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A Study on the Role of Jordanian Civil Society Organizations in Empowering Women Politicians

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Introduction



The participation of women in the political process holds a central position in development and democratic transformation in any country. In fact, the level of this participation determines the progress, civility of the society, and the success of political reform efforts being pursued ¹.

With the evolution of the concept of development, supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2002, which replaced the term "human" with "humane," development has transcended its material aspects to encompass the moral dimensions of individuals, regardless of their gender, social status, or educational level. This shift paves the way for the debate on empowerment for both parties, particularly in political spheres.

In recent decades, there has been growing attention to women's issues in Jordan. Jordanian women have played a significant role in the struggle to secure their rights in public life and political participation in particular.

Stakeholders addressing development challenges agree that inequality and unjust political participation—including a lack of pluralism to form what is known as the "political marketplace," where power is exchanged freely, even if relatively, among various social and political elites—hinder the potential to achieve developmental plans. By marginalizing women in decision-making positions, we are voluntarily sidelining half of the society's potential energies.

The political participation of women is contingent upon the conditions of the society surrounding them. This participation reflects the health, growth, integrity, and establishment of democratic principles within the society, as well as the degree of social freedom granted

to women. For a society to keep pace with the demands of modern life and the requirements of human development in the 21st century, such participation is essential ².

The political presence of women initially took a modest form, as laws and legislations were not yet prepared to grant them their rights. Women expressed their demands through protests and petitions addressed to political decision-makers. Additionally, civil society organizations, particularly those concerned with women's issues, played a significant role in promoting and activating their political participation. These efforts stemmed from a belief in developing women's capabilities and empowering them across various fields.



Since women's political participation is not merely an option but a prerequisite for achieving development, significant challenges stand in the way. Among these is the ambiguous understanding of civil society, which reflects a broader confusion regarding the concept of social conflict. This conflict arises between forces advocating for civil solutions and those clinging to traditions that perpetuate dominance and authoritarianism.

This understanding affects the tools of work and the selection of alliances, aiming to introduce a new culture into societies, such as tolerance and peace. These values help create space for different perspectives, including freedom of belief, thought, expression, and respect for diverse opinions. This creates a positive societal image, allowing individuals to participate politically and granting them political freedom. They should not be marginalized or their existence ignored, as this would effectively deprive them of their right to political freedom and undermine their fundamental membership rights ³, as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ⁴.

Today, we must not reduce the issue of empowering women politically to simply analyzing the numbers of women represented and quotas filled in various institutions, or their voting percentage in municipal and parliamentary elections. It now requires active participation in public affairs, which means sharing power, influence, and authority side by side. This also involves realizing the concept of gender integration in political life.



First: Political Participation of Jordanian Women

Jordanian women have always remained connected to Jordan's historical and political transformations. However, the low rate of their political participation remains one of the undeniable facts for those concerned with women, politics, and sociology.

Despite Jordan adopting a range of measures to enhance women's role in political work over various periods, their participation rate remains low ⁵.

According to official statistics, Jordan ranked 118th globally out of 167 countries, and 10th Arabically in the Democracy Index in 2021 ⁶. Many policies have linked political participation for individuals and women, in particular, to the level of societal awareness. This refers to the understanding and perception that motivates involvement in planning and change.

One can divide the political work of Jordanian women into three phases:



First Phase: The Launch Phase

This phase began in 1944 when Jordanian women started engaging in organized efforts. These pioneer institutions and associations focused on empowering women politically and economically, establishing programs to educate and train them for jobs and professions that fostered self-reliance.

These associations also played an awareness-raising role on many significant social and political issues. Women recognized that men's exclusive dominance of parliamentary seats deprived them of access to decision-making positions, thereby influencing legislation that concerned them. The struggle of Jordanian women began with demands for their political rights, including running for parliamentary and municipal councils in the early 1950s.

Their struggle became evident during the 1948 Nakba of Palestine, reflected in national chants and songs that highlighted women's role in political engagement, such as: "That day was election day... young men, elders, and don't forget the girls"⁷.

The Women's Awakening Association led this struggle, founded in 1952. The Arab Women's Union, established in 1954, also played a significant role in raising awareness among women and submitting numerous petitions to the

House of Representatives, Senate, and Ministers, demanding women's political representation. In October 1950, the government granted women the right to vote. However, the political climate of 1957 led to the dissolution of the union with the declaration of martial law.

Following the 1967 war and its aftermath, including significant losses and the emergence of protests and activism, women's role in political mobilization became prominent, encompassing cities, villages, and Palestinian refugee camps. Women organized demonstrations and actively participated in protests⁸.

