



INCREASING FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN EMPLOYMENT THROUGH VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN JORDAN

PRIME issues paper

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PRIME issues paper

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¹ Based on:

- Torino Process 2014 Jordan report
- PRIME launching meeting, Amman, September 2014
- PRIME validation meeting, Amman, December 2014
- Background analysis by Hala Ghosheh
- Field mission, Amman, October 2015.

Contents

PREFACE	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
1. INTRODUCTION	8
1.1 The PRIME approach	8
1.2 PRIME in Jordan: supporting a strategic objective.....	10
2. PROBLEM DEFINITION AND ANALYSIS	12
2.1 Country context.....	12
2.2 Baseline situation and target groups	13
2.3 Factors that are causing the problem	21
2.4 Summary of analysis	34
3. ARGUMENTS THAT STRESS THE NEED FOR ACTION	36
4. THE OBJECTIVES OF POLICY ACTION	37
5. WHAT HAS BEEN DONE TO ADDRESS THE PARTICIPATION CHALLENGE?	38
5.1 National strategies	38
5.2 National projects	40
5.3 Internationally-funded projects	40
5.4 Summary and lessons learned.....	43
6. FROM PROBLEM TO ACTION: AN AGENDA FOR CHANGE	44
6.1 Policy options.....	44
6.2 Assessment criteria	48
6.3 Stakeholders concerned.....	49
6.4 Next steps.....	51
ACRONYMS	53
REFERENCES	54

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1 Types of information source for the issues paper

Figure 1.1 PRIME and its contribution to the policy cycle

Figure 1.2 The implementation logic of PRIME

Figure 2.1 GDP growth rate and direct foreign investments in Jordan

Figure 2.2 Average labour force participation rate (female, percentage of the female population aged 15+), Jordan, SEMED region and middle-income countries, 2009–13

Figure 2.3 Current situation of young males and females in Jordan, 2013

Figure 2.4 Share of female graduates in Jordan with intermediate diploma and above, 2013

Figure 2.5 Females with elementary education or less in Jordan, by age group, 2013

Table 1.1 PRIME implementation overview, Jordan

Table 2.1 Inactive population in Jordan and EU28 as share of total population of working age, 2005–13

Table 2.2 Activity rate (AR) and unemployment rate (UR), by governorate and sex, 2013

Table 2.3 Unemployment and inactivity rates of females and students in working age (15+) in Jordan, by age group, 2013

Table 2.4 Economic activity of females of working age in Jordan by age group, 2013

Table 2.5 Economic activity rate of women in Jordan by level of education, 2013

Table 2.6 Activity rate of women (15+), by marital status, 2013

Table 2.7 Economic activity rates, by governorate and sex, 2013

Table 2.8 Education level of the population in Jordan, by gender, 2013

Table 2.9 Number of female students in academic and vocational secondary education, 2011–12

Table 2.10 Employment rates for youth who have completed TVET

Table 2.11 TVET training courses of interest by gender among people (16–26)

Table 2.12 Persons enrolled at community colleges, by programme and sex, 2011/12

Table 2.13 Percentage of jobs created, by sector (public and private)

Table 2.14 Number of BA and BSc graduates, by programme and sex

Table 2.15 Unemployment rates (15+), by education and sex, 2013

Table 2.16 Number of jobs created, by sector of work and sex, 2009–12

Table 2.17 Percentage of women who joined a new job and who left a job, by age, 2013

Table 2.18 Employment by status and sex, 2011–13

Table 6.1 Impact assessment criteria – preliminary selection

Table 6.2 Stakeholder involvement overview

Table 6.3 Matrix – PRIME ex-ante impact assessment

PREFACE

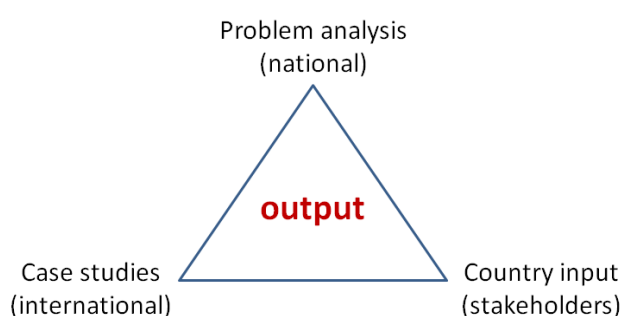
Understanding why and under what conditions a set of interventions can produce the desired impact is of utmost importance for policy making (European Commission, 2013). Well-planned policy options should be based on, and driven and justified by, a theory of change: a set of assumptions about how exactly the policy action will lead to the desired result. Therefore, the identification of policy options eligible for assessment in PRIME starts with an overview of the intervention logic – the assumptions of Jordanian policy makers, stakeholders and the PRIME expert team about the preconditions, mechanisms and context for the interventions to work.

This issues paper tries to identify and articulate an agenda for action regarding female participation in employment in Jordan, with a particular focus on the transition to work and the contribution of vocational education and training (VET). It then presents several policy options based on this theory. Its findings created a framework for a discussion in a validation meeting with stakeholders in December 2014 in Amman.

The empirical basis is evidence about who are the women affected and factors, which hinder them from participating in employment. The policy options are formulated and presented in line with the impact assessment guidelines of the European Commission. Phase 2 of PRIME relies on the results of the overview to test the assumptions and investigate whether and to what extent the suggested policy options will cause the intended results.

The issues paper builds on background analysis, international funded projects in Part V.3 as presented in Part V.3, and on the results of a Phase 1 meeting with stakeholders (kick-off meeting). Contributors to that meeting were the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education, Vocational Training Corporation (VTC), Al-Balqa University, Federation of Trade Unions, Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Industry, European Economic and Social Council, National Centre for Human Resource Development (NCHRD), donors, NGOs, microfinance institutions, a national expert from Turkey and an ETF team. It was further revised based on the validation meeting of December 2014 with the same representatives of Jordanian stakeholder institutions.

FIGURE 1 TYPES OF INFORMATION SOURCE FOR THE ISSUES PAPER



The meetings with stakeholders were framed as a structured consultation on the basic elements of a theory of change: on factors which cause low female participation in employment; on how exactly these factors matter; on who is most affected by the problem; on what could be done to address the problem; and on how the solutions could work. A stakeholder consensus about these questions and the logic of their connection allowed for the identification of policy options to be assessed in Phase 2, and suggested directions for the setting of assessment criteria.

The issues paper summarises these points.

- It frames the problem and the baseline situation and reproduces the results of stakeholder-driven analysis of factors that hinder progress (Part II).
- It draws lessons from national and international efforts in Jordan to address these factors (Part V).
- It outlines an agenda for change for achieving the strategic goal (Part VI).
- It defines policy options to be assessed in Phase 2 and sets the assessment criteria (Parts VI.1 and VI.2).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The European Training Foundation (ETF) is committed to supporting its partner countries in harnessing the potential of their human capital through better education and training. This includes raising the capacity for informed decisions, taken in full awareness of the reasons for, and consequences of, policy action. At the core of this support is a systematic approach to policy interventions, which promotes the advantages of a robust diagnosis of the policy challenge, before moving on to the design of corresponding actions.

To operationalise this commitment, ETF adapted ex-ante impact assessment methodologies used in the European Union so that they can be used for assessing the potential impact of policy action in VET, and called it PRIME. PRIME pursues two objectives. Firstly, it aims at identifying the optimal policy for addressing a specific problem/objective in the field of technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Secondly, it is a learning process intended to enhance the capacity of partner countries to take informed decisions and integrate the knowledge in their decision-making routines.

Following discussions with Prof. Nidal Katamine, Minister of Labour and Chairman of the Employment and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (E-TVET) Council, about the 2014 findings of the Torino Process, it was agreed that the policy priority on which to focus PRIME in Jordan would be 'increased female participation in the labour market, in particular by improving the transition from education and training to employment'.

The purpose of the issues paper is to define policy options to be assessed, set the criteria of assessment, and identify stakeholders to be involved in the consultations and the validation of results. The issue paper was prepared as a first deliverable of PRIME and its findings have been used in guiding the PRIME ex-ante assessment in 2015.

The paper frames the problem and the baseline situation and reproduces the results of stakeholder-driven analysis of factors that hinder progress (Part II); draws lessons from national and international efforts to address these factors (Part V); outlines an agenda for change for achieving the strategic goal (Part VI); defines policy options to be assessed in Phase 2 and sets the assessment criteria (Part VI.1 and VI.2).

The analytical part of the issues paper is devoted to a structured analysis of factors that hinder women from participating in employment and consequently prevent progress in solving the persisting participation challenge. The analysis suggests that the women who are most frequently affected by the participation challenge are:

- young graduates looking for a first time employment;
- (mostly) married women who leave their jobs to become economically inactive;
- inactive women economically.

Another important source of guidance on effective responses is an understanding of factors that prevent these target groups from contributing their share to the national economy. In the PRIME methodology, this is a key aspect of the problem analysis and is instrumental in constructing the options for policy action.

This paper confirms the known factors that contribute to the participation challenge, and structures them according to the main features of their disadvantaging impact on the target groups:

- factors related to skill supply through education and training, most notably the educational and training choices of women, the availability of different educational and training choices for women, and the quality of education and training;
- factors related to employment, in particular working conditions and attitudes of employers towards women;
- factors related to cultural attitudes towards female employment and working women.

Effective policy options are likely to be those that are able to address the factors that create the problem while taking into account the specific situation of women in each of the three target groups. An overview of initiatives so far shows that the sum of activities, both national and international, is impressive but that their focus is too dispersed, both in terms of problems addressed and target groups, to make a significant difference. The analysis suggests that a more informed, focused and needs-sensitive approach might render results better and faster.

At the core of the new agenda for change proposed on the basis of PRIME consultations is an insight that the extent to which women in Jordan can contribute to the national economy at any given point in time is a function of three progress variables:

1. the number of women in working age who are economically active;
2. the level and/or relevance of skills they possess;
3. their rate of employment.

These three variables are well suited to tracking succinctly changes in the participation in the national economy of all the major groups of unemployed and inactive women discussed in this paper. A positive change in any of them (economic activity rate, quality of education and training provision, employability) will be a first sign of success.

The best way to influence these variables is to reshape and influence transition: stimulate transition from education to work, prevent the transition flow from work to inactivity, and establish a transition pathway from inactivity back to employment. The policy options suggested in the last part of the issues paper all aim at a large and swift impact by suggesting ways to equip women for successful transition from education or inactivity to employment; to encourage and guide them in making this transition; and to empower and support them to stay in employment.

Education and training have a major role to play, but ultimately this task is a shared responsibility between the education system, the labour market, the women and the families of women. The policy options, together with an initial list of criteria for assessment, are presented in Part VI.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The PRIME approach

Today, more than ever before, the individuals and institutions responsible for developing the human resources of nations depend on the 'wider world' that surrounds them: on the demands of education participants, the expectations of employers, and the broader needs of the society and economy. In the same vein, learning credentials are only as good as the success of their holders in moving on to, and gaining achievements in, further education or the world of employment.

All partner countries in all regions of ETF's operation are facing complex policy challenges in the fields of youth unemployment and skills. In response, they are all investing efforts in changing things in one or more areas of their human resource development policies.

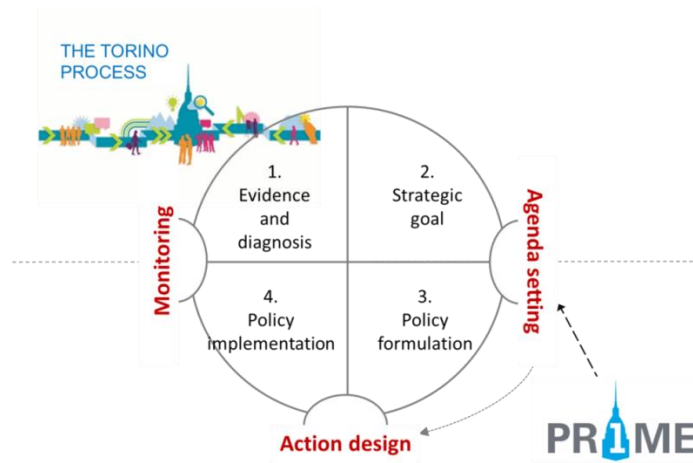
In recent years, countries of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region (SEMED) have witnessed sluggish economic and social development, surging population growth and high unemployment, particularly among youth. National development strategies and media reports in countries of the region all agree that human resource development can and should play a pivotal role in improving the current state of affairs.

Even when the objectives are straightforward, policies in this field remain complex and challenging. Their success depends on multiple stakeholder interests, and requires evidence that is often missing, yet is necessary to underpin policy decisions. In addition, there is often more than one way to go ahead and policy makers have to choose among several promising-looking alternatives, all of which have potentially long-term impact.

ETF's is committed to supporting its partner countries in harnessing the potential of their human capital through better education and training. This includes raising the capacity for informed decisions, taken in full awareness of the reasons for, and consequences of, policy action. At the core of this support is a systematic approach to policy interventions, which promotes the advantages of a robust diagnosis of the policy challenge, before moving on to the design of corresponding actions.

To operationalise this commitment, ETF adapted ex-ante impact assessment methodologies used in the European Union so that it can be used for assessing the potential impact of policy action in VET, and called it PRIME (Projecting Reforms' Impact in Education). The PRIME approach is rooted in the Torino Process and in impact assessment methods developed and applied by the European Union in its decision making.

FIGURE 1.1 PRIME AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE POLICY CYCLE



PRIME supports the assembly, integration and analysis of evidence for and against policy options. Its results facilitate and shape the transition from the strategic goal setting to formulation of policies, as depicted in Figure 1. PRIME involves problem analysis, the collection and interpretation of qualitative and quantitative information, and the mobilisation of stakeholders for consultations in view of improving the predictability of policy results and impact.

