



WHY WE CARE

An overview of the distribution of unpaid care work in Ma'an, southern Jordan

The concept of unpaid care work is not widely known in Ma'an or other parts of Jordan. As a result, the benefits of unpaid care to individuals' lives, as well as its negative impact on women who bear a disproportionate share of it at the household level, are overlooked by both local communities and policy makers. As such, women remain largely excluded from playing an active role in the economy, and receive limited or no recognition for the significant role that they play within the household.

In 2020, Oxfam commissioned a study on unpaid care work in Jordan's southern region of Ma'an. The purpose of the study was to better understand what care work women and men do, how it is distributed, and how people think about it. The study found that women perform the vast majority of care work activities, and that gender norms compound an unequal redistribution of unpaid care. This paper presents the study results and makes recommendations on how the Government of Jordan, donors and NGOs can encourage the redistribution of unpaid care work and improve women's access to livelihood opportunities.

© Oxfam International June 2021

This paper was written by Jean-Patrick Perrin. Oxfam acknowledges the assistance of Shaddin Almasri, Nivedita Monga and Ahmed Elassal in its production. It is part of a series of papers written to inform public debate on development and humanitarian policy issues. The research which this briefing note is based on is funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS). For further information on the issues raised in this paper please email advocacy@oxfaminternational.org

This publication is copyright but the text may be used free of charge for the purposes of advocacy, campaigning, education, and research, provided that the source is acknowledged in full. The copyright holder requests that all such use be registered with them for impact assessment purposes. For copying in any other circumstances, or for re-use in other publications, or for translation or adaptation, permission must be secured and a fee may be charged. Email policyandpractice@oxfam.org.uk.

The information in this publication is correct at the time of going to press.

Published by Oxfam GB for Oxfam International under ISBN 978-1-78748-774-1 in June 2021.

DOI: 10.21201/2021.7741

Oxfam GB, Oxfam House, John Smith Drive, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 2JY, UK.

Cover photo: Women from Ma'an taking part in training on food production for small businesses. Photo: Nesma Alnsour/Oxfam.

1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of unpaid care work is not yet widely known globally, and is a relatively recent notion in countries with deep socio-economic gender inequalities, such as Jordan. The broad concept of care can be defined as a set of activities provided by household members, communities, or governments that supports people's well-being.¹ These are undertaken through both paid and unpaid care work. Unpaid care encompasses all care activities provided in and for the household by its members or their relatives, including care for people (such as children, sick or elderly people), chores (such as cleaning, cooking, purchasing basic items), household maintenance, or other types of work undertaken out of a sense of duty and responsibility towards the community.²

These reoccurring activities are time and energy consuming, yet the burden they represent varies depending on gender, geographical location and associated social norms, socio-economic status, marital status, age, and the presence and number of children, elderly people, or people with chronic health issues or disabilities.³ Although it represents a major factor that both supports and impedes local communities and economies, unpaid care work is largely overlooked in measuring a nation's economic performance and setting policy agendas.⁴

Introducing the notion of unpaid care work to communities across the Middle East is often met with resistance by both women and men, due to the entrenchment of patriarchal social norms. Another issue is a lack of awareness within households of the time spent by its members on unpaid care work, with a disproportionate share of it falling on women, as well as the value and benefit that this work has in supporting their everyday lives.

Documenting the value of these activities must be complemented by an understanding of the inequitable gendered distribution of care work within households. Traditional households distribute work and contributions to household maintenance along the lines of paid and unpaid work, even though these are unevenly distributed and generally translate into a considerably longer working day for women. Gender roles associated with care remain important impediments for women to joining the paid labour force, while also further restricting the capacity to equitably share the care burden among household members. In most Jordanian families, household members – mainly women – are responsible for unpaid care work. Paid care work by domestic – and almost always migrant – workers in well-off households is another practice with its own socio-economic issues and challenges that does not fall within the scope of this report, but should be studied together with unpaid care in Jordan, and across the Middle East more broadly.⁵

In 2020, Oxfam commissioned a rapid care analysis through its WEE.CAN! initiative (Box 1) in Jordan's southern region of Ma'an, one of the most socially conservative areas in the country. A rapid care analysis is a participatory exercise that engages community members and is designed to assess context-specific patterns of unpaid household and care work.⁶ It provides a snapshot of the unpaid care work performed in households in Ma'an, its distribution between household members, and the gaps in knowledge and awareness around it. The results highlight a misunderstanding by both men and women of what care responsibilities are, the

time that they dedicate to these and therefore how much of women's time is consumed by care responsibilities. For this analysis, 36 members of the local community, 24 women and 12 men, were engaged in the exercise. Of these, five women and four men were Syrians, while the rest were Jordanians.

