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This paper is developed for the purpose of the discussion notes for the “Expert Group Meeting on good practices in national action plans on violence against women”. The paper first, look generally at the Arab region responses and strategies towards the issue of violence against women, second, it details the process of Jordan and Yemen in developing National Action Plans (NAP) for women and strategies for eliminating violence against women

Introduction to the regional responses to violence against women and NAP

The issue of violence against women (VAW) has received attention in the Arab region in the beginning of 1990s. NGOs played a significant role in bringing the issue into the policy level. They were pioneered in establishing protection and prevention mechanisms to fight violence against women in most of the Arab countries. As a result, governments responded to NGOs and as part of their commitment to the Convention for Eliminating all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Platform of Action (BPA), and the International Declaration for Elimination of all Types of Violence against Women.

The BPA called for countries to develop NAP for women. These are expressed also in the gender objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which focus on improving women’s access to decision-making, employment, providing greater conditions for literacy and education, and enhanced training opportunities. The majority of Arab states have established women’s commissions or councils. These commissions/councils advocate the empowerment of women in a variety of areas including economic and political domains. Therefore, the establishment of women’s bodies was a significant milestone, at the governmental level, in the change to women’s status in the region; hence, The NAPs in most of the Arab region were developed right after the establishment of the national commissions/councils for women.

The Effectiveness of women’s national committees/councils is in varying degrees across the Arab region. Most of women’s commission yet to have a clear mandates and role; they lack of transparency and accountability; the lack of autonomy and political commitment; inadequate expertise and funds; and, in particular, weak links with civil society organizations. Among the CEDAW committee concluding observation, to different Arab states were the identification of critical areas to be addressed and formulated for policy advocacy and wider dissemination. These include building a strategic framework for national mechanisms; strengthening the role and mandate of National women’s committees that serve as women’s machineries; ensuring adequate human and financial resources; promoting good governance; institutional enhancement and capacity development; strengthening partnership with civil society organizations; strengthening relations with media; and establishing regional coordination mechanisms.

Most of the Arab states approach to the issue of VAW was tackled through family/domestic violence approach. Several countries in later stages, such as Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Syria have established National Action Plans to combat violence against women either included in the NAP for women, like Jordan, or as an independent strategy like Morocco and Algeria. Some states, such as Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, for instance, had established Special Commissions for the assistance and protection of victims of violence. Several national

awareness-raising campaigns on VAW were launched in countries such as Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco and Jordan during the last few years.

There have been also efforts at the level of educational programmes for academics, policy makers and NGOs on mechanisms to eliminate violence against women. Training courses on women's rights issues were provided to judges, police in Jordan, Yemen and Morocco. The existence of specialized centres for victims of violence, as well as legal, medical and psychological assistance and counselling, and support networks were established across the region.

Despite the progress made, Arab states are only at the early stages of learning toward effective strategic and coordinated action for women rights in general and the issue of VAW in particular. Few countries are acting truly strategically such as Morocco. Many challenges remain in the continuous cycle of strategic management. The key challenges, along with some of the innovative approaches and tools employed to address them, include:

- unclear feedback mechanism – including monitoring and evaluation of the NAP
- lack of coordination of strategy objectives and initiatives with the national budgeting process
- weak linkages with sub-national and local sustainable development actions and strategies
- incomprehensive and not multi-dimensional strategies
- ambiguity of the concepts used in the strategies : inconsistent of the terminology and definitions used
- existence of two bodies at the same time dealing with women issues such as the family councils and women's councils/commissions, and miscommunication among these bodies;
- lack of efficient coordination with NGOs
- unclear role of government different ministries and department in the strategies
- the focus of the strategies at the policy and legislation levels
- non-existence of indicators to measure the achievement of the strategic goals in the NAP

I. Jordan

1-National Strategy for Women

Jordan drew up its first National Strategy for Women in 1993, one year after the establishment of Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) in 1992; the most recent National Strategy (2006-2010), which was updated for 2010-2011, includes a strategy on VAW and illustrates a commitment to safety and security of women Legislation, as part of implementation to the National strategy, to protect women against violence was passed in 2008 as part of the Family Violence Act.

objectives of the NAP are: (1) Enhancing the status and role of women within the family and in society, and developing social attitudes which strengthen the role of women in social development, and (2) Providing support to women in special categories such as women who head households and older women, and extending special care and attention to women with disabilities.

