jordan	25		

Source: Newsletter of Economic Research Forum Vol.10, No. 1, Spring 2003, Pg 27

<sup>11</sup> The Economic Advancement of Jordan Women: A Country Gender Assessment, 2005

<sup>12</sup> Women in MENA Labour Markets, Newsletter of Economic Research Forum, for the Arab Countries, Iran and Turkey. Volume 10 – Number one, Spring 2003, Page 27

This source is at variance with the official government rate. The data provided by the Forum for other countries in the region also differs with the data for the same category of analysis provided by the OECD, with most of the Forum's data coming in significantly lower than that of the OECD. The main exception to this is their figure for Jordan, which is almost twice that of the official labour force statistics.

Both the Ministry of Labour and the JNCW are convinced that the official estimate of women's economic participation in the country is low. The Ministry of Labour estimates that the real rate of women's economic participation is closer to 16% and noted that in their ministry alone it is 80%<sup>13</sup> These wide discrepancies provide a clear indicator that there is a need to develop a standardized means of measuring women's participation in the economic sector in the country. The Office of Women Workers thinks that this should include a regular survey to determine the real numbers and rate of women's economic participation in different sectors.

The report on the Status of Jordanian Women (2004) also notes that although the ratio of economically active women more than doubled from 1979 to 2002 (from 3.3 and 7.1 respectively), it remains proportionally low. A comparison of the growth patterns of men and women's participation across the same period shows that women have experienced more change than men. This may be because the role of women has changed over time, and as there is a growing economic need for women to work outside the home. Women's rate of refined economic participation parallels the growth pattern of economic activity in the country. This is not the case for men. The percentage change for men is -17.7, having dropped from 77.8% in 1979, to 64.2% in 2002. For women, the percentage of change is +83.6, and increased from 6.7% to 11.7% over the same time period.

The JNCW report suggests that these trends reflect the effect of education on women and men. Their analysis is that women's increased education is facilitating their entry to the labour market while increased educational opportunities for men have had the impact of encouraging them to prolong their years in education. This has resulted in a decline in the proportion of young, new, male entrants to the labour force.

## ***Women and Men's Formal Employment Rates***

The data on women and men's employment status suggests that the majority of working men and women are paid workers. The tendency to favour employed labour is linked to the security and benefits that jobs offer. Table 2 below also shows that since 1979, more men and women have sought formal employment as opposed to self-employment. Fewer men were recorded as self-employed in 2004 than in 1979 despite the considerable emphasis placed on private sector development during this time period. The differences in women's self-employment rates are marginal over the same period.

---

<sup>13</sup> Based on interviews with Ministry of Labour officials

**Table 2: Percentage distribution of employed persons aged 15 and above by employment status and sex in 1979 and 2004**

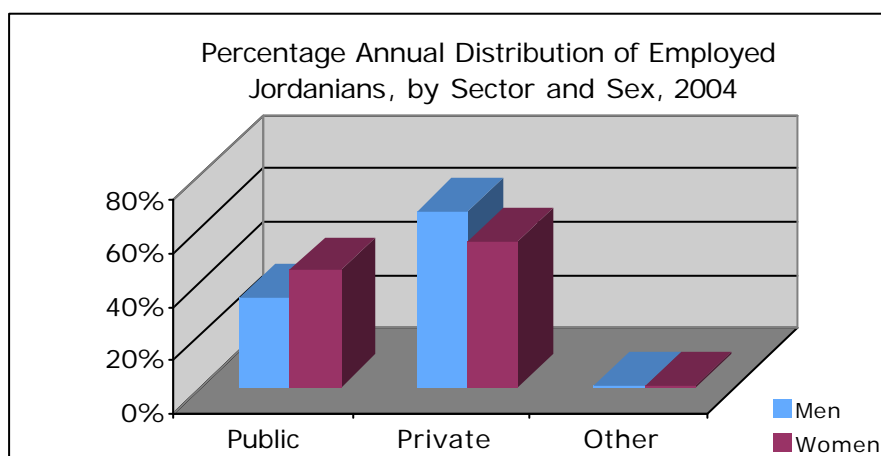
Employment Status	1979		2004	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Paid worker	65.9	84	80.3	94.6
Employer	3	0.6	8.0	1.1
Self - employed	21.3	3.3	10.7	2.7
Unpaid family worker	0.8	0.4	0.8	0.7
Unpaid worker	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.8
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: UNIFEM 2004: Report on the Status of Jordanian Women: Demography, Economic Participation, Political Participation and violence

Based on the Employment Survey of 2005, in Jordan, approximately 234,446 people are working in micro-enterprises.<sup>14</sup> Of these, only 10.9% are women and 89.1% are men.<sup>15</sup> The 2005 Country Gender Assessment states that women constitute only 3.9% of entrepreneurs in Jordan, a figure that is quite low compared to global averages, e.g., in the Asia Pacific region women make up approximately 35% of SME owners.<sup>16</sup>

Department of Statistics official estimates indicate that the informal sector constitutes approximately 12% of Jordan's overall economic activity. Unofficially, these same officials feel that it is closer to 40%, while the World Bank estimates it at just 19.4%.<sup>17</sup> There are also discrepancies about the real extent of women's participation in the informal sector, with one microfinance survey indicating that women run 63% of Jordan's informal enterprises<sup>18</sup>. While this is low compared to global trends, government officials think the latter figure is too high.

**Figure 1: Percentage distribution of employed Jordanians aged 15 and above by work sector and sex, 2002**



<sup>14</sup> Microenterprises are considered to be establishments with 1-4 employees.

<sup>15</sup> Al Manar. 2004. Human Resources Information Assessment Report: Case Study "Unemployment".

<sup>16</sup> Wong, Rosanne. 2000. History of the Women Leaders Network of APEC. CIDA.

<sup>17</sup> The Economic Advancement of Jordan Women: A Country Gender Assessment. 2005

<sup>18</sup> The Economic Advancement of Jordan Women: A Country Gender Assessment. 2005



## ***Impact of Education on Women's Employment***

As Table 3 shows there is a clear correlation between women's work and their education levels. The higher their education, the more likely they will be economically active and work outside the home. The trend is not the same for men where the highest rate of economic activity is among those with a middle diploma.<sup>19</sup>

**Table 3: Refined activity rate for the population aged 15 and above by sex and educational level 2006<sup>20</sup>**

Educational level	Male	Female
Illiterate	37.6%	1.6%
Less than secondary	63.2%	3.5%
Secondary	52.2%	7.1%
Middle Diploma	86.0%	32.3%
Post Graduate	85.5%	65.0%

Source: Al Manar Database on Employment and Unemployment Survey 2006

## **Economic Activity of Single Versus Married Women**

A comparison of the refined activity rate of women and men shows clearly the variances between men and women. Single women are more likely to work outside the home than married or divorced/widowed women. Married men, however, are more likely to work than single or divorced/widowed men. This trend is not surprising as it reflects traditional roles for Jordanian men and women. Men are perceived as the primary breadwinners for their families. Women are seen to be the caregivers of their families and are more likely to remain home when married. If married women work outside the home, their work is generally perceived as being secondary to men's.<sup>21</sup>

**Table 4: Refined activity rate by marital status, 2006**

	Male	Female
Single	53.6%	17.4%
Married	72.7%	8.7%

Source: Al Manar Database on Employment and Unemployment Survey 2006

<sup>19</sup> A middle diploma is awarded from a two year college

<sup>20</sup> Report on the Status of Jordanian Women, 2004

<sup>21</sup> Arab Women Progress Report, 2004

## **Women's Refined Activity Rates in Jerash and Mafraq Governorates**

Kerak Governorate, in Jordan's south, recorded the highest refined activity rate for women at 14.8% , Balaqa followed at 14.5% and then Amman with 13.8% . Jerash and Mafraq, both in the north, recorded the lowest rates at 9.2% and 9.3% respectively.<sup>22</sup>

Although there is no clear explanation for these variations, they could possibly be attributed to the distribution of industry and economic activity in the governorate, the type of industry dominating in that area, and social attitudes towards women's work. For example, Jerash is a tourist area, and in Jordan, women's participation in tourism tends to be limited.<sup>23</sup> Aqaba, a free trade zone area, shows the highest refined rate of economic activity for men (72.3%).<sup>24</sup>

## **Impact of Income on Women's Formal labour force Participation<sup>25</sup>**

The 2005 Country Gender Assessment report noted that women with poorer incomes are less likely to participate in the formal labour force, whereas women from the highest income quintile are more likely to do so. However, the statistics also show that women in the lowest income quintile are more likely to work than those in the middle ones.

Female-headed households earn a little over 10% of total household income reported nationally. Their income depends less on earned income, which seems to suggest that women from such households tend to participate at lesser rates in the formal labour force.

There are multiple factors that influence women's economic participation in Jordan. They include legal issues, the availability of child care services, poverty and the rising cost of living and socio-cultural attitudes and views about what women and men's roles in the family and the workplace should be. The following sections analyse the available data about these different factors, and identifies the key issues for each factor.

## ***FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE WOMEN'S ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION:***

---

### **Labour law and regulations**

Current Jordanian labour law and regulations embody both positive and negative provisions for women. Indeed, some of the laws originally intended to protect women, have actually had an adverse impact on women's economic participation. Table 5 below presents a summary of the gender relevant legal provisions in Jordan and the impact they have had on both women and on employers.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Report on the Status of Jordanian Women, 2004

<sup>23</sup> Gender Mainstreaming in the Jordanian 1999-2003 Economic and Social Development Plan, 2004

<sup>24</sup> Report on the Status of Jordanian Women, 2004

<sup>25</sup> The Economic Advancement of Jordan Women: A Country Gender Assessment, 2005

<sup>26</sup> The Economic Advancement of Jordan Women: A Country Gender Assessment. 2005

<b>Table 5: Summary of Labour Laws and Regulation</b>		
<b>Gender Issues</b>	<b>Legal provisions</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<b>Pregnancy, maternity and paternity</b>	<p>1996 Labor code – Law no (8) forbids the firing of pregnant women after the sixth month of pregnancy, or of working mothers during their maternity leave</p> <p>Article 68 grants married couples a one-time opportunity for leave without pay for up to two years to accompany their spouse if the other spouse is transferred to another location</p>	Positive impact in terms of supporting women, however, employers may terminate employment because of pregnancy prior to the six-month cut-off point.
<b>Maternity leave</b>	<p>Old civil service regulations of 1998 increased maternity leave from 60-90 days (2002).</p> <p>The 1996 Labour code requires the private sector to grant maternity benefits to female employees. Article 70 states that 10 weeks of maternity leave should be taken before or after delivery, provided that the period taken after delivery is not less than 6 weeks , and it is illegal for women to work during that period</p>	Labour law provisions covering private sector employees sometimes operate as a disincentive for private sector employers to hire women.
<b>Child care</b>	<p>The 1996 Labour code provides women employees who have worked in establishments of 10 weeks or more the right to one year’s leave without pay for childcare purposes.</p> <p>Article 71 grants the working mother the right to a total of one hour per day to nurse her children for a period of one year after delivery</p> <p>Article 72 requires employers with a minimum of 20 married women to provide a nursery and qualified childcare worker to care for children under 4 years old , if there are at least 10 children.</p>	<p>Disincentive to hire women</p> <p>Discrimination of employers against married, engaged or pregnant employees, or even those with children</p> <p>State recognition of parenting as solely a female responsibility</p> <p>Reflects a lack of state support for incentives to private sector institutions to establish appropriate mechanisms for children care, including options to reduce the costs to private sector employers</p>
<b>Night work</b>	The 1996 Labour Code (article 69) night work is prohibited for women between 7 p.m. and 6 a.m. “except in the instances specified by decision of the Ministry of labour”	<p>May limit professional advancement</p> <p>May deny women the opportunity to engage in some professions</p>

Gender Issues	Legal provisions	Impact
<b>Prohibited industries</b>	1996 Labour Code (Article 69) states that the Minister of Labour can seek the opinion of competent of official authorities and decide on industries and jobs prohibited to women	Designed to protect women's safety, but it:  Limits women's freedom of choice  Is outdated and also fails to provide equal protection from hazardous jobs to men
<b>Retirement</b>	Article 41 of the 2001 Social Security Law no. 19 states that the deceased wife's pension shall be transferred to her husband if he suffers total infirmity or does not have any other special income that equals his deceased wife's pension, in which case he will only be entitled to the difference	Unequal treatment for women and men  State does not consider women as primary household income earners with equal responsibilities for depends  Reduce the returns to women's labour
<b>Civil Service employment opportunities</b>	Regulation no. 55 of 2002 states that "family allowances shall not be paid: a) to a female employee for her children if their father is alive and not retired and will be paid b) ...by virtue of permanent disability of her spouse"	Unequal treatment of women  Unequal treatment of dependents of female employees  Potential negative economic impacts on families  State reinforces the perception of female employees as secondary breadwinners
<b>Income tax</b>	Provisional income tax law no. 25 of 2001 states that either spouse may benefit from tax relief. A wife may enjoy total or partial tax relief if she is furthering her education, responsible for dependent children or their education or has dependent parents	Pre-2001 law provided for unequal treatment of men and women, as only the husband was entitled to tax relief, unless the wife can claim that she was the sole breadwinner

The table above highlights factors that influence women's decision to enter the market, as well as employer decisions to hire women, particularly in the private sector. There is also a general perception on the part of employees that the private sector tries to evade some aspects of labour laws and, in so doing, discriminates against women. Participants in the focus group discussions and some of the human resource managers interviewed indicated that in their experience some employers make a point of hiring less than 20 married women at any one time to avoid the cost of having to set up a child care centre on site.

