



Overview

Focus on the poor

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: AN UPDATE ON PROGRESS

Jordan has made human development a national priority. The country continues to invest significant resources to ensure that all its citizens benefit from access to health and education services and enjoy a reasonable standard of living. Despite limited natural resources and the demands of a growing and young population, the country has made slow but steady progress towards human development targets.

Between 1997 and 2002, its Human Development Index (HDI) rose from 0.715 to 0.747 (on a scale of 0-1). This increase is primarily the result of improvements in the life expectancy and education components of the HDI. Jordan has also witnessed an improved score for the Human Poverty Index (HPI), down from 9.8% to 7.4% (on a scale of 100% - 0%). A significant milestone is that 98.5% of the population now have access to health services.

Given the considerable external constraints that have affected development progress in recent years, Jordan can be proud of its achievement. It compares well with other wealthier countries in the region and currently ranks ninth out of 19 Arab countries for its HDI value.

Within the country, however, significant regional disparities in human development persist. The 2.02 million citizens who live in Amman governorate benefit from the highest levels of human development (HDI 0.767), largely attributable to the high average per capita income of JD1,134 (\$1,598) compared to the national average of JD918.4 (\$1,295). However, the development status of Ma'an, Mafraq and Tafela remains relatively weak with HDI values of 0.697, 0.706 and 0.718 respectively. Mafraq has the lowest GDP index value (0.565) with an average per capita income of just JD656.4 (\$925.5).

Regional human development disparity

remains a challenge to the promotion of social equity. There is evidence, however, that in some governorates the regional human development gap is closing. Between 1997 and 2002 Ma'an and Tafela recorded significant increases in their HDI value (6.4% and 8% compared to a national average increase of 4.5%). In both governorates educational enrolment rates are rising. Ajloun, ranked fifth for its HDI value, has an above-average illiteracy rate but now has the highest level of educational enrolment in the country. Madaba records relatively low values for the standard of living index but has the highest life expectancy: 74 years compared to a national average of 71.5.

However, not all recent human development trends are positive. Zarqa, a highly-urbanised governorate containing 15.7% of the total population demonstrated the lowest increase in its HDI value over the period (2.5%). Average per capita income fell from JD694.9 (\$979.81) to JD684.6 (\$965.3). Economic activity rates have fallen and unemployment rates have risen over this period. Despite the relatively high literacy rates in this governorate, educational enrolment rates are decreasing. Zarqa's HDI ranking has slipped from third to sixth among the governorates. In-depth investigation into the situation in Zarqa is required in order to identify the causes and to implement effective strategies to reverse these trends.

THE CONSTRAINTS ON DEVELOPMENT IN JORDAN

Jordan's development choices are constrained by its weak natural asset base, particularly its inadequate access to water coupled with limited available fertile land. Extended cycles of drought have led to over-exploitation of existing water stocks and decreased soil and livestock fertility in agricultural areas. As elsewhere, when resources are limited and access is constrained, it is often the poor who suffer

Jordan continues to make good overall progress towards human development goals

However, regional disparities in human development persist.

A major challenge is the creation of employment for young adults

Regional instability has impacted negatively on standards of living

Poverty alleviation programmes should be tailored to the specific needs of sub-groups among the poor

most. The poor among rural communities are gradually abandoning agriculture and livestock as a livelihood strategy.

Jordan's demographic profile also presents a constant challenge. Nearly 70% of the country's population is under the age of 29. Although the fertility rate has decreased significantly in recent years, it now appears to have stalled at 3.7. Efforts are required to further reduce this figure.

The youthful population necessitates the investment of significant resources in education and health services. At the same time, Jordan's young and educated population also represents one of the country's main assets, provided their energies and skills can be harnessed towards social and economic development. A major challenge will be the creation of employment opportunities to cope with approximately 40,000 additional new entrants to the labour market each year as well as providing jobs for the 194,000 existing unemployed.

