

## JORDAN

# Pursuing the Sustainable Development Goals Strengthening Protections and Ensuring Inclusion

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Over the past years, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, a resource-starved Middle Eastern country increasingly dependent on imports and international financial assistance, has struggled to withstand the impact of successive economic and demographic shocks. Regional conflicts have disrupted several of the country's key trade routes and caused tourism revenues to drop; inflows of migrant workers and refugees have contributed to strained government resources and the national infrastructure, and have exacerbated labour market challenges; and the debilitated state of the economy has left many struggling to build decent lives for themselves and their families. These and other challenges have underlined the importance of developing clear priorities, policies and strategies in promoting the country's development and ensuring the well-being of its population, particularly its most vulnerable segments.

However, Jordan's development policies and strategies have lacked consistency and continuity, with successive governments (most of which have remained in power for periods shorter than two years) often eschewing their predecessors' programmes.

In 2015, the year in which the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were set to expire, the United Nations adopted a new resolution, affirming the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its list of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by the year 2030. The new development agenda enshrined in the SDGs is intended to serve as successor to the expired MDGs, and it vastly expands upon the eight original Millennium Development Goals to include a number of heretofore unspecified development challenges. Among

the 17 SDGs are: ending poverty in all its forms everywhere (SDG 1); ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture (SDG 2); ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages (SDG 3); achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls (SDG 5); building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and fostering innovation (SDG 9); and strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing global partnerships for sustainable development (SDG 17). In the context of this global endeavour, it is important to determine where each country stands in regard to each of these dimensions, and the extent to which the SDG agenda has influenced or been integrated into national development strategies.

In the case of Jordan, though much has yet to be achieved, the government's willingness to present a voluntary national review (VNR) in 2017 represents a positive step, reflecting in part the seriousness of the government in working towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This report provides an overview of some of Jordan's key socioeconomic and development challenges from an SDG-based perspective, giving particular attention to the six SDGs indicated above: poverty, hunger, health, gender equality, infrastructure and implementation. Following a look at the alignment between Jordan's development strategy and the SDGs, it will outline the country's main challenges in each of these goals, including a more comprehensive look at the challenges of implementation (SDG 17) and the role of civil society in meeting these then conclude with

what needs to happen to bring about needed change and recommendations designed to help do this.

The findings of this report have been complemented with the outcomes of a national workshop on the Sustainable Development Goals, which took place 27-28 March, 2017, at the Geneva Hotel in Amman, Jordan. The workshop was organized by the Amman-based Phenix Center for Economic and Informatics Studies, in cooperation with the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND). Among the approximately 70 participants were representatives from CSOs, government (i.e., the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation), the National Center for Human Rights (NCHR), trade unions, and independent human rights and development experts.

### Jordan's National Vision

Since the inception of implementation for the 2030 Agenda, there has been some proof of the Jordanian government's commitment to achieving the goals. Yet, to date, few programmes have entered the implementation phase, and most efforts thus far have been fundamentally theoretical and preparatory, rooted in policy-drawing and strategy development, and have yet to materialize into concrete measures. Commonly, as the national Department of Statistics usually compiles the statistics necessary for policy-drawing, the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC) is responsible for developing such policies and overseeing their implementation. Yet, as we approach the second half of 2017, efforts to integrate the SDGs into Jordan's development strategy remain limited.

To date, Jordan's governments have, for the most part, lacked commitment to the pursuit of necessary structural changes, limiting themselves to the application of ad hoc solutions to the country's socioeconomic ailments. Government action has thus largely been focused on (often unfruitful) policy-drawing, which has lacked adequate oversight and follow-up in its implementation. More recently, however – perhaps upon recognizing these flaws – the government has demonstrated interest in promoting inclusiveness in development. For instance, in March 2017, MOPIC opened dialogue with Jordanian civil society, academics and youth to discuss the

government's perceptions of the implementation mechanisms for the achievement of the SDGs.

In 2015, a new document was released in Jordan, entitled "Jordan 2025: A National Vision and Strategy" in which the government set forth a detailed list of development goals, and the measures to be adopted to achieve them.<sup>1</sup> Because it was issued prior to Jordan's endorsement of the SDGs, the latter are not explicitly referenced in the text. However, several of the goals listed are in line with the vision championed in the SDGs, meaning the document is nevertheless representative of Jordan's continued commitment to the improvement of socioeconomic conditions within its borders.