There are also no provisions in the law or regulations that protect women from discriminatory practices or ensure their workplace safety. As a result women are vulnerable to sexual harassment. Even if they choose to report any sexual harassment incidents they are likely to be victimised and socially stigmatised.<sup>27</sup> The focus group discussions also indicated that some companies have an unwritten policy of harassing single female employees who marry to encourage them to quit their jobs. It was thought that this was due to some employers perceiving married female employees to be less productive and to avoid having to pay additional staff salaries during maternity leave.

## **Maternity Leave**

Women are eligible for 70 days fully paid maternity leave, and employers are required to cover the women's pay during this period. Those interviewed in the focus groups thought that this policy served as a strong disincentive in any company with less than 200 employees. This is significant as 99% of all Jordanian companies fall into this category. For the smaller firms it is usually difficult to have someone on leave for several months, and to have to pay for two salaries for the same job for a 70-day period.<sup>28</sup> The Office of Women Workers in the Ministry of Labour is hoping to address this issue with their current work on the establishment of a Maternity Fund, which would be divided among the government, employee and employer.

## **On-site Childcare**

A key factor that limits women's participation in the private sector is that they do not have ready access to reliable and quality childcare services. Jordanian labour law states that if there are 20 married women in the company with children four years of age and under, the company is obliged to provide on-site childcare services – to be paid for by the employees. Some companies try to avoid this responsibility by limiting the number of married women hired to just 19. However, in general government officials noted that many companies and employees are not even aware of the childcare policy. Focus group participants also indicated that some employees are also afraid to ask for this childcare support unless their jobs are very secure.

Women workers also have the right to one hour a day for breastfeeding. This can also act as a disincentive for employers as it means that some of their female employees are not fully available to them. However, if there were more workplace childcare centers, it would be easier for women to take short breastfeeding breaks without a significant loss of work time and possibly would not consume any more time than the cigarette breaks taken by the majority of male employees.

The establishment of workplace childcare centers is also of interest to many male employees. Increasing numbers of men would like their wives to be able to work outside of the home due to the high cost of living. Having access to a workplace childcare center would make this much easier for them to do.

---

<sup>27</sup> The Economic Advancement of Jordan Women: A Country Gender Assessment. 2005

<sup>28</sup> The case study research seems to indicate that for the larger companies this is not a significant issue (refer to Chapter 3).

## **Retirement Policies**

Jordanian law requires that every person working for an establishment of five or more employees be insured for retirement and other social security benefits. It is mandatory for women to retire at 55 and for men at 60. Some government officials considered this to be a form of discrimination against women since it deprives them of five years worth of contributions to the retirement scheme. It is also a factor that leads to men receiving better pensions than women. The case study research found that this policy also contributes to a general reluctance to hire women in the private sector as employers are concerned that they will have five years less benefit from any training investments they make in a long term female employee versus a long term male employee.

## **Social Security Issues**

The primary challenge identified within government social security policy related to women workers is that there is a perception that women do not need their own benefits when they are viewed as dependents. Some challenges that this perception has caused include:

- ? A social security policy that states that if a woman dies, her children are only eligible for a survivor's pension if she can prove that she was the family's main breadwinner. However, she is only considered to be the family's main breadwinner if her husband is disabled, and if he does not have an income. The woman also has to obtain a certificate from a judge by bringing two witnesses to prove that she is the family's main breadwinner. This can be difficult to arrange in the advent of unexpected or sudden death of the woman.
- ? A woman can also receive a survivor's pension if her parents die while she is still considered to be their dependent – that is either a minor or still at school/university. However, if a boy is 18 or over, even if he is still at school, he is not considered a dependent and so is not eligible for the survivor's pension.
- ? If the woman is working or is married she is not eligible if she is over 18 – if she is married and not working, the dependency is considered to have passed over to her husband.
- ? The development of human resource policies in the private sector which provide for family allowances only for male, married employees and not for married, female employees on the premise that it is only the men who are the primary breadwinners in the family.

## **Lump Sum Compensation**

Another policy that affects private sector recruitment of women is that married women have the right to take up to a year's unpaid leave to look after their children. This also serves as a disincentive for private sector employers since they do not like the disruption it causes in their workforce.

Women are also entitled to take a lump sum from their pension contributions to help cover their expenses during this childcare leave. The only criterion to be eligible is if the person is a married woman who wants to take care of her family and has made at least

one year of contributions. However, most women are not aware that if they request a lump sum payment and subsequently want to return to their jobs, they have to repay the funds withdrawn from their pension funds with interest. While fewer women are taking advantage of this option than in the past, there is still a general perception among women that they do not really need to safeguard their pension funds. The general expectation is that they will be looked after by their children, husbands or families.

## **SUMMARY**

In general, Jordan has very progressive labour laws. However, the Ministry of Labour noted that many employers do not follow them and that female employees are not completely familiar with their own labour rights. Therefore it is that there is a need to raise women's awareness of the laws and regulations. The government also needs to strengthen its capacity to enforce labour laws.

By stipulating laws intended to protect women, in some ways the state has unintentionally created a disincentive for private sector companies to hire women. Although some of these protective laws could be eliminated, others could be revised so that they could be applied more equitably for both men and women, and thus level the field for competition. For example, if married men were entitled to paternity leave and childcare services, this could change the scenario for how employers perceive women and the perception that childcare is solely women's responsibility. Similarly, if an equal opportunity law were enacted in which women and men had the right to take companies to court if they had demonstrated gender-based discrimination, this would also likely have a positive impact on female recruitment in the private sector.

## **SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE WOMEN'S ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION:**

### **GENDER STEREOTYPING**

The Arab Human Development Report of 2004 noted, "despite laudable efforts to promote the status of women, success remains limited" (p.11). The report attributes this shortfall to the limited participation of women in public life, Jordan's personal status laws and the systematic violation of women's rights in the workplace. Underlying the obstacles that hinder women's advancement are the widely held social attitudes and perceptions about women's roles and acceptable behaviour. Indeed, the Jordan National Human Development Report 2004 noted "women are perceived as the primary source of affection and care for children and are responsible for domestic duties" (p. 113).<sup>29</sup> Working women are also expected to fulfil their domestic roles, even if their spouses are unemployed. This view is reinforced by legal provisions that continue to treat women as dependents.

The study's NGO focus group also reported that when it comes to choosing between women and men, employers tend to choose men unless the woman has specific technical skills that are in high demand. They indicated that this was because mobility is much easier for men, and that some jobs require a lot of communication with male clients and this is both easier and safer for men. The group also noted that if it is a man doing the

---

<sup>29</sup> Jordan National Human Development Report. 2004.

hiring, the bias tends to be for him to hire men. In general, they observed that employers want someone who will continue their career. This finding was borne out by the findings of the following three case studies that found women are often not perceived as being as serious about their jobs as men due to their family responsibilities .

It also depends upon the job sector. If it is very technical in administration or finance, the focus groups and interviews indicated that employers will tend to select the woman, as these sectors are perceived to be suitable areas of work for women. Other industries where women are more readily accepted include the public sector, nursing, teaching, banking, textiles, pharmaceuticals, universities, secretarial work, IT, as well as most professional designations, and management consulting.

Some manufacturers prefer to hire women since many women are not seeking to grow in their careers. Consequently, they are more willing to work in lower paid and status jobs than many male employees. The textile industry was cited as an example of this. The work is tedious and needs dedication, and many employers think that women are much better suited for this type of work than men. It is also an industry in which employees do not develop skills over time and its employees tend to have a very transitory approach to their work. This suits women who plan on moving in and out of the formal workforce to accommodate their changing family needs and responsibilities.

In Jordan, women and men's socialisation process continues to reinforce women's role as caregivers and mothers. Despite efforts to represent women in different capacities, the educational curricula often continue to present women in a stereotypical form. Similarly, women are encouraged to study fields considered more appropriate for women. For example, more women enrol in the education, arts, humanities and medical science fields than men, while more men enrol in social sciences, business and law and the natural sciences. Only a few women join technical and vocational training courses (15,256 women as opposed to 41,534 men).

## **Perceptions about Occupations/Jobs Appropriate for Women**

There is also a widespread perception that some jobs, such as teaching, nursing are more appropriate for women since they are an extension of their care-giving role. Women are concentrated in these fields and are underrepresented in managerial and leadership positions even when there is a pool of well-qualified women upon which to draw. The case study results attributed this in part to a perception by some employers that women may not be capable of fulfilling these jobs, or of meeting job requirements such as late working hours due to their family responsibilities.

A recent study on women in tourism also noted that 25.3% of women working in the tourism sector were harassed by colleagues and customers, since it is not commonly accepted that women work in this field in Jordan. Women also tend to avoid working as tour guides since it may require them to move around quite a bit, including sleeping outside their homes, an activity which is not widely socially accepted for women.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Simaan, Ruba. Difficulties Facing Women in Tourism.



Similarly, in the review of the Economic and Social Plan of 1999-2003 from a gender perspective, it was noted that the construction sector was "...inappropriate for women. Women are discouraged to join this field because it is a technical field that they are seen less capable of handling, especially that it requires field work and interaction with workers, who in most cases are men. Only 0.5% of construction engineers are women" (p. 35).<sup>31</sup>

The patterns above were further reiterated by specific examples of gender-based bias and discrimination given in the study's focus group discussions with women working in the private sector. These indicated that some occupations are simply inaccessible to women on the grounds of culture, religion, and safety concerns.

## **Undervaluing Women's Capacities**

The study also found that women in Jordan tend to need more years of experience than men to hold the same job. The Country Gender Assessment (2005) notes that "surveys show that the average female wage earner in Jordan is likely to have 12.3 years of education, compared with 9.3 years for a male counterpart holding a similar type of job." While this highlights the fact that some women are overqualified for the jobs they assume, it also indicates that many employers require women to have higher qualifications to assume jobs for which their male counterparts are routinely hired with less qualifications.

This was further confirmed by interviews with female private sector employees. One Human Resources officer noted that they have observed a tendency of Jordanian companies to predominantly hire women who graduate with top grades and who are highly educated and qualified. In general, everyone interviewed noted that Jordanian women are highly educated and tend to be more qualified and have better grades than men. The Human Resources officer noted that in her experience, if her company has a vacancy she will receive 100 CVs. Of these, there will be 25 good CVs from women, and there will be eight good ones from men.

Almost all the women interviewed indicated that they had been recruited because they were among the top three students in their graduating classes. In general, this raises the question of how accessible the private sector is to young women who are not in the top ten percent of their graduating classes. It was also not clear if young men also need to be in the top of their graduating class to find a job or if this criterion mainly applies to young women.

## ***Gender Bias in Recruitment***

---

<sup>31</sup> Gender mainstreaming In the Jordanian 1999-2003, Economic and Social Development Plan: A case study – Jordanian National Commission for Women 2004

The focus group discussions indicated that there are multiple reasons that many private sector employers prefer to hire men. These include:

- ? The expectation that private sector employees will work long hours and employer perceptions that women will not be able to do this due to their family responsibilities.
- ? Barriers from outside the company because the customers will not accept dealing with women in some fields or types of jobs.

One focus group participant noted that in her company their main clients are based in Saudi Arabia. Cultural and legal restrictions for women there make it challenging for their female staff to work there unless accompanied by a male relative. Therefore they restrict the recruitment of women to internal positions within the company that do not require travel. In another company, there is also a concern about women's safety and worker productivity. They feel that drivers, dock labourers and tallymen would not treat women employees well, or that if they were hired as sales representatives the work would take longer because the male workers would want to spend all their time talking to the women.

### **Personal Appearance as a Selection Criteria**

In small companies the focus group participants indicated that employers' first choice is often for women who are attractive and who dress stylishly or elegantly. They noted that companies will advertise explicitly for attractive women, or will indicate a preference for a male or female employee for a particular position. One male job seeker interviewed who is working in a female-dominated profession observed that he felt that "the women will get more chances because they are more beautiful".

The NGO focus group observed that gender-biased advertising was an issue about which the Ministry of Labour needs to get tough in the future. The challenge, however, is that even if this practice is made illegal, employers who are determined to maintain gender bias in their hiring can still choose not to interview anyone who they do not consider to be the right sex or appearance for the job. Consequently, any change of the law in advertising law would need to also be accompanied by an employer awareness campaign.

### **Religious Discrimination in Women's Recruitment**

The employees' focus group also noted that many young women who wear the hijab have trouble getting a job in the private sector. This problem is so pervasive that the friend of one focus group participant decided to wait until after her probation was finished to start wearing her hijab at work. However, it is not clear if the private sector bias against hiring women who wear the hijab is due to appearance-based or religious reasons.

### ***Occupational Distribution of Women in the Workforce***

Gender roles also appear to contribute to the dominance of women or men in particular job categories. The data in Figure 2 shows that the percentage of women represented in professional jobs is higher than in any other occupational categories for women. The distribution of men seems to be more balanced<sup>32</sup> across the board, and men also seem to dominate significantly in all sectors.

**Figure 2: Percentage of employed by occupation and sex, 2005**



Source: Al Manar Database, Employment and Unemployment Survey, 2006

Analysing the distribution of women in different fields of work, it is apparent that women are more likely to work in the education and health fields, as teachers and nurses, while men are more present in public administration and wholesale activities. More women work in the education and health sectors because socially the jobs in these fields are perceived as being more consistent with women’s traditional gender roles within the household.