Although it has a relatively small population, the Ma'an governorate is vast in size, making up just over one-third of the land mass of Jordan. Nearly half of its population resides in rural areas⁷ and just under 5% are Syrian refugees.⁸ Economic indicators show that Ma'an fares worse than the rest of Jordan. In 2010, the Ma'an governorate poverty rate was the highest in the country at 26.6%, compared with a national average of 14.4%.⁹ Social units in Ma'an are heavily tied to lineage and familial affiliations through *diwans* (in this instance, referring to extended family units), reflecting traditional social divisions and the role that these ties play in maintaining social relationships. In a 2001 national survey that asked about social values, Ma'an respondents were distinct from the rest of the sample in the value that they placed on religion and sense of duty and responsibility.¹⁰ Part of this relates to how Ma'an is known for its social conservative society; while the degree to which it is distinctly conservative is contested,¹¹ evidence from Oxfam programmes and analyses such as these partially corroborate this claim. Gender divisions are also pronounced: as of 2020, the illiteracy rate among women in Ma'an is nearly 5% higher than the national average – and twice the rate of Jordan's capital city, Amman. Unemployment for women in Ma'an is also nearly 3% higher than the Kingdom's average.¹² While this gap is less pronounced than in previous years,¹³ this is likely due to a nationwide increase in unemployment following the COVID-19 pandemic and does not reflect a significant increase in women's participation, which has stagnated over the past decade.

Box 1: Oxfam's WEE.CAN! initiative

The WEE.CAN! project is the local component of a regional initiative called Assistance to and Empowerment of Syrian Refugee Women and Girls and Vulnerable Women and Girls in Host Communities in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon. It is funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) and implemented by Al-Anwar Charity and Development Society and Oxfam in Jordan.

WEE.CAN! aims to improve access to sustainable livelihood opportunities for 150 economically vulnerable women from refugee and host communities in four areas in Ma'an governorate: Al Qasabah, Athroh, Mraighah, and Al Jafr. It contributes to creating an enabling environment for women through addressing and transforming social norms and gender roles which often result in women being excluded from work and income-generating activities.

While there are encouraging signs in Jordan of behavioural change towards sharing care work between men and women, there is a pressing need to show the value of unpaid care work and improve social recognition of its burden on women and girls. Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an increase in unpaid care work, particularly for women.¹⁴ The curfew measures and lockdowns in Jordan dramatically increased the amount of unpaid care work for women, in part as children remained at home while educational institutions remained shut and homeschooling became more prevalent, and breadwinners were either not able to leave the house to work, or did not as a result of losing their jobs.

Additionally, there is a need for the Government of Jordan and local authorities, with the support of civil society and especially women's rights organizations and women associations, to promote activities that challenge assumptions on intra-household gender roles and the gender division of labour, and seek small-scale behavioural change at the community or municipal level through local awareness campaigns led by women from these communities. This should be supported by the inclusion of the reality of unpaid care work and its impact on women in national policies pertaining to women's empowerment and access to livelihoods. It should also be complemented by challenging dominant economic dynamics, including existing barriers to women's access to work and gender-driven perceptions on sectors and professions that are socially acceptable for women to work in.

2 ROLES IN UNPAID CARE WORK

TWO DIFFERENT MISCONCEPTIONS OF THE VALUE OF CARE WORK

The results of the rapid care analysis show that Ma'ani society in general, and especially men, did not fully realize the benefits that unpaid care work done by other household members have in their daily lives. Both women and men were not able to see the relevance of factoring care work into the socio-economic dynamics of their households or communities. Most men were also unaware of the burden it can represent on individuals performing those tasks. This is of particular relevance to women as they bear the biggest share of care work. All respondents have the same strong sense of duty towards their families and take pride in doing care work activities for them. However, social norms obscure the human and economic value of care work by perpetuating a hierarchy of care obligations within the household based on patriarchy, which puts disproportionate social pressure and responsibilities on women.

There was a strong feeling among men that women underestimate the care tasks men perform for the household, such as buying essential items, taking children to and from school, or procuring cooking gas or fuel for heating. In addition, men, as the main traditional breadwinners and heads of households, felt that paid labour contributes more for the family as it brings financial stability and provides for its needs, and therefore has a higher value than unpaid care work. Men also felt that it induces more stress on them than unpaid care work does on women. In terms of social expectations, men did not generally express any sense of guilt for not contributing enough to, or not sufficiently performing, unpaid care work activities. This can be explained by the fact that the Ma'ani society mostly sees what is considered unpaid care work done by men as an add-on to their main role of breadwinner. Most men considered unpaid care work to be tied to women's identity and their expected role in the community, while also recognizing that women perform most care work activities for the household.