Second Phase: The Rise Phase

The repeated demonstrations resulted in women being granted the right to vote in 1974. Jordan also participated in two delegations in the Beijing Conference in 1975—an official delegation representing the government and a public delegation representing Jordanian activist groups. That same year marked the announcement of the re-establishment of the Jordanian National Women's Assembly, preceded by the establishment of the Arab Women's Society in 1970. However, significant challenges faced both organizations, and the government dissolved the National Women's Assembly in 1981.

The year 1978 marks the beginning of women's political work, as the National Consultative Council appointed three women upon its establishment. Women's participation in the council continued in subsequent years, and their presence in political positions expanded, including the appointment of several women to ministerial posts. This began with Mrs. Ina'am Al-Mufti, who was appointed as the Minister of Social Development in 1979⁹.

In 1981, the Ministry of Social Development established the Jordanian Women's Union as an umbrella organization for various associations concerned with women's issues. These organizations and movements.

The Jordanian civil society organizations, committees, and their offshoots played a pivotal role in empowering women politically. They became the driving force behind advocating for women's participation in various fields and political positions, marking the beginning of broader female involvement.

In 1980, they appointed four women to the second National Consultative Council, and in 1982, they appointed another four women to the third National Consultative Council. That same year, Jordan granted women the right to vote and run for municipal councils.

For the first time, women participated in voting, casting ballots, and engaging in the political process during the 1989 Jordanian elections. Although twelve women ran as candidates, no one elected them. In the 1993 elections, which

saw a shift in the electoral system from an open list system to the single-vote system, one woman won a seat allocated to the Circassian and Chechen communities out of three female candidates.

The women's movement then strengthened, focusing on additional issues such as fostering an encouraging political environment, addressing violence against women, and creating greater opportunities for political parties to conduct their activities¹⁰.

Third Phase: The Actual Participation of Jordanian Women in Political Life

With the issuance of the National Strategy for Jordanian Women and its legal recognition by registering it as an association under the Associations Law No. 33 of 1966, chaired by Princess Basma bint Talal in 1995 under the name "Jordanian National Women's Committees Assembly," the empowerment of Jordanian women began. Their participation was enhanced through the implementation of the strategy. The history of the women's movement, through charitable associations, feminist organizations (like the Jordanian Women's Union and the Jordanian National Women's Committees Assembly), and various women's political party affiliates, clearly links the political participation of Jordanian women to that history¹¹.

A look at the statistics reveals a relatively notable increase in the presence of Jordanian women in political positions over the past years. The percentage of female participation in the 19th House of Representatives in 2020 reached 11.5%, which was a decline compared to the 18th House of Representatives, where the female representation was 15.4%, the highest female representation ever ¹².

In terms of women's participation in the Senate, Jordanian women did not participate in the first Senate formed in 1947, nor in any Senate until the 16th Senate, which saw the appointment of the first woman. The representation of women in the 29th Senate in 2022 rose to 10 women, accounting for 15.4%. In contrast, the 28th Senate in 2020 had 7 women appointed, representing 10.8% ¹³.

Women's presence in the executive authority preceded their participation in parliament. They received representation in the 43rd government (Prime Minister Bisher Al-Khasawneh's government) in 2020, with five women ministers ¹⁴, accounting for 18.5% ¹⁵. However, Jordanian women achieved their highest representation in the Cabinet during Prime Minister Omar Razzaz's government in 2018, with 7 women out of 28 ministers (excluding the prime minister), representing 25% of the ministerial team. In the subsequent reshuffle, the number of female ministers remained 6 out of 27 ministers, maintaining the same percentage, which forms almost a quarter of the Cabinet. This is the highest percentage of female representation in the history of Jordanian political work ¹⁶.

As for the presence of Jordanian women in the diplomatic corps, they represent Jordan

in various regional and international forums, including meetings and conferences, through their roles as heads of diplomatic missions, attachés in embassies, or working diplomats. The Department of Statistics indicated that the participation rate in the diplomatic corps at all levels in 2022 reached 23.2%. Furthermore, the percentage of female ambassadors was 13.4% of the total number of ambassadors in 2022 ¹⁷.

Regarding the participation of Jordanian women in political parties, by the end of 2021, the number of women affiliated with political parties reached 12,752, representing 34.83% ¹⁸. However, their representation in leadership positions within those parties was only 11% ¹⁹. Political parties in Jordan are still not very attractive for men to engage in, let alone for women, who face additional challenges in their participation ²⁰.