The national strategy includes measures related to awareness raising of women and bringing media attention to supporting the comprehensive role that women play including both traditional and non-traditional dimensions. The strategy also highlights the needs of women-headed households, women with disabilities and poor women.

The National Strategy has no mention to migrant women, trafficking in women, and refugee women. Though Jordan has enacted new legislation related to migrant workers and anti trafficking, this was not as part of the National strategic goals and actions in the National Strategy for women.

The National Strategy specifically highlights Jordan's commitment to CEDAW and Beijing Platform of action. Although it tackles the issue of women's equality but it does not specify discrimination as human rights violation. Human rights based approach is not one of the guiding principles for achieving equality and thus needs approach is still in place when tackling women's rights.

The Guiding Principles of the National strategy for women

- the provisions of the Jordanian Constitution and the Jordanian National Charter
- The Strategy is further founded on the principles of Islamic Jurisprudence, the values of Arab and Muslim society, and the principles of human rights
- The role and status of women are legislatively, politically, socially and economically an end-product of a comprehensive developmental process at both the national and pan-Arab levels
- efforts must be positively and systematically exerted in an endeavour to optimize the effectiveness of women's role, to enhance their status in society, and to remove all forms of discrimination against them

The National strategy areas of focus /priorities

Economic Empowerment

- Increasing the contribution of women in the workforce, and to ensure non-discrimination in employment in all areas of work and sectors

- Provide the necessary facilities to encourage the entry of women into the labor market, continuity, and by encouraging and developing support services Listen

Legislation

- Raise women's awareness of their legal rights
- Enact Legislation or amend of existing ones to abolition discrimination against women in various areas
- Work to enact legislation to ensure that women to exercise their political rights, economic, social and cultural rights guaranteed by the Islamic Sharia

There is not any legislation that deals with the issue of violence against women; In 2008, the government enacted domestic violence law which includes acts of violence against women.

Participation in Public Life

- Developing the contribution of women in political life in its various forms, and their participation in the formulation of government policies, and occupancy of the centers of public leadership
- Increasing awareness of the importance of women's participation in political life, to enhance the democratic process and social development
- Support the struggle of Arab women to achieve their rights, and Palestinian women under Israeli occupation in their struggle for liberation and self-determination

Social component

- enhance the status and role of women in the family and society, and the development of social concepts to enhance the role of women in social development
- Provide support for special groups of women, including women heads of families, older women, as well as the provision of care and attention to women with disabilities

Health component

- Development of health services for women, and improve quality of health services in all regions in the kingdom
- Raise women's awareness of health issues, and provide health education for women, to promote public health, and promoting the health of the family

Education component

- Development of educational services and improve quality in the regions and different population groups
- Activating the role of the educational system in promoting a positive image of women and its place in the family and society, and its role in social development

The National Strategy for Women includes a strategy on VAW. In this regard, the JNCW strategy provides:

- Increasing efforts aimed at raising social awareness regarding manifestations of violence to which women can be subjected both inside and outside the home, including mental as well as physical harassment and bodily harm.
- Legal follow-up services will be provided when necessary, and legal advisory services will be extended to women in need of such assistance.
- Support services will also be provided when necessary, such as the provision of shelter and protection.

Objectives of the national strategy for VAW as specified in the National Strategy:

- to reduce the phenomenon of violence against women
- the development of specialist multi-institutional approach, based on Human Rights to protect women from violence and in accordance with the Arab and Islamic values and traditions inherent community to address issues of violence against women.
- to change social attitude towards violence in all its various forms

In terms of linkages with other plans and sectors, the National Strategy highlight the importance of making linkages with other development national plans with no accurate measures of how these linkages will be built and measured.