## Acceptance of Female Management

Women who work at the managerial level may face additional challenges. Some female focus group participants who worked as managers noted that when most of their employees are male, they have found that the men do not like to discuss work-related problems with them as they are afraid of losing face in front of a woman.

Another participant noted, however:

“I have worked in the private sector for 22 years and have never had any problems with my employers. I work as a civil engineer and since it is a male-dominated profession I have always been careful to dress very conservatively with no make-up and I put my hair up. As a woman working in a man’s world, I had to take these things into consideration. It just made my life easier. I also had no problems

<sup>32</sup> Human Resources Information (HRI) Assessment Report: Case Study “Unemployment” Al Manar Project. 2004

working on-site. Because I was serious about my work, my colleagues took me quite seriously. I currently supervise 14 men and they all listen to me very well.”

This would seem to give some indication that there is considerable variation in the experience of women managers, and is an area which would merit further study.

## **Career Choices Made**

The focus group participants also felt that gender discrimination in the private sector is not just a question of employer-bias. The attitudes of the young women themselves are also important. A lot depends upon their upbringing and how they were socialized. They felt that if girls are brought up the same way as boys with regard to their expectations, they are more likely to seek work in the private sector and to see the advantages of working outside the home. They noted, however, that many other women only work until they find the right husband and once married, do not take their jobs as seriously, or else will quit.

The underlying idea of women being dependents leads to some job applicants coming in for their interviews with one of their parents. Sometimes the parents go to the extent of actually answering the interview questions for their daughters. This leaves a very bad impression about the potential female employee’s ability to manage independently, and will generally lead to her being eliminated from the hiring process.

The male/female socialization process also leads to Jordanian women being more oriented towards a traditional role of homemaker and not to seek a career or job with much of a future. Many women prefer to work in the public sector where there is more flexibility regarding leave, the hours are more certain, there is no overtime, and more job security and holidays. All of these factors make it easier for them to manage their job and family responsibilities at the same time.

This trend is changing, as there is now an increasing need for two incomes for a family to manage. Consequently, there are now more men who are interested in marrying an educated woman who can work outside the home. The problem is that this increased level of female economic participation does not mean that their husbands are now sharing the housework – indeed, this would be seen as unmanly by most. As a result, increasingly women are expected to work both inside and outside the home. This leads to a significant increase in their workloads unless they have good support at home. One focus group participant noted that “behind every great woman there is another great woman – a mother, an aunt, or an excellent maid.”

## **Male/Female Job Priorities**

A new challenge has arisen with the trend towards increasing numbers of two-income families. If both the woman and the man in a family have good careers, his job still tends to come first when it comes to making career compromises. Focus group participants also noted that the men are especially reluctant to compromise if their job is at risk in any way, but that they do not hesitate to ask this of their wives.

Another focus group participant noted that maintaining closeness to her family was a far greater priority to her than earning a good salary. In general, it was felt that the women themselves tend to put their families first, and that this is a significant factor that employers take into account when deciding whether to hire male or female employees. This observation was borne out by the results of the case studies.

Focus group participants also noted that women do not generally challenge men in the workplace. They also receive fewer incentives to perform well than men. They are often happy to start with an entry-level position, and are less likely to complain about unfair or poor working conditions. Men, on the other hand, were observed to want to start at a higher level with a higher salary and would be quicker to change companies if they did not like the work situation. They also complain or protest if they do not like what is going on. Women tend to feel constrained to accept the situation and not to “make waves”.

Focus group members also observed that men tend to want to be the boss and the leader. Therefore they perceived that men are not as willing to accept or learn from entry-level positions, and that they were also less willing to be accommodating in a workplace situation or stick with a less than perfect work situation. They also perceived that female employees are more loyal and trustworthy than men and that female employees were more likely to stay with a company longer regardless of the working conditions or compensation. Similar perceptions were also expressed by employees interviewed as a part of the three case studies outlined in Chapter Two.

## **Factors Needed for Women to be Able to Work outside the Home**

“Women here do have equal opportunity – **if** her father supports her, **if** he sends her to college, and **if** she marries someone who is open she will not have any problems.” (emphasis added)

Focus Group Participant

This sentiment was echoed by another focus group participant members who noted that:

“We are all educated – and **if** there is someone to support us, especially the husband, it is possible to work and have a family.”

The “ifs” in these quotes are quite significant as they imply that many Jordanian women are in a position in which they are not the only person making a decision about their work and career choices. This observation is borne out by the responses made in the case study research in Chapter 2. It is significant as it means that women employees are perceived as being less reliable than men as their fathers and/or husbands may pressure them to quit their jobs to focus on their family responsibilities.

## **Personal Factors Considered in Recruitment**

Another challenge that women encounter in private sector recruitment is the fact that they are often asked personal questions that are taken into account in hiring decisions. These questions include their plans for marriage, whether they plan to have children and would leave the workforce to raise them, and if their families would allow them to travel. Men are generally not asked these same questions. The HR Officer noted, however, that in her

company they routinely ask both male and female applicants detailed questions about their family members, such as what kind of work their relatives do, if their siblings withdrew from the workforce for several years to have children, etc. Their rationale is that people tend to follow family patterns and that knowing what their siblings or cousins did will give the company a good indication of how the person being interviewed will behave in a similar situation. She did not perceive this practice to be unfair, but did offer the candidates the option of not answering these questions.

## **Employer Response to Marital Status**

In some companies the concerns about paid maternity leave and the perception that married women with children are not as serious employees are so strong that as soon as women become engaged, they start to be harassed by their employers in effort to get them to quit. This harassment can take the form of other employees starting to avoid her, or her supervisors asking her to do extra tasks and unpaid overtime. They sometimes also start making a big deal about small tiny mistakes that normally would have been ignored. One focus group participant noted that until recently one of Jordan's large banks had a policy to automatically fire any female employees as soon as they got married. This allowed them to avoid paying for maternity leave benefits

Other women get engaged and married and have children and find that there is no change in how they are treated at work. For others the challenge begins at home. One focus group gave the example of a woman in her company whose husband does not like her to travel on business and harasses her if she does. He is afraid that if she travels on her own, people will think she has left him. Another challenge is that sometimes women's work behaviour changes when they get engaged and they start taking off time to organize their weddings. She also noted many women lie about this, as they are afraid it will affect their employment status or chances.

## **IMPACT OF DISCRIMINATION AND SOCIAL ATTITUDES ON WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT**

**In Jordan, the private sector recruits more than 60% of men and 55% of women.<sup>33</sup> However, many women and men prefer to seek jobs in the public sector despite the fact that the majority of employment opportunities are generated by the private sector.**

**Currently government employment opportunities are decreasing due to measures to reduce civil service employment. Despite this, Civil Service Bureau statistics for 2003 show that the number of women applicants to the public sector is significantly higher than that of male applicants. Also of interest is that men's recruitment rates are higher than women's, standing at 4.5% while for women it was only 2.3%.<sup>34</sup>** This difference may be an indication that there is a gender bias in private sector recruitment.

---

<sup>33</sup> Report on the Status of Jordanian Women. 2004

<sup>34</sup> Human Resources Information (HRI) Assessment Report: Case Study "Unemployment" Al Manar Project. 2004

Table 6 below provides a comparison between the public and private sectors that may partially explain why women tend to prefer the public to private sector as an employer. It also outlines the obligations of both sectors towards women employees.

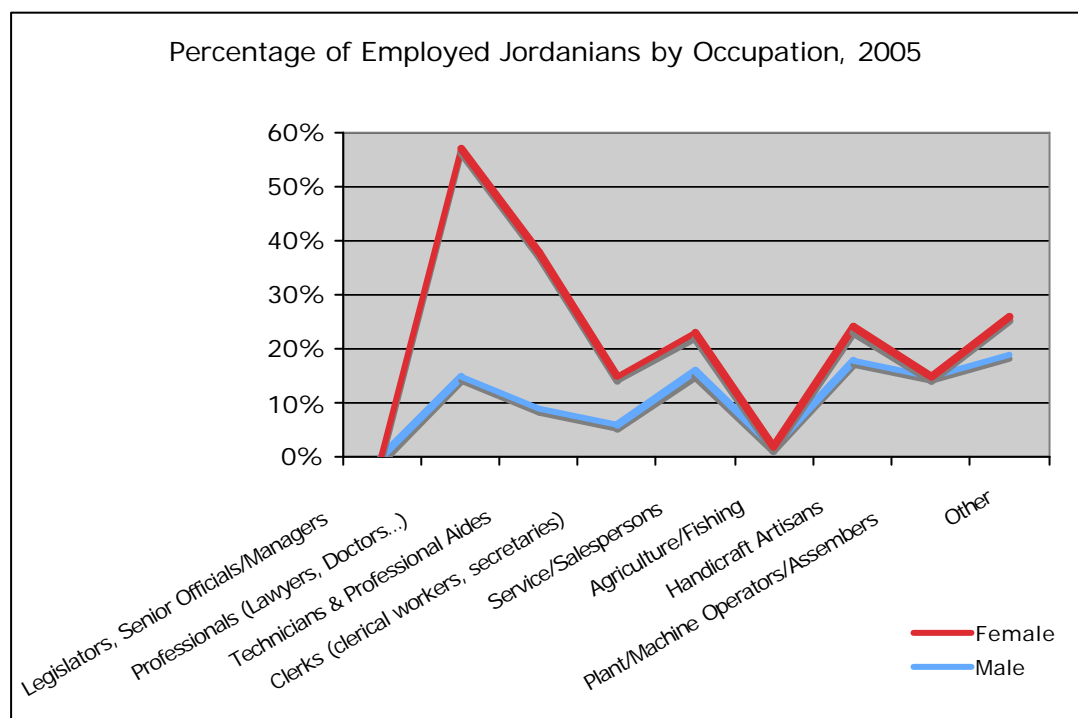
**Table 6: Comparison between private and public conditions of employment for women**

Labour Requirement	Pubic Sector	Private Sector
Minimum wage / month	120 JD (this is a general standard, but is not applicable for all public sectors organizations)	85 JD
Working hours	7 hours	8 hours
Tenure	Security of tenure	Contractual
Paid maternity leave	90 days	70 days
Costs covered by:	Government	Private sector employer
Lactation Leave	1 hour per day	Not prescribed
Nursery Care	Not Prescribed	Fully funded on-site by company once 20 married women are hired

Source: The Economic Advancement of Jordan Women: A Country Gender Assessment, 2005

Figure 3 below illustrates the distribution of women and men in decision-making positions in the public sector.

**Figure 3: Percentage of employed by main current industry in 2005**



Source: Al Manar Human Resources Information Database, 2005 ([www.almanar.jo](http://www.almanar.jo))

## **Women Under-represented in Public Sectors Decision-Making Posts**

The distribution of women in the public sector shows that women are concentrated in the health, education and social work areas. They are least represented in senior positions and in defence; the latter most likely as defence is seen as a male job since it potentially involves a combat role. Of 5 senior category posts, only four (4) were held by women. Similarly of 1072 posts in defence, only 79 were held by women. While there has been some increase in the percentage of women in more senior posts since 1996,<sup>35</sup> this discrepancy in job distribution in the different categories seems to suggest that perceptions of women at work remain based on more traditional gender roles.

## **Private Sector Working Conditions for Women and Men**

The impact of women and men's traditional roles extends to private sector firms and is reflected in the gender segregation of jobs, working conditions, spatial segregation in firms/industries, and in recruitment practices. While working conditions for women in the trade and service sector differs from that of women in the manufacturing sector,<sup>36</sup> in general, the following patterns prevail:

- ? Segregation between men and women in terms of job type is not uncommon;
- ? Women's vertical mobility is limited in industrial work. As Kawar noted women:  
"performing manual labour have few chances for mobility in most industries. The most the women can aspire to in such occupations is the post of supervisor. Such cases are limited to supervising other females and pay is only marginally higher." (p. 90)
- ? Spatial segregation sometimes discourages women's participation in a particular industry, especially if the majority of workers are men.
- ? Most industries prefer to hire young women since they are considered to be more energetic and are less likely to incur maternity leave costs.

## **INCOME, WAGES AND BENEFITS**

### **Women's Average Monthly Wage In Private And Public Sectors**

Jordan like most other countries records a lower average wage for women than men. Figure 4 shows that women monthly income is concentrated between the "less than 100 JD" and the "100-199" income brackets. However, the average number of women earning from 200-299 is higher than that of men. There is no clear explanation for this. It would also be useful to gain a better understanding of whether women stay in the income bracket for a longer time period than men.