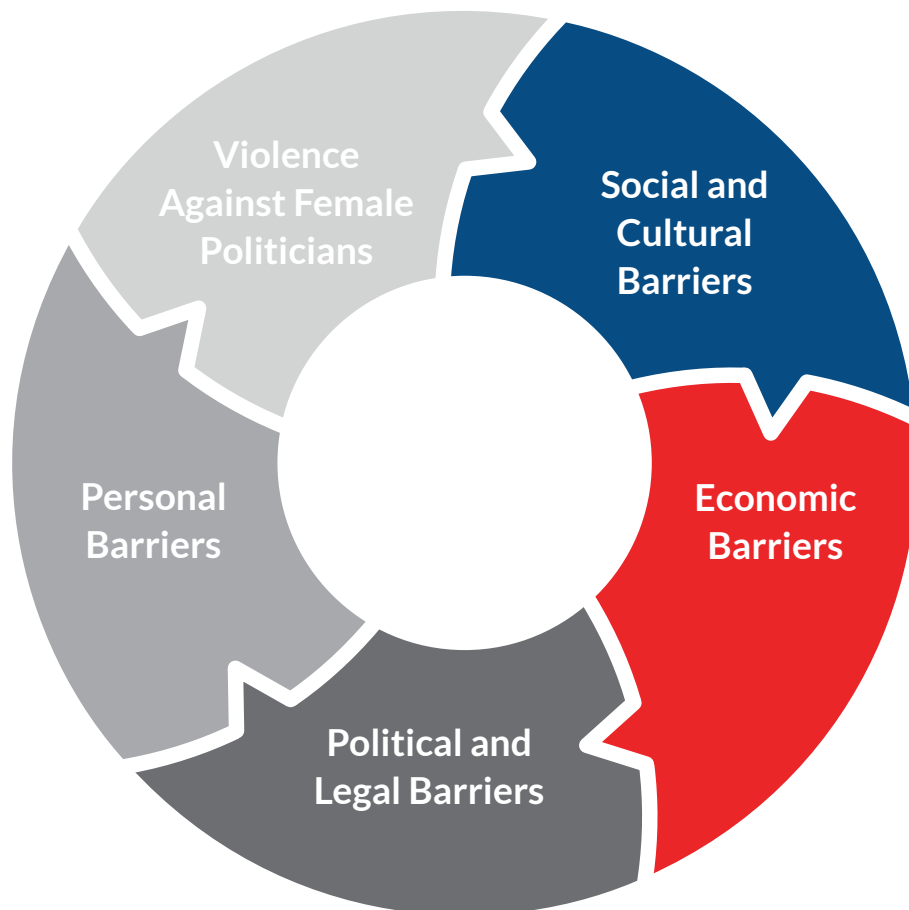
The share of women in municipal councils increased after the recent amendment to the Municipalities Law, which raised the women's quota from 20% to 25% ²¹. In 2022, the participation of women in municipal councils reached 28.5% ²².

The number of female judges in the judicial system reached 266 out of 954 judges, making up 27.8% of the judiciary. This represents an increase of 1.3% compared to 2020 ²³.

Looking at the above, it is clear that the representation of women in political decision-making positions remains low. The higher we go in the decision-making hierarchy, the lower the percentage of female representation. This clearly highlights the existence of a "glass ceiling" that prevents women from reaching decision-making centers.

Second: Challenges and Barriers Facing Women in Politics in Jordan:

Empowering women politically is a complex, interconnected process that involves multiple variables, the most important of which are: the economic and developmental reality of women, the state of community empowerment, the nature of the prevailing political system, and the social and cultural factors. The latter is considered one of the most significant variables, as the public sphere is traditionally associated with influence, authority, and power, making it a domain traditionally dominated by men. The challenges and barriers facing women politicians are as follows:



1. Social and Cultural Barriers

The dominance of male authority marked the social structure in Jordan, reinforced by mechanisms such as political institutions and the tribal and regional system. Values, principles, norms, relationships, customs, and traditions, which play a significant role in shaping many aspects of women's political participation governed these. The presence of a supportive man, whether a father, husband, or brother, is one of the key factors in determining a woman's political ²⁴ success or hindrance. One politician remarked that behind every talented woman is a father who supports her emotionally, or a husband or brother, as though sending a message: "strike with an iron fist; we are with you."

These mechanisms work to define the public space as male-dominated, while women suffer from cultural bias and social traditions that reinforce their roles in domestic work and family life, thus limiting their participation in politics ²⁵. Additionally, the feelings of frustration and pressures arising from entering the political arena, alongside the demands of work and household responsibilities, represent one of the most significant challenges faced by women in politics.

Some female politicians have pointed out that working in politics is exhausting, yet it does not exempt women from the demands of household duties and educating their children, especially in the absence of significant help from their husbands at home ²⁶. This double burden adds to the challenges they face in balancing their political careers with family responsibilities.