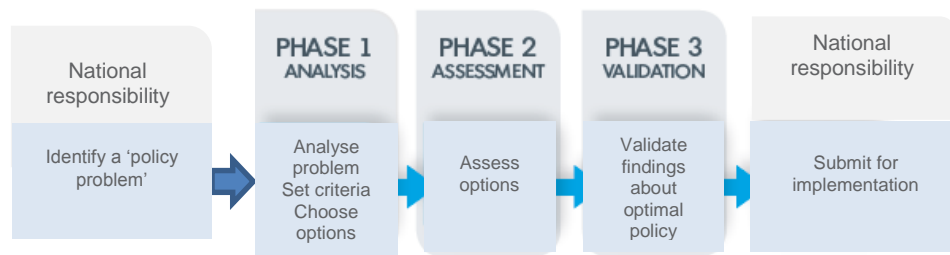
PRIME pursues two objectives. Firstly, it aims at identifying the optimal policy for addressing a specific problem/objective in the field of TVET. Secondly, it is a learning process intended to enhance the capacity of partner countries to take informed decisions and integrate the knowledge into their decision-making routines. In this sense, the application of PRIME is also an investment in a long-term improvement of public policy formulation.

PRIME combines the analysis, consultations and capacity building into a thorough but easy to implement assessment exercise, which is built around a three-step procedure:

- analysis of the problem at hand and identifying possible options to address it;
- assessing the options;
- validating the results with all parties concerned.

These steps are preceded by a period of commitment in which the partner country identifies the problem and nominates a national lead institution to coordinate the exercise. The outcomes can be used to initiate a planning phase in which the partner country prepares for implementation of the option identified as optimal (**FIGURE 1.2**).

FIGURE 1.2 THE IMPLEMENTATION LOGIC OF PRIME



The first phase of PRIME (analysis) encompasses steps 2 and 3 and is devoted to the setting of assessment criteria and determining which options for action will be assessed. The outcomes are summarised in the current issues paper, presented to stakeholders in Jordan at the end of the phase.

The objective of the second phase (assessment) was to collect evidence about the possible impact of the options for action and to assess them against the criteria set in the preceding phase. The second phase produced an impact report for each option and presented these to the coordinating institution for approval and a preliminary choice of option.

The objective in the third phase (validation) was to fine-tune and validate the impact reports in consultations with stakeholders and possibly the wider public, and to assess the cost of the preferred option for action.

1.2 PRIME in Jordan: supporting a strategic objective

Jordan's employment and employability issues are well considered, articulated and addressed in several strategic and developmental plans, for instance the National Agenda 2006–2015, the National Employment Strategy 2011–2020, the National Executive Plan 2011–2013, and the National Strategy for Jordanian Women 2012–2015. All of these include increasing the rate of female participation in the labour market as a national goal. The Jordanian government has repeatedly committed itself to this task as a matter of priority.

Regrettably, efforts invested in enhancing women's participation do not seem to transpire as desired and expected. Despite numerous efforts to address the issue, statistics show that figures are still below the desired aspiration and that actions are not necessarily transforming the situation on the labour market.

Nevertheless, the Jordanian authorities and stakeholders continue to be determined to invest in another, better, more consolidated and informed effort to change things, and strike a new, transformative policy direction that encourages and facilitates women to engage actively in the economy (ETF, 2014a).

Following discussions with Prof. Nidal Katamine, Minister of Labour and Chairman of the E-TVET Council, about the 2014 findings of the Torino Process, it was agreed that the policy priority on which to focus PRIME in Jordan would be 'increased female participation in the labour market, in particular by improving the transition from education and training to employment'. The overall coordination of this important exercise has been entrusted to the Employment and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (E-TVET) Council, which acts as a national lead institution with responsibility for stakeholder dialogue and the validation of deliverables. The Jordanian Economic and Social Council acts as peer reviewer of all interim and final deliverables.

PRIME-Jordan is being implemented in three phases: Analysis, Assessment and Validation (**TABLE 1.1**). At the core of each phase are consultation meetings with stakeholders and decision makers. In each phase, the meetings retain the dual purpose of PRIME: to build capacity for impact assessments in general, and to generate and agree on the content of PRIME deliverables. This issues paper summarises the outcomes of Phase 1 of PRIME-Jordan (problem analysis) and consolidates the ground for the impact assessment in Phase 2.

TABLE 1.1 PRIME IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW, JORDAN

Logic	Steps	How	Deliverables
Problem analysis	Phase 1. Analysis	Torino process and background analysis	Issues Paper
		Capacity building	
		Kick-off meeting	
		Validation meeting	
Impact assessment	Phase 2. Assessment	Site visits	Draft impact reports
		Multi-criteria impact assessment	
		Capacity building	
Validation	Phase 3. Validation	Stakeholder discussions and capacity building	Blueprint for implementation

2. PROBLEM DEFINITION AND ANALYSIS

2.1 Country context

Jordan is an upper middle-income country with limited natural resources and high reliance on foreign assistance. Increasing investment, creating jobs and reducing poverty are among the most daunting economic challenges that consecutive Jordanian governments have encountered, especially in the current political and economic state of affairs of the region (ETF, 2015).

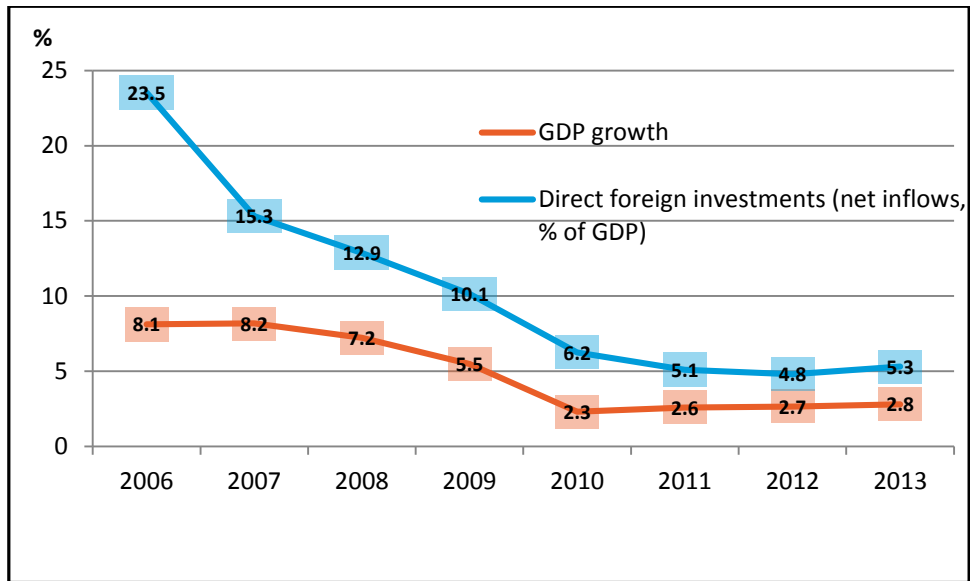
Jordan's population is estimated to be 6.4 million and the annual population growth rate is estimated to be at 2.2% (DOS, 2012). It is also estimated that the number of refugees and migrant workers in the country reaches up to 2 million (World Bank, 2013a). According to ETF calculations based on data for 2013 from the Department of Statistics of Jordan (DOS), over a third of the population is under the age of 15 and the median age is 20.3 years. In 2013, the population of working age was 64% of the total (DOS, 2013b) and half of that group was 15–29 years old (ETF, 2015).

Statistically, those who generate income seem to have a particular responsibility in Jordan. The dependency ratio in 2012 was 68.2%, and the average household size in the same year was 5.4 (DOS, 2012d). In 2013, only 37% of a working-age population of almost 4 million were economically active. In other words, some 1.4 million employed people support a population of 6.4 million, meaning that on average one worker supports more than four individuals. In addition to children, a significant percentage of the dependents are inactive or unemployed women. At the same time the need for employment among Jordanians, especially among young people, is increasing at a rate that exceeds the demand for labour. There are 60 000 new entrants to the labour market each year and the number is on the rise, while about 50 000 jobs have been created annually over the most recent years (ETF, 2015).

Because of a decision to liberalise investment and market policies, the Jordanian economy witnessed considerable growth between 2004 and 2008. Gross domestic product (GDP) grew at an average rate of 6.7% and more than 450 000 jobs were created. However, the benefits from the economic boom were short-lived. Despite the economic prosperity, unemployment rates hardly changed; participation in the labour force, especially among women, remained low (World Bank, 2013b). The majority of the jobs were filled by foreigners due to different mismatches in geography (jobs created far from where unemployed people lived), employability (the employers preferred foreign workers for their workplace behaviour and productivity) and expectations (Jordanians' expectations for wages, working hours, job security) (World Bank, 2013b).

Economic growth plummeted after 2008 (**FIGURE 2.1**) in parallel with foreign direct investments, and the following wave of political changes and unrest in the region further exacerbated the situation. The influx of Syrian refugees and the increased demand for resources, the continued disruption of gas supplies from Egypt, the fluctuating oil prices, and the increased demand for services led to a growing budget deficit and slower economic growth. Inflation and poverty rates are on the rise. The number of poverty pockets – defined by the Ministry of Planning as areas where poverty rates affect more than 25% of the population – increased from 22 in 2006 to 32 in 2008. Ironically, Jordan's poverty rose at a time when the economy was at its peak growth, which suggests that the benefit of the economic boom was not equitably distributed.

FIGURE 2.1 GDP GROWTH RATE AND DIRECT FOREIGN INVESTMENTS IN JORDAN



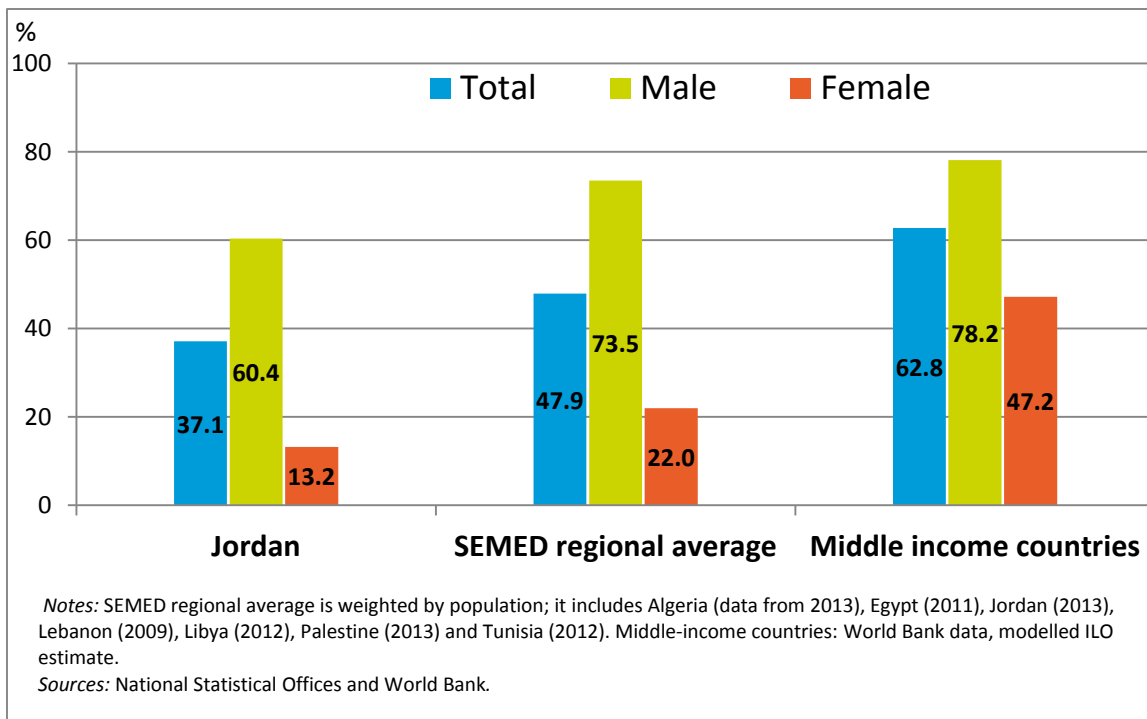
Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators Database.

2.2 Baseline situation and target groups

2.2.1 Overview

According to data from the Jordanian Department of Statistics (DOS), between 2005 and 2013 the average rate of participation of women in the labour market was 12–15%. This is more than twice as low as the regional average (22%) and more than three times below the average rate of participation in middle-income countries (47%) (FIGURE 2.2).

FIGURE 2.2 AVERAGE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE (FEMALE, PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE POPULATION AGED 15+), JORDAN, SEMED REGION AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES, 2009–13



Marginal changes with respect to women’s engagement in the labour market reflect the entrenched challenges, controversy and complexity surrounding the issue. Despite regular references in strategic and analytical documents such as the National Agenda 2006–2015, the National Employment Strategy 2011–2020, the National Executive Plan 2011–2013 and the National Strategy for Jordanian Women 2012–2015, and a multitude of activities, there is a clear and persistent gap between strategies, legislation and policy discourse on the one hand and genuine improvement in the employment situation of women on the other. For women in particular, perceptions of their capacities remain weak, for society and government policies continue to reinforce their dependency through a patriarchal system (Al-Manar, 2008; Amer, 2012; ILO, 2013; and World Bank, 2013c).

2.2.2 The target groups of policy action

Any discussion about measures to increase female employment will be incomplete without an overview of who the potential target groups for the measures are and of their situation. The analysis in the following sections suggests that the women who are most frequently affected by the participation challenge are:

- Target group 1. Young graduates looking for first-time employment
- Target group 2. Women who leave their jobs and become inactive
- Target group 3. Inactive women.

It is safe to assume that policy measures that start with these three target groups will have a better chance of success in making a difference at least. The available data seem to confirm this insight.

Of the women of working age in Jordan, some are available and willing to supply their skills to the labour market, but many more are not. In fact, in Jordan the share of those who are neither in employment nor looking for a job is remarkably high in international comparison (**TABLE 2**).

TABLE 2.1 INACTIVE POPULATION IN JORDAN AND EU28 AS A SHARE OF TOTAL POPULATION OF WORKING AGE, 2005–13

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2012	2013	Average 2005–13	Average EU28
Total	61.7	62.3	60.2	60.5	59.9	60.5	62.0	62.9	62.0	29.3
Male	35.6	36.9	35.6	36.0	35.2	36.5	38.7	39.6	36.0	22.4
Female	88.3	88.1	85.3	85.8	85.1	85.3	85.9	86.8	86.3	36.2

Source: <http://web.dos.gov.jo/?lang=en>; DOS, *Employment and unemployment survey*²

In the period 2005–13, more than 85% of women of working age were inactive, which means that only about one woman of every 10 was working or actively looking for a job. This is in stark contrast with the average inactivity rate of men in the same period, which was 36%. During the PRIME consultations, stakeholders expressed their concern about the problem of economic inactivity and the fact that it affects predominantly the women. In comparison, the average rate of female inactivity in EU countries was two and half times lower than that for females (36.2% on average³).