Women respondents expressed a strong sense of pride in performing care work for their households. This takes on even greater importance for unemployed

women (48% of respondents), as they perceive care work as their main contribution to their families and communities. However, this is counterbalanced by the fact that both working and unemployed women shared a sense of guilt and pressure for not being able to do as much care work as is expected from them by the community. This perception can be explained by social norms and the subsequent social construction of roles based on gender, that places high expectations on women when defining chores and caring for family members as an obligation that cannot be dissociated from their existence. In other words, socially constructed gendered identity defines the expected and accepted roles of women in this society.

GENERAL DISTRIBUTION OF UNPAID CARE

While the benefits of care work are not well understood, both men and women agreed that women, and especially middle-aged women, carry out most care work tasks. However, women's and men's perceptions differed on who else performs the most care work in the household. Men believed that they perform the second-most amount of care work, followed by girls, whereas women placed girls second, followed by men. Both groups agreed that boys, elderly women, and then elderly men gradually take on fewer of these chores. The difference between girls and boys can be explained by the fact that girls are expected to become housewives and mothers, and therefore must carry most of the responsibility for care work. Boys, on the other hand, are raised in most cases with the assumption that they will one day take on the role of breadwinner and head of the household, and therefore are not required to play a major role in unpaid care.

Throughout the different age groups, the gendered division of roles and responsibilities was strong and perpetuates norms that put more pressure on women when it comes to unpaid care, at the expense of education, income generation and personal free time. Although it could not be explained by respondents, the difference between men and girls being perceived as the second-most busy person with unpaid care can be related to the lack of visibility of the very phenomenon of unpaid care work – mostly performed by women and girls in the household. This once again highlights that the share and value of care work done by women remain overshadowed and underestimated by social norms. Women's and girl's labour inside the household plays a major role in allowing men to perform their breadwinner role and exercise their economic agency – and this contribution is widely unacknowledged.

Respondents identified the different care work activities performed by women and men, all of which were described as dictated by social and religious norms. For both men and women, the key determining factors for the amount and type of care work that they perform are their employment status, marital status, number of children, and presence of elderly people or people with disabilities or illnesses within the household or the extended family circle. The most consistent division of unpaid care work tasks between genders is that women, in the majority of cases, focus on tasks inside the house while men undertake those in public spaces outside the house. Married women are more likely to provide care to their spouse and children, while unmarried women and men focus more on their parents and siblings. Table 1 gives more details on the activities highlighted by the respondents.

Table 1: Unpaid care activities undertaken by women and men

Type of care work	Women	Men
<i>Household chores</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning the house • Washing clothes • Ironing • Storing and managing water supplies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disposing of waste • Supplying sources of energy for the house (cooking gas, fuel for heating) • Paying bills
<i>Cooking and grocery shopping</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing meals (cooking) • Washing dishes • Buying food and household items 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buying food and household items
<i>People's care and social obligations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching children • Preparing children for school • Looking after children • Taking care of elderly parents • Supervising a parent or in-laws, their children or other relatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching children • Taking children to/from school • Supervising children and their homework • Taking care of elderly parents • Taking sisters to/from learning centre • Taking family members to hospital • Visiting married sisters • Visiting the wife's family house • Settling disputes between neighbours and counselling

Among the tasks listed, women mentioned people's care, purchasing items, cooking and cleaning as the most challenging, as they require a high amount of attention or energy. Some, such as cleaning and cooking, cannot be given to men due to social norms and therefore are the sole responsibility of women and girls. Some of the women respondents were not allowed to access markets outside the house or to purchase items. Those who could purchase basic items also faced major transportation issues as they are not able or allowed to drive. The lack of affordable and efficient public transport networks in Ma'an makes them even more dependent on men's ability to drive. Men did not express major difficulty in performing the tasks that are usually entrusted to them. They considered cooking, childcare and caring for other adults as the most difficult types of unpaid care activities, as they require knowledge, practice, patience and time. The idea of men cooking inside the house was 'shameful' to men as it goes against social norms.

Even though men appeared to take on a higher number of unpaid care tasks than women, women are disproportionately dedicating more time to unpaid care. Women dedicate 59 hours a week on average to unpaid care work, including 21 hours doing tasks simultaneously and nine hours supervising other adults or children. In comparison, men only dedicate 22 hours on average, or only 37% of the time spent by women doing unpaid care. This includes seven hours of simultaneous unpaid care work, and seven hours supervising other adults or children.

While men expressed that their role as main breadwinner was more demanding and stressful than women's unpaid care work, there is a case to be made about the disproportionate impact that unpaid care work has on women's time and energy. Male respondents spend 54 hours per week on average doing paid work

and unpaid care work. Unemployed women respondents spend 60 hours a week doing unpaid care, while working women spend a total of 74 hours per week on average doing paid work and unpaid care work: in both cases, significantly more time than men.