In regards to SDG 1, pertaining to ending poverty in all its forms, two subsections of the document (sections 1.2.4 and 1.2.5) are particularly relevant, as they concern 'poverty and disadvantaged communities' and 'cost of living', respectively. In this respect, the document underlines the need for increased social spending, namely in the form of subsidies and pensions, in tackling the challenges posed by rapid population growth and refugee inflows.

On the issue of food security and nutrition, which concerns SDG 2, the document mentions (section 1.4.6.3) Jordan's dependence on imports, by virtue of which it is "highly exposed to international commodity price fluctuations", and, again, the impact of demographic shocks, which have burdened the government by increasing the need for subsidies on food items and other commodities.

Regarding SDG 3, pertaining to health, Jordan's 2025 Vision and Strategy highlights (section 1.1.1) the progress made over the last three decades in regards to life expectancy, which increased from 66 to 74.4 years, and infant mortality, which dropped from 45 to 17 per 1,000 live births between 1980 and 2014. The document also praises the expansion of the national healthcare system, which, it argues, is what placed Jordan below

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Jordan, "Jordan 2015: A National Vision and Strategy", Amman, Jordan, 2015.

the international average in terms of the spread of infectious diseases. However, it also points out that the country has performed poorly, in comparison with international levels, in terms of non-communicable diseases (e.g., diabetes) – a phenomenon which it ascribes to the spread of harmful ‘lifestyle choices’ among Jordanians – and that, according to estimates, over “30 percent of healthy life years in Jordan [are] lost due to early mortality, sickness, and disability,” which negatively affects labour force participation rates, increases healthcare costs, and decreases national productivity, namely due to increased worker absenteeism and early retirements. Finally, it is mentioned that only 45 percent of military hospitals, 16 percent of public hospitals, and 13 percent of private hospitals in Jordan are accredited according to international standards.

On the issue of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (SDG 5), the document underlines (section 1.1.4) Jordan’s low levels of female economic activity, which, at 15 percent (a figure which has since risen) fell significantly behind even the regional (MENA) average of 27 percent. It is pointed out that Jordan ranks 99 out of 146 countries on the Gender Inequality Index and 134 out of 142 in the Global Gender Gap Index (lagging behind the majority of MENA countries), and that the average wage gap between males and females reaches 67% (women earn 67% of what men do) in all types of jobs. Boosting female labour market participation from 15 percent to 27 percent by 2025, the document continues, would have “major positive impacts on economic growth in Jordan, [which it would increase] by at least 5 percent by 2025.”

Lastly, in regards to infrastructure (SDG 9), the document praises (sections 1.4.7 and 2.5.3) Jordan’s “road and air transport infrastructure, electricity supply, and mobile phone networks”, and stresses the importance of infrastructure development projects – namely in the form of public-private partnerships (PPPs) – in ensuring the provision of energy, clean water and food to the population.

However, numerous obstacles stand in the way of Jordan’s pursuit of these, and other, development goals.

Some of the challenges most often cited in this regard included hikes in the prices of such basic commodities as fuel and food, as well as the consequences of the global financial crisis, whose effects are still patent on the world economy; the absence of an overarching strategy for combatting poverty in Jordan; a lack of coordination between actors; and the mismanagement of available resources. There is also a need for a clearer conceptualization of corporate social responsibility, which refers to the role played by private entities in ensuring socioeconomic progress in the country, as well as to the mechanisms in place which hold enterprises to account should their actions and decisions be to the detriment of social development. In fact, though the government commonly refers to exogenous factors and lack of sufficient financing when discussing the lack of progress made towards the achievement of SDGs, many of their targets are perfectly within the reach of the government without need for additional financial resources. Namely, targets pertaining to SDGs 1, 2, 4, 8, 10, and 16 require only policy changes, such as ensuring compliance with decent work standards, reducing the heavy burden posed by indirect taxes, improving governance by promoting fair and transparent appointment and recruitment practices in the public sector – especially for high-level positions – and engaging with workers’ and employers’ organizations as partners in development by fostering tripartite social dialogue. To this effect, it is likewise important that freedom of association be protected and expanded, and that trade union independence is ensured, without with broad social dialogue between stakeholders, conducive to inclusive development, cannot take be achieved.