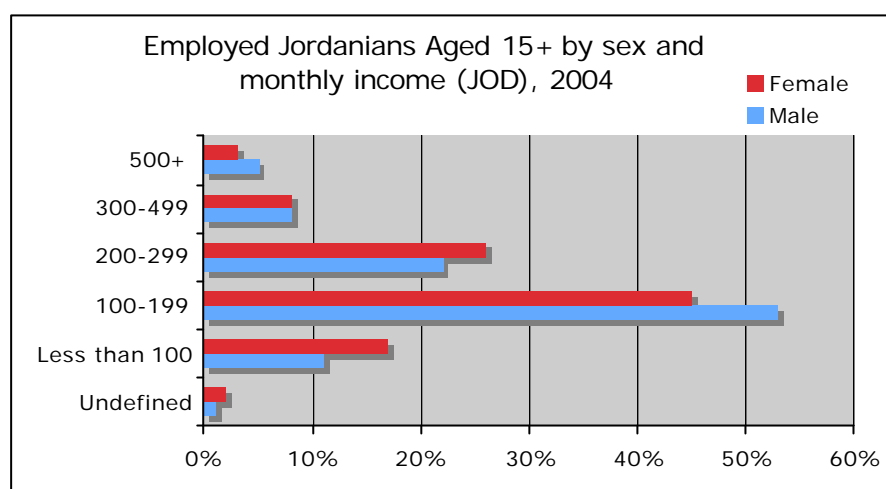
---

<sup>35</sup> Report on the Status of Jordanian Women. 2004

<sup>36</sup> Kawar, Mary. Gender Employment and the Life Course: the case of working daughters in Amman, Jordan. 1997



**Figure 4: Employed Jordanians, age 15+ by monthly wage and sex**



Source: Al Manar Human Resources Information Database, 2005 ([www.almanar.jo](http://www.almanar.jo))

### ***Wage Differences among Men and Women in Private and Public Sectors***

According to Al Manar, in 2005, the average monthly salary for public sector male employees for 2005 was 284 JD and 258 JD for women. There are also variations across the governorates where the gap is often in favour of men. In Amman, the average wage for men is 327 JD compared to 278 JD for women. However, these differences are not consistent across the country and in Zarqa, for example, women's average income is 191 JD as opposed to men at 185 JD.

The average wage for men and women in the private sector is lower than that of the public sector. In the private sector the average wage for men was calculated to be 266 JD and for women 210 JD. Seeing that the private sector in the last few years witnessed some structural changes, the differentials not only explain why women prefer to work in the public sector, but also may highlight why there is a widespread perception that the private sector is unfair to its employees.

### **Low incomes For Men and Women**

Table 7 confirms that it is difficult to compare the figures of actual working hours, income and sex without taking into consideration the type of job, educational level and work experience. However, it does show that a large number of men and women work earn less than 200 JD per month. No doubt this pattern affects married women's choice of work as the demands on their time, when holding such a job, would be difficult to manage along with their homecare responsibilities. Despite this, many women do undertake poorly paid work, indicating that women are interested in /or need to be working outside the home even though the double workload may be exhausting for them.

**Table 7: Employed persons aged 15 and above by number of actual weekly working hours, monthly income and sex: 2002**

Actual Working Hours	Less than 100 JD		100-199 JD		200-299 JD		300+ JD	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
14-1	45.9	48.2	33.4	28.3	14.2	21.5	5.9	2.1
36-15	17.1	19.4	51.5	49.2	20.9	23.6	10.5	7.8
50-37	11.7	21.3	52.8	43.9	21.1	22.3	14.5	12.4
51-70	17.6	36.9	52.3	37.5	16.7	17.8	13.4	7.8
71+	18	39.6	52.2	44.8	16.8	12.5	13.1	3.1

## Retirement, Pension and Social Security Benefits

Another issue is that pension and social security packages do not provide the same treatment for women and men even though both sexes contribute similar amounts. For example, pensions and social security pay do not pass onto a woman's husband or offspring if she dies, but do if the husband dies. Moreover, women are only entitled to a child allowance if their husband is deceased or disabled even though she contributes similar rates as her male counterparts. Policies such as these highlight the perception that women's income is secondary to that of men's, when, in fact, it may not be the case.

In the none-wage benefits area there are only slight differences between the private and public sectors. For example, while health insurance is mandatory for public employees, it is not in the private sector. The retirement law also covers only public employees, while social security law only covers the specific groups of private sector employees who are subject to the labour code. This effectively excludes large numbers of workers.

## Women and Men's Unemployment

Figure 5 shows that unemployment rates for women are higher than for men. The estimated unemployment rate for men is 14%, while for women it is 21.9%.<sup>37</sup> Geographically, unemployment among men and women also varies. In 2006, the highest unemployment rate for men, 19.1%, was recorded in Karak and the lowest in Amman 9.9%. For women, the difference was greater. The highest unemployment rate was recorded in Karak, at 34.9%, and the lowest in Aqaba at 23.3%. While this may be attributed to the different distribution of economic and industrial activities in Jordan, it is also affected by Jordanian society's perception of women's roles and the relative importance of women and men as family breadwinners.

Data shows that the prevalence of unemployment among women aged 15-19 years is higher than other age groups (44.4%). In fact, approximately 48.4% of unemployed women are between the ages of 15-24 years. As such, it is not surprising that 74.5% of unemployed women have never been married. The situation is similar for men. The highest rate of unemployment (35.4%) is recorded among the 15-19 year age group, and

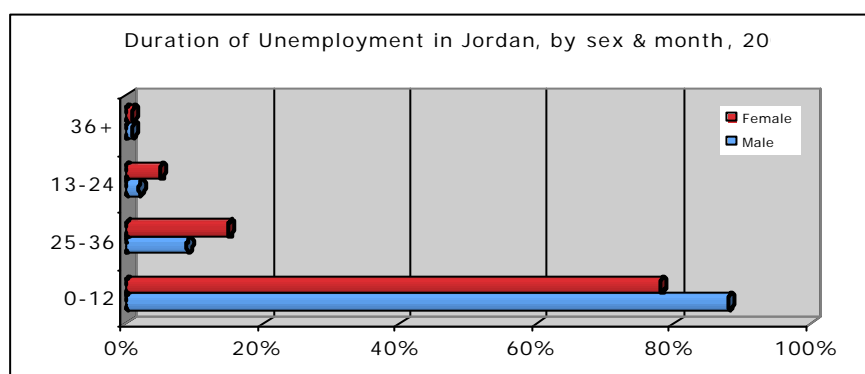
<sup>37</sup> Department of statistics figures for 2006 estimate unemployment for women at 25% and for men at 11.9%.

single men constitute 76% of the unemployed. Unemployment for married men and women drops sharply but still remains higher for women at 5.8% and 13.4% respectively.<sup>38</sup>

The Report on the Status of Jordanian Women found that 38.2% of unemployed women hold secondary or middle diploma degrees. The unemployment rate for women with bachelor degree holders is 50.2% , almost three times higher than that of their male counterparts (14.5%). Moreover, the incidence of unemployment among illiterate men is higher than for illiterate women. Unemployment among women with less than secondary schooling is slightly higher (16.8%) than that of men with similar education levels (13.4%).

Although there are different figures about the percentage of female and male unemployment rate by duration, all the data show that women are more likely to experience long-term unemployment than men. The difference is not great but still highlights a pattern worth noting.<sup>39</sup>

**Figure 5: Duration of unemployment by sex, 2004**



Source: Al Manar Human Resources Information Database, 2005 ([www.almanar.jo](http://www.almanar.jo))

## ***Discriminatory Practices Affecting Women***

Jordanian law unintentionally discriminates against women with regard to their pension and social security rights. This is one factor that may deter some women from participating in the economy. Early retirement provisions have also led some managers to exclude women from training and promotion opportunities, on the grounds that it is not worthwhile to invest in building their capacities since women employees will be with the company for five years less than male employees. This limits women from reaching senior positions and contributes significantly to the glass ceiling phenomena. Women, however, tend to accept the discrimination they encounter for fear of repercussions and possible job loss. In some cases, women encountering this discrimination deal with it by seeking early retirement, thus reinforcing employer perceptions that it is not worthwhile to invest in female employees. Some discrimination against women employees also appears to be based on religion and focus group participants noted several incidents in which women who wear the hijab face recruitment challenges in the private sector. This is another area that could benefit from verification through further research.

<sup>38</sup> Report on the Status of Jordanian Women. 2004

<sup>39</sup> Human Resources Information (HRI) Assessment Report: Case Study “Unemployment” Al Manar Project. 2004

## ***Sexual Harassment in the Workplace***

Although there is little information about the prevalence of harassment at the workplace, it is thought to be more widespread than is reported officially. In several organisational studies women have reported that their male colleagues tend to flirt with them and sometimes verbally intimidate them by making comments with sexual connotations. However, when women are subject to harassment, they tend not to report it out of fear of being victimised and disgraced. The situation becomes more critical when the harasser is their supervisor or from senior management.

**Both the HR officer interviewed and the NGO focus group noted that there is a need to teach both young men and women the importance of communications at work, how to problem solve and how to deal with the politics of working in a company. This seemed to be particularly an issue when dealing with issues of sexual harassment in the workplace. Currently it is not unheard of for a female employee to threaten to bring in her family to address workplace harassment issues as opposed to seeking out workplace mediation and support.**

## ***Impact of Preconceived Perceptions on Equal Opportunities and Treatment***

A study by Kawar “Gender, Employment and the Life Course: the case of working daughters in Amman, Jordan”, noted:

“Employers usually have rather fixed ideas about male and female characteristics. Many of these directly relate to the wider concept of gender differences (particularly in terms of roles and skills) regardless of whether they have any direct relevant to work performance” (p106).

	<b>No difference (%)</b>	<b>Males better (%)</b>	<b>Females better (%)</b>	<b>Not Applicable (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Productivity	27.7	36	25	11.1	100
Punctuality	27.8	19.4	41.6	11.1	100
Duration of employment	22.2	47.2	19.4	11.1	100
Adherence to rules	44.4	13.9	30.5	11.1	100
Accuracy in work	27.8	25	38.3	11.1	100
Accepting orders	30.6	13.9	44.4	11.1	100

(Not applicable refers to situations where there are single sex firms)

This table also shows that many employers believe that women are better at fulfilling their tasks at multiple levels, but overall do not perceive women to be as productive or as retainable as male employees. Consequently, even if their performance is better than men’s, private sector employers may hesitate to recruit women. This viewpoint on

<sup>40</sup> Kawar, Mary. Gender Employment and the Life Course: the case of working daughters in Amman, Jordan. 1997

productivity was not supported by the focus group discussions and interviews as those interviewed consistently indicated that they felt that women workers were often more productive than their male colleagues.

In particular, one focus group participant noted that she works in the engineering and architecture sector, which requires a lot of dedication and overtime. Her experience has been that since women often cannot work late hours that they tend to be very focused when they are at work and utilize their time there well. Consequently, she felt that her female employees generally got as much done within regular office hours as many of her male employees who regularly work overtime.

In general, there are contradictory perceptions of women and men's effectiveness in the workforce. One focus group participant noted that her university professor had told her that, in general, women are much more skilled, they are more open-minded and more enthusiastic about learning to work and that he found that his male students were the opposite. A Human Resources Officer also reported that most employers find that women are more dedicated and have more loyalty than their male employees, but that in her experience the women themselves tend to evaluate their work performance either too high or too low. Another focus group participant noted that for women their main concern is to prove themselves in their jobs, whereas she felt that men just want the money and the position.

These very differing perceptions of male and female dedication to the workplace also need to be investigated to either disprove or verify the negative and positive impressions about both sexes. The results of this proposed research could possibly form the basis for a campaign to change employer attitudes and potential biases about recruitment of one sex over the other for particular positions.

The next chapter attempts to fill in some of these research and knowledge gaps about women's employment by examining the pharmaceutical, communications and internet sectors in greater detail.

## **Chapter Two: Case Study of Women's Participation in the Pharmaceutical, Communications, and Internet Industries**

This chapter presents the key findings of the Al Manar pilot research study on the different factors affecting women's participation in the pharmaceutical, communication and Internet Service Providers (ISP) sectors. The field research was conducted during the period January 2006 – January 2007.

### ***Research Methodology***

The research design involved three main activities: a questionnaire, interviews with human resources managers, and two focus group discussions with male and female employees of companies from these three sectors.

#### **Questionnaire**

A questionnaire was designed based on the key issues identified in the preparatory research stage and in the literature review process. This was distributed to the companies that agreed to participate. The questionnaire included questions pertaining to employees and human resource policies and practices. Eleven companies in the three sectors were targeted and asked to participate. Nine companies responded to the questionnaire and nearly half of them completed all the required information. The research utilised an older and slightly different version of the questionnaire for Jordan Telecommunication company prior to the merger process it went through in October 2006. Copies of the questionnaires used are available in Annex 1 plus a list of companies that participated.

#### **Interviews with Human Resources Managers**

Guidelines for an in-depth interview with human resource managers were developed to explore gender-related areas in staffing, training opportunities, evaluation, promotion policies, the life cycle of staff and retention policies. The research team was able to interview nine companies. However, not all of these companies were the same as the ones that responded to the questionnaires. Refer to Annex 2 for a list of companies interviewed and a copy of the interview guidelines.

#### **Focus Group Discussions**

The research team asked the companies participating to allow staff members to participate in two focus group discussions, one for female staff and the other for men. Although only five companies agreed to nominate participants to the focus group discussion, the insights the staff who took part shared with the research team were quite important. Refer to Annex 3 for the guidelines used to leading the focus group discussions.

In total, ten companies took part in different parts of the case study. The data obtained from the three research processes were analysed by the research team and constitute the main body of this case study.