There is no mention in the National Strategy for gender budgeting and specific budget to implement the National strategy. Further, the National strategy does not include the most recent statistics related to women especially in the issue of VAW, though it highlights the lack of accurate data as a challenge.

There was no national assessment of the implementation of the national strategy to understand the effectiveness of the National strategy. The JNCW proposed a mid-review of the National Strategy but then the Strategy was expanded without such a review.

Best Practices: the Network against Violence against women : Shama'a

The Network against Violence against Women, SHAMA'A, was established in March 2008 by JNVW. The Network is one of the strategic goals set in the Strategic Plan, which was developed and agreed upon by the members of the network for the years 2010-2011.

The main goals of the network is to: build an active network that integrates the various efforts of a diverse group of organizations and individuals working to reach a common goal, and to create a society that is free of violence.

The network coordinates and unifies the efforts of all national public and private institutions, civil society organizations, and individuals working to end violence against women. It also integrates programs and services to improve their quality and maximize their efficacy through ensuring communication and to activate participatory planning among organizations that

respond to violence against women. The network facilitates the expansion of programs and services in order to reach to all regions of the Kingdom.

Strategic goals :

- Coordinating national efforts to combat violence against women by expanding and diversifying the base of partners to involve all sectors of society
- Using a participatory approach to support the efforts of SHAMA'A members to promote cultural and community-based initiatives to combat violence against women
- Strengthening the capacity of institutions and individuals working to combat violence against women in order to improve the quantity and quality of programs and services provided for women
- Consolidating all available resources relating to gender-based violence, including software and professional services, research and documentation, and services for victims of violence
- Lobbying decision makers in the executive, legislative and judicial branches to gain support for the adoption of positions that would promote societal trends that reject violence against women, address the causes of GBV, and increase the accessibility of treatment services for those who commit violence.

Strategic actions:

- Monitor the implementation of actions to combat violence against women as outlined in the Human Security and Social Protection section of the National Strategy for Jordanian Women 2006-2010.
- Monitor, document and classify cases of all forms of violence against women.
- Monitor all efforts, programs, projects and initiatives nationwide working to end violence against women
- Collect information, sources and references on violence against women, and make these resources available for educational purposes.
- Support the implementation of joint programs between various government agencies and institutions working against violence against women, as well as integrate and coordinate policies and procedures responding to the issue of GBV, including prevention, treatment and documentation, follow-up and assessment
- Institute participatory planning programs on the subject of combating violence against women
- Coordinate the efforts of organizations and individuals providing personal, financial and informational resources and services for survivors of GBV
- Work with the Department of Statistics and SHAMA'A members to develop a comprehensive, integrated national database of cases relating to violence against women
- Improve communication to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, experiences and best practices among the various nongovernmental organizations, civil society, and other institutions in order to develop an efficient system of referral.
- Publish an annual report reflecting the progress of the year's national initiatives to combat violence against women

2- VAW as part of combating family violence strategy

Since 1997 national response to address family violence/abuse has increased and developed and the efforts of governmental bodies have also developed and expanded. Major milestones included the launch of a National Family Protection Project in 2000, the establishment of the National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA) in 2001, and issuing the National Framework for Family Protection from Violence in 2006. All of which can be regarded as national efforts to coordinate governmental and nongovernmental services for victims of violence on both the intervention and prevention level. Furthermore, the past few years witnessed the sanctioning of the family protection law in 2008 and a partnership among different parties to establish an accreditation system for services provided to victims of family violence and training programs for professionals working with victims of family violence.

The National Strategy for Family Protection (2005 – 2009) was managed and implemented by the National Framework and had the following objectives:

1. Identify policies, programmes and action plans relevant to family protection;
2. Enhance the awareness on domestic violence and its impact on the physical and psychological health;
3. Build the institutional capacities and develop human resources of active members in the field of protection;
4. Enhance cooperation and partnership between governmental and non-governmental organisations working on violence issues;
5. Enhance judicial responses to issues of violence through legal amendments and policy formulation;
6. Enhance the quality of research and studies on violence; and
7. Raise funds to implement activities and procedures stemming from the National Strategy.