Recently, UN bodies in Jordan have striven to cooperate with the new government towards redeveloping the UN Strategic Development Partnership Framework (UNSDPF) in a way that better addresses the country’s priorities in terms of the SDGs. While cooperating and interacting with both government and civil society actors, the UN has thus sought to bridge the gap created by a lack of harmonized efforts, and make possible the adoption of a unified, comprehensive strategy to tackle

the country's socioeconomic challenges. Likewise, in April 2015, the National Forum on Jordanian Sustainable Development was launched, through which CSO representatives expressed their commitment to strengthening cooperation ties among each other and with the government. Additionally, in April 2017 the government expanded the national High Committee for Sustainable Development to include representatives from Jordan's two major civil society alliances – the Jordanian National Alliance for Sustainable Development and the Coordination Commission of Civil Society Organizations (HIMAM). With the exception of these measures, however, the government has so far only involved a limited number of civil society organizations in its development strategies, none of which champion a human rights-based development model. Overall, as will be further discussed below, civil society involvement in the development, implementation, and monitoring of development efforts in Jordan has remained limited.

Jordan's 2025 development vision denotes an understanding of the challenges it faces and, on certain issues, is in line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. However, meeting these challenges will require a level of participation, cooperation and inclusiveness which has hitherto not been possible within the country's political, economic and social framework.

The government has stated that it would integrate all 17 SDGs, along with the respective 169 targets and 231 performance indicators, into its national vision and executive plans, according to the country's priorities and capabilities – naturally with the exception of the targets which do not concern the country, such as those pertaining to the protection of specific forms of wildlife which do not exist in Jordan, the ocean, and other such issues. So far, the government has begun to discuss all goals and indicators with official bodies and civil society organizations and has expressed its intention to submit a Voluntary National Review (VNR) on implementation and achievements to the UN High Level Political Forum in July 2017.

### Jordan's key development and socioeconomic challenges

Poverty levels (pertaining to SDG 1) have remained high in Jordan. As of 2010, 14 percent of the population was estimated to be living below the poverty line. In addition, minimum wages, which stand at US\$ 310/month, remain worryingly close to absolute poverty threshold earnings, which are around US\$ 565/month for an average-sized family (4.8 persons). Currently, average wages in Jordan are around US\$ 650/month. According to figures issued by the Social Security Corporation for 2016, 52 percent of Jordanians earn US\$ 565/month or less, and 72 percent earn US\$ 706 /month or less.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the government has implemented a series of measures over the past years – often under the auspices of its international partners – in pursuit of 'fiscal consolidation', which have often threatened the livelihoods of some of the most vulnerable segments of the population, namely affecting the affordability of many basic goods and services (such as food, which concerns poverty as well as hunger). Unable to cut back on debt repayments and other essential expenses, the measures introduced by successive Jordanian governments have disproportionately impacted those least able to afford them (now 16%), as they have included the cutting and elimination of subsidies and the expansion of indirect taxes, while the country's income tax has remained among the lowest in the world (3.5% of GDP, according to the Ministry of Finance). This is partly owed to the high levels of tax evasion in the country (pervasive among individuals and institutions alike) which, in a way, have forced the government to rely heavily on indirect taxation, namely by introducing of a special tax on fuel, communications, cigarettes and other goods and services. Other factors which have contributed to the endangerment of Jordan's most vulnerable groups have been the government's failure to ensure corporate social responsibility and implement a progressive direct income tax system.

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<sup>2</sup> Social Security Corporation (2016), "Annual Report 2015", Amman, Jordan.

This endangerment is reflected in Jordan's levels of transient poverty, which is marked by "vulnerability to failing consumption".<sup>3</sup> Considering that recent estimates have placed the percentage of transient poor in Jordan at 18.6 percent, and that 14.2 percent of Jordanians effectively lived below the poverty line as of 2012, it follows that, today, over two-thirds of Jordanians may be considered poor in some regard.