This disparity can be defined as time poverty, which largely disadvantages women. A recent working paper defines 'individuals as "time poor" when they engage in long hours of unpaid work and have no choice but to do so. [...] These unpaid household activities are, in effect, a kind of tax that individuals – and especially women – pay before undertaking remunerated work.'¹⁵ In Ma'an, most male respondents spend more hours earning an income than women, while women are not entitled to any form of income for the higher amount of unpaid care work that they undertake, which also has a negative impact on women's economic independence. Women who also engaged in paid work faced the pressure of both care work and paid labour. In both cases, women were left with less personal free time than men.

On a daily average, women of all ages provide unpaid care to five to seven individuals, compared with three to eight for men. For unmarried people under 25 years old, women provide care to six individuals on average, compared with four for men. This difference is explained by the fact that unmarried daughters undertake the second-most amount of unpaid care work after their mother, and the care they provide to household members can sometimes be extended to nephews and nieces. Married women between 26 and 35 years old provide care to seven individuals on average, compared with six for men. Married women between 36 and 45 years old provide care to four individuals on average, compared with three for men. Women who are 46 years old and older provide care to three people on average, while men provide care to six people. While the difference between the number of household members women and men provide unpaid care to is not significant after 25 years of age, it is interesting that women above 46 years old transition to providing care for fewer people than men. This can be explained by women's lack of mobility, and the fact that social norms afford men more opportunities to provide care for the extended family outside the nuclear household.

NO OUTSIDE HELP REQUIRED

Across Jordan, middle-income and more well-off families often employ domestic workers, usually women from Africa and Asia, for care work such as cleaning, cooking, grocery shopping and childcare. Although this institutionalized practice has consistently raised concerns regarding human rights violations and decent work conditions, it remains largely entrenched and accepted within parts of Jordanian society. Community and family-based support with care work can also include family members taking on chores when needed, while help from trusted neighbours is not uncommon. Socio-cultural contexts vary in different regions and cities in Jordan, and the dominant social norms in Ma'an make reliance on strangers, whether national or foreign, unacceptable to most women and men. While the financial burden of employing someone is a commonly stated factor for not employing a domestic worker, there are other reasons specific to Ma'an that are worth exploring as to why care work continues to remain within the inner family circle.

Most women cited concerns over being judged negatively by the community if a wife transfers the responsibility of cooking or cleaning onto a stranger, which can be interpreted as her inability to efficiently perform those obligations. Additionally, unemployed women were concerned about seeing their contribution to the family's well-being taken away from them, which would deprive them of a sense of purpose. There was a strong reluctance from working women to outsource childcare, out of concerns for the quality of their education and risk of abuse. Both men and women also stated privacy concerns related to letting a stranger handle tasks within the family home for an extended period of time, which could risk private conversations being passed on to the community.

Male respondents seemed more open to outsourcing unpaid care work to individuals outside the household, even if this requires paying for a service. Although men did not justify during the interviews why they are more inclined to this, their openness to outsourcing care work can be explained by their understanding of unpaid care work being limited to tasks they normally provide to the household, like procuring energy for cooking and eating, water, maintenance or waste disposal, that can easily be handled by a third person. This does not put them at risk of being judged by the community like women would be if they were to do the same with chores considered a part of their family obligations and their inherent 'duty' to the family and society at large.

It is difficult to quantify the positive personal and socio-economic impacts of transitioning from traditional gender-segregated and family-centred unpaid care work to formal paid care and better sharing of responsibilities among household members. Yet, for some of the tasks listed by both women and men as part of their family care routine, these impacts need to be further explored as sites of possible multi-level socio-economic improvements. These include alleviating women's burden and allowing more personal free time to pursue education, training, or income-generating activities. This would foster behavioural change related to social norms that limit women's ability to claim their socio-economic rights, while also supporting the local economy and households' resilience.

3 THE IMPACT OF UNPAID CARE

A HAZARDOUS PATH TO SHARING THE CARE BURDEN

While the obvious solution to reducing the burden of care on women and girls in the short term lies with sharing unpaid care responsibilities inside and outside the house among physically able family members, the strength of social norms and the potential backlash to challenging them, coupled with what is perceived as the moral duty of women to perform unpaid care work, restricts women respondents' ability to propose redistributing care responsibilities between family members, including between men and women.

Both women and men respondents saw potential in sharing teaching and supervising children between men and women, as these tasks are perceived by both genders as something all parents should dedicate time for. Tasks that are normally segregated based on gender and traditional norms, such as cleaning, cooking, and shopping, are unlikely to rapidly change as this would require a more holistic approach to behavioural change, which could take several generations before there is enduring change in favour of egalitarian norms around notions of masculinity and femininity.