Women are allowed to work, but it must not conflict with their primary role as mothers,

a role that society has agreed is natural and unquestionable. Domestic violence, used to force the woman back into her prescribed role, may result from the stigmatization of a man who takes on that role. This reflects a struggle over roles, their incompleteness, or misinterpretation. Some individuals may adopt such attitudes to resolve conflicts, using the male power granted to them by society to assert dominance in the family.

This violence may also be linked to issues of adjustment, whether economic, psychological, or because of a lack of values and rules. It could also stem from the absence of deterrent punishment or emerge strongly because of social upbringing. The societal environment, including family dynamics, education, and broader cultural norms, can perpetuate such behaviors by not providing the necessary checks to prevent them ²⁷.

Indeed, some female politicians face bias in the media, which negatively affects their political image or undermines their political capabilities. Women's political roles are often underrepresented or overlooked, while male politicians receive more media coverage. This disparity diminishes the public's awareness of their achievements and political participation, reinforcing gender stereotypes and limiting the visibility of women's contributions to the political sphere. Such media biases further hinder progress toward gender equality in politics.

This tendency to focus on the mistakes or negatives in the political work of women while neglecting their achievements and positive contributions reflects a broader societal issue of gender bias ²⁸. People often portray women in politics in a fragmented or reductive manner, emphasizing their physical appearance or style rather than their political expertise or leadership

skills. This not only undermines the recognition of their qualifications but also reinforces stereotypes that hinder their ability to be taken seriously as capable leaders. Such media portrayals can contribute to the perpetuation of gender inequality in political spheres²⁹.

Men, within government structures, limit women's participation in leadership and political change, frequently permitting them to contribute only to agendas they have established, which often fail to align with women's interests. This constraint reduces the ability of women to fully understand and influence the realities of political life at the societal level. Moreover, the daily political activities carried out by women often remain invisible or undervalued, contributing to a broader systemic exclusion of their contributions and perspectives. This lack of visibility limits their ability to enact meaningful change and further perpetuate gender inequalities within political systems.

Significant barriers, including symbolic violence against women in Jordanian society, hinder women's ability to vote or run for office. Political positions, such as those in local elections, often reflect the familial and tribal dynamics of Jordanian society, which frequently do not align with gender considerations. As a result, the presence of women in these political spaces tends to serve more than a token gesture rather than offering meaningful progress for women's rights within the political agenda. This highlights how the political system in Jordan is rooted in a male-dominated culture, which is far from democratic governance and often limits the full political participation of women³⁰.

2. Economic Barriers

The difficult financial situation of many women is considered one of the major barriers to entering political life. Women's initial participation in the labor market can only achieve a transition from the home to decision-making spaces. According to general statistics, they indicate that the rate of women's economic participation in Jordan has remained stable over the past ten years. The results of the labor force survey for the first quarter of 2023 show a rate of 13.7% for women compared to 53.3% for men.

The results of the unemployment, labor, and income survey indicate that the unemployment rate in the first quarter of 2023 reached 30.7% among females compared to 19.6% among males³¹, which suggests the economic dependency of the majority of women on men because of their weak participation in the labor market.

Thus, Jordanian women cannot bear the financial burdens of the candidacy process, as the cost of nomination fees is high, and election campaigns are expensive and require funding³². Even if a female candidate earns a reasonable income, she cannot risk her job to run for parliament because success is not guaranteed. Therefore, when preparing future policy measures to ensure increased political participation of women, it must take into account the economic barriers that prevent their entry into the political field. Increasing women's economic participation will open doors for political participation.

3. Political and Legal Barriers

The lack of awareness of women's legal rights represented political and legal barriers through public and higher education channels, as well as the media. There is also a shortage of so-called political and legal education tools at the level of civil society organizations, with political parties³³, women's organizations, and labor unions at the forefront. The reality, according to some political analysts, confirms that even some women engaged in the political field are unaware of these political rights, as well as the ways to demand and benefit from them in political decision-making.

Some political parties also lack sufficient support for female politicians in their programs and the integration of women into party political work³⁴, preferring to nominate men over women. The internal structures of some parties tend to be traditional and undemocratic, needing more transparency in their operations. Some female politicians have pointed out the weak political representation of women within women's movements and organizations that support women, emphasizing the need to activate the role of women's political associations and shift their focus toward political issues, rather than just dealing with economic and social matters³⁵.

Some civil society institutions advocate for the quota system, arguing that it is the only guarantee for Jordanian women to reach the parliament in a society with a clear masculine mindset. They believe observing women's practical parliamentary performance in the council will change societal perceptions of women. On the other hand, the small number of votes women receive in elections is a clear indicator of the lack of societal conviction in voting for women. Therefore, the social impact of the quota system,

for discrimination against women has not been notably positive. Women continue to suffer from social and political discrimination, an issue that the electoral system could not address.