Simultaneously, unemployment and economic inactivity rates have remained high – particularly among youth and women – which has further endangered the ability of many workers to provide a living for themselves and their dependents. According to the Department of Statistics, total unemployment has hovered at around 13.0 percent over the last 10 years. Currently, unemployment is believed to round 13.9 percent among males and 33% among females.<sup>4</sup> As suggested above, the employment gap between male and females in Jordan must also be looked at in the light of the much larger gap between male and female activity rates, which is targeted under SDG 8 on full and productive work and decent work for all (see target 8.5). By the first quarter of 2017, only 18.3 percent of Jordanian females of working age were economically active, to 63.0 percent of males.<sup>5</sup> This represents an enormous untapped economic potential, especially considering that Jordanian women are not only more educated, on average, than their male peers, but outperform them academically. Although several factors have contributed to the widening of this gap, three are of particular relevance: 1) a scarcity of affordable nurseries, which often prevents mothers from being able to reconcile economic activity with their traditional role as caregivers; 2) a lack of incentives capable of offsetting the unwillingness of employers to hire women; and 3) social norms, which often deter women from engaging in certain professions.

In terms of economic empowerment, it is worth

mentioning that, as recently as 2014, GNI per capita between males and females in Jordan stood at 18,831 and 3,587 (US\$ PPP), respectively. While the gap was shown to be similarly substantial among other Arab States, this contrasted with the relatively slimmer gap among high HDI countries on average. In terms of GII, or Gender Inequality Index, Jordan scored 0.473 in the 2014 index, ranking 102 out of 155 countries.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, youth unemployment has been estimated to stand between 32 and 40 percent, with rates reaching as high as 47 percent among recent graduates,<sup>7</sup> underlining the need to reevaluate the GOJ's policies on education (SDG 4). As in most comparable MENA countries, school-to-work transitions in Jordan are commonly long and difficult – especially for university graduates, as the national economy's reliance on low-skill occupations has resulted in, among other things, a very limited number of job opportunities in professional occupations. Furthermore, the quality and affordability of tertiary education have both suffered as a result of the government's emphasis on promoting the establishment of private universities, while only a fraction of the state's budget has been allocated to the development of public tertiary education. Partly in light of this, higher education in Jordan has become, in many ways, a commodity which few are able to afford. In addition, several tertiary education programmes have since been established which charge higher fees while facilitating admission procedures for those who are able to afford them, regardless of whether they have completed secondary education with the minimum average required by most other universities – causing what has been termed a 'partial privatization' of education.

Overall, the government's policies regarding the private sector, specifically, on the issue of PPPs, have not been sufficiently geared towards the promotion of human rights, and have failed to promote

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3 Ravallion, M., and Jalan, J. (1998), "Determinants of Transient and Chronic Poverty: Evidence from Rural China"

4 Department of Statistics, "Quarterly Report on the Unemployment Rate", Amman, Jordan, May 2017.

5 Ibid.

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6 UNDP, Human Development Report 2015, New York, 2015.

7 Department of Statistics, 2017.

accountability for socioeconomic consequences in decision-making. In this regard, it is also important to underline that the sustainable Agenda 2030 and its respective goals and targets have yet to be integrated into government strategies, in general, and those concerning the private sector, in particular.

According to the government, improving socioeconomic conditions in the country has been made difficult by the country's rapid demographic growth, whose effects have been exacerbated by the presence of numerous unlicensed migrant workers and refugees. In this regard, it is important to point out that, as of 2015, 46 percent of schools in the country were overcrowded.<sup>8</sup>

While detailing its development vision and strategy for 2025, the government described its gains in tackling poverty and inequality (SDGs 1, 5 and 10) as "fragile," underlining that current levels of social spending were unsustainable, in view of the refugee crisis and the country's projected population growth, and that social support systems should be redeveloped in order to better target those "who are genuinely in need". Yet, many of those who are 'genuinely' in need remain beyond the reach of social protection mechanisms.