POVERTY AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

Scarce resources constrain opportunities for growth. Economic performance has been weaker than expected, largely attributed to the impact of significant regional instability. Real GDP per capita (PPPUS\$) rose from \$3,450 in 1997 to \$4,129 in 2002, an increase of nearly 20% over the five year period. It must be noted, however, that in 1993 real GDP per capita was \$4,380: the standard of living is not improving significantly over time.

Moreover, national averages mask disparities between different groups of the population. Poverty remains a major obstacle to human development progress and therefore it is likely that a significant percentage of the population is unable to enjoy standards of living that will allow them to achieve their full potential.

A major challenge to policy-makers over the last few years has been the lack of reliable up-to-date data on poverty. As the Government of Jordan's 2002 Poverty Alleviation Strategy notes: "No-one knows exactly how many Jordanians are poor today, where they live, or what their demographic characteristics are." The Strategy currently draws on the World Bank analysis of 1997 Household Expenditure and Income Survey (HEIS) which indicates that 11.7% of the population of Jordan lives below the poverty line. In 2004, a new poverty line

will be calculated, based on the 2002/03 HEIS. Given the complex and dynamic forces that have affected Jordan's development choices over recent years, significant changes in the nature and scale of poverty can be expected since the 1997 survey.

Poverty alleviation strategies are most effective when they target "pockets of poverty" where the poor are disproportionately represented. Within such "pockets of poverty" there is a perception that poverty is deepening and the poor feel that they are not fully included in the benefits of economic growth and social change. The 2002/03 HEIS will provide data disaggregated to the district level, which will help identify these locations in order that targeted interventions can be developed for different location across the country.

Differentiation between sub-groups of the poor helps decision-makers tailor interventions to meet specific needs. The report identifies sub-groups among the poor: the "poorest of the poor" who are dependent on cash assistance, "the coping poor" whose income is insufficient to maintain the households above the poverty line and the "near poor" who are at risk of slipping below the poverty line if economic and social conditions deteriorate.

The 2002/3 survey will help policy-makers tailor programmes to meet the needs of such sub-groups among the poor and thereby promote greater social unity. It is essential, therefore that existing programmes be evaluated so that lessons can be learned, conclusions drawn and improved programmes implemented.

The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA), which this report promotes, provides useful insights that can improve the effectiveness of poverty alleviation strategies in Jordan. The approach places the poor at the centre of analysis and seeks to understand poverty from their perspective. For this report, the views of over 800 community members in seven communities were elicited through a participatory process of consultation. The seven location were selected purposively in order to reflect the complexity, dynamism and diversity of poverty throughout the country.

The consultation provided significant insights into:

- The impact of recent shocks and the coping strategies adopted by the poor
- The changing livelihood strategies of the poor as they adapt to change
- The assets that the poor value and utilise to

create sustainable livelihood strategies

- The policies, institutions and processes that either support or constrain them
- The extent to which the poor claim their entitlements and exercise their rights.

COPING WITH VULNERABILITY AND SHOCK

The lives of the poor and their struggle to survive and thrive has to be placed in the context of the broader political and economic environment in which they live. That environment has changed significantly over recent decades as Jordan undergoes a process of intense and accelerating social and economic transformation, much of which results from a series of shocks to which the country has been forced to adapt.

Jordan's development processes are constrained by external factors over which it has limited control. Its strategic location has made it vulnerable to the impact of regional conflicts that have shaped its development path.

During the consultation, all communities discussed the shock of the 1991 Gulf War and the negative impact on the poor. Any short-term benefits, for example from employment in the construction boom in urban areas were, reportedly, offset by increased competition for scarce resources and employment opportunities, coupled with significant increases in the cost of accommodation. For the rural poor, the loss of markets for agricultural products had a negative impact.

The short-term coping strategies adopted by the poor further eroded their asset base and has left them worse off in the longer-term. The impact of shock is cumulative and the poor perceive limited positive change in their lives over recent years. This is in marked contrast with the overall relatively positive figures of national level data.