In addition, women earning a substantial income through work would not necessarily lead to a more equitable distribution of care work. Some respondents thought that this would be a logical evolution in the power relations between men and women within the household, leading to more independence for women. However, there is also a risk that economic emancipation would be met with reluctance from conservative individuals unwilling to see women take on active roles in the public sphere. There is also a deep reluctance within the Ma'ani society to actions that are perceived as eroding the traditional model of socially assigned roles of women in the family as wives, mothers or daughters.

SOCIAL NORMS DRIVE INEQUALITY

All the respondents attributed the gendered distribution of unpaid care work to social and religious norms, as well as to pedagogy in schools that reinforces these norms. In a traditional, conservative area such as Ma'an, these norms remain strongly entrenched across time and generations, with limited room to challenge them without facing criticism from the community or family. While women are allowed to seek formal or informal employment, and respondents stated that they would favour paid work for the financial benefits it brings, they also unanimously highlighted that a working woman is still judged solely on her ability to perform care work activities. As one woman respondent stated, 'if people in Ma'an observe that the house is not neat enough, they are highly critical towards the woman no matter the circumstance and the fact that she has a paid job'. Women and men both stated that men do not face the same level of judgement, as the patriarchal culture and society accept their role of breadwinners as a legitimate reason for failing to fulfil their unpaid care duties.

The same norms perpetuate the segregated social roles of women and men due to deeply entrenched perceptions that assign inherent skills and characters to both men and women, such as women's perceived natural patience when dealing with children, or men's perceived natural ability to resolve conflicts. These perceptions largely prevent women and men from sharing or swapping care work activities. This patriarchal vision of society, and the limited ability to challenge it in a place such as Ma'an, is also internalized by women, maintaining the dominant social order and norms of femininity.

This entrenchment of social norms manifests itself, for instance, when some women in the family judge a new bride's ability to perform care work based on the cleanliness of her family's house, thus reinforcing the gender power hierarchy and cementing a reductive, discriminatory and unequal vision of women for future generations. Masculinity that is tightly related to patriarchal norms also limits the opportunities for socio-behavioural change. Men are often weary of the community's judgement if they were to perform tasks that are deemed too

feminine, such as cleaning. The pressures on men to adhere to dominant notions of masculinity are oppressive and this is something that is often underestimated or unacknowledged.

YOUR TIME IS NOT YOURS TO CONTROL

Both employed and unemployed women stressed that they often felt overburdened by the weight of unpaid care work. This was even more prevalent for working women, who spend 57 hours per week on average doing unpaid care work, while unemployed women dedicate about 60 hours per week. This shows that pursuing work opportunities is not correlated with a decrease in unpaid care responsibilities. However, the amount of unpaid care work that women have is not a key factor in preventing them from seeking formal paid work. While not covered during the rapid care analysis, the same assumption can be made for women who study or undertake vocational training.

In addition, unpaid care work is both physically and mentally exhausting for women, who often have to perform multiple tasks simultaneously. The combination of several time and energy consuming tasks, including caring for children, elderly people or people with disabilities, with physical work such as cleaning leaves little free time for women, whether they are employed or not. A widowed Syrian woman who owns a small food catering business explained, 'I work around 15 hours a day between doing household chores and my business of producing food to sell so that I can have an income to support my kids and thus I have no time to relax considering my situation'.

In contrast, male respondents considered unpaid care less tiring and stressful than securing an income for the whole family, as women who do not work do not have to worry about where the money is coming from. This again highlights the limited knowledge that most men interviewed have about the impact that unpaid care has on women's mental and physical well-being, about how women perceive the pressure of social norms and the community's expectations of them, and about the general efforts that routine care activities require from individuals.

When asked about their perception of women's free time, some men expressed that unpaid care work was not an issue for women, as they wake up late, and have enough time for themselves and interacting with neighbours, while also making the conscious choice of not looking for formal work. However, some men did recognize the efforts needed to perform household chores. A male respondent said about working women that, 'a woman who is doing all of her care work and also working is like 10 men and she can stand in front of any army bravely'. Behind the apparent praise, this idea, along with the preconceived ideas that unemployed women have plenty of time of their own, reinforce patriarchal stereotypes that make unpaid care work performed by women invisible.