The National Framework for the Protection of the Jordanian Family against Violence identifies five types of violence that cover all members of the family, including women:

- **Physical Violence:** The deliberate use of physical force, or the threat of its use, against the individual himself or against any member in the family, that results in physical harm, including punching with the fist, biting, burning, and any other acts harmful to individuals.
- **Emotional Violence:** Perpetuating, or refraining from any act that may result in weakening a person's ability to deal with his/her surrounding social environment; it includes rejection, insults, neglect, scorn, intimidation, and impossible demands.
- **Psychological Violence:** Perpetuating or refraining from any act that may cause physical or emotional suffering; it includes humiliation, calling by names, insults, harassment, and isolation from family and friends.
- **Sexual Violence:** Any sexual act or any attempt to perpetuate a sexual act against the will of the other party; it includes rape, sexual harassment and any unaccepted sexual remarks. It also includes sexual abuse of children, i.e., coercing or seducing a child into participating in sexual acts, regardless of whether the child realizes it or not. These activities include any physical contact for the purpose of sexual harassment, and any other acts such as encouraging the child to watch, or participate in the production of pornographic material or persuade his/her to act in an inappropriate sexual manner.

- **Economic-social Violence:** The forms of economic -social violence include depriving women of education or work under the pretext of moral consideration, or of their earnings from their work or their share of inheritance as stipulated by the Shari'ah. Its forms also include depriving children of their right to education and family care, and pushing them to work outside the home.

The National Strategy for the National Framework for the Protection of the Jordanian Family against Violence includes five strategic objectives :

- *Prevention:* Domestic violence prevention aims to enhancing healthy behavioral patterns within the family, removing social and cultural risk factors, detecting and identifying domestic violence, and adopting the necessary measures to curb violence through awareness and education programs.
- *Protection:* Protection aims to raising the efficiency and timeliness of response to domestic violence by the society, governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations through providing quality services and raising organizational and procedural levels within these institutions in a manner that guarantees the delivery of best services to victims of violence.
- *Human and material resources:* Developing human resources and enhancing the institutional capacities of the parties involved in family protection and security.
- *Legislation, policies, and legal issues:* Governmental commitment to developing legislation and laws that harmonize with the principles of prevention of, and protection against domestic violence.
- *Partnership and coordination:* Ensuring that the programs, policies and legislation related to domestic violence are comprehensive and integrative and are based on the multi-sectoral participatory approach.
- *Studies and research:* Promoting research on protecting the family against domestic violence through identifying priorities, the consequences and costs of violence, and the efficiency of the programs

The National Framework for Family Protection defines Violence against Women in line with global definition set forth by international organizations and institutions involved in protecting women, “any act of violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty.

The NCFA convenes the multi-sectoral National Task Force for Family Protection from Violence. Different ministers and NGOs are active member of the Task Force. The NCFA released a comprehensive study Status of Violence against Women in Jordan in 2009 which was accompanied by a fact sheet with basic information on the issue. The study was part of the Advocacy and Awareness Raising Project for Violence against Women implemented by the NCFA. The study includes analysis of the problem in Jordan, details about prevention activities and services by governmental institutions and NGOs, best practices based on international and regional experience, and recommendations.

The ‘National Strategy for the Jordanian Family’ is considered the main reference of the plan of action currently being developed by NCFA in cooperation with governmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with family affairs.

The National Strategy for the Jordanian family was developed in consultation with different sectors. Four workshops were held in different regions of Jordan. Discussions highlighted the issues of the themes, objectives, suggested activities to deal with these issues, outputs, target groups, the main implementing and cooperating parties, performance indicators and timeframe.

II. Yemen National Strategy for Women Development

The current National strategy (NS) for Women Development 2006-2015 is an expansion of the previous 2003-2005 National Strategy. The responsible body in Yemen for the implementation and monitoring of the NS is the National Women Commission (NWC), which is the governmental body concerned with women’s affairs in Yemen. However, it does not have any legislative or judicial power. The core goal of the NS is to bridge the gender gap and mainstream gender with governmental institutions.