More recently, the ongoing Palestinian *Intifada*, the repercussions of 9/11 and the US-led occupation of Iraq have had a severe impact. The poor have proven to be particularly vulnerable to such economic and political volatility. For example, young people who have entered new employment opportunities in tourism and small enterprise have been affected by staff lay-offs and falling trade as tourist numbers decrease. They worry about their long-term employment security. In many cases, these young people had overcome social and cultural obstacles in order to re-orientate

themselves to the emerging economy. If such risk-taking behaviour is not rewarded, it may lead to increased frustration and dependence.

The policies introduced in order to achieve macro-economic stability under the structural adjustment programme (SAP) have had a significant impact on the poor. Among "the coping poor", the rationalisation of employment in the public sector is closing off a significant livelihood strategy, at a time when few alternative opportunities exist for the poor. The removal of fodder subsidies had a major impact on rural livelihoods. The removal of subsidies on fuel has affected both rural and urban communities.

The poor also make explicit reference to the impact of utilities restructuring and privatisation on the cost of living. Some households among "the poorest of the poor" complain that they are unable to pay utility bills and spend some time without electricity. The policies may be essential to deliver long-term macro-economic benefits, but the poor are ill-equipped to cope with the costs. Mechanisms are required to ensure that negative impacts are mitigated and adequate safety nets are in place to protect the fragile livelihoods of the poor.

CHANGING LIVELIHOODS OF THE POOR

The most significant aspect of change in Jordan in recent decades has been the transformation of rural livelihoods. The combination of drought, over-grazing and the removal of subsidies on fodder means that livestock is no longer a viable strategy for many poor people in rural communities. Faced with high input costs and low levels of return, many poor people have responded by selling their livestock. National figures indicate that between 1995 and 2002 the combined stock of goats and sheep decreased from 3.54 million to 2.47 million animals.

Livestock represent a significant form of savings, allowing the poor to raise cash to deal with sudden emergencies. The loss of this safety net reduces the resilience of the poor to face shocks in the future. Decreases in livestock also impact on nutrition levels and protein intake has fallen significantly among the poor. Where rural communities have access to significant development-oriented support, it appears that they are coping with the transition towards new livelihood strategies. In communities that have not benefited from targeted support the

Jordan's development choices are constrained by external factors over which it has little control

For the rural poor, livestock and agriculture are no longer viable livelihood strategies

Stronger mechanisms are required to protect the poor from the negative impact of policies introduced under the structural adjustment programme

The rural poor often lack appropriate skills to adapt to urban livelihoods

The provision of development-oriented support can help rural communities adapt

Men are migrating in search of employment and more women are entering the labour market

poor, especially the older generations, are less confident about their future.

As rural livelihood patterns change, Jordan is also facing the challenge of increasing urbanisation. The population classified as rural has fallen to 22% from a high of 62% in 1952. Sixty-three per cent of the total population are now concentrated in Amman, Zarqa and Irbid. The rural poor who migrate to these urban locations often find that their traditional knowledge and skills are not suitable for urban-based employment opportunities. Among the younger generation there is a demand for vocational training programmes to re-orientate towards emerging economic opportunities. In urban communities the accelerated pace of social change is leading to pressure on limited resources and social tension.

In urban and rural communities, many men are moving away from their communities in search of new employment opportunities. More women are entering the paid labour force especially in seasonal agricultural work and in the manufacturing sector. This type of employment tends to be low paid and is often carried out under difficult conditions, but the consultation process revealed that women value such opportunities.

Women who enter sectors that are not considered “appropriate” to their gender role report that they may face considerable obstacles from within the family and the broader community. Policies designed to encourage women’s entrance into the work force are essential if women are to successfully contribute to their family’s resources.

Some communities noted that there has been a rise in the level of child labour, especially in agriculture. Among rural communities it is normal for children to work alongside their family after school and in the holiday, but parents report that the level of contribution required from children has risen and that in some cases they are being removed from school in order to help support the family. In one community they reported that children work for up to five hours in return for JD1–1.5. Parents express regret at the situation but see no viable alternative. The National Council for Family Affairs co-ordinates the efforts of government and leading children’s rights organisations to tackle this issue but the investment of additional effort and resources is required.

BUILDING ON THE ASSETS OF THE POOR

As livelihoods change, it is essential that the poor have opportunities to engage actively in economic and social development processes. The consultation process identified the wide range of assets (human, physical, social, natural and financial) that the poor combine creatively and flexibly in order to create sustainable and robust livelihood strategies.