## **BACKGROUND ON PARTICIPATING SECTORS**

### **Pharmaceutical Sector**

The pharmaceutical sector is considered as one of the strategic sectors for Jordan's development. The Jordanian National Agenda notes that the pharmaceutical sector has strong potential to become one of the leading sectors to develop and lead Jordanian medium investments.<sup>41</sup> It is characterised as having staff with high levels of education and pays its employees nearly double the wages offered in other sectors. In 2002, the pharmaceutical sector employed nearly 4000 specialists. This makes it an attractive working environment for graduates from community colleges and universities with the relevant background.<sup>42</sup>

Work within the Jordanian pharmaceutical sector started in 1966, and had expanded to 17 registered pharmaceutical companies by 2006. Activities in this sector can be classified as research and development (4%), marketing (10%), manufacturing (55%), profits (10%) and other (11%). Most companies in this sector work within generic manufacturing (with 93% of products branded generic and 7% under license). The sector is export driven, and between 70 source – 80% of its production is exported annually. The pharmaceutical sector's share in manufacturing employment is nearly 3.4% and has created 8000 direct and indirect jobs.<sup>43</sup>

The case study included five pharmaceutical companies. The following provides a brief description of each one. The information provided in this summary is based on the companies' websites, the website of the Jordanian Association for Manufacturers of Pharmaceuticals and Medical Appliances (JAPM), and company responses to the questionnaires.<sup>44</sup>

### **Hikma Quality Pharmaceutical (HQP)**

HQP was established in 1977 and has grown to become one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in Jordan in terms of capital (\$24,000,000) and exports. HQP has comprehensive quality assurance systems for production as well as detailed staffing criteria. It is also the only company in the pharmaceutical group studied whose human resource policies include a clause prohibiting any discrimination based on sex. HQP's human resource policies also provide financial support for employees who are mothers and HQP is committed to covering the nursery costs for staff children for two years. HQP also offers health insurance and benefits for its employees with no discrimination between female and male staff. Furthermore, HQP offers its employees a family allowance once they are married regardless of their sex. The only exception to this is that a married

---

<sup>41</sup> Government of Jordan. 2006. The National Agenda.

<sup>42</sup> UNIDO at [http://exchange.unido.org/upload/3423\\_Pharmaceutical%20sector.pdf](http://exchange.unido.org/upload/3423_Pharmaceutical%20sector.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> UNIDO at [http://exchange.unido.org/upload/3423\\_Pharmaceutical%20sector.pdf](http://exchange.unido.org/upload/3423_Pharmaceutical%20sector.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> Due to limited available information on Dar Al-Dawa (DAD) this section will not provide a profile on this company.

woman whose husband is also an HQP staff is not eligible for this allowance (i.e., there is only one allowance allocated per family).

### **Arab Pharmaceutical Manufacturing (APM)**

Established in 1966, APM was the first pharmaceutical company in Jordan and has the highest paid capital among the pharmaceutical sector (\$38,000,000). APM has the largest number of staff, with over 800 employees. Based in the city of Salt, APM provides employment opportunities to a large segment of the local community. The company does not have specific human resource policies, but rather utilises existing labour laws. However, APM does provide extra privileges to its staff, including up to 30 days of leave, overtime and a savings fund, in which the company deducts 10% of the employee's salary and adds an additional 15% to it in savings to help staff save for specific purposes.

Unlike other companies, APM provides a family allowance for married male employees. A woman is also entitled to this allowance if she can prove that she is the only supporter of her family. This is also the case with health insurance, and only the families of male employees are entitled to this benefit.

### **Jordanian Pharmaceutical Manufacturing (JPM)**

JPM was established in 1979 with capital of (\$17,100,000) and has 454 employees. Although JPM has its own human resource policies, the entitlements of its female employees are confined to those required by Jordan's labour laws. The company does, however, offer equal access to its health insurance benefits for both men and women.

### **Jordan Sweden Medical and Sterilization Company (JOSWE)**

Founded in 1996, JOSWE is the most recent established pharmaceutical in Jordan with capital of (\$7,000,000). JOSWE has a relatively small staff and only produces products in eight therapeutic categories. While the company has a specific human resources policy, the document is also based mainly on Jordanian labour laws. It does not include any specific clauses prohibiting discrimination, including sex-based discrimination.

JOSWE offers health insurance for all of its employees. Benefits are equal for female and male employees and also cover their family members. However, JOSWE does not offer any family allowances for staff members of either sex.

Recently, JOSWE developed evaluation forms for staff performance appraisals. These forms are filled out annually by the staff member direct supervisor with some limited input from the staff member concerned. The results of the evaluation determine the level of annual salary increases to which the staff member is entitled. While the form reviews the employee's technical capacities, it also allows for a subjective evaluation of the supervisor on attitudes without any measures to ensure transparency or to redress any perceived unfair assessments.

### **Information Technology – ISP Internet Providers**



Internet services were first available in Jordan from the mid-1990s. The rapid development of this field has made Jordan one of the leading Arab countries in this sector. Currently, there are nine national and regional companies that provide internet services in Jordan. According to recent studies it is expected that the ISP sector, which is still in its infancy will expand rapidly within the next five years. Three companies from this sector responded to the questionnaire. Only one agreed to being interviewed. A short description of each company that participated in the study follows.

## **Batelco**

The recent merger of three ISP service providers (“NETS”, “First Telecommunications Group” and “Bahrain Telecommunications Company”) resulted in Batelco becoming one of the leading ISP providers in Jordan. However, Batelco prides itself as the first ISP provider in Jordan since 1996. Batelco services include the country’s largest frame relay network that connects banks, multi branch companies and government. It also provides internet broadband in the form of leased lines and Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line (ADSL), as well as regular dialup internet, web-based solutions, interactive sites and hosting services. Batelco has 145 employees, making the company larger than its competitors. The company has specific human resource policies, which comply with Jordanian labour laws. Batelco also has specific articles against discrimination based on sex. It has an agreement with a health insurance company to provide pregnant women on staff with the right to unlimited visits to the doctors during their pregnancy.

## **Cyberia**

Currently, Cyberia operates in three countries including Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Cyberia was established in Jordan in 1997. The company has 31 staff members who are governed by specific human resource policies, which are in line with existing labour laws. The company provides its employees with health insurance without any discrimination in benefits for female and male staff members.

## **Wanadoo**

Due to a recent merger with the Jordan Telecom Group, it is not possible to obtain current information on Wanadoo specifically. The questionnaire the company initially provided the research team indicates that the company was established 1996 and had 47 staff members. The company was previously known in Jordan as Global One and Equant, then following a strategic partnership with France Telecom, Wanadoo emerged into the market place in 2001. It is one of the leading ISPs in Jordan, with a more than 50% market share. Wanadoo, along with the other corporate entities now affiliated with Jordan Telecom, it own human resource policies. However, given the previous ownership of the company by the government its human resource policies are mainly in line with Jordanian labour laws.

## **Communications Sector**

At both the user and producer levels, the communications sector is one of the fastest growing sectors in Jordan. By the end of 2006, there were four mobile service providers competing in the Jordanian market and one main fixed line provider. Three

communications companies agreed to participate in this study. They include Fastlink, Jordan Telecom and Umniah.

## **Jordan Telecom Group**

In February 2006, the Jordan Telecom Group announced the integration of the operations of Jordan Telecom, Mobile COM, Wanadoo and e-Dimension into a single organization with a single management structure. The company was established by the government but was recently privatised. One of the main shareholders is France Telecom, which ensures the development of more equitable human resource policies. Nevertheless, the company's current human policies are mainly derived from Jordanian law. While it does not discriminate between men and women's access to health insurance, it only provides family allowances for male employees.

## **Umniah**

Since its launch in 2005, Umniah has been expanding its market share. Umniah has 385 staff and the company human resource policies are in line with national labour laws. It also provides specific benefits for all of its employees, such as medical insurance.

## **KEY FINDINGS**

### **General Profile of Companies**

The companies participating in this study provided the research team with the opportunity to look more in-depth at medium and large enterprises, old and recently established companies, as well as those who are in the production/ manufacturing versus those in services.

The companies that participated in the study were quite hesitant to share their human resource policies with the research team. In fact, only two companies agreed to share relevant documents with the research team. To ensure consistency in approach these were not analysed as part of the research process. Therefore the findings presented in this report are based solely on the companies' responses to the questionnaires.

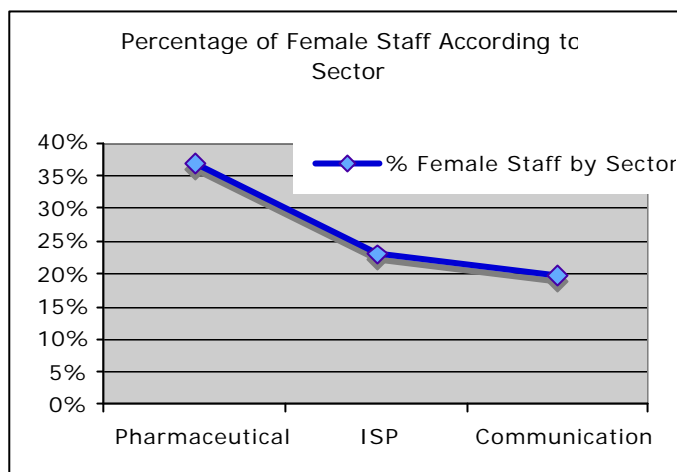
Only two companies from the ten that participated indicated that they provide marriage/ family allowance to male employees only. These two companies are the oldest both in terms of when they were established and their mindset. They also have the largest number of employees compared to other companies in their respective sectors. Until recently one of them was owned by the government. Their policies still continue to perceive men in their traditional role as the sole breadwinners in the family. The firms that have been established more recently and which have a connection to international private companies are rapidly updating their human resource policies more in line with international standards and equal opportunities principles.

Only three companies, one from each sector, responded that they have a specific article against discrimination based on sex. All three companies are rapidly expanding in the national and international markets and aspire to compete with regional and international

companies in an environment that support clear policies on equity and non-discrimination.

**Figure 6: Percentage of female staff according to sector, Jordan**

In general, companies involved in manufacturing, and mainly pharmaceuticals, have a higher representation of female workers. However, the technician jobs are most likely to be filled by men in the ISP and communication sectors. Even positions in call centres, which in many other countries are female-dominated, in Jordan are more likely to be held by men due to the need to work evening and night shifts. Figure 6 shows the percentage of women in the three sectors.



### **Compliance with Labour Law Articles Regarding Working Mothers**

All the companies studied are in compliance with national labour laws, particularly with regard to maternity leave. However, only two companies out of the nine interviewed provide either nursery services or childcare subsidies for working women with children. A significant research finding was that the human resource managers interviewed repeatedly confirmed that maternity leave had only limited financial implications for their companies. This is contrary to the general perception that Jordan’s employer-paid maternity leave policy acts as a deterrent in the hiring of women in the private sector. It is not clear, however, if this is mainly because these companies employ relatively few married women or if it is simply not a high cost for these companies. The large enterprises also appeared to find that this was less of an issue compared to the small and medium enterprises.

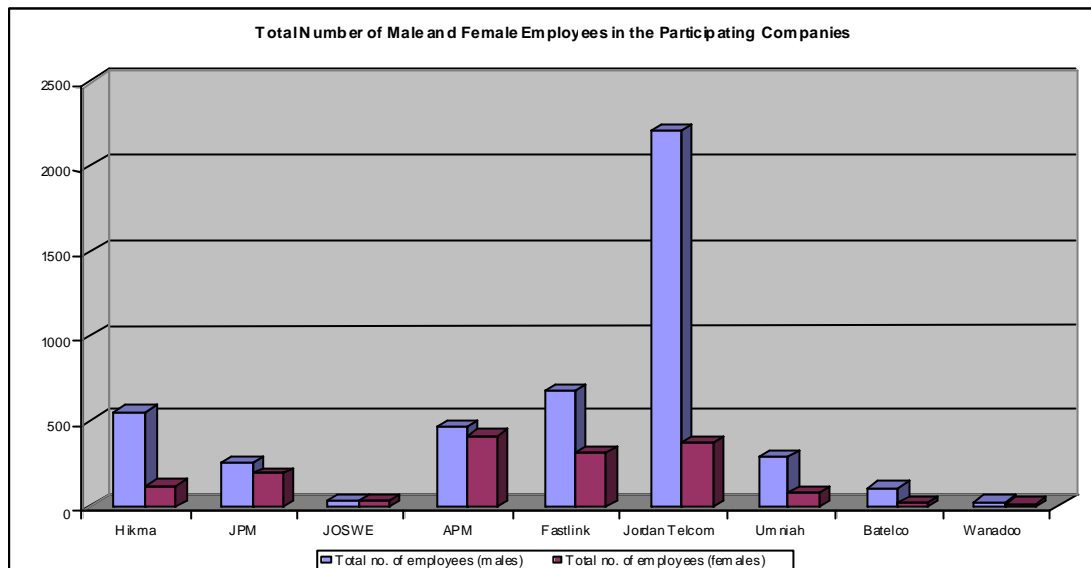
One person interviewed noted that his company had actually hired a qualified female employee who was obviously pregnant at the time of her interview. The rationale behind this decision was based on her qualifications and because this company believes that taking social responsibility is part of their corporate image and duty towards the Jordanian society. However, the other evidence documented in this study indicates that this was highly likely an individual case and not a standard hiring practice in Jordan.

### **Women Constitute 25% of the Labour Force in Case Study Sectors**

The questionnaires indicated that the total number of employees in the nine companies that participated in the study is 6,298 (with 4,694 men and 1,604 women). Female employees make up nearly 25.46% of the employees in these three economic sectors.

This is four percent higher than the national statistics cited for the year 2005.<sup>45</sup> Figure 7 presents the total number of male and female employees in the participating companies.

**Figure 7: Total number of male and female employees in the participating companies**



However, as discussed earlier, this percentage varies widely according to sector. Female participation is highest within the pharmaceutical sector, where it reaches around 36.82% of the total labour force, followed by the IT sector and the communications sector where it is 22.94% and 19.61% respectively.