In expanding and developing the current NS, NWC considered one of the effective women’s machineries in the Arab region in engaging NGOs in the process of developing the NS. Several meetings, consultations and workshops took place with different sectors.

The preparation of the strategy was undertaken with a direct and indirect involvement of concerned. Engaging different parties was in different stages of drafting the NS: sending a written request for views and suggestions on the context and trends and finished with wide discussion on the final draft in annual conference for women (8th March 2005).

The strategy put emphasis on facilitating the efforts of all concerned parties, governmental and non-governmental, with women empowerment, and in accordance to Beijing Platform of Action, MDGs, and CEDAW to ensure gender equality and women empowerment.

The NS drew the attention in the unequal representation of women in education, politics, and economics. It provides statistics on women’s status in Yemen. The statistic shown in the NS reveals that women’s representation considered as one of the least in the world. For instance, illiteracy widespread among women, it reaches 40% in urban areas and 74% in rural areas. As for political participation, women represent 0, 33% in Parliament

The issue of VAW was highlighted in the NS as one of the strategic issues. In the new strategy, the issue was tackled from human rights perspective and as a violation of women's human rights.

The National Strategy Objectives:

- Provide basic education for everyone by 2015 and gender equal access to education in all education level and reduction of illiteracy among girls and women by half.
- Expand women access throughout her life cycle to adequate and advanced health care and services with affordable cost and ensure their involvement in health sector employment.
- Reduce poor women rate to half and enhance women dependency through economic empowerment and effective participation in economic and environmental decision-making.
- Increase women participation, quantitatively and qualitatively, in all decision-making and power positions, upgrade the national mechanisms concerned with women issues and support NGOs capacities.
- Facilitate women's experience of their human rights guaranteed by Shara'a, national legislations and international laws in particular CEDAW and eradicate all forms of discrimination still practiced against women.
- Expand women participation and enhance their role in media and information technology in order to improve women status and change the unbalance image and stereotype.

Guiding Principles of the strategy;

- 1- Gender equality as stipulated in Sharia, constitution, national laws and Arab and international legislation ratified by Yemen
- 2- Yemen commitments related to BPFA and CEDAW to ensure women human rights, gender equality, and empower women through collaboration with all partners'; government and NGOs.
- 3- Commitments to partnership and building coalition with all related parties
- 4- NGOs, private sector, and all international and regional donors aiming to improve women status
- 5- MDGS particularly the third goal "Gender Equality and Women Empowerment
- 6- Goals and commitments set in national and sectoral strategies concerning women empowerment and advancement in all areas.
- 7- Goals stipulated in NSWDG 2003 – 2005 still valid for the coming years.
- 8- Recommendations of national women conferences and other related conferences

Priority issues of the NS

- 1- Wide gender gap in all education levels and fields and high illiteracy rate among women and girls
- 2- Gender inequality in receiving health care and services and limit incentives and guarantees for women in health sector.
- 3- Women poverty and their economic dependency, and limit participation in management of economic and environmental resources.

- 4- Poor women's representation – quantitatively and qualitatively – in all decision making positions, in elected and appointed bodies on the central and local levels.
- 5- Violence against women (VAW) and ensure women human rights
- 6- The stereotype of women in media and weak mainstreaming of gender issues in media policies and programs.

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Strategic Issue: Violence against women and ensure women human rights

The NS specifies the need for the fight against VAW, it highlights the percentage of women suffer from different forms of violence as still high, estimated by NWC as 50% from total percentage of women. The NS also recognizes that VAW hinders the achievement of goals of equity. It also interconnects VAW and women's lack of exercise to their civil, political, economic, and social as they fail to access resources and power means that enable them to benefit from the available laws that guarantee equal rights with men.