² www.dos.gov.jo/dos_home_e/main/, last accessed 3 March 2014.

³ In all EU Member States, female employment rates are lower than those for males, with big variations across the EU: EU 2020 indicators, available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/themes/31_labour_market_participation_of_women.pdf, last accessed April 2015.

Even if women are willing to work, in Jordan they seem to be confronted with particular difficulties in finding a job. While this is true for both sexes, unemployment affects more than twice as many active women than it does men. The female rate of unemployment in 2000–2013 varied between 17% and 26%, while the unemployment rate of men in the same period was between 10% and 14%.

In 2013, close to a quarter (22%) of the women who were active in the labour market were unemployed. According to the data presented in **TABLE 2.2**, some of the highest activity rates are reported in regions in which unemployment rates are higher.

TABLE 2.2 ACTIVITY RATE (AR) AND UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (UR), BY GOVERNORATE AND SEX, 2013

	Total		Male		Female	
	AR	UR	AR	UR	AR	UR
Amman	36.7	10.5	59.4	8.7	13.4	19.0
Balqa	38.2	14.4	59.6	12.9	15.6	20.4
Zarqa	35.4	13.1	61.7	12.0	8.0	21.9
Madaba	42.0	16.2	64.9	14.2	18.8	23.2
Irbid	36.9	13.0	61.2	10.4	12.3	26.5
Mafraq	36.9	14.5	59.7	12.3	13.2	24.9
Jarash	35.1	12.3	57.6	10.4	11.5	22.3
Ajloun	34.9	13.5	55.5	9.7	14.8	27.2
Karak	42.3	15.8	63.5	12.5	22.0	25.0
Tafiela	42.5	17.1	61.6	13.0	22.5	28.9
Maan	36.9	15.0	59.0	14.1	13.4	19.1
Aqaba	39.1	15.2	64.5	14.1	12.1	21.3
National	37.1	12.6	60.4	10.6	13.2	22.2

Source: DOS, *Employment and unemployment survey*, yearly estimates.

It is not known how many of those unemployed have lost a job and how many of them never had one and are looking for first-time employment. However, a breakdown of unemployment by age suggests that a majority of those girls and women who are unemployed (22.8% in the age groups 15–19 and 56.2% in the age group 20–24) is at typical ages for graduation from secondary, post-secondary or higher education (**TABLE 2.3**). Table 2.3 also suggests that the rate of economic inactivity among female learners declines considerably the more advanced they are in their educational career. In other words, the more educated young female students are, the bigger the share of those who are willing to work but seem to have difficulties in moving on from education to employment.

PRIME team discussions have confirmed with a sample of female university graduates in October 2015 on their willingness to work within the scope of their studies or otherwise, if the wages and conditions of work suitable enough to contribute to the family expenses. But a number of difficulties have been confronted specifically: the limited employment opportunities within the females living areas in Tafileh, Irbid and other remote areas from the capital Amman, working conditions are not appropriate in many cases, also the long working hours and low wages less than the minimum, with up to less than 190 Jordanian dinars. In addition to the lack of commitment by employers to cover the labor insurance, such as health or social security.

TABLE 2.3 UNEMPLOYMENT AND INACTIVITY RATES OF FEMALES AND STUDENTS OF WORKING AGE (15+) IN JORDAN, BY AGE GROUP, 2013

Age group	Unemployment rate (%)	Economic inactivity among female students (%)	Age group
Total	22.2	19.5	15–19
15–19	22.8	79.5	20–24
20–24	56.2	37.6	25–29
25–39	19.2	2.2	30–39
40–54	2.7	0.7	40–49
55–64	0	0	50–59
65+	0	0	60+

Source: DOS, *Employment and unemployment survey*, yearly estimates.

Last but not least, at a particular point in their professional life (at the latest after they have reached the age of 39, but often also earlier) women tend to leave the labour market, presumably never to come back. **TABLE 2.4** shows that there is a considerable drop in economic activity from 24% in the 25–39 age group to 12% in the 40–54 age group. One could speculate that at this age professionals have commonly gained sufficient experience and seniority to be of importance to employers as potential managers, or as senior staff. If this is the case, women must have compelling reasons not to be in employment at a possible turning point in their careers. Whatever these reasons might be, the change in economic activity rate (most striking in this age group, but presumably starting even earlier) is significant and merits attention.

Unemployed women and women who do not have a college degree or professional diploma after they married and reached age of 35 years and over, they return to work to help in covering their family expenses. Hence women turned to vocational training centers or to the non-governmental associations and charities to receive specific training to qualify them for a work either individually or through the concerns of the private sector. But also their return to the labor market is not easy, given the limited employment opportunities in remote areas from the capital and other main governorates, and the low existing skills in women to keep up with developments in the labor market, in addition to low wages and inadequate working conditions for them in terms of wages, insurance and lack of space to take care of children and the lack of transportation lines carrying women workers to their villages after the work is finished.

TABLE 2.4 ECONOMIC ACTIVITY OF FEMALES OF WORKING AGE IN JORDAN, BY AGE GROUP, 2013

Age group	Economic activity rate (%)
Total	13.2
15–19	0.5
20–24	17.6
25–39	24.1
40–54	12
55–64	1.5
65+	0.2

Source: DOS, 2013a.

In summary, the three target groups discussed here have something important in common. They are all affected by deficiencies in transition to or from employment. From the data presented so far it is evident that the graduates have difficulties in transiting from education to work, the inactive women are not encouraged (or are unwilling) to transit from inactivity to employment, and a worrying share of those who are employed give up and move on to inactivity. The participation challenge comes out as a challenge of transition to and from employment. Education and training can play an important role in supporting all of these transitions.

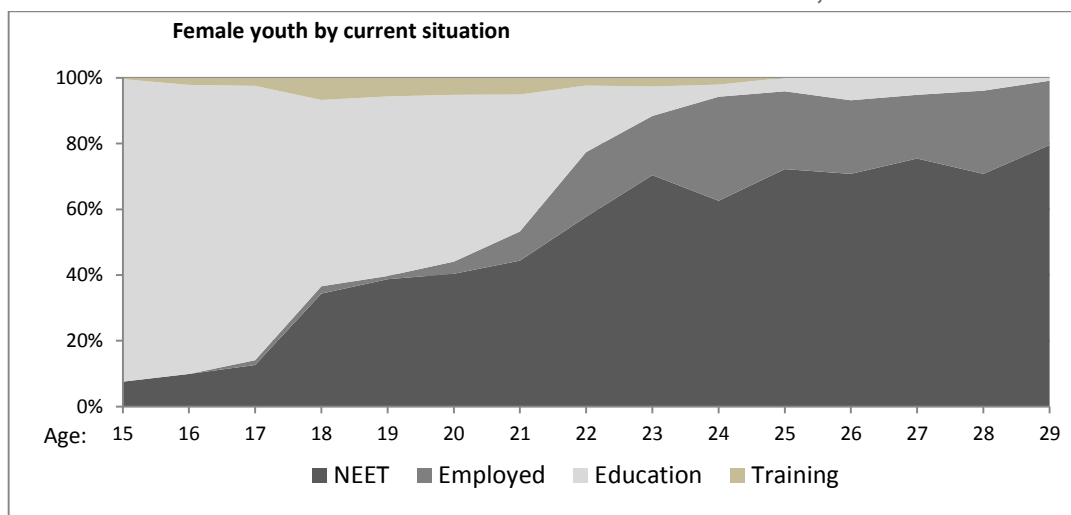
The following subsections provide more detail on the profile and situation of each of the three target groups.

Young graduates looking for first-time employment

Young graduates in Jordan, especially females, have considerable difficulties to move on from education to work. Females stay in education longer than males, and **FIGURE 2.3** indicates that, after they leave formal education, only a modest share transits to employment whereas most of the others become inactive.

The likelihood of a transition to economic activity (to employment or unemployment) rises with the level of educational attainment. Female graduates with an Intermediate Diploma or with a Bachelor's or higher diploma are more than five times more likely to be active than those with secondary and those with less than secondary education (**TABLE 2.5**). Correspondingly, women with lower educational attainment are very likely to be inactive.

FIGURE 2.3 CURRENT SITUATION OF YOUNG FEMALES IN JORDAN, 2013



Note: 'NEET' refers to those who are neither in employment, nor in education or training. Eurostat defines the indicator as the percentage of the population of a given age group and sex, who are not employed and are not involved in further education and training.

Source: ETF calculations based on ILO School-to-Work Transition Survey, 2013.

TABLE 2.5 ECONOMIC ACTIVITY RATE OF WOMEN IN JORDAN, BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION, 2013

Educational attainment	Economic activity rate of women (%)
Total	13.2
Illiterate	0.9
less than secondary	3
Secondary	5
Intermediate Diploma	30.1
Bachelor & above	55.9

Source: DOS, 2013a.

Discussion groups held by the PRIME team in October 2015 in cooperation with the chambers of commerce in cities: Amman, Irbid and Tafileh stressed the increasing desire of girls graduates with diploma or university degree to get a job, because the majority of the interviewed were unmarried and they do not face social restrictions, such as those challenges faced the married women in their movement.

Women who leave their jobs and become inactive

Women in the second target group typically leave their work after a certain number of years in employment, and become inactive. As already noted, this occurs at the latest once they have passed the age of 40.

When women have family responsibilities, this limits their freedom of movement and therefore they have to leave their work, especially since wages are less than the minimum wage and working conditions are not encouraging for the continuation of their works.

There is no direct evidence for the reasons behind this tendency, but **TABLE 2.6** shows that married women are more likely to be inactive than those who were never married.

TABLE 2.6 ACTIVITY RATE OF WOMEN (15+), BY MARITAL STATUS, 2013

Marital status	Activity rate (%)
Never married	17.7
Married	11.9

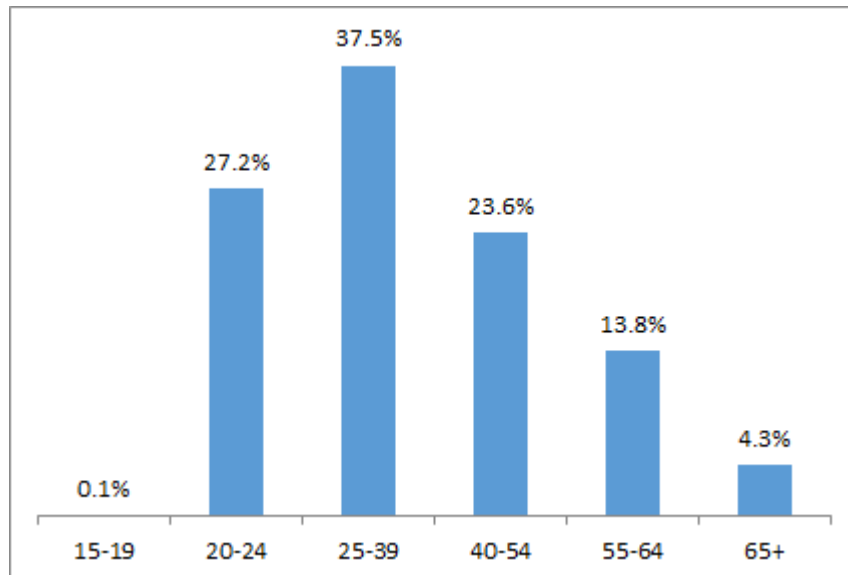
Source: DOS, 2013a.

The activity rates of married women are about 5% points lower than those of women who have never married. The difference might appear modest; however, in a country where an average of 60% of women above the age of 19 are married and close to 97% of those who thereby become homemakers do not work outside the home and do not look for a job, according to data provided by the DOS's Employment and Unemployment Survey, marriage becomes an important predictor of the likelihood of becoming inactive.⁴

According to stakeholders consulted in the PRIME kick-off meeting, employers seem to share the view that women are likely to leave their work at a turning point in their careers to become mothers and take care of family and household, and never come back to their jobs. Third party reports also point towards family reasons as the most likely explanation for women opting out of the world of work (ILO, 2013).

Some women in this target group are well educated. Among those women who in 2013 were between 25 and 39 years old and, according to past trends, were about to leave employment in considerable numbers and most likely transit to inactivity, almost 38% had an intermediate or higher level diploma (**FIGURE 2.4**). While the levels of educational attainment of those who leave employment are not known, the loss of well-educated individuals to inactivity is particularly harmful in economic terms.

FIGURE 2.4 SHARE OF FEMALE GRADUATES WITH INTERMEDIATE DIPLOMA AND ABOVE, 2013



Source: DOS, 2013a.

⁴ It is important to note that marital status does not correlate in the same way with female unemployment as it does with female inactivity. Of those women who in 2013 were active and had employment, 57% were in fact married. Of those who were never married, in the same year only 39% had a job (DOS, 2013a).

Inactive women

The data presented so far suggest that inactive women are more likely to have lower educational attainment and to be married. More importantly, there are considerable differences between governorates in the size of this target group. In Tafileh and Karak, around 22% of the females are active, while at the bottom end of the list only 8% of the women in Zarqa and around 12% of the women in Jerash and Aqaba are working or seeking employment (TABLE 2.7).

TABLE 2.7 ECONOMIC ACTIVITY RATES, BY GOVERNORATE AND SEX, 2013

Governorate	Economic activity (%)		
	Both sexes	Male	Female
Tafileh	42.5	61.6	22.5
Karak	42.3	63.5	22.0
Madaba	42.0	64.9	18.8
Balqa	38.2	59.6	15.6
Ajloun	34.90	55.5	14.8
Amman	36.7	59.4	13.4
Maan	36.9	59.0	13.4
Mafraq	36.9	59.7	13.2
Irbid	36.9	61.2	12.3
Aqaba	39.1	64.5	12.1
Jerash	35.1	57.6	11.5
Zarqa	35.4	61.7	8.0

Note: Governorates are listed by female activity rates in descending order.

Source: DOS, 2013a.