The poor place a high value on health and value the services that the government provides. Those who benefit from health insurance regard it as a significant asset. However, poverty is a barrier to the full enjoyment of health, especially where poor diet leads to ill-health. Disability is perceived as a factor that contributes to increased poverty at the household level. Access to health care is constrained by direct costs of medicine and the hidden costs of transportation.

The poor report that they value education as an investment for the future that will help them escape from poverty. In many cases, they invest their own scarce resources to ensure that their children gain the skills needed for the employment market. The poor note that current education services do not fully cover their needs, and that access is constrained by hidden costs such as transportation, uniforms, fees and the cost of school books.

The rural poor value access to land as a major determinant of successful livelihoods and note that increased levels of access would allow them to diversify their rural livelihood strategies and become more self-reliant. The urban poor value housing as a key asset although they report that rented accommodation is often overcrowded, in poor repair and over-priced. The poor recognise the value of urban upgrading schemes, especially when local communities are fully involved with all stages of the process.

For “the poorest of the poor” access to cash assistance acts as a safety net for survival. The poor recognise that the cash assistance system often delays them from engaging in alternative livelihood strategies. In some cases, this has contributed to a culture of dependency that is a burden for the state. “The coping poor” value access to credit in order to deal with short-term consumption needs or to invest in income generating initiatives. They note obstacles to access to credit and problems managing debt.

In all communities studied the poor have access to relatively good service infrastructure

but are constrained by the high cost of utilities. People in rural areas lack access to affordable accessible transport and are therefore isolated from markets, services and employment.

Although the poor express a sense of frustration and powerlessness, they have clear ideas regarding the measures that need to be taken in order for them to escape poverty. They would like the opportunity to raise their views and to work more closely with government and civil society organisations in order to find solutions to their problems. In many cases, significant improvements can be made without the allocation of additional resources, through a process of more effective targeting and tailoring of programmes to meet specific needs at local levels.

POLICIES, INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES

The government makes a serious commitment to addressing the needs of the poor through a wide range of initiatives recommended under the Jordan Poverty Alleviation Strategy (JPAS). Many of the programmes are already addressing the concerns raised by the poor in the consultation process.

Most notable is the reform of the National Aid Fund (NAF) cash assistance programme which will help deliver benefits to the neediest efficiently and effectively and with reduced transaction costs for the poor. The move towards establishing a Family Income Support model will provide poor households with the incentive to “work themselves out of poverty” even though few among “the poorest of the poor” will be able to respond. As the scheme is extended to the “working poor” it may also compensate for low wages in sectors where the poor find employment.

The role of vocational training is central to the success of the “welfare to work” approach and there is strong demand for training, especially among the young. However, significant investment is required in order to ensure that training programmes build the skills required by the emerging employment market.

The findings of the consultation process provide useful suggestions for possible amendments to the current Poverty Alleviation Strategy. In the longer term, the poor will benefit if the national Socio-Economic Transformation Programme (SETP) achieves its objectives and delivers the proposed outcomes.

Where policies and programmes aim to deliver macro-economic benefits there is still scope to focus on the needs of the poor in order to maximise the benefit they gain and to minimise the negative impacts that structural adjustment programmes can bring for vulnerable members of the community.

The government’s own review of progress notes that the pace of reform under the 2002–04 SETP was slower than anticipated and that dependence on donor assistance undermined the capacity of the country to implement the development programme it wishes to pursue. The 2004-06 Economic and Social Development Plan aims to bring about a self-sustaining budget to reduce this dependence on external funds in the future.

The poor will also benefit if the planned public sector reforms are successfully implemented. The consultation process reveals the extent to which the poor depend on the government to provide access to essential services such as primary health care, education and NAF cash assistance. If the proposed reform can deliver services that are efficient, effective and client focused, this will address many of the existing shortcomings. The poor will benefit from the drive towards greater accountability and transparency but they also need to become more active in claiming their rights responsibly.