Some female politicians mentioned that the quota system is what prompted some tribes to nominate women for the parliament, hoping to represent the tribe within the council in the absence of opportunities for representation through other seats outside the women's quota. This indicates the exploitation of the electoral system for tribal competition (to increase the tribe's representation) and social gains. This negatively affected the concept of citizenship and even threatened the unity of the tribe, especially where multiple male candidates from the same tribe run in the same electoral district³⁶.

Regarding decision-makers, in terms of not meeting international standards related to the effective exercise of the right to participate in public affairs, some decision-makers consider women's participation as a privilege or a grant, rather than a right. This is because of the lack of obvious mechanisms that compel authorities to involve women in the decision-making process³⁷.

Some female politicians have pointed out the necessity of aligning local laws with international agreements established to protect human rights and the need to amend certain laws that may limit women's political participation, such as changing the retirement age for women. The age of 55 is one where women can take on leadership roles, having gained wisdom and experience, and also freed themselves from domestic burdens. Regarding the judiciary, one female politician stated that a national strategy for women's affairs should be developed to increase the number of women, especially as public prosecutors, since only two women currently hold this role. This is also one of the sustainable development goals.

It appears that there is a weakness in women's participation in political life, despite the fact that the amendments to laws and legislations have all been in their favor. This leads us to conclude that there is a flaw not related to the laws themselves, but to the prevailing culture, which may be the biggest barrier to the general involvement of women in political life³⁹.

4. Personal Barriers

Personal barriers and the particularities of Jordanian women also have a significant impact on women's political participation. They willingly refrain from political work without any legal, political, cultural, or economic restrictions, as it relates to socialization, which has conditioned women to be submissive to men. As a result, their personal inclinations to occupy political positions are limited, and they are content with only casting their vote when the opportunity arises⁴⁰.

Challenges also arise from the lack of empowerment because of the absence of empowerment tools or methods, such as the availability of information, granting of authority, encouragement and rewards, self-development, and training⁴¹.

Some female politicians have pointed out that educating about women's rights should begin at an early stage, from school to university. As knowledge providers, teachers and counselors in schools should include these trainings to ensure the continuity of these ideas throughout the child's schooling years.

Awareness plays a crucial and primary role in ensuring active participation of women in political life. The lack of awareness and knowledge of their legal rights, such as the

ability to run for parliament, participate in party political work, or engage in municipal councils, is one of the fundamental barriers to their political participation. Overcoming this obstacle would encourage women to have more self-confidence, with a conscious and strong will regarding their rights and the duties they have to fulfill⁴².

Besides the prevailing belief among the majority of society that political work is not suitable for women, and that they do not possess the qualities and skills required for political work, such as the ability to persuade, speak publicly, communicate, negotiate, and form alliances, the phenomenon of male dominance has contributed to the emergence of social inequality based on gender. This inequality affects individuals' opportunities to access education, work, or decision-making spaces, and consequently, limits their chances of obtaining resources and assets, such as power, income, wealth, and social status⁴³.

Some studies have indicated that many women in leadership positions fear competing with their male colleagues, fearing rejection or criticism. This is where concessions in decision-making participation begin, and ultimately, they decide to avoid confrontation and remain in the background⁴⁴.

5. Violence Against Female Politicians

Forms of political violence are considered a violation of women's rights, as female politicians are subjected to physical, sexual, psychological, economic, or electronic violence while performing their political work. This prevents them from participating effectively, leading to the violation of their human rights. Jordanian female politicians face various forms of violence aimed

at subjugating or exploiting them within unequal power relationships, contrary to what people expect, that a female politician is strong-willed and cannot be subjected to violence⁴⁵.

Female politicians are primarily subjected to psychological violence, followed by verbal abuse. They have reported experiencing one or more forms of psychological violence, which forces them to work in an unsuitable environment because of actions that harm their mental and moral health, such as discrimination, humiliation, defamation, threats to their reputation, harassment, or even neglect and indifference. This includes the inferior treatment from male colleagues and voices urging women to stay in the kitchen⁴⁶, as one female politician pointed out. These actions diminish their humanity and dignity, preventing them from effectively and efficiently performing their roles.

This exposes them to a process of selection and filtering for the political elite, where politicians in some societies are chosen based on factors such as gender, age, and affiliation, supported by cultural legacies backed by religious, social, economic, and military institutions⁴⁷.

Cyber and media violence against female politicians is fueled by the growing number of internet users, thus creating a negative image of them. They face various forms of psychological, social, and even health-related violence. This begins with jokes and escalates to targeting the very essence of female politicians, attacking their femininity, questioning their mental capabilities, abilities, and experiences⁴⁸.