It is interesting to note that the governorates with the highest female activity rates (Tafileh: 22.5%; Karak: 22%; Madaba: 18.8%) are also those with the highest activity rates of men (Tafileh: 61.6%; Karak: 63.5%; Madaba: 64.9%) and for both sexes (Tafileh: 42.5%; Karak: 42.3%; Madaba: 42%). Of these governorates, Karak has an Industrial Qualified Zone, which may or may not have a positive impact on employment rates, but the other two governorates with higher female activity rates – Tafileh and Madaba – do not have such zones. Through the focus group meetings in October 2015, Prime team found that the high proportion of female workers in Tafileh goes back to the high rate of female enrollment in government and military institutions. Despite this, women in Tafileh are also complaining about the lack of employment opportunities available to them in private sector.

In fact, other governorates with such zones, such as Irbid, Zarqa, Amman, and Aqaba had very different data patterns. Aqaba and Zarqa are the next 'best' governorates in terms of male economic activity (Aqaba: 64.5%, Zarqa: 61.7%; Irbid: 61.2%) but they are also places where women are among the least active (Aqaba: 12.1%; Zarqa: 8%; Irbid: 12.3%).

A third pattern can be observed in the governorate of Jerash, which has the second lowest activity rate in Jordan for both males and females. The female activity rate in the capital, Amman, is around the national average (13.4%). It is surprising to discover that in regional comparison the activity rate of women in Amman is only average, despite the fact that the capital offers more employment opportunities than the regions and attracts better-educated women.

These are important observations that point towards a need for further, more regionally focused investigation into the reasons behind the differences. The findings might justify and guide the introduction of a regional dimension in the policy solutions to the participation challenge.

2.3 Factors that are causing the problem

The previous section identified who should be the primary target groups of policy action to increase female participation in employment. Another important source of guidance on effective responses to the challenge of low female participation is an understanding of the factors that prevent these target groups from contributing their share to the national economy. In the PRIME methodology, this is an important aspect of the problem analysis and is instrumental in constructing the options for policy action.

What hinders young graduates in finding their first employment, women in employment in staying employed, and those who are not active from re-entering the labour market? The next sections discuss three groups of factors:

- factors related to skills supply through education and training, most notably educational and training choices of women and quality of education and training (Section 2.3.1);
- factors related to employment, in particular working conditions and attitudes of employers towards women (Section 2.3.2);
- factors related to cultural attitudes towards female employment (Section 2.3.3).

To a varying extent, all of them limit the prospects of transition to employment of the target groups and thus contribute to the persistence of the problem.

2.3.1 Skills mismatch

Skills mismatch due to educational and training choices

Girls and boys have equally good access to education in Jordan. Gross enrolment rates are high as well: at primary level they are 99% for males, 97% for females, at secondary level 87% for males and 89% for females, and at tertiary level 43% for males and 50% for females⁵ (TABLE 2.8).

TABLE 2.8 EDUCATION LEVEL OF THE POPULATION (15+) IN JORDAN, BY GENDER, 2013

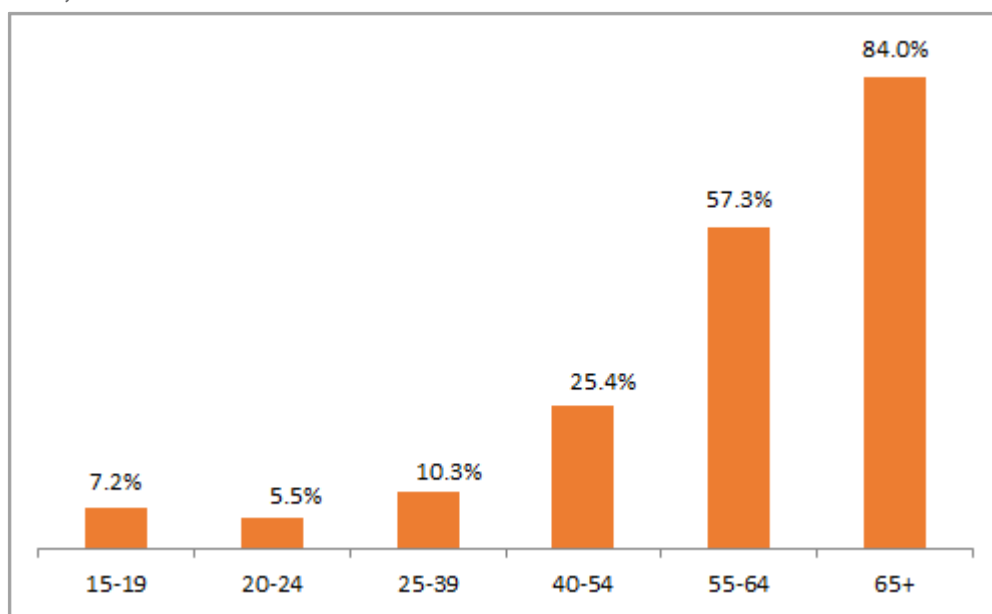
Education level	Total	Male	Female
Total	100	100	100
Illiterate	6.8	3.7	10.1
Less than secondary	52.5	56.3	48.6
Secondary	17.9	17.9	17.8
Intermediate diploma	7.8	6.3	9.4
Bachelor and above	15.0	15.8	14.2

Source: Dos, 2013b

⁵ Data available for 2012 on UNESCO-UIS database: www.uis.unesco.org/DataCentre/Pages/country-profile.aspx?code=JOR®ioncode=40525

Overall, the younger generation of females is enjoying a more equitable access to education than the school generations that preceded it. The average share of women with elementary education or less, including illiterate women, is considerably higher among the older age groups: 57.3% in the 55–64 age group and 84% in the 65+ age group, compared to 10.3% among the 25–39-year-olds and 5.5% among those in the 20–24 age group (**FIGURE 2.5**).

FIGURE 2.5 SHARE OF FEMALES WITH ELEMENTARY EDUCATION OR LESS IN JORDAN, BY AGE GROUP, 2013



Source DOS, 2013b.

As regards gender parity in educational attainment, Jordan is performing well, too. In 2010, the gender parity index (GPI)⁶ in primary education was 1.0 and for secondary education 1.06 (UNESCO, 2012). In higher education, the male–female ratio was 105.5 and at the intermediate diploma stage it was 130.8 (DOS, 2013b).

Access is important, but access to what? While females are almost equally represented in education overall, clear preference is given to general education over TVET. In 2011–2012, only 8.7% of female enrolment on secondary level was in vocational streams. The vast majority of girls preferred academic secondary education, presumably with a view to moving on to university upon graduation (**TABLE 2.9**).

TABLE 2.9 NUMBER OF FEMALE STUDENTS IN ACADEMIC AND VOCATIONAL SECONDARY EDUCATION, 2011–12

	Academic secondary education	Vocational secondary education
Number of students	101 753	9 724
Share of total (%)	91.2	8.7

Source: DOS, 2012a.

⁶ The gender parity index presents the ratio of girls to boys at specific levels of education. A GPI greater than 1 indicates a disparity in favour of females.

There are a number of quality-related challenges in secondary education and in TVET schools in particular, and they will be touched upon in the next subsection. Nevertheless, TVET still ensures relatively good employment prospects, which at present remain out of reach for female students due to their own and their families' preference towards general education. A recent study by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on vocational education and training (mainly VTC) shows that the proportion of young people completing TVET and finding work is significant, especially in the governorates of Tafileh (56%), Mafraq (42%), and Karak (43%) (TABLE 2.10).

TABLE 2.10 EMPLOYMENT RATES FOR YOUTH WHO HAVE COMPLETED TVET

Governorate	Young people completing TVET and finding employment (%)
Balqa	33
Irbid	38
Mafraq	42
Jerash	38
Karak	43
Tafileh	56
Maan	25

Source: UNDP–JICA, 2014.

According to data from the Jordanian National Centre for Human Resource Development (NCHRD), in 2011/12 females accounted for only 31% of enrolment in secondary vocational schools, and were concentrated mostly in a small number of vocational streams provided in women-friendly surroundings, limited to traditional female professions like hairdressing or nursing. The reasons behind the reluctance of females to enrol in TVET, despite the employment opportunities that it is likely to offer, are numerous and well known. Addressing them might help to start slowly to influence the perceptions and choices of prospective female students and their families.

Fewer girls than boys join vocational training centres or opt for vocational secondary education, and while there are cultural barriers to their participation, factors such as accessibility and creating friendly environments for women are commonly recognised as deterring factors (Q-Perspective, 2009). In a recent study by the UNDP, it was notable that women included in the study sample were less aware of nearby vocational centres and courses offered than men were (31% to 47% respectively) (UNDP–JICA, 2014). In both cases, however, the awareness level continues to be low. The low female participation in TVET can also be explained by the preconceived cultural notions against women joining TVET and the labour force in general (Barcucci and Mryyan, 2014).

Furthermore, there is a perception (confirmed by evidence) that TVET is for the less affluent. Although vocational education students come from different backgrounds it is evident that students, both males and females, who have parents with primary education and an income level of less than JOD 399 per month are more likely to join than other students, of the total number of students in vocational education (261 137), 17 632 come from families with an income of less than JOD 399 per month (NCHRD, 2012).

Finally, yet importantly, TVET is stigmatised. Students who join TVET are considered academic failures (UNDP–JICA, 2014), which runs contrary to the aspirations of young Jordanians in general to acquire a university degree. Even though some of them may join community colleges, most still strive to finalise their studies and 'bridge their study' to complete university. Despite the increasing need for more technical and vocational skills, TVET careers are not considered attractive for both social and

economic reasons. If allowed by their grades, students opt for general and academic education rather than vocational or technical streams.

Women sample that was interviewed in October 2015, confirmed that girls' enrolment in vocational education is limited, considerations related to: community perception of vocational education as less important than university education, limited educational options in vocational training with the limited options still devotes traditional role, in addition to the low wages.

For those few female students who enrol in TVET, another source of limitation in employment perspectives is the choice of courses. In general, girls enrol in programmes that are deemed appropriate for them. For the most part, their interest is in clerical and office-related courses, and trade and crafts-related vocations such as hairdressing, personal care and beauty treatment, leather clothing and tailoring. Boys also follow traditional choices: machinery and vehicle operation, metal formations and mechanics, electronics and equipment technology, and so on (TABLE 2.11).

TABLE 2.11 TVET TRAINING COURSES OF INTEREST AMONG STUDENTS (16–26), BY GENDER (%)

TVET course of interest	Male	Female
Communication/IT	55	45
Trades and crafts and related vocations	28	72
Electronics and equipment technology	62	38
Catering and hospitality	61	39
Clerical/office functions	30	70
Metal formations and mechanics	97	3
Agriculture and horticulture	80	20
Machinery and vehicle operation	94	6

Source: UNDP–JICA, 2014.

A difference in enrolment preferences between males and females is observable in community colleges as well (TABLE 2.12). Overall, the community colleges have more females enrolled than males: 66% in 2012 (NCHRD, 2013). Women's high representation in community colleges is associated with those colleges being women-only, and with the courses being two years long and allowing for university bridging (ETF, 2015). Study fields that are believed to be more 'socially appropriate', such as languages, education, and Sharia and Islamic civilisation, are female-dominated. Such fields of study are in limited demand in the private sector, but might provide knowledge and skills more adequate for employment in the public sector.

TABLE 2.12 PERSONS ENROLLED AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES, BY PROGRAMME AND SEX, 2011/12 (%)

Programme	Males	Females
Languages	10	90
Education	3	97
Engineering	91	9
Agriculture	76	24
Paramedical	28	72
Administration and finance	34	66
Information management	41	59
Hotel management	77	23
Applied arts	34	66
Applied science	0	100
Sharia and Islamic civilisation	12	88
Total	43	57

Source: DOS, 2012b.

It is likely that both males and females would prefer the job security that comes along with public employment, but the study choices of males, such as engineering, agriculture, hotel management, etc., give them a chance to compete for jobs in both the public and the private domains. In turn, this improves their employment prospects, as in recent years most jobs are created in the private sector (TABLE 2.13).

TABLE 2.13 PERCENTAGE OF JOBS CREATED, BY SECTOR (PUBLIC AND PRIVATE)

	2009	2010	2011	2012
% of public sector jobs	35.1	29.3	34.5	33.6
% of private sector jobs	64.4	69.4	64.5	64.0
% of other jobs	0.5	1.3	1.0	2.4

Source: DOS, 2012c.

The picture is somewhat different at university level. Roughly half of all graduates are female (TABLE 2.14), and at the higher, post-graduate level the female students outnumber the male ones.

Women who were interviewed in Tafileh, Amman and Irbid in October 2015 with PRIME team confirmed that the government decision related to the decrease of the female employment in the security and military sector as a result of the administration reforming programme. This decision is not well appreciated from women, because they prefer government jobs than private-sector jobs, due to the better security they offer.

TABLE 2.14 NUMBER OF BA AND BSc GRADUATES, BY PROGRAMME AND SEX

Programme	Females		Males	
	Number	%	Number	%
Veterinary science	13	0.1	23	0.1
Service trades	108	0.4	102	0.5
Dentistry	214	0.8	128	0.6
Physical education	288	1.1	397	1.8
Medicine	308	1.2	567	2.6
Law	314	1.2	809	3.7
Agriculture	375	1.5	221	1.0
Architecture and town planning	418	1.6	190	0.9
Mass communication and documentation	432	1.7	256	1.2
Fine and applied arts	477	1.9	574	2.6
Social and behavioural sciences	812	3.2	530	2.4
Pharmacy	899	3.5	457	2.1
Natural sciences	1 438	5.6	657	3.0
Paramedical sciences	1 825	7.1	1 003	4.5
Engineering	2 139	8.4	4 098	18.6
Mathematics and computer sciences	2 230	8.7	2 058	9.3
Educational sciences and teacher training	3 932	15.4	708	3.2
Humanities and religion	4 341	17.0	1 535	7.0
Commercial and business administration	4 993	19.5	7 744	35.1
Total	25 556	100	22 057	100

Source: DOS, 2012b.

There is a perception that the trouble with limited study choices for women continues at this education level too, and that they are concentrated in more 'female'-appropriate studies that befit their social and cultural roles. However, Table 2.14 suggests that, with one exception, the most popular graduation subjects are the same for male and female students: commercial and business administration, humanities and religion, mathematics and computer sciences, and engineering. The exception is educational science and teaching, where the female graduates outnumber the male graduates by five to one. The least popular subjects are the same for males and females: veterinary science, service trades, and dentistry.