GENERATING INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT

The promotion of economic opportunity for all is a major pillar of the government’s strategy to combat poverty. The consultation reveals that there are limited employment opportunities for many poor households and that it is difficult to acquire sufficient and stable revenues from existing employment opportunities. Dependence on state employment is no longer a viable option and employment opportunities in the private sector are limited. Increasingly, the government is promoting Micro-and Small Enterprise (MSEs) to raise household incomes, reduce dependency and create employment opportunities.

Successful development of the MSE sector is dependent on access to credit, provided primarily through Micro-Finance Institutions (MFIs). Significant levels of investment have been made in this sector and MFIs report

The poor have clear ideas concerning the measures that should be taken to alleviate poverty

Significant investment is required to ensure that vocational training leads to employment

The poor would benefit from an efficient, client-focused public sector

Evidence suggests that few among the poor can manage micro-enterprise successfully

Co-ops established with public funds will have to deliver social and economic benefits to the poor

Women value the social and economic benefits of employment in the QIZs

excellent repayment rates that will ensure long-term sustainability for their credit operations. The enterprises created can contribute significantly to improving the well-being of the entrepreneur's household and can stimulate growth in the broader community. For many people, especially poor women, this represents the first step on the ladder out of poverty. The sector is expected to expand with increased funding from international donors, although some providers indicate that the potential market for credit may already be nearly saturated.

The consultation process also reveals, however, that where poor people take on loans to establish small enterprises these "projects" often fail. Poor people often live in communities that are geographically isolated and therefore lack access to markets. They have limited resources and lack exposure to successful entrepreneurial role models to stimulate interest. Typical enterprises established by the poor are often in vulnerable "easy entry / easy exit" businesses such as hairdressing, dress-making and home-based food-processing. Marginal returns mean that many of these enterprises fail to maintain an average poor family above the poverty line.

The evidence suggests that many of the poor are unable to manage these enterprises successfully. Where businesses fail this can lead to increased indebtedness and a descent into an increasing spiral of poverty.

It is essential, therefore, that a full-scale impact assessment of the MSE/MFI sector be carried out in order to understand the conditions under which the combination of credit and enterprise delivers optimal outcomes.

When the poor pool resources, share risks and act collectively much can be achieved. The government invests considerable funds in programmes that bring the poor together to find shared solutions to community problems. Projects implemented under the Pilot Projects and Rural Cluster Community Development Programme involve the formation of local co-ops to operate relatively large-scale businesses, involving assets of up to JD900,000.

These enterprise co-ops are expected to deliver economic and social benefits to the members and to the broader community, to contribute to poverty alleviation and to stem the process of rural-urban migration. Local commitment and ownership will be essential to improve the likelihood of sustainability after project support is phased out. As co-ops play a more important role in local level

development, the sector will require support and the recognised shortcomings in the policy, institution and regulatory framework will have to be addressed. Close monitoring of the co-ops is essential so that lessons are learned.

The re-orientation of the economy towards further integration with globalised markets is opening up employment opportunities for poor people in large manufacturing enterprises in the Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZs) throughout the country. By mid-2003 more than 18,000 Jordanians were benefiting from these new jobs. The majority of employees are young, single women from rural communities.

The consultation process reveals that women value such opportunities, which provide income, increase mobility, and give them the opportunity to experience new learning experiences and mix with other women. Although the women complained of the long working hours and problems of transportation they note that employment in a QIZ factory is better than labour-intensive seasonal work in the agricultural sector, which is often the only alternative open to them. More attention needs to be paid to improving labour conditions and addressing gender obstacles in the workplace.

It has to be recognised, however, that the long-term future of the QIZs is still uncertain because the Multi-Fibre Agreement (to which it is linked) ends in 2006. If the "favoured quota status" that Jordan enjoys in relation to the US market is lost, it remains to be seen whether QIZs will be sustainable in the face of competition from the Far East. There is a risk that these employment opportunities could disappear.

Overall, enterprise and employment opportunities are opening up for the poor and are leading to increases in household incomes. These initiatives are welcomed but need constant monitoring to ensure that they deliver the anticipated benefits and that the poor are able to participate fully.