At a time when the prices of fuel, food and other goods and services are on the rise, nearly half of the country's workforce is engaged in the informal economy, meaning that it is not covered by the social security system. Among other concerns, these workers commonly work long hours, earn below-minimum wages; do not enjoy health insurance, maternity leave or overtime payments; face substandard conditions in the workplace; and are vulnerable to arbitrary dismissals (indicating Jordan's poor performance in regards to combatting poverty and promoting inclusive growth and decent work, as mandated in SDGs 1 and 8). The recent rise in informal employment is partly owing to the deterioration of Jordan's industrial sector, following the country's liberalization of trade (undergone largely under the auspices of the World Trade Organization, though also

influenced by the World Bank and the IMF) which greatly favoured imports, to the detriment of Jordan's exporting sectors. In short, Jordan's recent approach to trade all but destroyed the country's job-creating industries (SDG 9), producing deep imbalances in the balance of payments.

Among refugees, the deterioration of working and living conditions and the challenges associated with supporting a family have led to an increase in child labour in Jordan, as many families have been forced to put their children to work out of a need for additional income – often in violation of international labour standards and contrary to the pursuit of SDGs 3 and 8). These children (under the age of 16) are estimated to be as many as 76,000, and commonly work long hours (one-third work more than 48 hours per week), for meager wages (averaging 244 USD/month among Jordanians and 223 USD /month among Syrians), and are exceptionally vulnerable to physical and emotional abuse.<sup>9</sup>

While the mission of addressing these and other challenges would benefit from the integration of SDG indicators into national development strategies, Jordan's ability to monitor SDG-related indicators remains severely limited. Out of the 231 performance indicators contained in the 2030 Agenda, the Department of Statistics is only able to measure 71, while 80 can only be estimated by means of indirect data, and for another 80 no data is currently available. Though there have been thoughts of redeveloping the national statistical system to meet the requirements of the Sustainable Development Agenda, no concrete plan has of yet been developed. Additionally, the cost of fully pursuing the Sustainable Development Goals remains to be calculated, which makes it difficult to assess, at present, the extent of the government's ability to integrate the 2030 Agenda into national development programmes.

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8 Ministry of Education, "Annual Narrative Report 2014", Amman, Jordan, 2015.

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9 International Labor organization, Department of Statistics and Center for Strategic Studies, Child Labor in Jordan, Amman, Jordan, 2016.

In light of these and other insufficiencies, there is a pressing need for an intensification of capacity-building and infrastructure development programmes in Jordan (SDG 9), which would stand to benefit immensely from multi- and bilateral international assistance. Yet, most of the foreign aid Jordan has received since 2009 has been allocated to general budget support, meaning that it was used to cover current expenses (the country's upkeep) instead of invested on capital expenditures and the development of infrastructure, institutional quality and human potential.<sup>10</sup>

### Civil Society, Partnership and Implementation

Numerous experts, stakeholders and other (national and international) observers frequently call for greater partnership between governments, the private sector and civil society actors in the pursuit of sustainable development at both the national and international levels. Internationally, the importance of involving civil society in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development projects and programmes became evident in the course of the four High Level Fora on Aid Effectiveness, which took place between 2003 and 2011. By 2011, the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation would finally expand the core notion of ownership in development to include civil society. Accordingly, Article 22 reads: "Civil society organizations (CSOs) play a vital role in enabling people to claim their rights, in promoting rights-based approaches, in shaping development policies and partnerships and in overseeing their implementation."

However, as mentioned, several obstacles still stand in the way of the inclusion of civil society in development efforts in Jordan. One such obstacle is the national 2008 Societies Law, and its 2009 amendments, which ban the creation of any societies which champion the goals of political parties, or whose activities are perceived to threaten public order. In 2016, proposed amendments to the law sought to make it more restrictive still, by prohibiting the formation of any groups threatening

"national security, public safety, public health, public order, public morals, or the rights and freedoms of others".<sup>11</sup>