Despite graduating in similar subjects, females have more difficulty in finding a job after university. **TABLE 2.15** shows that females with Bachelor's degrees and higher are twice as likely to be unemployed as males. In 2013, 26.6% of the female university graduates were unemployed as opposed to 12.6% of males. The debate focus group confirmed in October 2015 to the high proportion of male graduates enrolled in the institution security and military after graduation. As the families and friends connections and support were given to the male university graduates more than the support given to females graduated females seeking work.

TABLE 2.15 UNEMPLOYMENT RATES (15+), BY EDUCATION AND SEX, 2013

	Total	Male	Female
Total	12.6	10.6	22.2
Illiterate	7.6	8.5	0
Less than secondary	10.9	10.8	11.4
Secondary	8.5	8.5	8.6
Intermediate diploma	11.9	7.4	20.2
Bachelor and above	17.8	12.6	26.6

Source: www.dos.gov.jo/dos_home_e/main/

This discrepancy is a hint that the difficulties of women with transition from higher education to work might stem from the labour market and possibly from family pressure, and not from limitations in higher education itself. The finding could have implications for the construction of policy options. It suggests that interventions to improve the transition of female graduates from education to work might have to be customised for TVET and for higher education separately. Improvements in the transition of female university graduates to work might require action that targets employment and culture-related factors, described in Sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3.

Some of the women confirmed that the quality of university specialization fields are not linked to the labor market needs, in addition to that they pointed out the (wasta) and favoritism in hiring, which still affect the hiring process and give the priority to males in employment.

Skills mismatch due to limitations in quality of provision and relevance of skills

Another source of skills mismatch which burdens transition is the quality of education and training and the limited relevance of skills. This affects both young graduates and women who have been inactive for a longer time.

Firstly, the quality of education and training is below what is needed and expected (ETF, 2015). Addressing the quality of education has been a constant feature in literature on employment and unemployment. The issues identified are rather similar and include:

- the mismatch in knowledge and skills that are being taught at schools, universities and vocational training centres with the demands of the private sector;
- the limited focus on practical learning for students at universities and vocational training centres;
- the system of acceptance to universities which determines different weights of importance to different specialisms within academia and between academia and vocational training;
- teaching approaches and gender stereotyping;
- the lack of focus on lifelong soft skill learning and insufficient emphasis on work values and ethics.

Secondly, as stakeholder consultations confirm, the learning of soft skills and work values is limited. Studies with private sector companies indicated that they are dissatisfied with the outcome of education and are reluctant to hire Jordanian youth and women (World Bank, 2012), and that many consider the applicant's work attitude and soft skills as a critical determinant in the hiring process. Moreover, when stating obstacles in hiring Jordanians, private sector companies indicated the lack of

soft skills, insufficient salaries to motivate Jordanians to join the labour market, and lack of available qualified applicants (Creative Associates International, 2014).

Women, especially girls of a typical university age, are subject to stricter behavioural rules than their male counterparts are (JOHUD, 2009). This might have an effect on their exposure to communication and affect their social skills. The mismatch between the outcome of the educational system and women's ability to join the market extends beyond learning the requisite technical knowledge and skills, and rests in socially and professionally preparing women to engage in the market and foresee their own role in it, either as entrepreneurs or professionals.

Through meetings with women, team PRIME observed the decrease in the desire of women in business administration among the female's graduates and even among women who graduated from vocational training courses for reasons of weak knowledge of the labor market, the fear of independent work and risks, the fear of taking loans, and the fear from the legal accountability.

Thirdly, there is no gender-sensitive career guidance in schools. Pressure on women in employment is relatively high and yet many of them are not receiving any form of support or guidance on labour law, their career options, or even sharing experiences on managing multiple roles. Information suggests that a large number of women in Jordan work out of necessity and not self-actualisation, but more investigation is needed to help understand the drivers to women's work and their coping mechanisms. According to meeting sessions in October 2015 conducted by PRIME team, it became clear that the need for money to cover expenses and things in life are the foundation of motivation to work and self-realization comes later.

Finally, the vast majority of the female population of working age in Jordan is inactive. Statistically, the transition from work to inactivity is most pronounced after the age of 39 and there is anecdotal evidence that it tends to be a one-way transition. This means that those women who quit remain inactive, despite the fact that currently some 38% of them have a university degree. Long-term inactivity has various negative consequences, such as depreciation of skills over time (OECD, 2012) and diminished employment outlook (Maloney, 2004). The longer the period of inactivity of women, the more difficult it becomes for them to transition back to employment. There is a lack of training offers to adapt and upgrade of skills in support of a re-entry to economic activity.

2.3.2 Employment conditions

Another group of key factors hindering young graduates in finding their first employment, women in employment in staying employed, and those who are not active from re-entering the labour market is related to working conditions and the attitudes of employers towards female employees. They affect the absorption capacity of the labour market for female job seekers and its responsiveness to the more specific requirements of female workers, in particular of mothers and women who transit from inactivity to work. The following subsections discuss female transition from education to work from a labour market perspective, retention of women in employment, and female transition from inactivity.

Transition to employment

The Jordanian market does not generate enough opportunities to absorb the new entrants to the labour force each year. Despite recent improvement in GDP growth rate (from 2.3% in 2010 to 2.7% in 2012), there is an evident decrease in the number of jobs created between 2009 and 2012 (**TABLE 2.16**). On the one hand, public sector recruitment has decreased in line with the government policies to reduce its current labour market share (ETF, 2014b), and on the other hand, the overall performance of the economy and the current political situation of the Middle East emphasise the need for Jordan to continue to improve its investment-friendly environment for foreigners and Jordanians.

TABLE 2.16 NUMBER OF JOBS CREATED, BY SECTOR OF WORK AND SEX, 2009–12

Sector	2009			2010			2011			2012		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Total	49 714	26 604	76 318	39 335	23 477.2	62 812.6	36 062.1	16 825.6	52 887.7	35 448.3	12 620.9	48 069.2
Public sector	19 911	6 850	26 761	12 432	59 69.6	18 402	13 777.6	4 470.9	18 248.5	12 587	3 584.4	16 171.4
Private sector	29 662	19 506	49 168	26 406	17 177.5	43 583.4	21 930.9	12 157.2	34 088.1	22 099.8	8 656.2	30 756
Others	141	247	388	497	330.1	827.1	353.6	197.5	551.1	761.5	379.5	1 141

Source: DOS, 2012c.

Furthermore, the jobs created do not meet the expectations of the Jordanian workforce. The majority of new jobs are mainly low-skill and low-wage jobs that are not attracting Jordanians and in many cases are not considered appropriate for women. Of the newly created jobs, only 30% are opportunities for university graduates the rest are for high school or lower graduates (DOS, 2013c).

The quality and reliability of transportation to and from work affects the decisions of women and youth to work. Jordan's public transportation falls short of being effective and efficient. Respondents to a study on transportation noted that both the distance from home to work and the frequency and reliability of public transportation are significant determinants in their decision to accept or stay in a job. Women are also affected by the weak transportation systems, as not only are they encouraged not to assume jobs distant from their homes, in order to avoid transportation, but also they need to consider other factors such as safety, returning early in winter.

In addition to the shortcomings of the transportation infrastructure, the cost of transportation is relatively high, especially for workers moving from one governorate to another. Indeed, both workers and business owners noted that a considerable proportion of salaries is spent on transportation from and to work. The modest wages turn this into a burden that influences the decisions of prospective workers whether to stay in employment (IYF, 2014).

Retaining women in employment

Even when women work outside home, there is a tendency to discriminate them in the way they are treated at work and in the access to benefits and opportunities. The incentive of women to stay in the labour market is low from both professional and personal points of view. Professionally, a considerable share of young female learners are pushed into colleges and fields of study that hold little promise of success in the labour market. Even after they graduate with a specialism that might be in demand, employers tend to prefer their male peers. Once employed, women are exposed to structural discrimination at the workplace: they are seldom promoted and have lower pay than their male colleagues with comparable job profiles and responsibility. Hence, women lose interest in advancing their career and drop out of the job market.

On a personal level, women in employment are under pressure to fulfil all their responsibilities at work and home with limited support and are criticised if they fall short of meeting their family and community expectations. Combined together, these pressures mean that women have little incentive to work, especially if they do not even have control over their earned resources.

When they continue to work, women in employment tend to invest more effort both at home and at work to prove their ability to balance between their tasks, even if it is at the risk of their own physical and psychological well-being. Consequently, women's coping mechanisms are exhausted quickly and their careers tend to be shorter, as many tend to drop out shortly after being married or at early retirement age (45–50 years).

Anecdote information suggests that some women prefer to work at home or in part-time opportunities to accommodate all their responsibilities while working. Some also seek flexible hours in order to facilitate their commitment to their families. Nonetheless, the culture of part-time work, job sharing, flexible hours and remote home-based work is still underdeveloped in Jordan, consequently enforcing a work structure that is not accommodating to the needs and interests of women in specific times of their lives.

Companies' perceptions and attitudes towards women are negative. A study with business owners showed that 31% of those surveyed believed that women are incapable of performing the same tasks that their male counterparts undertake, 20% expressed their concern about women's inability to work late hours and 13% cited problems arising from vacations and personal leaves due to family matters. Even so, a quarter of managers surveyed found that the main problems with women employees are their families' refusal to let them work (MOPIC & UNDP, 2011).

Companies discriminate against hiring, training and promoting women. Private sector companies are reported not to be sensitive to gender issues and not actively engaged in promoting women's advancement. The existing 'mental models' within the companies tend to perpetuate social perceptions and reinforce stereotypes. Women are discriminated against in hiring, training opportunities, promotion, wages and benefits. They are in some cases deprived of their maternity rights that have been stipulated by the labour law as well. Sexual harassment is illegal by law but because many women refuse to report it, due to social considerations, it continues to take place.

Some of the women confirmed that the lack of sensitivity of the private sector to gender in terms of: the issues of discrimination against women in employment, training opportunities, promotion, wages and benefits, Sometimes also denied of their rights to maternity..There is a lack of available day care services. Although compulsory by law, companies should mandatory provide day care services for their employees (provided they have more than 20 female and male employees with a total of ten children under the age of four). Despite the law, according to survey many companies neglected the stipulation or instead refused to hire women as employees, to ensure the inapplicability of the law on them. Nonetheless, recently, and due to civil action and Ministry of Labour interest, the law is being enforced and more companies are engaging in establishing day care. While such a solution will facilitate women's work, the need for affordable day care remains as Jordan's private sector is largely composed of small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that may not be obliged to provide day care.

The labor offices in Tafleeh, Amman and Irbid confirmed the difficulties they face in the work force to provide day-care services for children of working owners, however there is a response by employers, but not to that percentage they plan to achieve. This challenge hinder the entry of women into the labor market

Trends and perception of working women do not encourage private sector companies to hire them. Due to the lack of sensitivity to women's needs in the workplace, unfavourable patterns of behaviour emerge from working women that in fact reinforce the negative image that women have. This is a vicious circle unless the private sector reevaluates its position to facilitate women's participation.

According to a study of companies in 2006, private sector companies noted reasons for their reluctance to hire women. The first is attributed to the overall impression that women are less productive than men, while the second relates to women's sudden drop out of the market for maternal or retirement purposes⁷. Half of the hired women in the formal private sector are likely to change their position in the first year (Amer, 2012). Of them 30% drop out of the market while only 12.2% move to public sector jobs (Amer, 2012).

⁷ Policies on women's economic empowerment rights in Jordan, 2012, Jordanian Fund for Human Development.

An ETF study from 2010 that surveyed ICT and tourism companies in Jordan, interestingly, did not indicate the prevalence of negative stereotypes about women. Employers quite strongly disagreed with the statements that women are less committed to their jobs than men are, or that they perform worse than men do. In addition, employers did not believe that male colleagues and customers are biased against women. They also tended to perceive their companies as appropriate workplaces for women, and said that women improve the image of the company, and that women establish better relations with the clients. However, 60% of employers in tourism and 32% of employers in ICT found that it is difficult to find women with the qualifications and skills their companies need, and a majority of the employers thought that women create organisational problems for companies, and that they find it difficult for their company to provide transportation for female employees. Many thought that it is too expensive to employ women because of legal provisions. When asked about the types of incentives they would like to see for hiring women, employers mentioned sharing the costs for training, subsidising salaries for the first year, supporting awareness-raising programmes, supporting part-time work, and sharing the cost of nurseries and covering maternity leave.

The legislative framework is not favourable to female employment. Jordanian labour laws are constructed from a patriarchal viewpoint despite efforts to grant women rights that are more equitable. Indeed, while there have been many progressive changes to the labour law, some articles and other relevant laws continue to perpetuate the image of women as dependent on men. Moreover, there are gaps in the labour law and its implementation that reinforce the discriminatory practices against women. In addition, there is no equal opportunity clause to guarantee lack of discrimination against women

Not having an anti-discrimination clause within the labour law, or even on a voluntary basis within organisations, has rendered women vulnerable to discriminatory actions and decisions. Such discriminatory behaviours create a less favourable environment for women to continue working. Efforts to bridge discrimination between men and women are already on their way; however, unless a coherent strategy to eliminate any form of mistreatment is introduced, the private sector will bypass this by discriminating against women at the recruitment stage. The recent introduction to promote 'equitable pay' for women is an achievement. The initiative calls for equal pay without sex-based discrimination for the same jobs that women and men undertake. However, unless there are guarantees that women will not be discriminated against at the recruitment stage, some private sector companies are likely to reject women applicants from the outset.

The underlying assumptions of the laws are patriarchal and assume women's work is secondary. Despite efforts to modify the laws and make them less discriminatory, clauses within the labour law, social security law and taxation laws still reflect the patriarchal and economic model that men are the breadwinners. There are still limitations on women's work at night and in certain sectors (article 69) from the labor law, despite efforts to modify the situation of women in the social security law, there are stipulations that suggest that women still need protection and that they are dependent on men. For example, unmarried or widowed women are entitled to their husbands' and fathers' pensions if they remain single. Once they are married or remarried, they lose the benefits. Similarly, men in the public sector are offered family allowances whether their spouse works or not, but women are allowed them only if they are the breadwinners of the family. These stipulations reinforce the principle that men are the breadwinners and women's work is supplementary to men's.