A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

The consultation reveals that in some communities poor people do not always feel that they enjoy their full rights and entitlements and that this contributes to their poverty. If this is true, then their livelihoods can be strengthened through the application of a rights-based approach to development.

The context is supportive of such an

approach. Human rights are enshrined in the constitution and laws of the country. All the major international conventions have been ratified and the process of translating these principles into the national legal and policy framework has been initiated.

The human rights agenda receives attention and support from the highest levels of national leadership. The National Centre for Human Rights provides an independent body that can raise awareness among all parties of the gains to be made if rights are respected. The policy-making bodies and the institutional environment are therefore enabling for a rights-based approach.

A rights-based approach to development asserts a pro-active form of citizenship, in which relations with the state are based on mutuality, inclusion, accountability and rights. The continued dependence on the use of connections (*wasta*) to gain access to goods and services remains a critical obstacle to the creation of a transparent environment in Jordan. Both the poor and service providers would have much to gain if the current reform programme can contribute to the elimination of the use of *wasta*.

As elsewhere, this type of approach incorporates not only political and civil rights but also upholds the economic, social and cultural rights of all people. This includes the right of the poor to have a voice and to participate in the processes and decisions which affect their lives. When citizens accept their responsibilities and respect the rights of others, this can lead to enduring and positive outcomes.

To achieve this, institutions must act transparently, accountably and efficiently. The current public sector reform programmes and initiatives launched under the “Jordan First” campaign, which seeks to unite all Jordanians, are essential components of a rights-based approach.

The government is urging the poor to become self-reliant and to solve more of the problems of poverty through more efficient use of local resources and opportunities. In this way, it is hoped the current level of “dependence” on the state will be reduced. To achieve this, the poor will have to work together to share resources.

Collective action allows the poor to reduce transaction costs and is, perhaps, the most effective way for poor people to realise their rights on a broad scale. Mobilisation around

common concerns can forge alliances with supportive opinion leaders or national agencies to create a shared platform from which the poor can address decision-makers.

Jordan’s democratisation process is supportive of rights, but is currently being led mainly from the top. While this strong leadership is essential, the process must also be supported and owned at the level of community and the poor must be part of the process. Pilot projects are providing illustrations of the effectiveness of collective action strategies that demonstrate how government, civil society and the poor can make mutual gains when such an approach is adopted.

CLAIMING GENDER RIGHTS

The first Arab Human Development Report identified the “lack of gender equity” as one of the three major deficits constraining human development in the region. In some respects, women in Jordan appear to have made significant gains. Women’s equal rights are enshrined in the constitution and women’s equal access to essential services has been heavily promoted. As a result, Jordan’s educational enrolment rates for females are now higher than those for males and health indicators are positive.

However, these achievements fail to translate into economic empowerment for women. The GDP Index of the GDI was 0.703 for males and only 0.421 for females. This disparity is largely attributable to women’s low participation in the formal sector labour force. National surveys and local studies investigating household decision-making processes reveal that lack of economic empowerment is mirrored by lack of empowerment within the household. The “gender gap” for human development in Jordan is still unacceptably wide.

In all communities consulted, women note that deeply entrenched gender discrimination prevents them from exercising all their rights and assuming their full role as equal partners in the development process. Poverty creates an additional barrier.

Girls report that they are discriminated against within the home, where patterns of socialisation restrict them to relatively limited roles. Many girls want to have more voice in the decisions that will affect their entire lives. Some girls, for example, are afraid their parents might remove them from education for economic or social reasons.

The enjoyment of rights is an essential component of human development

The elimination of the use of wasta is a priority

The poor will have to work together to share resources.

Gender-based discrimination hinders women from assuming their full role as active partners in the development process

They perceive the roles of wife and mother as status-giving but they do not want to be removed from school in order to fulfil these roles. They also want more involvement in the choice of a husband. Among the young women who have taken up employment, there is evidence that their increased economic independence may be providing opportunities for them to have more influence in household decisions.