### Women's Participation Highest among the Younger Age Groups

In general, the representation of employment according to age group varies in each sector. In the ISP sector the majority of its employees are under 29 (73.57%); in the pharmaceutical sector it is 52.28%, and in the communications sector where 36.99% of their employees are under 29.

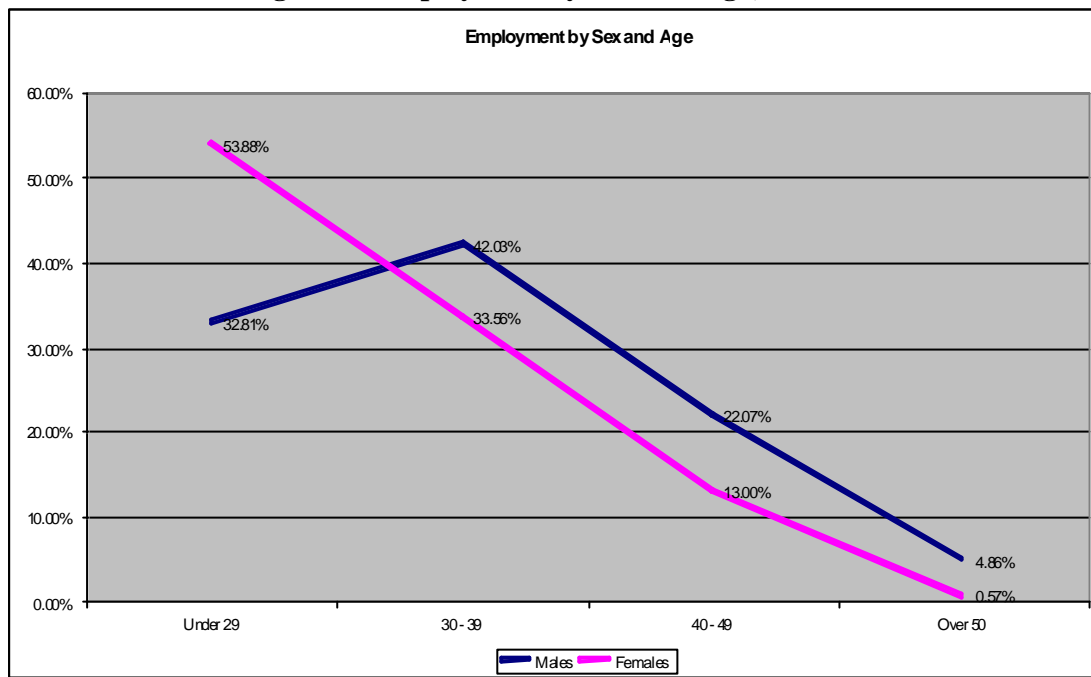
Both the case study data and the national statistics available indicate that this same pattern also applies to female employees in the three sectors studied. Nearly 54% of female employees in the companies studied were under 29 years of age. The percentage varies according to different sectors. Information technology has the highest percentage of female employees under 29, with 80.65% of female employees being under 29, followed by the pharmaceuticals and the communication sector at 63.31% and 43.46% respectively. Figure 8 presents the percentage of female employment by sex and age.

In general, these findings are not surprising within the ISP sector. It is a relatively small sector and attracts most of its employees immediately after they have graduated. They tend to come for short periods to gain the required work experience before moving on to other jobs. However, in light of a recent study by the World Bank, these findings, specifically in relation to the presence of younger females, are also linked to that fact that Jordanian women tend to leave formal work after marriage. A recent study by the

<sup>45</sup> DOS. 2006. Employment and Unemployment Survey

World Bank (2005) has affirmed that only 7% of married women in Jordan are employed<sup>35</sup> in the formal sector.

**Figure 8: Employment by Sex and Age, Jordan**



Nearly all of the private sector firms interviewed also noted that women tend to leave their jobs once married. Some study participants indicated that the decision to stop working outside the home is usually prompted by the husband who asks his wife to quit her job. This pattern was reiterated by the focus group discussions.

Women over 50 years of age constitute only 0.57% of women working in the selected sectors. This appears to be in line with national statistics, but raises a red flag about women's eligibility to benefit from social security schemes.

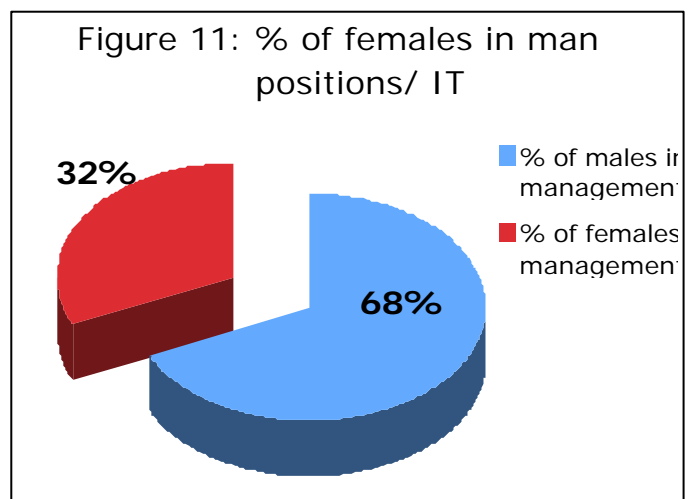
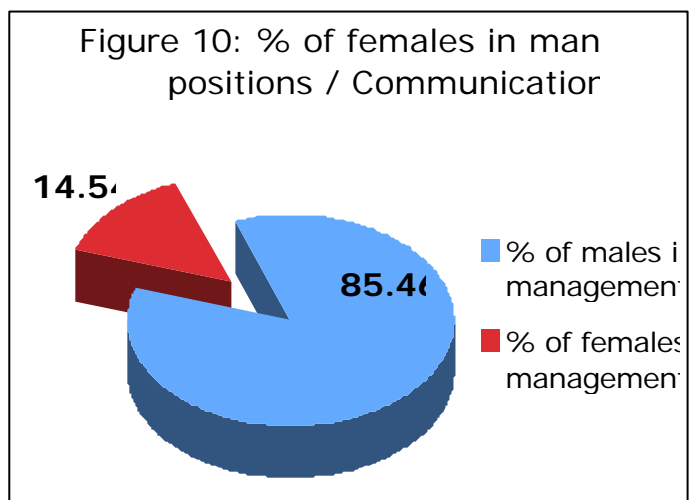
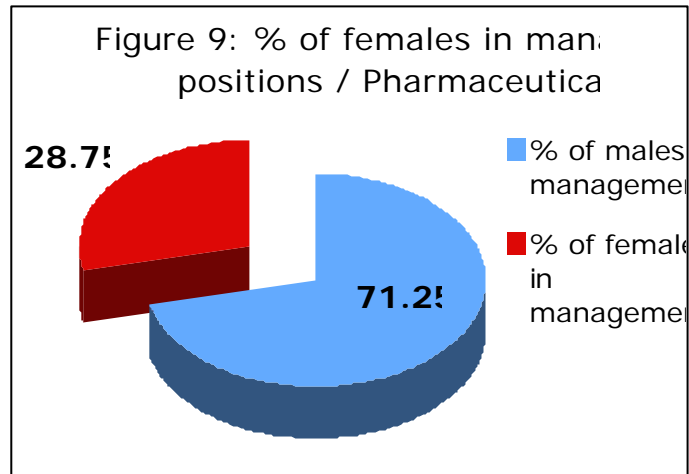
<sup>35</sup> World Bank. 2005. Gender Country Assessment

## Women Under-represented in Managerial Positions

Of the total number of female employees working in the three sectors included in this research, only 8% are in the top three managerial positions in the companies in which they work. This is compared to 12% of the male employees who hold senior

management positions. While this appears to be a slight difference, it is important to keep in mind that this 8% is drawn from a much smaller pool of employees and therefore represents a significantly smaller group when the actual numbers which are disaggregated are considered.

Only two of the companies interviewed demonstrated positive policies towards women in management. This combined with a variety of other factors that limit women's mobility within the formal labour force have led to a situation in which women's representation in management is quite limited compared to that of men. This pattern holds true in the three sectors studied as can be seen from Figures 9, 10 and 11. Of the total 160 top three management positions in the pharmaceutical companies studied women constitute just 28.75%. This is 8% less than their overall representation as employees in this sector and can be seen as a clear indication that women are not represented at the management level in proportion to their numbers on staff. In the communications sector, the difference is 7.21% and women represent only 14.73% of the 502 staff members in the top three management positions. In the ISP sector this situation is reversed and there are proportionately more women in management than there are female employees in the sector in general. There women hold nearly 32% of the 25 managerial positions documented.



## Pharmaceutical Sector: Feminisation of Specific Job Types

Although women's participation is generally less than that of men's in the pharmaceutical sector, some jobs are dominated by women. The packaging department, at 96.89%, is largely occupied by women, while 92.32% of the technical jobs are held by men. Similarly, in administrative jobs there are more women than men and their presence exceeds 60% of the total staff working in this occupational category. This is in line with the feminisation of some job categories such as secretarial work, registry work, telephone operators and cleaning personnel.

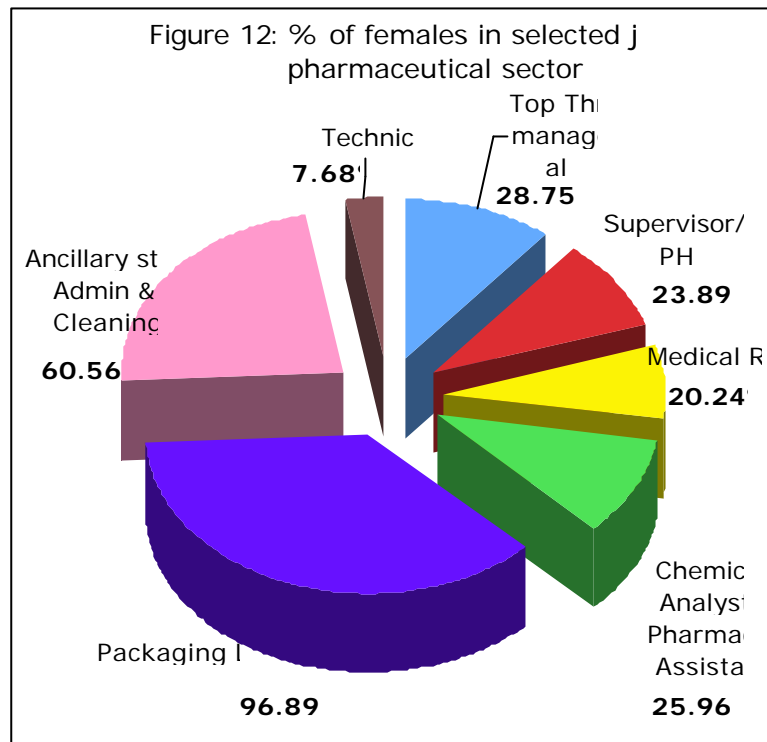


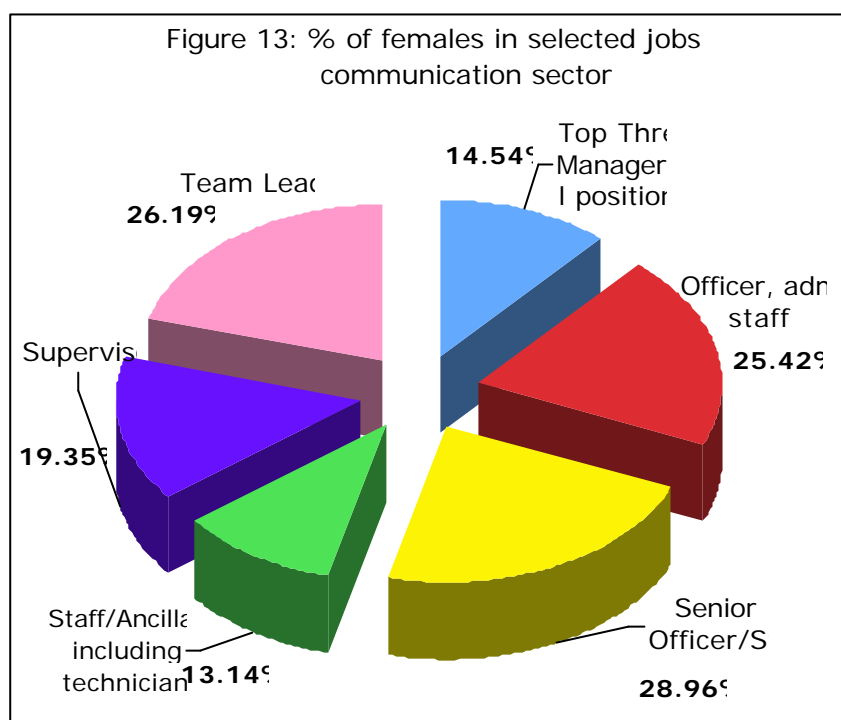
Figure 12 outlines the percentage of women in selected job categories in the pharmaceutical sector.<sup>46</sup> There is some evidence that medical representative positions are gradually opening up for women pharmacists. However, 79.76% of the staff employed in this category are still men. It is also worth noting the following data limitations:

1. The information provided in this section is based on data from only three companies. The fourth company did not provide the relevant data. Therefore, the results might be different if the fourth company had responded.
2. The percentage of female participation in the total sample is skewed somewhat as one company employs nine women as medical representatives out of the 20 staff working in this position. In addition, the company's human resources manager explained that the majority of women working as medical field representatives were concentrated in telemarketing as opposed to actual field-based marketing.