One more factor is informal employment. Government research has estimated on the basis of a 2010 survey that informal employment represents 44% of total employment, including children and foreigners, in the Jordanian economy. The World Bank has estimated the informality rate as a percentage of GDP to be 21%. All informal workers are in the private sector: 59% are employees, 39% employers and own-account workers, and 2% unpaid household workers (ETF, 2014b). If the tendency is to restrict the number of work permits to foreigners during massive inflows such as the one

currently this might result in a growth of the informal sector. The segmentation between formal and informal sectors results in youth getting their first job in the informal sector and not accessing protected employment later.

(Re)integration into employment

The concept of re-entry of women into the labour market is hardly studied or promoted. There is limited understanding and information on the extent to which some women return from inactivity, and why they do so. In addition, there are little if any reintegration programmes for such women. DOS data for 2013 indicate that in the age group 20–39, the share of women who join a new job is higher than the share of those who quit employment (**TABLE 2.17**). It would be important to determine what factors contribute to this statistic and to incentivise women who do not leave their jobs to continue working.

Women mentioned during October 2015 meetings their wellness to return to work after their drop for reasons of raising children, to do that, women were involved with vocational training, whether these training provided by chambers of commerce or charitable institutions or vocational training centers run by Ministry of Labor to enhance their skills to start new jobs.

The women mentioned other problem affected their work, which is their inability to communicate with financial institutions and conditions for taking loans and payments system. Hence, the return to the work is still dependent on women self-initiatives and not within a national plan to expand the proportion in the work-force.

TABLE 2.17 PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN WHO JOINED A NEW JOB AND WHO LEFT A JOB, BY AGE, 2013

Age group	Joined new job	Left the job
15–19	1.4	0.0
20–24	29.2	13.5
25–29	31.6	29.9
30–39	30.3	20.6
40–49	6.7	20.6
50–59	0.8	23.7
60+	0.0	12.3

Source: DOS, 2013c.

2.3.3 Attitudes and beliefs

Women’s employment is highest in the sectors of education, health and social work. They are also concentrated in public employment and are deterred from jobs that require fieldwork, mixing with men, and long working hours (MOPIC & UNDP, 2011). Noticeably as well, the number of paid women employees with vocational apprenticeship is rather marginal.

The society still resists women’s work. On the surface, statistics in the Hashemite University study (Ali et al., 2010) show that respondents support women’s work outside their homes. However, a deeper analysis of the figures indicates that women support women’s work more than men (85.5% vs. 66.9% respectively) and that in both cases, acceptance of women’s work is generally associated with ‘financial needs’ of the family and is restricted by the ‘appropriateness of conditions’ at work. Moreover, the study showed that since men are the breadwinners of the family they have priority over

women in recruitment. Accordingly, women's work continues to be circumscribed by their family conditions and acceptance and not their own choice (Brown et al., 2014).

The educational fields in which women are heavily represented correspond to the socially perceived appropriate jobs for women. Ninety-three per cent of respondents to the Hashemite University study (Ali et al., 2010) noted that teaching is appropriate for women, then being university professors (82%) and public sector employees (70%). Only 13.8% thought it appropriate for women to work in hotels and 27% noted that working in sales (at malls) is appropriate.

There is a clear preference for public employment. Studies on women's economic participation confirm that women and their families prefer that they work in the public sector. Working conditions and benefits in the public sector are considered more suitable for women than those offered by the private sector. However, the public sector cannot continue to absorb high numbers of new recruits. Statistics in 2008 show that the public sector hired only 30.7% of women entering the market, whereas the private sector hired more than 66.6% and the informal and NGO sector hired only 2.7% (MOPIC & UNDP, 2011). Statistics from 2012 (Creative Associates International, 2014) also indicate that the private sector has almost double the number of job opportunities than the public sector (16 171 for public sector vs. 30 756 for private sector). It will continue to be difficult for women to find work if they continue to lean towards working in specific jobs within the already saturated public sector.

There is also a preference for women to work in 'blue-collar jobs'. Women tend to be concentrated in work and jobs that reflect their reproductive roles. Sixty-eight per cent of working women are in blue-collar jobs compared to 17% and 13% in white-collar and management ones (MOPIC & UNDP, 2011). The distribution of women in different types of jobs influences their income as well as their career plans. Blue-collar jobs tend to be paid less and have less career advancement plans compared to the other type of jobs. Moreover, women tend to be concentrated in more conventional sectors as opposed to potentially growing sectors.

Women themselves prefer to work in medium-sized enterprises; The survey undertaken as part of the Jordanian Human Development Report 2011 (MOPIC & UNDP, 2011) has also highlighted that women prefer to work in medium-sized enterprises (i.e. having 20–99 employees) that are owned by women. Correspondingly, medium-sized enterprises have a greater tendency to hire women university graduates than smaller enterprises with 1–19 employees. Small enterprises are unable to mature and attain the minimal required production in order to grow and or sustain the costs of hiring women. In fact, new small enterprises are usually weak and have a relatively high exit rate compared to medium and large enterprises. Indeed, of the total 112 468 of working women in the private sector, 71 192 were working in medium to large organisations while the remaining 41 456 worked in smaller enterprises.

Women and their families also prefer to work in close proximity to home. Women's preference to work in close proximity to their place of residence restricts their choices of work even further. Women's mobility has proven to be a challenge, not only because of social restrictions, but also because of the quality and reliability of transportation. Hence, women have difficulties in finding jobs that are close to their homes, especially given that already there is an uneven distribution of private sector establishments. A brief review of the concentration of enterprises (small, medium and large) in Jordan suggests that women need to travel some distance to work. Indeed, the distribution of businesses with 1–49 employees (i.e. small and first tier of medium) ranges between 15.54% in Tafileh and 30.75% in Amman. Variances in distribution of companies having 50–99 employees and 100 and above are more striking and reflect the challenges that women who seek work in governorates have.

Women also have a clear preference for employment as opposed to self-employment. This is also reflected in the types of studies they more frequently choose. Statistics show that women prefer waged employment to self-employment and entrepreneurship (**TABLE 2.18**). The share of paid

employees among working women has generally been above 90% for the past few years; nonetheless, their rates of participation as employers and self-employed are below 2.5%. The last two years also witnessed a drop down in these figures even further. Moreover, only 5.3% of small and medium businesses are owned by women (Jordanian Fund for Human Development, 2012).

Women indicated in the meetings that were held in October 2015 with the project team that women prefer to work in the government sector, and if they do not find any jobs in the public sector, they prefer to work in big companies that provide them with suitable working conditions in terms of salaries, allowances and day care for children. Women working in different provinces find it difficult to accommodate with the transportation issue. In addition to the fact that, some families find it difficult to adapt with women's working conditions that require movement to other governorates. However, if the women have a high enough salary they would not mind working in a different province.

TABLE 2.18 EMPLOYMENT BY STATUS AND SEX, 2011–13 (%)

	2011			2012			2013		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Paid employee	84.4	81.9	95.9	84	82	96	84.9	82.8	95.8
Employer	6.1	7.0	1.9	6.20	7.10	1.60	5.6	6.3	1.6
Self-employed	9.0	10.6	1.5	9.30	10.70	2.00	9	10.3	2
Unpaid family worker	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.40	0.40	0.30	0.3	0.4	0.2
Unpaid worker	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.10	0.10	0.20	0.2	0.2	0.3

Source: DOS, 2013a.

There is limited appreciation and support for the work of women. A study on coping mechanisms of working women showed that the lack of good-quality care services and household help, even from members of the family, deters women from working (Al Marefeh, 2012). Working women also complain about the lack of appreciation and help they have. Some even noted the level of sarcasm, demotivation and constant criticism they receive from their close and extended family (USAID LENS, 2014). They note that they all remain accountable to their work responsibilities, household chores, their children and other social activities and commitments.

Women have limited control over resources, even over those that they have earned themselves. Approximately 18% of working women contribute to the family budget (Ali et al., 2010). Recent evidence suggests that women's contribution may have more of an impact on patterns of contribution from men within households. Women entrepreneurs and working women both reported that men's expenditure on their families decreases once the women start earning and some women indicated that they have no control over their earned money. Indeed, some women even expressed their desire to leave work but even if their male relatives originally opposed the idea, they now encouraged it (USAID LENS, 2014). Although this is still unstudied, women are indicating that men's contribution to household expenditure are decreasing once women's income is generated.

2.4 Summary of analysis

The analytical part of the issues paper is devoted to a structured analysis of factors that hinder women from participating in employment and that prevent progress in solving the persisting participation challenge.

The findings confirm that it is possible and necessary to identify three distinctly different target groups of females who do not participate in employment or are at risk: young graduates looking for a first time

employment; (married) women who leave their jobs and become inactive; and inactive women. The analysis also suggests that in order to be effective, policy measures should start with these three target groups and target the factors that determine their situation.

This section of the paper also listed the known factors that contribute to the participation challenge, and structured them according to the main features of their disadvantaging impact on the target groups: inadequate skills supply, unfavourable employment conditions, and discouraging attitudes and beliefs towards female employment. A common feature in all of them is that they affect the transition outlook of the target groups from and to employment.

The latter finding is at the same time a reliable pointer for policy action. Effective policy options are likely to be those that are able to address the factors discussed in this part of the paper, while taking into account the specific situation of women in each of the three target groups. As will be discussed in the next sections, a promising way to reshape the current situation for the better is to aim at reshaping the pathways of transition of females – an area in which the TVET sector can and must play a pivotal role, in partnership with stakeholders and other sectors.

3. ARGUMENTS THAT STRESS THE NEED FOR ACTION

Ideally, to achieve its desired economic growth rates and economic competitiveness, Jordan needs to mobilise its female and male labour force in a more efficient manner. The government also needs to adopt a more intensive and transformative approach to encourage women to supply their skills to the national economy.

To date, there is no study of the extent to which the Jordanian economy is losing out from women's low rate of participation in employment. International studies indicate, however, that economic performance and female participation in the labour market are correlated. It is likely that Jordan's economic potential is undermined by women's timid participation as well. There are two major arguments in favour of changing the current situation.

Firstly, higher rates of female participation in employment can increase the income of households, thus reducing poverty and dependency. A World Bank study carried out in the MENA region in 2003 indicates that household income is likely to increase by 25% because of improved women's rates of economic participation, hence opening an opportunity for a strategic approach to enhancing the livelihood of Jordanian families. Moreover, by promoting women's work the dependency ratio is likely to decline. Currently, Jordan's dependency ratio is relatively high not only because more than one-third of the population is below 15 years of age but also because women have a high inactivity rate.

Secondly, higher rates of female participation in employment could expand market diversity and ensure the optimisation of educational resources. Increasing women's participation in the labour market will not only enhance Jordan's ability to optimise its investment in the education of its citizens but will also enhance productivity. Men and women have different viewpoints, ideas and market insights, which enables better problem solving, innovation and more creativity. Women's participation in private sector companies has proven to have a good impact on the 'bottom lines' of companies not only in matters of diversity but also in terms of better governance and transparency.

4. THE OBJECTIVES OF POLICY ACTION

Policies must have clear objectives that are directly related to solving the problems that have been identified. Only clearly defined objectives will make the level of ambition visible and allow for identification and comparison of options for action and their likely impacts (European Commission, 2009). Indeed, without clear objectives, it is impossible to evaluate the extent to which the action has generated its intended effects.

The definitions of objectives may come from various sources and can be refined in the course of impact assessment. The general objective in Jordan was identified in the 2014 round of the Torino Process. It was confirmed by the Jordanian authorities and in national strategic documents. Other objectives are more specific and operational, and emerge in subsequent consultations with the authorities and with stakeholders, or in the course of constructing and assessing the policy options.

PRIME distinguished three levels of objectives: general objectives, specific objectives and operational objectives (European Commission, 2009). Not all options require objectives on all three levels, and this issues paper does not discuss operational objectives. The references to specific objectives are distributed between this Part and Part V. It is also important to note that some specific objectives may change during the impact assessment process as the exercise gains more insight into the effectiveness and implications of various policy options.

General objective

The objective defined by Prof. Nidal Katamine, Minister of Labour and Chairman of the E-TVET Council, is to increase female participation in the labour market, in particular by improving the transition from education and training to employment. This objective is qualified by several 'lower level' objectives, as outlined below.

Specific objectives

The expectation of the national authorities of Jordan is that the ex-ante impact assessment exercise will add value to the existing efforts to increase the rate of female participation and will make policies more informed and predictable. The leadership of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs agreed on the importance of two specific objectives in addition to the overarching one.

First, the policy options to be assessed should be chosen in a way that takes into account the differences in profiles and needs of women affected by unemployment.

Second, the assessment should focus predominantly on the role and potential contribution of education and TVET in improving the situation.

5. WHAT HAS BEEN DONE TO ADDRESS THE PARTICIPATION CHALLENGE?

According to the database of gender programmes of the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, more than 83 projects were tagged as women's economic empowerment projects. Within this, 20 projects were listed as supporting vocational training, 35 had skills training, 15 had loans and grants and 13 were listed as supporting women entrepreneurs. The definition of classifications remains vague and as such, projects may vary in size, scope and locality. The list is based on donor reporting and the same project could be classified in more than one category meaning the total number of projects may be inflated.

The following section lists some of the strategic interventions. The list includes projects that have been completed, are ongoing and or still starting. This is by no means a comprehensive list but one that highlights key initiatives.

5.1 National strategies

Jordan's employment and employability issues are well considered, articulated and addressed in strategic and developmental plans. However, the gap is generally evident in translating the strategies, legislation and policies into action. Indeed, aspirations are always higher than what is financially possible and the political economic fragility of the area (most recently the Syrian crisis) can lead to consequences that have a dire impact on the Jordanian national plan.

Increasing women's participation in the economy has also been a constant feature of all national strategies. Regrettably, though, efforts invested to enhance women's participation are not transpiring as desired. The following section details the most relevant strategies, legislation and policies relevant to promoting women's economic participation.