They also experience economic violence, where men control the resources that represent a source of power and empowerment for women, giving them authority, power, and dominance over women's decisions. This extends to

controlling their freedom. Often, this violence comes from husbands because of the financial losses associated with running for elections. Additionally, female politicians face malicious economic violence from competitors, opponents, and acquaintances, ranging from tearing down campaign posters to attacking properties belonging to them and their families, as some female politicians have pointed out⁴⁹.

Physical violence affects some female politicians, but it leaves no visible marks, unlike its profound effects on their psychological health, causing humiliation and degradation.

It is common for some female politicians to hear the justification for such violence, claiming that their political work has made them forget their "natural" role in the home. Some of them also face sexual harassment, although at a lower rate, and often hesitate to talk about sexual violence out of fear for their reputation. Many of them view sexual violence only as rape or direct assault. However, some experience sexual harassment as inappropriate comments, jokes, or receiving obscene images on their phones⁵⁰.

Studies show that violence against Jordanian female politicians is a mechanism operating within individuals and institutions as symbolic violence, ultimately aiming to exclude and silence women from public affairs. Popular heritage is one of the significant contributors to shaping the culture of the society, with some proverbs reinforcing the violence against women in their relationship with men. Some proverbs imply women's inability to make the right decisions, such as "Consult them and disagree with them" and "A woman, the daughter of a woman, is who you consult." These sayings, expressions, and proverbs circulating in society highlight the deep-rooted nature of this culture, granting the patriarchal society the justification and right to continue acting against women⁵¹.

Third: The Role of Civil Society Institutions in Supporting Women's Political Participation

Civil society institutions play a vital role in supporting and enhancing women's political participation in all aspects of political life. Expanding the base of women's political participation strengthens the principle of citizenship in its two dimensions: rights and duties. This enhances the sense of belonging and strengthens their position in society, aiming to achieve development in its comprehensive sense.

Civil society organizations have realized that formally acknowledging development requires the efforts and energies of all societal segments, including women, is insufficient. They have started to view development in its comprehensive and sustainable sense, which cannot be achieved without the active contribution of women in a society that relies on its human resources for full participation in political, economic, and social development efforts.

The political empowerment process for women is a dynamic process that both influences and is influenced by its political, economic, and social environment ⁵². Civil society organizations represent the political and social leverage and the major supporter of the issues of female politicians in the following ways:

1. Providing Services

These are the traditional tasks that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been carrying out for decades and include charitable bodies and non-governmental associations. The service areas include the following:

Economic Empowerment of Women:

Through economic empowerment and other methods, civil society organizations help women become decision-makers, providing services to female politicians along the way. An example of the role of civil society organizations is the Jordanian Women's Union, which enhances the status of women to involve them in local community development, establishing productive, training, and rehabilitative projects targeted at them. Additionally, the Jordan River Foundation works to provide employment opportunities for youth, particularly females, and improve their economic, cultural, and social conditions. This is done through establishing and supporting projects and focusing on initiatives that push local communities to their fullest potential ⁵³. It has also implemented several programs, including the Reconstruction Projects Development Services program, the Jordan River Design Projects, and the Karma Kitchen ⁵⁴.

Some female politicians have mentioned that they lead civil society organizations aimed at helping orphans, widows, school students, and poor families, distributing aid to them. Additionally, one organization provides gifts to girls and encourages them to participate in any elections ⁵⁵, whether school, parliamentary, municipal, or party elections, once they reach the legal age.

Funding and Financial Support:

Some civil society organizations provide financial support to female politicians to help fund their election campaigns or other political activities.

One female politician mentioned the role of civil society institutions in organizing fundraising campaigns within the community and using the collected funds to support her ⁵⁶.

Networks and Communication:

Civil society organizations help female politicians connect with each other and with other political institutions and parties to encourage collaboration and exchange of experiences. An example of this is the "Women Supporting Women/Jordan" network, which has formed partnerships with various women's organizations, national institutions from different fields, as well as several female parliamentarians, members of municipal councils, political parties, the youth sector, and volunteers. The goal is to raise awareness about the importance of women's political participation and strengthen the capacity of Jordanian institutions to support politically active women ⁵⁷.

Some civil society organizations also assist in creating women's networks to support women's rights and enhance communication and cooperation among them, such as the "Shamsa" network, which is a participatory, multidimensional network aiming to coordinate specialized national efforts. The network works to expand the base of partners with the goal of reducing violence against women, including violence against female politicians. It involves all sectors: public, private, civil society organizations, academia, and media, considering the fight against violence against women as a "national participatory responsibility" ⁵⁸.