Another obstacle has been the pervasive lack of capacity among civil society actors. Many Jordanian citizens lack an adequate understanding of the country's political and social framework, as well as of the SDGs, and of the mechanisms they can access to make their voices heard and seek assistance. Though CSOs commonly strive towards goals which are in line with the 2030 Agenda, most do so unknowingly. Civil society in Jordan is largely fragmentary and, accordingly, CSOs often act individually, and within a relatively limited scope. Similarly, though the media reports on issues which concern SDGs, the 17 goals in the 2030 Agenda are seldom referred to explicitly. In spite of the awareness-raising efforts carried out by UN agencies and a small number of other institutions, civil society and the general public remain largely unaware of the Sustainable Development Goals. Additionally, on the technical side, there is an overall want of a better understanding of socioeconomic and political rights and of the ways to advocate for their protection and advancement, as well as of more efficient organizational capabilities. Nevertheless, the commitment of Jordan's civil society groups and networks to the goals and principles of the 2030 Agenda have been made clear through a number of initiatives, of which the most momentous has arguably been the creation of a CSO coalition named Jordan Forum for SDGs 2030. Coalition members are currently developing an organizational framework and implementing an internal capacity-building programme. In the future, civil society partners hope that the Forum will serve as a platform through which CSOs may contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

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<sup>11</sup> Registry for Societies, Amendments to the Societies Law (2016), Available at:

<http://www.societies.gov.jo/Documents/%D9%85%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B9%20%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%AF%D9%84%20%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88%D9%86%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA%20201663b23ae1-2204-478f-803c-80496464eb2b.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC), "Foreign Assistance Report 2015", Amman, Jordan, 2017.

Last year's parliamentary elections and the appointment of a new government present an opportunity to change the country's approach to the challenges it faces in achieving the SDGs. In particular, it represents a chance to halt the unrelenting process of political and administrative centralization which Jordan has witnessed with increased intensity over the past years. Although the government has expressed a desire to boost popular participation in development efforts and to undertake a process of decentralization,<sup>12</sup> the emphasis has mostly been placed on municipal and governorate autonomy, and civil society remains largely disregarded as a partner in development, even though civil society and community-based organizations are among the actors most concerned with achieving the SDGs in Jordan.

The government's lack of dialogue with civil society is one of the main sources of the country's chronic strategic dissonance in the pursuit of sustainable development. In other words, the absence of formal cooperation between the central and local administrations, on the one hand, and civil society, on the other, is an impediment to the achievement of what the United Nations has termed the 'single approach', which encapsulates the need for developing a unified strategy founded on the principles of cooperation, and stresses the undertaking of concerted efforts for the achievement of development targets.

However, as mentioned above, the majority of CSOs in Jordan suffer from a lack of institutional capacity, in addition to being dependent on foreign funds and subject to a broad array of legal restrictions. To address these fragilities, the Phenix Center for Economic and Informatics Studies, an Amman-based NGO, has launched a broad training programme reaching over 40 local CSOs, with course subjects ranging from institutional development to human rights, advocacy and the SDGs. Through this initiative, the Center has sought to empower civil society to become a stronger partner in sustainable development, though this will require government action towards creating an effective

enabling environment for CSOs to operate.

Yet, little in the 'vision and strategy' launched for the next 10 years is cause for optimism regarding the government's position towards civil society, as it continues to emphasize the central role of government in promoting living and working conditions and still fails to account for the need for broader dialogue and cooperation between the several social, economic and political actors in the country. In order to achieve tangible sustainable development in Jordan, the stage must be set for overarching cooperation between government, parliament, civil society actors and the private sector.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

Against a backdrop of regional instability, security concerns, the Syrian refugee crisis and unbridled migration, among other factors, Jordan has struggled, over the past years, to implement a long-term, cohesive, results-oriented strategy to achieve its development priorities. The country's population continues to suffer from high poverty levels, low wages, informality of employment, limited access to social security, gender inequalities and a number of other developmental challenges. In fact, most of these challenges are likely to remain unaddressed if the national administration opts to preserve the current social, economic and political paradigm to the detriment of real, profound change. Moreover, the SDGs themselves are yet to be explicitly integrated into the national approach to development. In other words, a comprehensive reassessment of the country's problems and the most effective strategies in addressing them must be undertaken, under pain of repeating past mistakes and preserving an ineffective framework.

The country's most disadvantaged social strata remain vulnerable to price hikes, which impact negatively on their access to such basic goods and services as food and healthcare (SDGs 2 and 3). This, in turn, underlines the need for more robust social protection mechanisms, and beckons the integration of SDG targets into the national developmental priorities.