In all communities, women are perceived as the primary care providers within their household and are responsible for the well-being of the whole family, especially children, the elderly and the sick. Most women who enter paid employment report that they are still expected to fulfil their household duties. Often, the broader community and the immediate family are not supportive of their working outside the home, but their poverty status leaves them no alternative.

Generally, women note that they have little voice within the home. Males make the strategic decisions concerning employment, family size, children's marriage, political participation and voting. Some women assert that poor decision-making by men contributes to increased poverty in the household. Many women consulted resent the power that their in-laws wield over them and see it as an obstacle to their well-being. Divorced or widowed women report particular difficulties in claiming their rights. Many women report that they feel pressure from within the family to forego their inheritance rights in favour of their brothers. Young women note that it tends to be mostly their brothers who restrict their freedom of movement.

In each of the seven locations studied for this report, women note that domestic violence and child abuse occurs within their communities. In recent years there has been more candid and open discussion about these issues. Speaking out can often be the first step towards dealing with abuse. Although the problem cuts across economic and social barriers, poverty can be an additional barrier that prevents women escaping abusive situations.

Under-reporting means that the scale and scope of the abuse and the factors that exacerbate it are unclear. The fight against these practices requires co-ordinated efforts and a multi-agency approach. The persistence of "honour crimes" remains a deeply troubling problem in Jordan. Concerted efforts will be required from all parties to ensure that this issue is placed high on

the agenda in order to eradicate it.

The achievement of gender equality is a slow process and one that will involve significant attitudinal change from all segments of society. There is evidence that women are more aware of their rights than in the past. In some communities many of them report that men are more respectful of rights and are adapting to changed household roles and responsibilities as women enter the labour force.

There is evidence that where women work collectively they can mobilise support across a range of stakeholders and advocate effectively for change. Collective action is crucial for women's rights and the women's movement in Jordan has been successful when it has united on priority issues. The Jordanian National Commission for Women acts as an umbrella for women's rights activists, providing a constant lobby at the policy-making level to accelerate the process by which rights enshrined on paper translate into rights in practice.

PARTICIPATION AND GOVERNANCE

Democratic governance has become a central theme in Jordan's national development strategy. The consultation process reveals that the poor want to have a stake in the processes that are intended to alleviate their poverty. Increased citizen participation in the identification and implementation of local development strategies is essential if the current government reform programmes are to succeed.

Jordan is witnessing a trend towards increasing decentralisation of responsibility to "sub-national" levels through the Governorates Development Plan and the Municipalities Reform Programme. Since Governors were mandated to play a greater role in promoting poverty alleviation at the local level, they report greater co-ordination between stakeholders and an opening up of channels of communication. As a result, the pace of project implementation has increased significantly. Parallel initiatives at the municipal level are also resulting in the identification of local enterprise opportunities. This report suggests that strong municipal planning can support governorate development processes.

For decentralisation to bring about significant improvements in well-being of the poor, it needs to be accompanied by increased local democracy and more effective governance structures through which the poor can hold

Domestic violence against women is a significant problem, which cuts across economic and social differences

Poor people may have more opportunity to participate in decision-making at the local level

service providers and elected representatives accountable.

Greater co-ordination can be achieved when service providers, local authorities, the private sector and the poor work together to identify local solutions to local problems. Civil society can act as a catalyst for change by bringing the parties together and advocating for the poor. Local development does not necessarily require additional funds but can often result in savings from increased efficiency and the elimination of waste and duplication. The process of decentralisation opens up channels of communication and opportunities for genuine partnerships where all parties benefit. Development-oriented institutions will have to respond proactively and to advocate for and

with the poor to bring about lasting change that will improve their well-being.

It is essential that the appropriate democratic mechanisms are in place that enable the poor to become active participants in Jordan's development processes. Empowerment, social inclusion and gender equity are primary objectives integral to all socio-development initiatives.

There are no fixed recipes for success, but strong political will and vision are essential prerequisites. There are clear indications that these conditions are present in Jordan today. If the drive is strengthened by increased local voice then more profound, positive changes can be expected.

