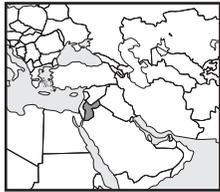


Globalisation and the impact of war



In 2002 the Government implemented a national strategy for eliminating poverty. It has also managed to make improvements in areas such as health and education. However, much remains to be done in a country threatened by a scarcity of water resources, foreign debt, political instability and threats to security, lack of gender equity, poverty and unemployment.

Jordanian Women's Union

Ghosoun Rahhal

Security, dignity and equity are basic to human security

Jordan has recognised the importance of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were agreed upon at the Millennium Summit in New York in 2000. The signatory countries committed themselves to achieving the following by 2015: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equity and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability and develop a global partnership for development.

The Jordanian Government has already made many attempts at implementing the MDGs at the social and economic levels, and in 2002 Jordan implemented a comprehensive national strategy for eliminating poverty with the creation of the National Aid Fund and the Development and Employment Fund.

The Government's approach to achieving universal education is laid out in the Ministry of Planning's National Report on the Millennium Goals, with the national budget allocating JOD 17.7 million (USD 25.14 million) to the Ministry of Education. Of these funds, JOD 3 million (USD 4.26 million) are to build new schools and classrooms, JOD 9.7 million (USD 13.78 million) are to provide schools with computer equipment, JOD 0.4 million (USD 0.57 million) are to provide kindergartens with equipment, and JOD 2.1 million (USD 2.9 million) are for teacher training.¹

The Government, in compliance with MDG 3, has also adopted a plan aimed at empowering women and reducing the gap in gender equity in education, labour and participation of women in public and political life.

AIDS and malaria

The document on the MDGs also contemplates fighting HIV/AIDS through the National AIDS Programme, established after the discovery of the

first cases of AIDS in 1986. This Programme was created to follow up all aspects of the disease. Jordan has one of the lowest HIV/AIDS rates in the world (331 cases were reported between 1986 and 2003).²

In 2001, 210 cases of malaria were detected (124 of them among foreigners, 86 among Jordanians) and the outbreak was rapidly controlled. More precautions should be taken to control malaria completely.

With respect to the development of a global partnership for development, Jordan has worked at the economic level to implement a structural adjustment programme, which includes privatisation, and has joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Through this programme the Government has been able to control inflation and stabilise the national budget and general economic indicators.

The main threats

However, despite all the above achievements, which were defined as objectives in the Ministry of Planning's framework strategy, the challenges of globalisation are still present in the country's limited water resources, foreign debt, political instability and threats to security, lack of gender equity, poverty and unemployment.

Wars and armed conflicts

In the first place, it is important to bear in mind the destructive effect on Jordan of the armed conflicts and continuous wars in neighbouring Palestine and Iraq. These tragic events have taken a heavy toll on the Jordanian people's sense of stability and security. Moreover, it is clear that the negative impact of

the war against Iraq and the subsequent occupation is not limited to Iraq itself - it has affected the Arab world in general and Jordan in particular, because of the close relations between the two countries and the common economic interests that unite them. Iraq used to supply Jordan free of charge with part of its total oil requirements, with the rest being supplied at reduced prices, which significantly contributed to reducing fuel prices. Following the US occupation of Iraq and its takeover of oil production, Iraq is now selling its oil to Jordan at international prices, which has caused an abrupt and massive increase in fuel prices. According to the Minister of Finance, Iraqi assistance to Jordan has decreased from 7% to 3% since the US occupation.

International policies, reflected on the one hand by UN Security Council resolutions, and on the other by US policy, have failed to solve disputes by peaceful means according to the UN Charter. On the contrary, whether by resorting to force in Iraq or by encouraging the use of force in Palestine, these policies have contributed to delaying the development of the Arab world and especially to endangering human security. Such policies have affected the means of production; GDP per Arab worker has fallen to USD 5,000.³

The Jordanian economy depends primarily on the exploitation of its natural resources. Raw materials constitute 90% of the country's exports, leaving only 10% of total returns in this field to manufacturing.⁴

Curtailment of civil rights

At the civil and political levels, the instability and insecurity in Palestine and Iraq have had a direct influence on the Jordanian Government, especially concerning the scope of general freedom. The Government has enacted numerous laws to limit the right to expression either in the press or on the Internet. A law was recently passed limiting the right to hold public gatherings and many human rights activists have been detained because of their activities against the normalisation of diplomatic relations with Israel. Many of these activists are

1 Ministry of Planning. *The National Report on the Millennium Goals*. 2003.

2 "The Jordanian National AIDS Programme was established in January 1986, shortly after the first AIDS case was diagnosed. The National AIDS Programme is the responsibility of the General Directorate of Primary Health Care in the Ministry of Health. At the higher level of the programmatic structure there is National AIDS Committee, headed by the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Health, and includes in its membership experts in different branches of health from all health sectors. There is awareness among higher authorities in the country about the extent of the problem and NAP is recognized as an active department in the Ministry. Mobilization of local resources is still in the beginning, there is need for further work in this regard." www.emro.who.int/jordan/CollaborativeProg-HIV.htm