National Agenda 2006–15: is the overarching development plan that was designed in a consultative approach and aimed at bettering the livelihoods of Jordanian citizens. The Agenda, although ambitious, remains the reference point for all strategies and national development plans. It also guides ministerial action plans. The agenda themes are intertwined and all emphasise enhancing equal opportunities and equity, but, more specifically for employment, the agenda focuses on:

- reducing unemployment to 6.2% by 2017;
- enhancing women's economic participation;
- reforming higher education and vocational training;
- reforming transportation.

National Executive Plan 2011–13: is building on the National Agenda. As part of its pillar on employment support and VET, the plan seeks to increase women's economic participation rates while reducing their unemployment rates.

National Strategy for Jordanian Women 2012–15: while the strategy's components address gender equality and equal opportunities in general, it also promotes economic empowerment and participation. One of the strategy's overarching objectives is to provide a 'warranty of economic equal opportunities to achieve larger participation of women in various national economic sectors and raising the percent of her participation in setting policies and economic decision making'. Within the strategy,

the focus is on working women, businesswomen, women working from home or in irregular work, poor women and family supporter women.

Although there is a scoreboard to measure the progress of implementation of the strategy, it is difficult to assess the extent to which it is being implemented. As the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW), part of the national women's machinery, co-chairs the National Equal Pay committee with the Ministry of Labour, it was successful in introducing amendments to the Labour Law. The JNCW also worked with local NGOs on lobbying for modifications of the Social Security Law and has managed to adjust some of the discriminatory articles in the law. They also lobbied for establishing the maternity fund within the Social Security programmes and helped alleviate the cost of maternity to private sector companies who discriminated against women to avoid bearing the cost of their maternity leave.

National Employment Strategy 2011–20: was developed as a comprehensive strategy to address the low employability and unemployment of Jordanians, especially youth and women. The strategy was designed in three terms: short, medium and long. Each term has its set objectives and targets. Currently, the plan is being overseen by the Ministry of Labour in collaboration with the King Abdullah II Development Fund. The different elements of the strategy are relevant to enhancing women's participation in the labour market, but most relevant are:

- scaling up the school-to-work transition programme;
- reforming E-TVET;
- investing in the future through early childhood education;
- introducing health insurance benefits and expanding social security coverage to SMEs.

The implementation plan addresses both female labour market participation and female opportunities in education and TVET, job search and employment programmes but progress on the strategy has been slower than expected. On the one hand, few if any resources were dedicated for implementing the 69 initiatives outlined in the strategy, especially as there were a number of cabinet reshuffles. On the other hand, the political situation of the region and the influx of Syrian refugees also disrupted the labour market situation, a factor that was not anticipated in the strategy.

Jordan Poverty Reduction strategy 2013–20: aims at reducing poverty, vulnerability and inequality. More specifically the strategy focuses on a number of themes including bettering the social protection of poor and vulnerable households and on providing more gainful employment for Jordanians, especially youth, women and persons with disabilities. While the strategy outlines action to reduce poverty, it is still at the outset.

Higher Education Strategy 2007–12: 'aims at having a high quality higher education system capable of preparing highly qualified human resources'. More specifically the strategy intends to:

- develop a more fair and equitable system of acceptance;
- develop community college programmes and institutions to enable qualified professionals and technicians to graduate with competencies that meet the market demands;
- create a conducive, safe learning environment that promotes creativity and distinction.

E-TVET strategy 2014–20: the E-TVET Council has coordinated the formulation of the second E-TVET strategy. While the primary goal of the strategy is to improve the efficiency of the sector in order to develop a competitive knowledge economy, it will also focus on creating a more coherent and inclusive E-TVET system with a network of public and private training providers. Officials recognise

that more cooperation and collaboration are needed between ministries in order to realise the objective of the strategy.

Career Guidance Strategy 2011: was developed to coordinate mechanisms of career information and guidance. It included counselling services and provided a realistic, transparent and up-to-date information to empower young people with employability and career management skills. Regrettably, the strategy was not funded and action is very slow.

5.2 National projects

Active Labour Market Measures by the Ministry of Labour (ongoing) focuses on providing youth and women with work training, on-the-job training and internships, and provides employment subsidies for employers to hire youth and women. The initiatives include programmes such as the National Employment Training Company and satellite trainings and employment opportunities for women. Both programmes link training to wage subsidies and both are under considerable criticism, since they distort the market and attract companies that seek the wage subsidy rather than long-term employment commitment. Moreover, the employers found that trainees tend to join for the salary and leave before completing three months of work. Indeed, employment secured in this way is not sustainable, and the cost of the trainings is rather high and difficult to justify especially in light of their effectiveness.

Pay Equity is an ongoing initiative to promote equal pay between men and women. The initiative was launched by the ILO and is being led by a national committee, jointly chaired by the Ministry of Labour and the JNCW. The committee managed to introduce amendments to the labour law to ensure equal pay for men and women, but efforts are directed now on implementation and follow-up.

SADAQA (ongoing) started as a campaign and now the campaign is managed by an organisation of the same name. The intended goal of SADAQA is to advocate for nationwide compliance with Article 72 of the Labour Law. The adaptation of this article will subsequently create friendlier working environments for employed women and increase the number of day care places established within private workplaces as specified within the law. SADAQA works closely with the Ministry of Labour.

Maternity Fund: the Jordanian National Commission for Women along with a number of women's organisations lobbied for introducing a maternity fund as part of the social security system. The fund is intended to cover the cost of working women taking maternity leave, instead of the employer paying for such leave. Consequently, encouraging more employers to hire women as the cost of maternity leave is leveraged.

5.3 Internationally-funded projects

Many donor-supported initiatives address the issue of the quality and relevance of education and TVET, which no doubt is a key issue for women's as well as men's employability in Jordan. Initiatives addressing the issue of gender more specifically are presented below.

Education Reform for Knowledge Economy Project (ERfKE) (started 2003, ongoing in the form of phases): ERfKE was designed to reform the educational system in Jordan. It aimed to support the Government of Jordan in transforming the education system at the early childhood, basic, and secondary levels to produce graduates with the skills needed for the knowledge economy. The reform process was renewed and its first phase is still ongoing. It is a multi-donor initiative with the involvement of the World Bank, USAID, Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada (previously CIDA), the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the European Union, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), etc. Within ERfKE, project the government of Jordan and IBRD are financing the secondary vocational training reform.

According to a 2012 report on ERfKE II, there are strategic challenges to implementation, including (but not limited to) financial restrictions, limited capacity to launch the reform, and deteriorating quality of student achievements that reflect weakness in teaching methods and approaches. Finally the infrastructure of schools remains overcrowded and underequipped.

Decent Work Country Programme 2012–15 (ongoing): developed in line with the National Agenda and the National Employment Strategy, the programme adopts a holistic approach. While working on policy, the programme also works on social protection, creating an enabling environment and enhancing employment for women and men. One of the programme's outcomes is to ensure that 'employment promotion strategies for women and men are enhanced'.

SABEQ (2007–11): The USAID Jordan Economic Development Program was a five-year broad economic development initiative that aimed to support sectors and activities in alignment with the growth sectors envisioned for a knowledge-based economy. The programme worked on inserting Jordanian enterprises into global value chains, promoting investment, and improving the enabling environment to generate value-added jobs, exports, foreign direct investment and sector revenues as a powerful engine of economic growth. It also addressed gender equality as a cross-cutting theme and undertook initiatives to support women's economic participation in different localities.

USAID Jordan Local Enterprise Support Project (LENS – started 2014, ongoing) aims to promote growth and job creation among micro and small enterprises (MSEs). More specifically the programme will work on:

- MSE policy – supporting a conducive policy environment that facilitates the ability of micro and small firms to produce, transport, market and sell efficiently and at competitive cost;
- MSE competitiveness – driving activities based on end market demand and concrete economic opportunities to strengthen horizontal and vertical linkages between firms, while improving the ability of stakeholders to implement investments;
- MSE access to finance – enhancing MSEs' access to a wide variety of financial products and services tailored to their needs, through increased provision of products and services by financial service providers and improved MSE awareness of them.

Gender is a cross-cutting theme in the programme activities and there is a focus on working with women's economic empowerment in their areas of operation.

USAID Jordan Competitiveness Program (JCP) (started 2013, ongoing) will strengthen Jordan's competitiveness in selected sectors, promote sustainable economic growth, and increase employment for Jordanians. More specifically, the programme supports private and public sector leaders and organisations in their work towards increasing competitiveness, investment, and employment in three key Jordanian sectors: information and communication technology, clean technology, and medical services and life sciences. To achieve this the programme will strengthen innovation networks; enhance the Jordanian business environment; build workforce capacity; and improve access to financing. Gender equality is a cross-cutting theme and attention to advancing women in large and medium companies is highlighted.

Youth:Work Jordan (2008–14, completed) is a USAID project. The project brought comprehensive employment and entrepreneurship programmes to young people aged 15 to 29. The programme offered young people access to vocational, technical, and life skills training, job placement services, entrepreneurship training, and support for job creation through start-ups and youth-led SMEs.

Workforce Development and Enterprise Support Project (2014, ongoing) is a new USAID project that is under development. The project is approximately USD 40 million and focuses on job creation and employability skills for youth

Maharat project (ongoing) is a programme that recruits and trains recent Jordanian graduates for internships and employment opportunities at Jordanian businesses. The programme provides a series of courses for youth at universities, and more recently community colleges, to enrich and elevate their business knowledge and capabilities in different subject areas including entrepreneurial activities. The community college programme focuses on supporting a four-week employability skills course for 84 unemployed community college graduates, mainly women.

INJAZ (ongoing) aims to inspire and prepare youth to become productive members of their society and accelerate the development of the national economy. The programme focuses on developing students' sense of personal ambition and passion for achievement through a diverse spectrum of programmes, inspirational activities, volunteer projects, internships, competitions, and opportunities to gain real work experience and training before leaving the education system. It works in schools and universities and promotes private sector participation in its programme delivery. The programme targets both men and women. Programmes are both curricular and extracurricular and focus on such themes as economics, financial literacy, work-readiness skills, soft skills, leadership, entrepreneurship, career guidance, and social responsibility.

Jordan Now (completed) was an action research project funded by the World Bank. The project examined the role of training and subsidies in encouraging private sector companies, especially SMEs, to hire women. While the research was informative, the results concluded that although the training has a positive impact on women's self-esteem and self-actualisation, neither the subsidies nor the training necessarily increases the employment potential of women. The project also highlighted the reluctance of SMEs to hire women and youth. The project is undermined by many, but indeed as an action research, the study is underutilised in informing programme and initiative designs.

Building and Extending Skills Training System (BEST) (completed): this project sought to develop strategic interventions in policy, planning, coordination and information management at the Ministry of Labour. The project focused on engaging women and in promoting women's participation in vocational training. It also worked on developing career guidance in universities.

Vocational Training and Start-up Entrepreneurs in Jordan (starting). The programme will be implemented by Microfund for Women (MFW) and paves the way for Silatech (a social initiative based in Qatar which seeks to create jobs and economic opportunities for young people in the Arab world') to provide support for two MFW programmes. First, Silatech will provide technical assistance and training to improve the impact of MFW's existing 'Mihnati' programme. Mihnati is a loan product that finances vocational education and training for young Jordanians. Secondly, Silatech will work with MFW to develop 'Makinati,' a loan product for young start-up entrepreneurs which is targeted mostly at graduates of the Mihnati programme.

Economic Integration of Women in the MENA Region (EconoWin) (2010–16) is a regional project of which Jordan is part. The project aims to improve conditions for the integration of women in business and employment in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, through changing attitudes and perceptions of women in employment, providing advisory services and implementing gender-sensitive economic and employment policies, working on the economic empowerment of women, and supporting women in professional orientation. The programme also works on enhancing gender diversity within companies.

5.4 Summary and lessons learned

Efforts to combat unemployment and increase employability have been ongoing for the past decade or more. The results, however, have been marginal and hardly felt, especially as regards women's rates of labour market participation.

Economic empowerment and youth employability is one of the priorities of the key donors in Jordan. Accordingly, there are multiple initiatives operating in this field, which sometimes overlap. Some interventions are large, with multi-million dollar funding; others are more modest, at a local level. All initiatives tend to focus on five aspects of the problem:

- policy and legislative amendments;
- system reform;
- capacity building for institutions and individuals;
- access to opportunities and finance;
- awareness and skill enhancement.

Hardly any comprehensive assessment has been undertaken to evaluate the impact of the implemented initiatives as a whole. The sum of activities, both national and international, is impressive but the progress achieved so far is limited because the focus of initiatives and activities is dispersed, both in terms of problems addressed and target groups.

6. FROM PROBLEM TO ACTION: AN AGENDA FOR CHANGE

One of the main goals of this issues paper is to identify and articulate what matters in preparing an agenda for change regarding female participation in employment in Jordan. The focus therefore is on the contribution of VET in addressing this persisting problem.

An agenda for change is like a string of answers to three interconnected questions, namely, what policies, achieving what exactly, and for whom?

The analysis presented so far has brought about a valuable insight. The extent to which women in Jordan can contribute to the national economy at any given point in time is a function of three progress variables:

1. the number of women of working age who are active;
2. the level and/or relevance of skills they possess;
3. their rate of employment.

A positive change in any of these three variables (economic activity rate, quality of education and training provision, employability) will be a first sign of success. In the same vein, the variables lend themselves as pillars of a simple but robust framework for the monitoring of progress in solving the participation challenge.

The best way to influence these variables is to reshape and influence transition: stimulate transition from education to work, prevent the transition flow from work to inactivity, and establish a transition pathway from inactivity back to employment. Women in the three target groups identified in section II.2.2 should be equipped for successful transition from education or inactivity to employment, encouraged and guided in making this transition, and empowered and supported to stay in employment.

Education and training have a major role to play, but ultimately this task is a shared responsibility between education, the labour market and the families. The policy options presented in the next section bear this in mind.

6.1 Policy options

This section presents a selection of policy options which aim at the root causes of the problem outlined in Chapter 2.

The policy options were constructed and selected according to the following principles, following the impact assessment guidelines provided in EC document SEC(2009) 92 (European Commission, 2009).

- The only options considered were those identified through the background analysis, the kick-off meeting, and selected international experience.
- The initially broad choice of options was screened for technical and other constraints and narrowed down to a selection of only a few options which clearly related to the general and specific objectives as defined at the beginning of the PRIME process (see Chapter 4 for objectives).