<sup>46</sup> Note: the percentages provided are the percentage of women in relation to each job category compared to the percentage of men in these positions and not to the total of female employees.

## Female Participation Highest in Office-Based Work

Women participating in the communication sector are mainly located in the administrative related departments (nearly 25%). These include the legal department, accounting and account handling. Women constitute just 13% of the technical staff who are field oriented. Figure 13 presents a summary of these findings for the communications sector.<sup>47</sup>



Although the numbers available from the ISP sector do not allow for any inference on whether women are working in a specific area, the information obtained during the only interview made in this sector indicated that jobs entailing house visits were mainly handled by men and women were assigned office-based jobs.

## Hiring Processes

During the focus group discussions, the female participants emphasised that for them there is a strong link between economic participation and educational attainment. They indicated that they applied for positions as soon as they graduated from university. Furthermore, unlike the general perception among the employers interviewed, the female participants indicated that they applied for jobs regardless of its relevance to their area of study. However, they also noted that while some women are aware that private sector opportunities might be more rewarding for employees, there is still a general misconception that the private sector exploits its staff, particularly with regard to overtime. This discourages some women from applying.

The private sector companies interviewed indicated that they advertise vacant positions in the local newspapers, as well as use other approaches to find qualified candidates. These include:

<sup>47</sup> Note: the percentages provided are of females in each job in comparison to males and not to total female employees.



For low level positions, most companies refer to their database of available CVs. This is particularly relevant to companies within the pharmaceutical sector, as these companies receive daily applications from people living in the area. In the communication and ISP sectors recent graduates usually approach the companies and apply regardless if there is an advertisement or not.

For high level positions, staff members are usually hired through head hunters or through advertisements in web based regional advertising agencies.

It is worth noting that although the companies studied do not specify a specific sex for employment sometimes, the working conditions and job description lead to only women or men being hired. For example, in the pharmaceutical sector any jobs that require shift work automatically preclude women applicants. Furthermore, even when women do apply for this type of work, their applications are generally rejected. The general perception is that these jobs are not suitable for women.

Current labour laws define several occupations in which women are not allowed to work, including those that require night shifts. Nevertheless, interviewees pointed out that even if the law permitted the employment of women on night shifts, they would not encourage women to apply for these positions. The main reason they gave for this is that social traditions in Jordan do not consider it appropriate for women to work in the evenings or at night. Women themselves are also perceived not to be that interested in working evening and night shifts. This observation was made by the human resources managers in the communications sector. They have found that women applicants explicitly state that their preference is to work on the day shift. In all cases, this limits women's access to the benefits of night shifts, include higher or overtime wages and additional opportunities to apply for supervisory positions.

The above findings concur with the document review in Chapter One and highlight the need for legal provisions promoting and supporting equal opportunities or treatment of men and women in private sector hiring practices.

## **INTERVIEW RESULTS**

For recruitment, most companies request the applicant to fill in an application form followed by tests to measure their technical capacities. The process is finalised by an interview before they select an appropriate candidate.

The case study research found that it is common practice for human resources personnel to ask personal questions pertaining to social status and place of residency during job interviews. The human resource managers interviewed justified asking these personal questions as a means of obtaining information on the applicants' character or to better understand if the candidate has family responsibilities that could affect their job performance or availability for overtime or work-related travel. Several human resource managers noted that the questions they ask women include those related to their marital status and their future marital or childbearing plans. While none of them indicated that the answers to these questions influence their decisions about hiring female job applicants, various remarks they made about the effect of marriage and childbearing on the working woman's life seemed to indicate that these issues could readily have a direct impact on hiring decisions. One company also explicitly stated that up until very recently it was a

common expectation that as soon as a female employee got married she would have to quit her job.

## **Training Opportunities**

All the companies interviewed indicated that they provide in-house training opportunities. Although some mentioned opportunities outside Jordan, the limited available data hinders making any substantial conclusions about how many women benefit from these opportunities compared to men. However, discussions during the interviews highlighted that while external training opportunities are available, it is mainly men who benefit from them. These decisions are based on the pre-conception that women cannot travel abroad, based on the fact that in the past the women themselves have turned down these opportunities or because their direct supervisor tends to offer this training only to male subordinates.

## **Evaluation and Promotion**

Nearly two thirds of the companies interviewed utilise specific forms and working processes to evaluate staff performance. In most cases the evaluation process helps identify employee strengths and weaknesses. While some of the companies interviewed have an elaborate process involving the staff member and his/ her supervisor prior to finalising the evaluation, other companies rely mainly on the supervisor's evaluation. Many of the companies interviewed indicated that they did not perceive their recruitment processes as being discriminatory and indicated that promotion measures were usually based on the performance evaluation process. It was not, however, possible within the methodology used within the scope of this study to verify this perception using an independent and transparent assessment process.

## **Career Cycle**

One interesting outcome raised in the different discussions was the companies' perception and appreciation of female and male's added value and characteristics in the private sector. In concurrence with the focus group discussions with female employees held in the second phase of the study, most of the case study interviewees indicated that women's participation is characterised by commitment and dedication to work while male workers were characterised by their limited commitment to the company, high mobility and a willingness to leave the job for better opportunities in other companies without much consideration for loyalty to the company. This is particularly relevant to the ISP sector, which recruits recent graduates who tend to be highly mobile and apply for these entry-level positions as a means to gain enough experience to obtain a better job. In the communications sector, competing companies outside Jordan often target the Jordanian companies' male employees and try to lure them away.

Although all the companies interviewed emphasised discrepancies between the commitment levels of men and women, they still invest more in their male employees. They repeatedly mentioned that their female staff's career plans are highly dependent on

their marital status. According to these interviewees it is not the expense of hiring women, such as maternity leave that hinder their investment in female staff, but rather the fact that women's working decisions are highly influenced by her family or husband. Therefore, women's entry to the labour market is subject to her family's perception on the suitability of the job, the working hours and conditions, and its influence on her reproductive role once she is married. The HR managers also indicated that women are more affected by their family needs compared to male employees. These different factors influencing women's decisions about whether or not they will continue working after they marry or have children have led to employers to perceive women as being less reliable than men.

It is significant that the companies interviewed indicated that the financial implications of maternity leave were not a major determinant affecting their decisions to hire women. However, they do find that maternity leave affects how their companies manage the remaining human resources available while female staff members are on maternity leave.

The decision makers in large companies believe that male workers can be motivated by the possibility of having access to increased salaries, better training opportunities or promotions. They do not perceive this to be as much the case for their female employees due to women often not being the sole actors in making any decisions related to pursuing their careers. In their view, the fact that women's families or husbands have an important say in determining whether or not the women continue to work outside the home limits the role of the company can play in motivating its female employees.

During the focus group discussions several participants pointed to the fact that when the woman worker marries the value of her economic participation is reduced, as she can no longer work overtime that readily due to her increased family responsibilities. This, in turn, limits the financial rewards she can earn and her opportunities to participate in other workplace opportunities. This is both because she may not be able to take advantage of them and because even when she is, her supervisors may assume that she is not. This pattern is one impact of the general societal perception that women's main role is to uphold the family and to work as mothers. As there is increasing economic pressure for women to work outside the home, women entering the formal labour force find themselves having to try and balance both their productive and reproductive roles at the same time and in some ways are experiencing the worst of both worlds. Their work within the household has not diminished, they are made to feel guilty for neglecting their families even though they are bringing in much needed income. They are also generally not perceived as "serious" employees after they marry and so are unable to advance as readily as married men.

Most of the discussions about forms of discrimination against women workers that took place made no mention of sexual harassment in the work environment. However, some female focus group participants noted that that some of their male supervisors were more supportive of the career development of their male colleagues than of the women. The women supervisors who participated in the focus group discussions also observed that that their male subordinates often resist their female supervisor and question their directions and instructions.

## **SUMMARY**

This case study research has looked into few major private sector companies in the fields of pharmaceuticals, communications and Internet Service Providers (ISPs). Set up initially as a pilot, its findings provide some important indicators about general trends related to women's participation in these three important economic sectors in Jordan.

While some of the research findings simply supported the results of existing studies, there were also a few surprises. Primary among these is the fact that for large companies, the cost of maternity leave is not a major factor that they take into account in their hiring decisions. They also do not see the cost of this benefit as having a significant negative financial impact on their companies. This may be in part due to the fact there is a high rate of women who quit their jobs upon marriage and, consequently, for the large companies this cost is relatively small compared to their overall work force. It appears to be a more significant cost and issue for small and medium enterprises.

For some companies, however, the main challenge they have found is the need to replace the pregnant women's services during her maternity leave. For this reason, they could use some assistance to develop creative management practices that both address their temporary staffing needs effectively and which will support the women taking the maternity leave.

Another major finding of the research is that the social view that confines Jordanian women to a reproductive role is still dominant in the mindsets of many employers. Consequently, many companies still mainly prefer to employ single and young women. Similarly, as national statistics indicate, the majority of women tend to leave their jobs after they marry. This leads to a self-reinforcing situation in which because many women quit their jobs after marriage, the women who remain in the work force are generally assumed not to have a strong commitment to their careers. Therefore when decisions are made regarding access to training opportunities and promotions all women are less likely to be considered. This, in turn, limits the benefits being offered by the private sector to married women and reinforces the idea that working outside the home is not worth the trouble. Women in this situation wind up with dual responsibilities in the workplace and at home and are, in essence, working two full time jobs at the same time.

Social attitudes also influence women's decisions about what kind of work they will seek and accept. For example, both women and men's feel that night shift work is not really appropriate or safe for women. This combination of legal restrictions and social attitudes limits the areas of work in which women can compete and restricts their access to jobs that are more financially and professionally rewarding.

The same social attitudes limit women's decision-making powers on issues relevant to their work and career development. The research results in this study reiterated findings of previous studies which have identified the family and the husband as the main decision makers about issues related to women's employment. This is particularly true in low-level positions, such as packaging in the pharmaceutical sector where wages are low. It is also relevant to women in other sectors to a varied degree.

These social perceptions appear to have a significant impact on which groups of women are employed in the private sector in the three sectors studied. There is a clear bias towards the employment of young, single women. This bias is both on the part of the employers and to some degree a result of self-selection as the women employees

themselves, given the large numbers who choose to quit after marriage due to family pressures and societal expectations. This contributes to a situation in which there are lower numbers of women at the managerial level than in the general work force in the companies surveyed in two of the sectors studied simply women's high attrition rate means that is a smaller pool of experienced women for managers to draw upon. It also means that the young women currently entering the work place have fewer positive role models to emulate and can further undermine their confidence that they can succeed in the private sector.

Another important finding is that many companies base their human resource policies primarily on the core labour standards established under Jordanian law. Therefore changes in key areas of labour law could provide women with more choices in a competitive market, as well as more equal access to work-related benefits. These new laws would also have to be enforced and an awareness campaign mounted to inform both employers and employees of the new laws and labour policies.

However, a legal solution is not sufficient. It is also necessary to increase societal awareness of gender-related employment issues at all levels. Be it within the family level or in society at large, the perception that the role of women is primarily as a wife and mother needs to be addressed to ensure that women will have equal opportunities in accessing the private sector and in their subsequent careers and work life.

## Chapter Three: Conclusions and Recommendations

The research process involved in this study indicated that there are multiple challenges facing women who want to or are already working in the private sector. Underlying all of them is the social value that women are dependents and that their primary role is to serve the family as the primary homemaker. This perception of women and their roles has led to the development of public policies that, while aimed at protecting women, actually have led to increased discrimination against them, and in some cases, also discriminate against men.

The view of women as homemakers, mothers and dependents also appears to influence the kinds of jobs considered suitable for women and men, how seriously each sex takes their jobs once they obtain them, as well as women and men's access to training and their promotion rates once in the workplace.

Having to pay for maternity leave was not considered a significant financial issue by the large enterprises that participated in the study, but it does appear to be an issue for small and medium enterprises. This has had the result that some employers will harass their female employees as soon as they become engaged in an attempt to get them to quit. The people interviewed also indicated that they have experienced or witnessed discrimination in hiring related to women being hired on the basis of their personal appearance, including the decision to wear traditional Islamic clothing.

Despite these many challenges, those interviewed noted that there are some employers who do not take a person's sex into consideration in hiring, management and promotion decisions. They, however, did not consider this to be the norm. In general, women reported that they have found that they have to have higher qualifications than men and to work harder both to obtain work and to get ahead once hired. They also cited the difficulty of obtaining work in the private sector, and then of having to juggle family and work responsibilities as key factors limiting their participation in this sector. They gave this as the main reason many women prefer public sector employment.

From an employer's perspective women are perceived to be more reliable in terms of getting the work done and that they tend to be more loyal to their employers and to be more willing to compromise on issues related to their working conditions. These attributes, however, are more than offset by the fact that employers also perceive women as being less committed to paid employment and career development than men, and because they tend not to be available for overtime once they marry. This may explain why the majority of the female labour force in the private sector in the three sectors studied were single and under 29, with less than 1% of their female staff in the over 50 age group.

Thus while there is a need for change in awareness and attitudes among private sector employers, equally there is a need for increasing awareness and changing attitudes about women and men's roles among the general population. Both are necessary to make a significant change in the rate of women's economic participation in the private sector.

