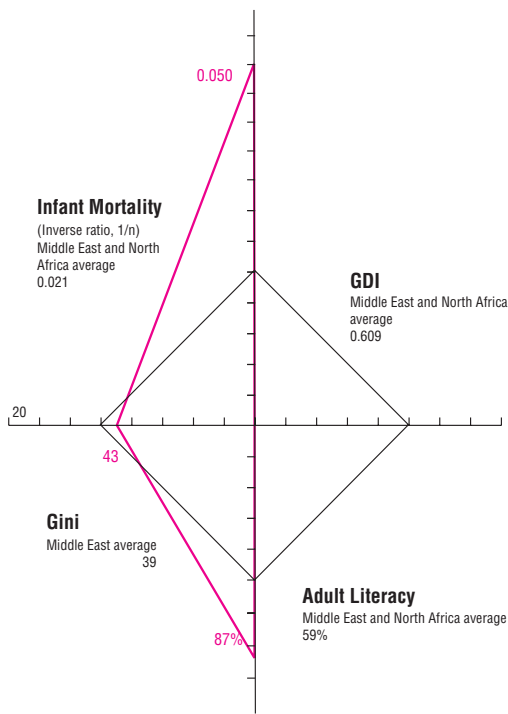


•GHOSOOD RAHAL



The Equity Diamond: National values in terracotta compared to regional ones in blue.
 Source: **Infant mortality:** UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children, 1998*, **Adult literacy:** UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children, 1998*, **GDI** (Gender Development index): UNDP, *Human Development Report 1998*, **GINI:** World Bank, *World Development indicators 1998*. (The regional average for this indicator was calculated by *Social Watch*).

The report, National Strategy on Social Development – Copenhagen 1995, dealt with the many axis related to poverty, unemployment, social integration, family violence, and women's rights. The National Strategy provides policies and a work programme designed to realise the objectives of raising economic and social standards of the poor classes in particular and of Jordanian society in general. This was to be accomplished through concerted efforts to create an enabling social and economic environment for growth and development.

BEING A WOMAN IS DANGEROUS

Progress has been made on some aspects of implementation of the National Strategy, such as adoption of development programmes, financing for small projects, support for vocational training and employment, replacing expatriate workers with Jordanian workers, lowering illiteracy rates, and forming committees to combat unemployment. But for the most part these plans and programmes are stagnant and the necessary resources for implementing them are lacking.

The public sector has a role to play in evaluating the achievements of the National Strategy and in assessing economic trends that result from government reform policies, in the context of the public sector's ambition to achieve development in accordance with the objectives and principles of the Copenhagen Summit. NGOs have been stimulated to take on implementation of some development programmes that the government was unable to implement. This is in the context of the NGO sector's transition from furnishing aid to undertaking a development role, in accordance with the Summit's recommendations.

The National Strategy surpassed all ambitions by setting very high ceilings for its targets and programmes. These posed big obstacles to its implementation. Jordan has serious economic problems resulting from the scarcity of wealth and natural resources and the impact of the Second Gulf War. The War raised the unemployment rate, lowered hard currency flows from the Jordanian expatriates, and increased debt and trade imbalances. These led to the adoption of economic reform policies including privatisation and reduction of state services in education and health care, which in turn resulted in increased poverty, unemployment, marginalisation and social exclusion for wide sectors of the population.

Concerning the creation of suitable political and economic environment, there are clear deficiencies in the protection of political rights, especially in laws and legislation concerning public liberties. There are restrictions on public meetings and the establishment of societies, and prior written permission is required for peaceful sit-ins and demonstrations. There is harassment and arbitrary intervention in parties, syndicates and NGOs.

COMMITMENT TWO

The National Strategy sought to combat poverty by restructuring the National Aid Fund to make it more effective in supporting training and employment and development of infrastructure in poor areas.

The problems with these goals are that, on the one hand, they are not productive and face obstacles for which the state has no solution, such as the marketing of products produced by small projects, and infrastructure development in the countryside. On the other, they depend on the private sector and market mechanisms to solve the problems of poverty and unemployment by giving financial support to the private sector.

The public sector should play a vital role in combating poverty, through availing training, creating small manufacturing and artisan centres, and teaching the new and traditional skills such as computer use and land reclamation.