- Further criteria applied in the process of narrowing down were feasibility and proportionality.
- The proposed options are formulated in a way that closely links them to the causes of the problem and to the objectives to be achieved.
- The proposed options are centred on interventions in the field of TVET or in relation to TVET.
- The options deemed to promise the greatest net benefits were selected.
- Finally, yet importantly, stakeholders expressed strong preference for policy options 1 and 2.

The options are presented according to the same template, which is inspired by those used by the European Commission in similar impact assessments. For each option there is a short description, a justification, an overview of problem factors addressed and option-specific objectives (actions which the implementation of the option implies), and an indication about the female profile that the option is targeting.

Commonly, ex-ante impact assessments include an option to preserve the status quo (a baseline option). In consideration of the declared importance of making headway in improving the situation with female employment, a 'no action' option was not included in the list below.

The main deliverable in Phase 2 was an impact assessment report for each option. The reports are based on an expanded version of this template, featuring additional categories for effectiveness and/or benefit and for impact according to the assessment criteria.

Policy option 1. Improving skill supply

Description and justification

This option evolved from the insight that the careers and engagement of women in the labour force are shaped by the quality of education and fields of studies they choose. Indeed, the mismatch between education and market skills requirement has been extensively discussed in Jordan and the government was already committed to a reform agenda almost a decade ago. However, the problems still prevail and women tend to be further disadvantaged as they are geared towards particular study fields that 'befit their social and reproductive roles' and are not necessarily in demand.

It is suggested to invest in developing and implementing a package of measures to overhaul the supply of skills through the network of initial TVET providers, to be more in favour of women.

Option-specific objectives

- Diversify and improve the course offer, in particular by:
 - developing a better, more relevant offer of study fields from which to choose;
 - revising the curriculum and training materials to be gender-sensitive;
 - developing campaigns together with employers to promote VET as a promising choice of study for males and females.
- Improve the quality of TVET provision, in particular by:
 - raising awareness and gender sensitivity among teachers and instructors;
 - establishing more gender-friendly vocational training environments to encourage women to join and participate actively in mainstream courses;

- Set up a comprehensive, national career guidance system which is gender-sensitive, covers the entire skill demand and supply continuum and for this policy option includes:
 - course counselling to encourage women to expand their options in choosing their educational fields of study.

Group of problem factors addressed: Factor group II.3.1. Skills mismatch due to limitations in the quality and relevance of the education and training offer.

Progress variables targeted: Predominantly B.

Profile targeted: Target group 1. Young graduates looking for first-time employment.

Policy option 2. Building bridges for transition from vocational education and training

Description and justification

Transition from education to work is a multi-dimensional process (OECD, 2000) which depends on the context in which it takes place: on the way the labour market is organised, the nature and organisation of education and training provision, the institutional relationships between key players such as employers, providers and authorities, and – last but not least – on national values and traditions.

This policy option is about improving the transition from technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to work for young female graduates. In principle, this option can be applied to support transition from higher education as well. ‘Transition’ therefore refers to the process of passing along a typical pathway from school to work which young female graduates have to take if they want to find work, and ‘improvement’ means incentivising actors at key stages of this pathway – the employers, the TVET providers, and the families – to play a supportive role in facilitating the transition.

It is recommended to design measures to incentivise employers, families and TVET providers to support proactively a transition from initial TVET to work, and provide them with the means to do so.

Option-specific objectives

- Objectives targeting employers and labour market services:
 - anchor anti-discrimination provisions in the labour law to ensure equal opportunities and protect women from being excluded from interviews and recruitment because of their sex;
 - design active labour market measures including positive discrimination, e.g. E-TVET funded programmes with quotas for women;
 - introduce fiscal incentives for private sector employers recruiting females and/or employing a certain share of women among their staff;
 - awareness raising and gender sensitivity training provided to all the public employment offices staff.
- Objectives targeting TVET providers:
 - set up a comprehensive, national career guidance system, which is gender-sensitive, covers the entire skill demand and supply continuum, and for this policy option includes career counselling that relies on up-to-date information from the labour market, with sex-disaggregated data.

- Objectives targeting families and the wider public:
 - social marketing campaign on working women's image aimed at parents, young women and employers, and focusing on non-traditional female occupations.

Group of problem factors addressed: Factor group II.3.2. Transition to employment; and Factor group II.3.3. Attitudes and beliefs.

Progress variables targeted: Predominantly A and C.

Profile targeted: Target group 1. Young graduates looking for first-time employment.

Policy option 3. Building bridges for transition from inactivity to work, for preventing inactivity, and from informal to formal employment

Description and justification

As discussed, the (re)integration into the labour force of Jordan of the vast number of women who are inactive can stimulate the Jordanian economy and can bring further benefits to their families and the society. Besides, long-term inactivity can render education credentials and work-related skills obsolete. This is the case also with women's informal employment. Informal employment not only prevents women from making use of their rights to maternity leave, household allowance and pensions, but also leads to a waste of skills in low-qualified jobs and weak career opportunities. Measures that aim to prevent this from happening are also measures against the deterioration in overall quality of human capital in the country.

Develop measures to support the reintegration of women back into the labour market, and retain them there.

Option-specific objectives

The third policy option suggests a sequence of actions to:

- Identify who the inactive women are and where they are from.
- Develop a regularly updated continuing VET (CVET) offer in view of retraining them, as necessary, in accordance with labour market demand.
- Prepare a support, information and incentives package for women and their families to facilitate a decision to remain in or return to the labour market, including:
 - financial incentives to encourage participation in the labour force;
 - removal of non-financial obstacles to labour force participation, such as promotion of a more gender-friendly working environment that accommodates women's needs to manage their multiple roles and time constraints related to family and care obligations, e.g. by allowing for part-time employment;
 - awareness raising about the economic rights and entitlements of women, including labour rights, rights to inherit, right to control their resources while expanding their career options and potential;
 - legislative modifications.

- Set up a comprehensive, national career guidance system which is gender sensitive, covers the entire skill demand and supply continuum and for this policy option includes:
 - awareness raising and information provision for inactive women on the current state of the labour market and the opportunities it offers Last but not least, remove demand-side barriers (barriers on the side of potential employers) to hiring, for example through efforts to reduce employers' reluctance to hire inactive individuals.

Factors addressed: Factor group II.3.1. Skills deficit of inactive women; Factor group II.3.2. Retaining in employment and resumption of employment; Factor group II.3.3. Attitudes and beliefs.

Progress variables targeted: Predominantly A.

Profile targeted: Target group 2. Women who leave their jobs to become inactive; Target group 3. Inactive women.

6.2 Assessment criteria

To assess the impact of policy options, PRIME resorts to multi-criteria analysis (MCA). The MCA covers a wide range of techniques that share the aim of combining a range of positive and negative impacts into a single framework to allow easier comparison of options (European Commission, 2009). It is a flexible approach, which is particularly useful in cases of impacts that are assessed through a mixture of qualitative and quantitative information, and where there are varying degrees of certainty.

The establishment of the assessment criteria that were used to compare the options is a crucial step. In the logic followed in Phase 1 of PRIME. It follows the identification of the general policy objective and of options to achieve it. Once the criteria had been established and agreed upon with all stakeholders the MCA helped to prepare a 'scoring', or rather a narrative, of how each policy option fares against the criteria. The point of orientation for the narrative is the baseline analysis presented in Part II of this paper.

The assessment of policy options in Jordan was evaluated against two groups of criteria: **effectiveness criteria**, which are directly related to the objective and look into the extent to which the policy options achieve the set objectives and are coherent with them; and **self-imposed criteria**, which reflect the concerns and expectations of authorities and stakeholders as well as the country context. An initial list of criteria is suggested in **TABLE 6.1** and was subjected to discussion and verification in a validation meeting with stakeholders at the end of Phase 1.

TABLE 6.1 IMPACT ASSESSMENT CRITERIA – PRELIMINARY SELECTION

Criteria	Guiding questions
Effectiveness criteria	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Effectiveness vis-à-vis the objective ■ Added value ■ Sustainability 	<p>To what extent does the policy option address the bigger strategic objective?</p> <p>Does the option benefit any of the other policy options?</p> <p>Is the option sustainable and does it contribute to a sustainable change in attitudes towards female employment?</p>
Self-imposed criteria	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Regional dimension ■ Target group dimension ■ Equity ■ Short-term impact ■ Administrative burden ■ Monitoring ■ Risk potential ■ Alignment with broader national priorities 	<p>Expected positive impact on regional and individual levels</p> <p>Does the policy option have a negative effect on equity?</p> <p>Is the option likely to lead to some immediate results?</p> <p>What is the administrative burden associated with the option?</p> <p>To what extent is the impact of the policy option traceable with existing tools and data?</p> <p>Are there any risks associated with the option?</p>

Once the first assessment results had become available, the authorities and stakeholders were asked to identify a preferred option, which was then subjected to a cost assessment in the last phase of the PRIME exercise.

6.3 Stakeholders concerned

Stakeholders participate in the policy process as members of formal or informal policy networks (ETF, 2013) that can be created or mobilised at any stage of the policy cycle. The composition and width of these networks depend on the policy stage at which the involvement takes place and on the topic at hand. In Jordan, as in all other countries, the PRIME exercise identifies and reaches out to all networks and their members that are concerned through:

- an overall responsibility for the policy objective;
- a responsibility for implementation of the option-specific objectives;
- the anticipated impact of the policy action;
- a responsibility for sustaining the new state of affairs after the reform is implemented.

TABLE 6.2 provides an overview of organisations that are involved in the consultations for the PRIME initiative.

TABLE 6.2 STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT OVERVIEW

Organisation's name	Rationale	Suggested level (general partner/ core)
AFD	Funding economic development initiatives and employability projects	General
Al-Balqa University	Provider of technical education	Core
AMIDEAST	NGO female capacity building	General
British Council	Concerned with employability and education reform processes	General
Business Development Centre	Private provider of employability training programmes in universities and community colleges	General
Trade and Development Canada	Funding economic development initiatives and employability projects	General
Department of Statistics	Education, training and labour market data	Core
EconoWin	GIZ project promoting women's active participation in economy	General
E-TVET Council	E-TVET reform coordinator	Core
E-TVET Fund	Active labour market programmes	Core
EU Delegation	Budget support for E-TVET sector (benchmark on female participation rate, inclusiveness of E-TVET)	Core
GIZ	Funding economic development initiatives and employability projects	General
Higher Population Council	Analysis of female employment and other related issues	General
ILO	International donor/labour markets	Core
INJAZ	Provider of courses to enhance employability, knowledge and skills of youth in universities and schools	General
JICA	Funding economic development initiatives and employability projects	General
Jordan Hashemite Fund for Human Development	Projects on women's empowerment	General
Jordan River Foundation	Projects on women's empowerment	
Jordanian National Commission for Women	National mechanism for promoting gender equality, women's advancement and empowerment in Jordan.	General
King Abdullah II Development Fund	National Employment monitoring Criteria, entrepreneurship, career guidance in universities	General
Ministry of Education/ Vocational Training Department	Provider of vocational secondary education	Core
Ministry of Labour	Labour market policies, provider of vocational training	Core
Ministry of Social Development	Social policies related to labour market	Core
Ministry of Trade and Industry	Supports employability projects	General
Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (Gender Unit)	Coordinating unit on gender programmes funded by international organisations	Core
SADAQA	Advocates for creating a more enabling environment for women lobbying for enactment of Law 72: establishing day care centres.	General
Social and Economic Council	Strategic perspective on economic policies and strategies, studies in female employment	Core

Organisation's name	Rationale	Suggested level (general partner/ core)
Social Security Corporation	Administrating social security contributions	General
UNRWA	Community colleges	General
USAID agency	Funding economic development initiatives and employability projects	General
Vocational Training Corporation	Provider of training programmes	Core
World Bank	Concerned with employability and education reform processes	General

6.4 Subsequent steps

The immediate next step was to conclude and validate the outcomes from the first phase of PRIME in a meeting with stakeholders. The meeting was set around the current issues paper. The validation meeting also launched the second phase of the process.

The second phase is intended to verify the potential impact of the different policy options. In Jordan, this primarily consisted of a comparative assessment of the different policy options according to the established criteria to understand their potential impact (TABLE 6.3).

TABLE 6.3 MATRIX – PRIME EX-ANTE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Criteria	Policy option 1: improving skill supply	Policy option 2: transition from TVET	Policy option 3: transition from inactivity and preventing inactivity
Effectiveness			
Effectiveness vis-à-vis the objective	assessment results	assessment results	assessment results
Added value	assessment results	assessment results	assessment results
Sustainability	assessment results	assessment results	assessment results
Self-imposed criteria			
Regional dimension.	assessment results	assessment results	assessment results
Target group dimension	assessment results	assessment results	assessment results
Equity	assessment results	assessment results	assessment results
Short - term impact	assessment results	assessment results	assessment results
Administrative burden	assessment results	assessment results	assessment results
Monitoring	assessment results	assessment results	assessment results
Risk potential	assessment results	assessment results	assessment results
Alignment with national priorities	assessment results	assessment results	assessment results

In the second phase, PRIME also included consultation with affected stakeholders on the different options. This was done through the field visits in October 2015, interviews and focus groups with women, potential employers, etc. to capture perceptions at national as well as local level.

The deliverable of Phase 2 was an Impact Report with an assessment of each option. This comparative process allowed for the identification of the option which responds most closely to the policy priority and to the principles of efficiency and effectiveness.

This was followed by Phase 3, devoted to the operationalisation of the selected option for action, in particular through the preparation of an overview of the costs and funding adjustments necessary to

implement it. All outcomes were then available to be used by the Minister of Labour as input for future policy decisions in Jordan.

ACRONYMS

CVET	Continuing vocational education and training
DOS	Department of Statistics of Jordan
ETF	European Training Foundation
E-TVET	Employment and technical and vocational education and training
GDP	Gross domestic product
HRD	Human resources development
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JNCW	Jordanian National Commission for Women
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MSEs	Micro and small enterprises
NCHRD	National Centre for Human Resource Development
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PRIME	Projecting Reforms' Impact in Education
SEMED	Southern and Eastern Mediterranean
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
VET	Vocational education and training
VTC	Vocational Training Corporation

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