## **GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES AND CONCERNS**

### **Jordanian National Commission for Women**

The JNCW sees increasing women's participation in the labour force as a national priority as it will provide women with greater economic independence and an increased awareness of their labour and other rights, as well as will contribute to the country's development. The current emphasis in terms of programming to support women's economic participation is on small business development programs. However, the JNCW does not feel that this approach will generate much employment for women initially due to the many social restrictions that affect Jordanian women. Therefore they think it would be a better strategy to focus attention on finding ways to increase women's economic participation as employees. Since there is a limit to the number of employees the public sector can accommodate, Jordan's national development five-year plan has placed an emphasis on private sector development. Therefore, it makes sense for the Jordanian government to seek ways to support increased participation of women in the private sector.

The JNCW is also concerned that although women in Jordan are very well educated, this is not translating into economic participation. This has implications for Jordan both in terms of wastage of trained personnel, as well as for women's rights and their ability to support themselves independently. This makes a study about the challenges women face in accessing the private sector, what their situation is within industry even more pressing. There is also a need to pinpoint what other research is needed and possible sources of support for this research.

### **Advocacy**

In Jordan, women's NGOs and activists have been focusing on increasing women's political participation and on support for microcredit programs. While these initiatives are needed, those interviewed also thought that strengthening women's economic participation would create stronger women who will then be in a better position to advocate for their own rights. Therefore one of the needs identified is to create awareness among women's NGOs of the importance of also working to increase women's economic participation, and to find ways to facilitate the building of alliances around this issue.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Public sector

There is a need for the public to consider developing and enacting laws that would:

1. Introduce labour laws that make a national commitment to the promotion of equal opportunity in employment and strict measures to address work-related gender - based discrimination; in particular, to prohibit discrimination in hiring and promotion based on gender and religious dress, and advertisements that specify being male or female as a job requirement.
2. Make sexual harassment in the workplace illegal, and provide employers with support to set up sexual harassment training and policies within their companies.
3. Ensure that companies provide women and men with equal access to company benefits regardless of their marital status.
4. Encourage companies to institute family-friendly and work-life balance policies such as flex time, compressed work weeks and paternity leave.

There is also a need to consider revisions to the existing Personal Status Law, Social Security and Pension Laws to remove discriminatory provisions related to women's labour. In particular, there is an urgent need to:

5. Eliminate restrictions on women working evening and shift work
6. Change social security laws that are based on the principle of women as dependents and establish social security policies that treat women as independent economic actors.
7. Amend maternity leave laws provisions that place the sole responsibility for these costs on the private sector employer.
8. Work towards harmonizing private and public sector working conditions and benefits.

The Ministry of Labour could also consider the viability and potential positive impact of developing the following types of incentive programs to support the increased hiring of female employees by the private sector at all levels.

9. A range of incentives promoting the recruitment and promotion of women such as:
  - ? Providing additional points on tenders for government-funded work for companies that demonstrate equal opportunity policies and have a certain percentage of female employees
  - ? Requiring companies to be in compliance with government equal opportunity policies in order to bid
  - ? Sharing the cost of recruitment/employment for women who work in areas in which they are under-represented for their first year of employment
  - ? Providing tax reduction/ exemptions for companies that have at least the same percentage of women in management positions as there are in their workforce with the long term aim of reaching 50% women in management positions.



- ? Funding or co-funding internship programs for recent female graduates so that they could gain additional experience by working with NGOs where they are often given considerable training.
  - ? Funding or co-funding internship programs for recent female graduates to help them gain entry to fields in which women are under-represented.
10. Work with educational institutions at all levels to remove gender stereotypes in curriculum and to promote positive role models for girls and women.
  11. Work with the media to reduce and eliminate gender stereotyping in the media.

The Ministry of Labour, Statistics and the JNCW could establish:

12. Baseline data in each major economic sector related to women and men's participation in the private sector and establish a series of quantitative and qualitative indicators to measure change in participation rates and working conditions.

## **Post-secondary Institutions**

There is a need to foster a working environment that supports more career-oriented women. Post-secondary institutions can do this by:

13. Integrating the following topics and themes into their career counselling programs:
  - ? Discussion of measures men and women can take to help them fit having a family into their career, how to balance family and career (including the growing need for men to share household and family responsibilities)
  - ? How to behave in the workplace
  - ? Realistic expectations of work benefits and salaries
  - ? How to select which organizations and companies to apply to
  - ? Communications issues they are likely to encounter at work
  - ? Conflict resolution skills in the workplace
  - ? Worker rights and obligations, including sexual harassment, and what constitutes gender discrimination.
14. Revise the curriculum to remove gender stereotyping and to promote positive role models for women.

## **Private Sector**

Private sector employers could seriously consider adopting the following:

15. Non-discriminatory recruitment policies and practices.
16. Human resource policies that do not discriminate between women and men, particularly with regard to access to benefits.
17. Internship programs to increase the number of women employees in job categories in which they are under-represented.
18. Mentoring programs to support the increased promotion of women in management positions.
19. Work-life balance and family-friendly work policies.
20. Realistic hiring targets (as opposed to quotas) for increasing and retaining the number of women and men in any job categories in which they are under-represented., i.e., these would have to be in proportion to the availability of qualified candidates in the workforce and coming out of Jordan's training institutions as opposed to a 50/50 split.

## **Public Sector, Private Sector, Academe and Civil Society**

All four sectors need to:

21. Support the JNCW in the implementation of the National Strategy for Jordanian Women, specifically in the area of economic advancement.

Develop and implement workshops, seminars and other forms of social marketing campaigns to raise the awareness of both men and women about gender discrimination

22. in the workplace, worker rights and obligations, the need to find ways to support the growing need for two-income families and develop creative family approaches to accommodate and support working mothers.

The public, civil society and academic sectors need to:

23. Target and involve decision-makers in private sector firms in policy fora and debates on issues relating to women's economic participation.

### Annex 1: Companies Interviewed during Case Study Research

	Company	Responded to Questionnaire	HR manager interviewed	Representatives participated in focus group		Notes
				Males	Females	
1	<i>Hikma Quality Pharmaceutical (HQP)</i>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Questionnaire filled in Jan 2007
2	<i>Arab Pharmaceutical Manufacturing (APM)</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Questionnaire filled in Jan 2007
3	<i>The Jordanian Pharmaceutical Manufacturing (JPM)</i>	Yes	Yes	No	No	Questionnaire filled in Jan 2007
4	<i>Jordan Sweden Medical and Sterilization Co</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Questionnaire filled in Jan 2007
5	<i>Dar Al Dawa</i>	No	Yes	No	No	
6	<i>Batelco</i>	Yes	No	No	No	Questionnaire filled in mid 2006
7	<i>Cyberia</i>	Yes	Yes	No	No	Questionnaire filled in mid 2006
8	<i>Wanadoo</i>	Not fully	No	No	No	Questionnaire filled in mid 2006 company merged
9	<i>Umniah</i>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Questionnaire filled in Jan 2007
10	<i>Jordan Telecom Group</i>	Yes	Yes (but resigned after interview and new policies installed, but not available for the study)	No	No	Questionnaire filled in mid 2006 company merged
11	<i>Fastlink</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Questionnaire filled in Jan 2007

## **Annex 2: Interview Guidelines**

### **STAFF RECRUITMENT**

#### **ADVERTISING**

1. How do you advertise new positions in your company?
  1. Employee referrals
  2. Newspaper, internet, postings
  3. Referrals from universities and post-secondary institutions
  4. Other?
2. Does your advertisement preference depend on the vacancies you want to announce?
3. Does any of your advertisement indicate a preference for male or female candidates in any particular vacancies? If so, for which positions? Why?
4. Are there any particular positions or types of work that you think are more suitable for women? For men?
5. If so, why?
  - ⌘ Customers prefer working with men
  - ⌘ Job involves a lot of travel
  - ⌘ The nature of the job suits women/men's characteristics better
  - ⌘ Women are more .....(fill in characteristic)
  - ⌘ Men are more .....(fill in characteristic)
6. Do you have any particular concerns about hiring women for particular positions? If so, what are they?

#### **INTERVIEWS**

7. What are your interview strategies?
8. Do you have a panel interview or committee?
9. Who sits on the interview committee? (do you ensuring having males/ females)
10. What kinds of questions do you ask the employees in the interviews?
  - ⌘ About professional qualifications and experience
  - ⌘ Problem solving situations
  - ⌘ Personal questions regarding marital status, family members, etc.
  - ⌘ Other?

#### **TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES**

11. How do you advertise training opportunities in your company?
12. How do you ensure that qualified candidates are chosen for training opportunities?
13. Do you offer training opportunities outside Jordan? If yes, how many annually? How do you choose between candidates? Do you ensure that equal numbers of men and women participate?
14. What kind of orientation/training do young women need to support their entry into the labour force in the private sector?

#### **EVALUATION AND PROMOTION**

15. What are your policies towards evaluation and promotion?
16. What are the criteria you use to ensure transparency?
17. Are women and men evaluated and promoted according to different criteria?

**CAREER CYCLE**

18. Do you hire men and women at the same hierarchal level?
19. On average how long does it take a woman/ man to move up the organizational ladder?
20. What are the policies you have on promotion, moving in between departments?
21. Are there any wage gaps between female and male employees?
22. From your experience, what is the career cycle for women? Men?
23. What kinds of positive/negative experiences have you had with regard to the performance of your female employees?
24. What kinds of positive/negative experiences have you had with regard to the performance of your male employees?

**STAFF RETENTION**

25. What kinds of challenges have you found in retaining your female staff?
26. What do you think your company or the government could do to increase your female retention rate?
27. What kinds of incentives would your company respond to best to encourage the hiring of more women?
28. Would your company find it easier to hire more women if the maternity leave benefit costs were divided up among the government, employee and your company instead of it being a 100% cost for your company?
29. Are you aware of the law that indicates that any company with 20 or more married children with children under the age of 4 is required to provide on-site child care on a cost recovery basis (i.e., the employees would pay for the service).
30. What kinds of measures do you think you could take in your company to increase the numbers of women working there?
31. What kind of support would you need to make this happen?

## **Annex 3: Focus Group Guidelines**

1. Is this your first job?
2. How did you find out about this position?
3. After you graduated how long did it take you to find a job?
4. What kinds of questions were asked during your interview?
5. What were the most important factors you considered when you were looking for work?
6. Have you been promoted since you started working here?
7. Have you gotten engaged or married since starting work at this company? If so, have you been treated any differently by your supervisors and colleagues since then?
8. If so, in what way?
9. Do you think that some jobs in this company are more suitable for women or men?
10. If so, which ones and why?
11. Is there anything you find particularly challenging about being a female/male employee with this company? If so, what are these challenges for you?
12. Does or did your mother work outside the home?
13. For female participants:
  - ? How do you manage your family responsibilities while you are at work?
  - ? What do you think are the biggest challenges for women who want to work in the private sector?
  - ? What do you suggest that the government and employers do to reduce these challenges?
14. For male participants:
  - ? Does your wife work outside the home?
  - ? If so, how do you and she manage your family responsibilities while she is at work?
  - ? Would you consider sharing the housework and family care with her to make it easier to hold a job outside the home and to contribute to the financial support of the family?
  - ? What do you think are the biggest challenges for women who want to work in the private sector?
  - ? What do you suggest that the government and employers do to reduce these challenges?

## References

Agocs C. and Burr C. "Employment equity, affirmative action and managing diversity: assessing the differences". International Journal of manpower, Vol. 17, No. 4. pp30-45, 1996.

Al Manar Project. 2004. Human Resources Information Assessment Report: Case Study Unemployment. Amman.

Catalyst. 2004. The Bottom Line : Connecting Corporate Performance and Gender Diversity. New York.

Chrysler. 1997. Presentation, Businesswomen's Trade Mission. Washington D.C.

Cox T. and Blake S. "Managing Cultural Diversity: implications for organizational competitiveness". Academy of Management Executive, Vol. 5, No.3, pp45-56, 1991.

Department of Statistics. 2004. Jordan in Figures. Amman.

Devlin and Associates Canada, "Workforce Diversity: A Royal LePage Relocation Services Training Seminar", 2001.

International Labour Organization. 2002. Women Workers in the Textiles and Garments Industries in Jordan: A research into the impact of globalisation. Amman.

Jasey, J. May 2006. Presentation: Buying Real Estate in Toronto. Remax Real Estate. Toronto.

Jordanian National Commission For Women, 2002/2004: Gender Mainstreaming In the Jordanian 1999-2003 Economic and Social Development Plan: A Case Study

UNDP and Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation. 2004. Jordan Human Development Report: Building Sustainable Livelihoods, Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development. Amman.

Kawar, Mary. 1997. Gender Employment and Life Course: the case of working daughters in Amman ,Jordan. Ph D. Dissertation, London School of Economics, London UK

Gender, Institutions, and Development Data Base (GID).

<http://www.oecd.org/dev/institutions/GIDdatabase>. OECD 2006

Richard, O. "Racial diversity, business strategy, and firm performance: A resource-based view" Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 43, pp164-177, 2000.

Robinson G. and Dechant K. "Building a Business Case for Diversity" Academy of management Executive, Vol. 11, No. 3, pp21-31, 1997.

Simaan, Ruba. "Difficulties Facing Women in the Tourism Sector" (in Arabic).

UNDP. 2004. Arab Human Development Report. New York - USA

UNIFEM. 2004. Arab Women Progress Report. Amman - Jordan

UNIFEM. 2004. Report on the Status of Jordanian Women: demography, economic participation, political participation and violence. Amman - Jordan