FULLEMPLOYMENT

There are two basic problems contributing to unemployment in Jordan:

- Jordan ranks high among Arab countries on education, with 96% coverage in basic education for girls and boys. The paradox is that unemployment is very high – as much as 23% according to some studies. This is partially because of the curriculum, which needs to be reassessed.
- The expatriate workforce pushes wages down and increases unemployment among Jordanians, especially among tribal people who reject certain professions thus forcing private business to import expatriates.

Although the National Strategy adopted plans to replace expatriates with Jordanians, to expand the productive workforce and to limit unemployment, it has been unable to stimulate investment in labour-intensive projects. Also contributing to unemployment and poverty are the de-activation of the Vocational Organisation Law through which many skilled workers would have been employed, and failure to grant incentives to employers, such as tax exemption and support for training, to employ Jordanians instead of the expatriates.

SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND GENDER EQUITY

Social integration requires the following:

- Paying more attention to the countryside and the desert (*badia*), with support for agriculture and livestock.

- Integration in the work market of groups suffering from simple handicaps, in accordance with Jordanian labour law.
- Giving a greater role to women and abolishing all forms of discrimination against women, whether legislative or traditional.
- Improving the living conditions of Palestinian refugees, especially after the reduction of services furnished by UNRWA.¹

The National Strategy undertook programmes to improve the situation of Jordanian women, within the context of implementing the Beijing commitments. The programmes aimed to protect women from fragmented families and to provide shelter for women in particular circumstance by establishing family protection units and centres; they also aimed to integrate the handicapped into society. The establishment of protection centres for women who are victimised or threatened with death by relatives has been undertaken by NGOs. The same holds for establishment of child protection centres. Integration of the handicapped into society has not advanced.

The local electoral law forms an obstacle to real political representation of the Jordanian people. The one voice system and issuing of electoral cards to husbands or custodians (the women's vote depends on men), the absence of a quota for women in parliament, and tribal traditions contribute to the abortion of national and social integration.

The National Strategy on women adopted special axis on poverty, violence, and women in decision-making, and on examining laws and legislation to suggest amendments in favour of women. Some progress has been made toward achieving the Beijing commitments, and Jordan has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Steps taken include: efforts to lower illiteracy among females to 10% by the year 2000; attention to spreading health awareness and family planning, judicial efforts to combat violence against women through the establishment of family protection units through the Public Security Act in 1997, and efforts to protect children susceptible to harm first and then to protect victimised women.

Nevertheless, the percentage of female student dropouts is higher than for males. Families are inclined to sacrifice their daughters' education in favour of their sons' because of difficult economic conditions. Despite recognition of the violence against women, measures to confront it are trivial compared with the size of the problem. The government has not availed houses for accommodating victimised women. ***The proposed amendment to the Penal Law outlawing assassination for honour motives was rejected by parliament. Women threatened with death are placed under administrative detention for indeterminate periods to save their lives.***

The government has worked to integrate women's issues into development plans, and to increase women's participation in the labour market by providing vocational training opportunities and small financial loans. Nevertheless, statistics point to a low share

¹ United Nations Relief and Work Agency

of local women in the workforce. Women's share was 14% in 1998, while the share for local men was 69%. Unemployment was 34% and 11.3% respectively.

The government established a section at the ministry of labour aimed at limiting the exploitation of women, and organised several courses for women to improve their professional capabilities. But efforts to move women into leadership positions have clearly failed. Women hold positions as: 7 municipal mayors, 3 senators (Al-Aayan Council), 1 vice prime minister, 4 judges, 1 secretary of a ministry, and no MP. There are conservative cultural and social factions that consider women as being of second rank in society.

The government has passed legislation that discriminates against women, among which the labour law, civil service law, code for civil status and passports, social security law, pension law, and citizenship law. The Labour Law No. 8 of 1998 was amended so as to secure many guarantees for the women, but other laws have not been amended. Women are still prohibited from securing passports without consent of their husbands or custodians, which hinders their freedom of movement. There is discrimination in social security, retirement, and civil service laws. The Personal Status Law provides a motive for violence against women with its out-dated provisions.

COMMITMENT EIGHT

Structural adjustment, called «economic reform» in Jordan, has not targeted social development or poverty issues. It was designed to lower the trade deficit and debt, even if it meant adding new taxes, raising the old ones, and collecting dual taxes in many cases. Also, prices were raised regardless of wages. These measures led to an increase in poverty and unemployment and had a direct adverse affect on development programmes.

We recommend that the state adopt policies to decrease trade imbalances and debt parallel to the reconstruction programme imposed by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the lending states. This parallel policy should consider programs that depend on internal resources and production rather than services.

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