2. Contributing to the Political Development Process Through Empowering the Local Jordanian Community

Civil societyThe role of civil society organizations in developing skills, building capacities, and providing training in various developmental areas, such as program formulation and implementation, strategic planning, and expanding popular participation in economic or political activities, includes the following areas:

Enhancing the Political Capabilities of Women:

Empowering women has a unique concept than merely providing technical support and training. These are things that anyone, whether male or female, may need in order to play an active political role.

Political empowerment must include changing the stereotypical image and breaking the constraints caused by the political, social, economic, and cultural environment that hinder women's actual participation. Civil society institutions work to increase women's awareness, inform them of their rights and potential, develop their sense of citizenship, and train them in leadership skills, decision-making, planning, negotiation, and effective communication and influence, through programs that aim to instill correct political socialization values and principles.

The starting point lies in beginning from the very narrow level, which is the family, by raising awareness among women about the importance of having a voice in their homes, which results from empowering them economically and socially⁵⁹.

One of the female politicians mentioned that she received free courses from several civil society organizations in leadership, emotional intelligence, and future planning, which

helped her develop herself and deepen her specialization or field of work with full effort to achieve her goals⁶⁰.

Civil society organizations played a role in enhancing the abilities of female politicians, supporting them, educating them, and helping some of them reach global councils⁶¹. For example, one woman reached the 14th World Congress on the Palestinian Cause and gave a speech in the United States in the presence of President George H. W. Bush. People were astonished to see a woman, who was both a general and a deputy, speaking on behalf of the Palestinian cause. She was also the first Jordanian woman to succeed outside the women's quota in the 15th Congress and the first woman to chair a foreign committee. All of this was thanks to the charitable organizations in her area, and later her leadership of the charitable association in Dhiban.

Increasing women's involvement in organized collective action aimed at change.

Opening communication channels between civil society organizations facilitates the exchange of experiences regarding women's social, political, and economic rights, and increased communication between female parliamentarians and civil society organizations brings women's voices to parliament.

It appears that civil society organizations led by female politicians play a role in spreading political culture among women during their upbringing. One of them mentioned being influenced by a female politician who supported them through awareness lectures on the importance of voluntary work for women. She brought educational books that impacted them, such as "Political Harem" and "The Forgotten Sultanas," which helped foster a love for leadership. Additionally, the discussion of experiences from East Asia, highlighting that traders have no issue with women being sultanas, encouraged her to pursue law and ultimately enter the political arena ⁶².

One of the party members ⁶³ points out that civil society organizations play an important role in helping women and increasing their participation in organized collective work. These organizations are already present in the field, and since most of them are led by women, many of the women who succeeded ⁶⁴ in elections had worked in civil society organizations, offering their assistance to many individuals, and it is from there that they started their political journey.

At the political level, there has been greater openness through the acceptance of the plurality of ideas ⁶⁵. Strengthening women's capabilities and involving them in the development process are among the major goals of the Jordanian Women's Union. This includes qualifying and training women for suitable job opportunities, representing Jordanian women in local, Arab, and

international conferences and forums, as well as conducting studies and research related to women at both national and pan-Arab levels ⁶⁶.

Fighting the imbalance in elected councils and gender-based discrimination in political representation.

Some civil society organizations monitor the electoral process and political activities of women, providing legal support in cases of rights violations. One such organization is the "We Rise for Sustainable Development - Riadology" center, a Jordanian civil society institution that is non-governmental and non-profit. It aims to establish values of active citizenship based on the principles of democracy and human rights, enhance social cohesion, promote accountability, and encourage participation in decision-making processes to achieve better developmental outcomes. Additionally, it seeks to strengthen communities by embedding concepts and practices of gender equality as an integral part of Jordanian societal culture.

It established an electronic platform called "Monitors" in collaboration with other civil society organizations. This platform aims to raise awareness among local community members about parliamentary oversight in Jordan and to promote principles of transparent governance, such as accountability, transparency, and participation in decision-making processes ⁶⁷.

3. Contributing to the Formulation of Policies and General Plans:

This is achieved by proposing alternatives, recommendations, and position papers to influence public policies and incorporate these alternatives. These areas include:

This involves advocating for equal political rights and access to political and public institutions for all genders, thereby achieving true gender equality.

One politician pointed out that her repeated engagement with civil society organizations helped her enact significant laws and decisions, particularly concerning marginalized groups such as women, children, older adults, and youth with disabilities ⁶⁸. Another politician highlighted ⁶⁹ the role of civil society organizations in capacity-building programs and various campaigns to establish the foundations of the national strategic plan, create the Jordanian Women's Document, review discriminatory texts, and advocate for their amendment. Additionally, they worked on drafting the first domestic violence protection bill, which was submitted to the government and resulted in the law's enactment in 2008.