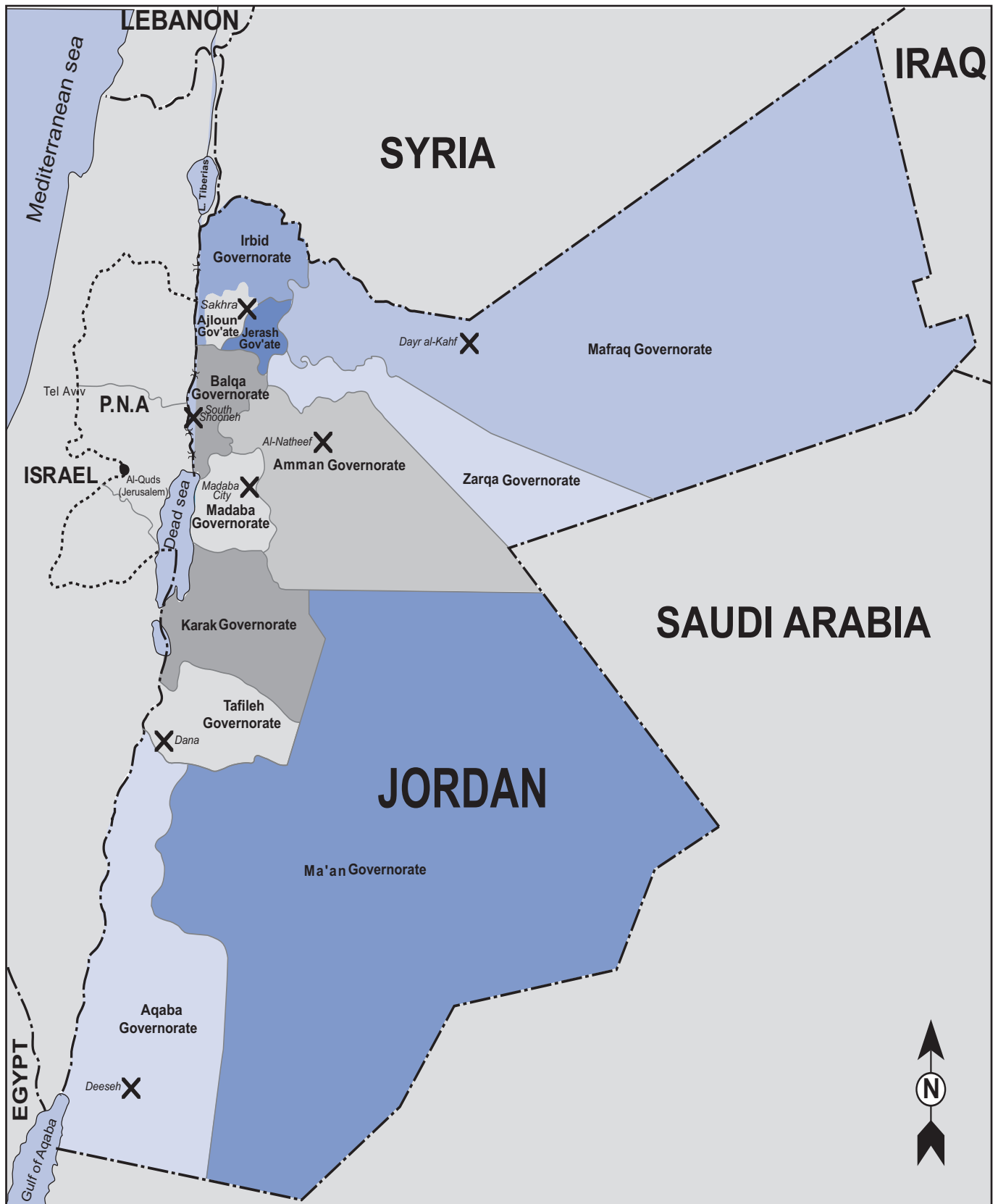
Decentralisation should be accompanied by increased local democracy

Civil society should engage pro-actively with local governance structures and advocate for the interests of the poor

Figure A

Map of Jordan

Showing governorates and the seven locations where the “consultation with the poor” was carried out.



Source: Royal Geographic Centre.