A MAJOR ECONOMIC IMPEDIMENT FOR WOMEN AND FAMILIES

Social norms, through the pressure and expectations that they put on women, disincentivize many from seeking employment even if it is allowed. Women feel that they are first and foremost recognized for the quality of the care work they provide, as opposed to their work when they are employed. Thus, their choice not to pursue income-generating opportunities is driven by a perceived lack of recognition of their contribution to the household's financial stability, social stigma for not performing care work to the expected standards, and the little support they are likely to receive from other family members on care work. This not only hampers women's abilities to provide for their family, if not become more financially independent, but also deprives the household of often-needed additional income, especially in an area like Ma'an which suffers from a lack of economic dynamism compared with other parts of the country.

Female labour participation in Jordan is one of the lowest globally, with fewer than 15% of women working.¹⁶ Prolonged economic slowdown and the significant impact of COVID-19 have resulted in the highest unemployment rate the country as ever recorded, with the overall unemployment rate standing at 24.7%, and female unemployment hitting 32.8% at the end of 2020.¹⁷ Additional social pressure has fallen on women as a result of the increase in unpaid care work obligations that has been recorded during lockdowns and curfews, in part due to the closure of schools, which kept the children at home, and adults' limited access to their workplaces. According to an ILO/FAFO assessment from May 2020, 74% of women agreed that their household duties increased as a result of the lockdown, while 59% of male respondents shared the same analysis.¹⁸ Data also show increased domestic gender-based violence (GBV) in this period. According to the Government of Jordan's Family Protection Unit, there was a 33% increase in reported cases of gender-based violence between January and May 2020. This highlights the pressing need to recognize women's roles at the family and community levels, dramatically improve the sharing of the responsibility of unpaid care, as well as diversifying household income sources in a context of limited jobless growth, increased unemployment and labour informality, and a downward spiral towards low salaries.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ma'an context has its own cultural and socio-economic dynamics that shape the construction of gender roles and intra-household gender distribution of unpaid care work among family members. These put the highest physical and mental burden on women and girls, and prevent a more equitable distribution of those activities, along with a better understanding of the impact of unpaid care by both women and men. While these conservative social norms are rooted in a wider patriarchal culture that is shared by most communities living in Jordan, the extent of their application and impact on women's empowerment vary depending on a wide range of factors, including geographical areas, socio-economic status,

nationality, education and religion.

Unpaid care work is a countrywide issue that requires both national and localized responses in order to foster the economy in an inclusive manner and improve family members' well-being. Failing to understand local dynamics and ensure that national policies are context-sensitive will undoubtedly limit the opportunities to make a significant and durable impact on women's lives in the long term. In addition, changing social norms is a sensitive matter that requires a long-term approach, if not a multi-generational vision that short-term resilience programmes can contribute to, but not replace. To this end, decision makers must be able to take a holistic approach to unpaid care, by addressing the economic, social, mental and educational implications in policies and laws, as well as in aid and development programmes.

TO THE GOVERNMENT OF JORDAN AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Raise awareness on the role and impact of unpaid care work and promote egalitarian and just gender norms

- Social awareness of gender roles in unpaid care work is a long way from achieving durable positive change in the lives of families in Jordan. As the socio-economic situation is increasingly difficult for most, there is a dire need for both online and offline campaigns for recognizing the value of unpaid care work and the negative physical and mental impact it has on those who undertake those tasks. This should be complemented by a strong push towards challenging social norms in the distribution of unpaid care activities between men and women.
- While this behavioural change approach to unpaid care should cover the entire country, it should be cognisant of localized socio-economic and cultural dynamics and norms, with tailored messages. The Ministry of Social Development, in coordination with relevant local authorities, religious and other community leaders, civil society organizations, women associations, and grassroots organizations, should lead the implementation of such campaigns at national and local levels, using both traditional and new media platforms, along with direct engagement with communities.
- Increase government-led data collection on unpaid care work, in order to better document policies and national strategies aiming to improve socio-economic conditions and social protection, especially pertaining to women's status.
- Raising awareness of unpaid care, the need for its recognition and how responsibility for it can be shared equitably, along with the negative impact on individuals and the economy of gender norms and social constructs that prevent women from seeking education and work, should also be part of sensitization efforts in school and relevant university programmes.