Not to mention the role of civil society and the feminist movement in abolishing Article 308 of the Penal Code, which for years served as a lifeline for perpetrators of certain sexual crimes, enabling them to escape punishment if they married their victims. One of the largest campaigns was launched, led by civil society organizations and the feminist movement in Jordan, under prominent slogans such as "He raped me and married me for free ⁷⁰."

The focus is on approaching political decision-makers to amplify the voices of marginalized women on various issues.

Advocacy campaigns utilize media channels, organize seminars, and hold conferences to highlight various women's issues. The goal is to achieve political empowerment in the future ⁷¹, besides the repeated calls for amending the associations law to increase support for women's civil society organizations, engaging with authorities, and using the law to strengthen their arguments and protect the rights of women-led civil society organizations ⁷².

Developing strategies and creating national programs:

Some civil society organizations play a significant role in developing strategies and creating national programs. The National Committee for Women's Affairs monitors, tracks, and documents all issues related to Jordanian women. Formulating strategies and establishing national programs to improve Jordanian women's status and build an equitable society, with women's active contributions to sustainable development, is also the committee's role.

The National Strategy for Jordanian Women is one of the key initiatives of the National Committee and the Jordanian National Women's Committees. The public sector, non-governmental organizations, universities, and women's rights activists from across Jordan developed it through an extensive "participatory" process. The strategy focuses on legislative amendments, increasing women's participation in public life, especially in politics, and emphasizes the importance of access, control over economic resources, and equal opportunities in education, health, and social sectors ⁷³.

Conclusion

The political scene in Jordan still reflects a poor reality for women's political participation, in terms of their representation in political bodies such as the parliament, government, local councils, parties, and others, especially when compared to the representation of men. Consequently, the lack of genuine political empowerment for women persists, as they remain excluded from decision-making processes and national policies. This reality was exposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, where women were excluded from participating in the response measures to the crisis⁷⁴.

The lack of independence of most organizations and associations can explain this, despite their diversity and role in providing legal support, training, and guidance to women. This sidelining of women's political issues and ignoring of their demands results from the lack of independence among most organizations and associations. This highlights the necessity of establishing independent and effective Jordanian women's associations and non-governmental organizations that can exert pressure and influence on the authorities to implement policies that serve women's interests and promote their rights.

Civil society not only contributes to developing women's political skills but also raises public awareness of its importance through awareness campaigns and public activities supporting and assisting women politicians. Furthermore, enhancing women's political participation is not just a technical issue related to measures; it is a cultural matter deeply rooted in society. Therefore, addressing and confronting it requires concerted efforts, mobilizing energy, and organizing campaigns that use various tools, including engaging in cultural dialogue with different components, including political parties, labor movements, and unions, as well as challenging the stereotypes used by traditional forces to reproduce power and discourse in society.

Civil society organizations also call for intensifying their efforts by coordinating among various stakeholders to become a key and distinctive civil actor, a source of strength for women, by contributing to the change movement in establishing a democratic society based on respecting human rights. This would enable women politicians to play an active role in shaping the future and achieving positive change.

recommendations

- Directing the media to portray the image of women in politics not as an exception, but as a natural case that represents the capabilities of Jordanian women.
- The necessity for women's civil society organizations to focus on changing the discourse and societal attitudes that divide spaces between men and women, and to review the methods and means of societal discourse to be ready to accept and support women's participation in politics in its comprehensive sense. This includes organizing awareness campaigns and public dialogues about the importance of women's roles in political life and their positive value in decision-making.
- Offering training programs and workshops that help women politicians develop leadership and communication skills, improve their decision-making abilities, and raise awareness about their legal rights. Furthermore, awareness campaigns should be organized to cultivate a broader understanding of citizenship and political identity, rather than emphasizing sub-identities.

The government should prioritize combating violence against women politicians and create a network to coordinate and facilitate information exchange among relevant organizations. It is also necessary to align national laws with relevant agreements and treaties, both in substance and form, to ensure women's full citizenship rights. We can achieve this by submitting proposals for these laws to the relevant authorities and by drawing on Latin America's experience in creating laws criminalizing political violence and sexual harassment against women, or by incorporating provisions on violence against women into laws combating violence against women, penal codes, or cybercrime laws.

We will strengthen alliances between parties and forces that believe in the importance of women's political participation, beginning with women themselves, their institutions (the feminist movement), and extending to those who value women's participation, especially the human rights movement and broader civil and legal movements. Enhancing women's political participation is not a women's issue alone, but a matter that concerns society.

- Requiring political parties and civil society organizations to allocate seats for women in their top leadership positions, as this reflects the parties' commitment to women's empowerment.

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