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<sup>12</sup> "Government presents policy statement to Lower House," Jordan Times, 17 November 2016.

In short, although the Jordanian government has undoubtedly demonstrated its commitment to the improvement of living conditions in the country, its strategies continue to suffer from a lack of integration of SDG targets and principles.

Notably, in regards to the empowerment of women and girls (SDG 5), Jordan remains beset by a number of challenges which not only hinder the advancement of socioeconomic human rights in the Kingdom, but also its economic growth and the well-being of those who live within its borders. Jordan cannot develop sustainably as long as half of its population is denied a part in development.

Under its current development model, Jordan is severely underutilizing its potential social capital, which is arguably the greatest challenge to the achievement of the SDGs in Jordan. Civil society, which has been the main actor striving for the promotion of socioeconomic human rights in the country – which play a fundamental part in ensuring sustainable development – suffers from a chronic lack of capacity and has been repeatedly denied a voice and a role in the development of strategies geared towards facing such challenges as the gender gap, poverty and unemployment. In part, this may be addressed by strengthening the country's productive sectors, such as its agriculture and industry.

On the other hand, there are little to no incentives in place to make the private sector a partner in development; in fact, the strategy of prioritizing the competitiveness of the Jordanian economy in detriment of the promotion of decent working conditions, whilst largely ignoring the question of corporate social responsibility, has served to perpetuate and even exacerbate some of the country's most pressing socioeconomic challenges.

Yet, the political changes currently underway in the Kingdom represent a precious opportunity for a change of pace. Recently, as the government expressed its desire to favour decentralization, hopes were rekindled that it will be willing and able to create the necessary environment for broad coordination and cooperation between the government, donors, the private sector and civil society, where the latter would assume a

predominant role in working towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030. In fact, it could be argued that civil society alone may come to ensure the broadness of scope and reach which the implementation of a sustainable development strategy in Jordan will require. Finally, in pursuit of the SDGs, it is important to address Jordan's limitations in regards to collecting and calculating all relevant indicators, namely by building the capacity of the national Department of Statistics and other state institutions.

In light of these conclusions, the following recommendations for government action were developed:

- Reconsider Jordan's development model and ensure that it is rooted in human rights principles. SDG targets and goals should help to guide and monitor government strategies regarding development, which in turn should be derived from broad social consensus and geared towards protecting the rights and interests of every component of Jordanian society.
- Promote awareness of the SDGs and intensify national efforts towards the achievement of their targets. Public awareness of the 2030 Agenda will promote transparency in the implementation of development programmes and hold governments accountable before the public.
- Strengthen cooperation so as to harmonize efforts and work towards the implementation of a unified strategy towards achieving the SDGs. Increased information-sharing, technical assistance, consultancies and dialogue between actors such as government, civil society and the private sector will help pool resources and contribute to the improvement of development strategies.
- Take action in promoting the social, political, and economic empowerment of women, namely by providing incentives to female employment and wage equality, working to minimize the gender gap in the labour market, and expanding the availability of affordable nurseries.

- Strengthen dialogue with civil society actors and promote their involvement in developing, implementing and monitoring national strategies for the achievement of the SDGs. The inclusion of civil society is a fundamental element of country ownership in development, and may provide valuable insights for the pursuit of development goals.
- Integrate all SDG principles and targets into the national agenda. This would facilitate monitoring and evaluation efforts, promote information-sharing and other forms of cooperation and enable donors to maximize returns on investment in development.
- Foster Jordan's productive sectors, namely agriculture and industry, decreasing the country's dependence on imports and foreign financial assistance and promoting job-creation. In addition to reducing unemployment, revitalizing these key sectors of the Jordanian economy would help to stem the spread of informality in the national labour market.
- Broaden the reach of the national social security system, to better protect the most vulnerable segments of the population from the effects of international price fluctuations and other socioeconomic shocks.
- Boost financial support to public universities. Preserving the affordability of tertiary education will likely contribute to the reduction of inequality and the empowerment of young women.
- Work to improve the capacity of the Department of Statistics and other state institutions in gathering and analysing data concerning Jordan's progress in regards to SDG targets and indicators.

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