Improve women's access to livelihood opportunities

- Promote and implement gender-sensitive policies for vocational training and higher education opportunities that promote women's economic role in society in a way that transforms the dominant social norms and gender stereotypes around women joining the workforce or limiting them to jobs that are highly segregated by gender.
- Institutions providing such training programmes, including the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC), should both formally state that all sectors are open for women to enrol in and ensure that this is enforced, as none of the economic sectors are legally restricted for women.
- VTC centres and other training facilities should ensure that a greater diversity of trainings is available across the country, so as not to limit the number of specialties offered to women in a given geographic area.
- Supporting the enrolment of women in training programmes and higher education should be complemented by specific grant schemes that reduce the cost of education for women. These should be also tailored to local job market needs, as well as allow for the wide availability of educational programmes across the country, in order to overcome mobility issues.
- Facilitate women's access to public and private small and microfinance schemes to better support business creation and their sustainability. This should be complemented by direct support through financial literacy and business management courses.
- Awareness-raising campaigns on unpaid care work should include a component on women's economic empowerment, showcasing the positive impact that women's labour market engagement has on them and their families. Promoting the narrative of women taking on the role of breadwinners, and stories of women from the local community that successfully launched businesses or followed a career as an employee, should be at the core of this effort. Such campaigns should target both local communities and private sector employers.
- Ratify ILO Convention No 190 on Violence and Harassment, allocate adequate resources to its enforcement, and make the necessary legal changes to the Jordanian labour code in order to improve the protection of workers, including women, against abuse in the work environment.
- Improve the rollout of Article 72 of the Labour Code on the provision of day care for children at the workplace, which has been largely ignored by the private sector. Better tailoring the article's provisions to the local reality of the labour market and size of businesses is paramount to foster women's employment, including through allowing groups of private businesses employing low numbers of parents to offer joint day-care facilities. This could be incentivized by cost sharing between private employers and the government, and by tax breaks.
- Access to affordable and safe public transportation for all women is one of the key issues preventing women from working or pursuing higher education, while they have to rely on family members for transportation when they are not allowed or able to drive. In line with the new National Framework for Gender Sensitive Public Transport launched in 2021, the Government of Jordan and local authorities should develop a feasibility study on the improvement of existing public transport networks, or the creation of new networks, in both

urban and rural areas. Geographical prioritization should be based on consultation with communities, including by providing a safe space for women to express their concerns and aspirations.

- The idea of safe transportation involves both safety for women inside public transport and adequate responses from law enforcement to potential cases of abuse after they occur. Setting up such transport networks should be complemented by adequate training of law enforcement on the management of such cases, so as not to discourage women from accessing justice and using public transport.

TO INTERNATIONAL DONORS, RELEVANT UN AGENCIES AND INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

- Prioritize and increase funding to international, national and local civil society organization programmes that promote behavioural change with regards to gender roles and gender division of labour, with a focus on unpaid care work. Such programmes should be grounded in a context-specific approach to both unpaid care work and awareness-raising activities, due the different social contexts and norms that prevail in different communities across Jordan.
- Ensure that awareness-raising and behavioural-change activities on unpaid care work are mainstreamed in women's employment and training programmes.
- Provide financial and technical support to the Government of Jordan to reform existing laws, policies and strategies that are limiting women's financial independence and training opportunities, including access to finance, public transportation policies, family law, and the income tax framework.

TO INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS, COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS

- Support campaigns on raising the visibility and impact of unpaid care work at national and local levels, while also mainstreaming context-specific behavioural change activities in all training and income-generating programmes that include a women's empowerment component.
- Ensure that projects are based on a thorough study of the local socio-economic and cultural context. When necessary, this should include thorough training on social norms, unpaid care work and gender roles for staff implementing the projects. If serving communities of various nationalities and statuses, ensure that those cultural differences are also factored into the project designs.
- While addressing unpaid care work and gender roles, development projects should take a more holistic approach to behavioural change and address in parallel the question of masculinity and social expectations towards men,

which also often prevent men from providing stronger support to women within the household on care work.

- Women and men should be included in projects' design and evaluation stages, so as to take their concerns and expectations into consideration. This is particularly true for initiatives that seek to increase women's labour market engagement. When including women in such exercises, safeguarding measures should be incorporated in order to provide a safe space for women to express themselves.