As for legislation, although some progress had been achieved in the last few years in amending discriminative provisions and in enforcing laws and promoting elimination of VAW in different activities, but still many other legal articles need amendment and more efforts to eradicate VAW. There is not any law in Yemen that clearly criminalize VAW

The NS set a strategic goal to be achieved in 2015: facilitate women's actual exercise of their human rights guaranteed by Sharia, national laws and international conventions especially CEDAW, through eliminate all forms of VAW, to do so, the NS sets the following actions to take place

Legislation and judiciary system:

- Abolish all discriminative articles in laws and adopt legal measures that guarantee and protect equal rights for women
- Continue with efforts to amend discriminative articles in laws
- Ensure equal access to justice for women especially in judicial system.
- Adopt new legal measures to protect women's equal rights and enforce them in reality
- develop awareness programmes for communities and schools
- establish monitoring mechanisms in collaboration with civil society to measure implementation of laws
- increase number of women working in judicial system and law enforcement institutions
- start supportive initiatives to facilitate women's enrolment in the High Institute for Judiciary to ensure recruitment of female judges
- Adopt initiatives to protect child girl from any form of violence (FGM deprivation from education- early marriage- deprivation from inheritance- economic and sexual exploitation).
- Take required measures to reform laws that discriminate against child girl.
- Continuous community awareness on early marriage and call for approval of minimum age of marriage in law
- Strong punishment for who commit moral crimes against children including girls.

Prevention

- Raise awareness with causes, results and forms of VAW and effective ways to eliminate them.
- Raise awareness with basic rights and freedoms and legal principles among men and women.
- Establish sensitization program on VAW and women rights
- allocate sufficient resources from public budget and donors funds to
- carry on activities to eliminate VAW
- continuous awareness on VAW and its consequences on women as individual and on development process. It should address to judicial personnel and senior governmental officers.
- raise the legal awareness among men and women
- provide programmes for legal assistance for women

Education:

- Amend educational curriculum and media discourse that involve ideas encourage directly or indirectly discriminative practices against women and incorporate human rights instead.
- Study the educational curriculum which need amendment to change stereotype image of women

Services:

- Establish effective and modern methods to support and protect women victims of violence.
- Establish special units to deal with women in police stations
- Establish special units to deal with domestic violence cases (at least in governorates capitals)
- Establish hotlines to help violated women
- Establish shelters and emergency services for women victims of violence

Budget

- Allocate required resources to eliminate all forms of discrimination and VAW and empower women to enjoy her human rights. The allocation should be incorporated in the annual budgets of concerned parties.

NGOs

- Enhance partnership with CSOs under and outside the umbrella of Yemeni Network for Elimination of VAW.
- Support NGOs and develop partnership to take bigger role in eliminating VAW and provide legal assistance to women.

Statistics and Database

- build data base on women's rights and VAW campaigns for women rights in inheritance
- develop procedures to protect women from violence
- build database on women human rights and forms of VAW

Expected outcomes of the NS by 2010

- Remove all discriminative articles in laws against women
- Endorse new legal texts that guarantee the enforcement of women rights
- Increase the percentage of women in decision making positions concerned with law enforcement and justice.
- Establish modern instrument to protect victim women.
- Reduce the percentage of women victims of violence in homes and workplace.
- Increase the percentage of women working in police to 50% of total labour force.

Media

- Change the stereotype image of women in media and address the challenges of women economic, political, social and cultural advancement and set it as priority in all visual and aural programs
- Review the media programs with concerned institutions and highlight on materials that reflect women participation in development process and change women image in media.
- Sensitize media programs for women issues

Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) Mechanisms

The strategy specified M & E mechanisms to be adopted in two parallel trends:

- The first is restricted with the monitoring and evaluation tools that the governmental bodies use with condition that they take a gender analysis approaches to ensure gender based outcomes.
- The second which meets with the requirement of the WNC role as sole monitor which obliged the concerned governmental bodies to submit regular progress reports to WNC in the beginning of the following year.
- The women directorates should take over these responsibilities through the partnership, coordination, and different correlated activities of monitoring and evaluation for what has been achieved by CSOs, the WNC can fill in the gaps in the annual report.