3 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). *Arab Human Development Report 2003. Building a Knowledge Society*. 2003.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 134.

public figures, well-known politicians and professionals. Some demonstrations were violently repressed, leading to one civilian being killed and others wounded.⁵

The challenges of globalisation

Notwithstanding the positive impact of globalisation in making the world a smaller place and in speeding up the flow of information, the present process of globalisation is nothing but a tool for the more powerful states in the world to exert their domination in the areas of knowledge production and the economy, and therefore, of development.⁶ Progress in the means of producing knowledge and information at the international level has turned this service into a private commodity, subject to new laws governing the protection of intellectual property. The world's most powerful states ensured that the laws protecting intellectual property contain clauses and conditions granting them what amounts to a monopoly over knowledge production.⁷

This approach has principally affected the medicine manufacturing sector in Jordan. Jordanian companies compete with their US counterparts in the medicine market by producing generic medicines and marketing them at lower prices. Buyers find Jordanian medicines more attractive than US drugs due to their availability and cheapness. However, since many companies were prosecuted under the new intellectual property laws, the sick and the poor are now unable to purchase medicines at affordable prices.

WTO and privatisation

Jordan joined the WTO in April 2000 and signed partnership agreements with the European Union and the United States. It also established duty-free industrial zones in Aqaba, Irbid and Karak and amended investment law to attract foreign investment. Jordan has also sought to comply with World Bank conditions by implementing its recommendations regarding structural adjustment and privatisation programmes.

Privatisation programmes were applied in two phases. The first phase included the following sectors: communications, tourism, industry, transport, and mining. In this phase the Government sold its shares in 44 companies for USD 900 million. The second phase included the national oil company, the Jordan Cement Factories, the Royal Jordanian Air Academy, the Water Authority of Jordan, the Ma'in Spa Complex, Postal Services, Assamra Water Treatment Plant, Jordan Silos and Supply Gen-

eral Company, Customs Department warehouses, Jordan Phosphate Mining Company, Arab Potash Company, and Civil Aviation Authority.⁸ As a result of the mass privatisation of national companies, treasury funds have diminished and national revenue has been transferred to the pockets of foreign investors and transnational corporations instead of being spent on developing the country and improving the population's living conditions.

Official statistics indicate a reduction in foreign debt from 190% of GDP in 1990 to 77.7% in 2002, and a reduction in debt service from 43.2% in 1990 to 18.8% in 2002.⁹ In addition, World Bank statistics show an increase in GDP from 4.22% in 1990 to 4.85% in 2002, while annual exports of commodities and services grew from 5.9% in the 1980s to 7.4% in the 1990s. However, poverty and unemployment rates are also at an all-time high.

Unemployment and poverty

There was a major increase in unemployment among young people aged 15-24, from 27% in 1991 to 31% in 2002. Statistics have also revealed that poverty affected 21% of the population in 2001. However, the reduction of poverty was not included in the national strategy of the Ministry of Social Development. Moreover, Ministry of Planning figures relating to Official Development Assistance, including loans and donations provided by the Government, do not match those released by the Ministry of Finance.¹⁰

Lack of gender equity

Equity for all people in society without discrimination on the grounds of religion, sex, language, etc., is the cornerstone of human security. Equity means justice, and without justice there can be no social order.

The Jordanian Constitution enshrines the equality of all Jordanians before the law, and guarantees women's right to education and work. However traditions and customs restrict women's potential contribution to the development process. Although the Government is attempting to integrate women into public life either by offering them high posts or engaging them in the decision-making process, there is still a noticeable gender gap in many sectors. Table 1 illustrates this gap.

A significant move towards enhancing women's status was the appointment of three women to the Cabinet and seven to the Upper House in 2002.

TABLE 1

Women's participation in society		
YEAR	(%)	FIELD OF PARTICIPATION
2001	20	Paid labour excluding the agricultural sector
2001	25	Paid labour in general
2003	8	Parliament
2003	17	Upper House
2003	15	Cabinet
2002	2.9	Judiciary

Source: Ministry of Planning, (2003) The Millennium Goals Report.

Nevertheless, a greater effort is needed at legislative and administrative levels to enhance the status of women. And more action should be taken at the social level to change men's negative conceptions of women's participation in public life and the decision-making process.

Development policies should take into account the actual abilities and role of women, and employ them fruitfully rather than limiting them to micro-economic projects which do not make the most of their talents or promote their role in the development process. ■

5 *Ibid*, pp. 30-31.

6 *Ibid*, p. 11.

7 *Ibid*, p. 133.

8 Executive Privatization Commission. www.epc.gov.jo

9 Central Bank of Jordan.

10 Ministry of Planning, *op cit*, p. 6.