NOTES

- 1 M. Maestre and J. Thorpe. (2016). *Unpaid Care Work: Facilitating Change Towards Women's Economic Empowerment When Market Systems Care*. Retrieved 17 June 2021, from https://beamexchange.org/uploads/filer_public/fa/73/fa73f0e0-f2de-4913-b409-fb6d575dbaad/unpaid_carework.pdf
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 J. Charmes. (2019). *The Unpaid Care Work and the Labour Market: An Analysis of Time-use Data Based on the Latest World Compilation of Time-use Surveys*. Geneva: ILO. Retrieved 17 June 2021, from https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_732791.pdf
- 4 G. Ferrant, L. Pesando, and K. Nowacka. (2014). *Unpaid Care Work: The Missing Link in the Analysis of Gender Gaps in Labour Outcomes*. OECD. Retrieved 17 June 2021, from https://www.oecd.org/dev/development-gender/Unpaid_care_work.pdf
- 5 L. Abou-Habib. (n.d.). *Feminist Perspective on Care Work in the MENA Region*. Beirut: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES). Retrieved 17 June 2021, from https://mena.fes.de/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf-files/publications/FES-Care_Work.pdf
- 6 T Kidder, et al. (2016). *Participatory Methodology: Rapid Care Analysis. Guidance for Managers and Facilitators*. Oxfam. Retrieved 17 June 2021, from <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620147/ml-rapid-care-analysis-facilitators-151116-en.pdf?sequence=1>
- 7 Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance and Al Urdun Al Jadid Research Center. (2010). *Local Democracy in Jordan: General Summary of the Results of the National Report*. Retrieved 17 June 2021, from <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/pictures/SoD-Country-Report-Jordan.pdf>
- 8 Author's calculations based on the 2018 population census and UNHCR registration data.
- 9 United Nations. (2017). *The United Nations Country Team Common Country Assessment for the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*. Retrieved 17 June 2021, from <https://jordan.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/CCA-%20Feb122017.pdf>
- 10 For more information on these dynamics, see Center for Strategic Studies. (2003). *Ma'an: An Open-Ended Crisis*. Amman: University of Jordan. Retrieved 17 June 2021, from <http://jcss.org/Photos/634750951027786023.pdf>
- 11 This report, for instance, does not conclude that Ma'an's society is distinctly conservative. Center for Strategic Studies. (2003). *Ma'an: An Open-Ended Crisis*.
- 12 Department of Statistics. (2020). *Jordanian Women Statistics*. Retrieved 17 June 2021, from http://jorinfo.dos.gov.jo/Databank/pxweb/en/DOS_Database/START_14
- 13 For analysis on previous years, see F. Kreishan and A. Awad (2011). *Economic and Social Realities of Women in Ma'an Governorate* [in Arabic], *Najah Journal for Social Science Research* 25(4), 821-48.
- 14 M. Bolis, A. Parvez, E. Holten, L. Mugehera, N. Abdo and M.J. Moreno (2020) *Care in the Time of Coronavirus: Why Care Work Needs to be at the Centre of Post-COVID-19 Feminist Future*. Oxford: Oxfam GB. Retrieved 17 June 2021, from <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621009/bp-care-crisis-time-for-global-reevaluation-care-250620-en.pdf?sequence=13>
- 15 C. West and A. Williams (2018) *Alleviating Time Poverty among the Working Poor: A Pre-Registered Longitudinal Field Experiment*. Harvard Business School. Retrieved 17 June 2021, from https://www.hbs.edu/ris/Publication%20Files/19-049_a92e4eb7-92c8-4a62-bef8-8b0505e9d2f5.pdf

- 16 ILO/IFAD. (2020). *Jordan: Young Women's Employment and Empowerment in the Rural Economy*. Retrieved 17 June 2021, from https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_622766.pdf
- 17 Department of Statistics. (2021). *24.7% Unemployment Rate During the Fourth Quarter of 2020*. Retrieved 17 June 2021, from http://dos.gov.jo/dos_home_e/main/archive/Unemp/2020/Emp_Q4_2020.pdf
- 18 This assessment focused on Jordan and Syrian nationals only. See T.A. Kebede, S.E. Stave and M. Kattaa. (2020). *Facing Double Crises: Rapid Assessment of the Impact of COVID-19 on Vulnerable Workers in Jordan*. Geneva: ILO/FAFO. Retrieved 17 June 2021, from https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_743391.pdf

OXFAM

Oxfam is an international confederation of 21 organizations, working with its partners and allies, reaching out to millions of people around the world. Together, we tackle inequalities to end poverty and injustice, now and in the long term – for an equal future. Please write to any of the agencies for further information or visit www.oxfam.org

Oxfam America (www.oxfamamerica.org)

Oxfam Aotearoa (www.oxfam.org.nz)

Oxfam Australia (www.oxfam.org.au)

Oxfam-in-Belgium (www.oxfamsol.be)

Oxfam Brasil (www.oxfam.org.br)

Oxfam Canada (www.oxfam.ca)

Oxfam Colombia (lac.oxfam.org/countries/colombia)

Oxfam France (www.oxfamfrance.org)

Oxfam Germany (www.oxfam.de)

Oxfam GB (www.oxfam.org.uk)

Oxfam Hong Kong (www.oxfam.org.hk)

Oxfam IBIS (Denmark) (www.oxfamibis.dk)

Oxfam India (www.oxfamindia.org)

Oxfam Intermón (Spain) (www.oxfamintermon.org)

Oxfam Ireland (www.oxfamireland.org)

Oxfam Italy (www.oxfamitalia.org)

Oxfam Mexico (www.oxfammexico.org)

Oxfam Novib (Netherlands) (www.oxfamnovib.nl)

Oxfam Québec (www.oxfam.qc.ca)

Oxfam South Africa (www.oxfam.org.za)

KEDV (www.kedv.org.tr)

