

October 24th, 2012

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„The Role of Women in Shaping the future“

Event: Training Workshops

Date/Place: October 13 & 20, 2012 – All Youth commission, Mafrag & Karak– Jordan

The Jordanian Society for Family Empowerment, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Amman Office



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Due to the fact that some governorates are not getting as much attention and developmental aid as the main cities, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, KAS Amman in cooperation with the Jordanian Society for Family Empowerment and All Youth Commission conducted a 1-day workshop in the Governorates of Mafraq and Karak on October 13 and 20.2012,

Local women leaders of different age groups and from different civic and government institutions in the 2 governorates attended the workshops. The training was provided by a media and gender expert, **Ms. Suhair Jaradat**.

The main objective of the workshop was to raise women's awareness of their constitutional national and international rights as well as of the importance of their participation in both political and economic life. The training coincided with the forming of the new government, which consists of 20 ministers, and that was highly criticized by the participants due to the lacking of any female minister.

Ms. Samah Masannat, opened the workshops by thanking Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung for the new partnership and wishing that this activity will be a seed for future workshops. She also referred to the many projects the Jordanian Society for Family Empowerment has achieved during its 3 years of existence including workshops for supporting women and youth, free medical days and employment projects in different areas of Jordan which aim at sustaining development in local communities. She ended by promising to deliver the recommendations of the workshop to the decision makers.

Ms. Nidaa Shraideh, KAS project manager (acting on behalf of KAS Resident Representative Ms. Maria

Zandt), started her speech by thanking all the parties who participated in the workshop, and gave the participants a brief overview on the work of the Konrad - Adenauer-Stiftung in Jordan. Afterwards, she clarified the importance of this workshop in raising women's awareness of their rights in both the Jordanian Constitution and international agreements, in addition to the significance of women participation in political life.

The main speaker of the workshop in Mafraq **H.E. Ms. Wafaá Bani Mustafa**, MP from the North, started her intervention by talking about the challenges and opportunities she faced before and during her journey to the parliament, stressing the importance of being active in the political life by increasing the number of women representatives at the parliament in order that women should increase their representation in the Parliament, which is vital to solve women issues. Then she clarified that the women quota is important to strengthen women participation in political life, especially because women in Jordan are still suffering from many social and economic obstacles.

H.E complimented the amended part of the new electoral law of 2012, which made it compulsory to have a minimum one woman from each governorate in the parliament, which stimulates women participation in Jordanian political life. This amendment is a great chance for women movement in Jordan.

H.E. also encouraged the participants to break the cocoon and stop accepting being in the rear seats. She stated that some obstacles started to fade due to the changes in the awareness of women of their rights, but also due to the change in the Jordanian society's perception towards women proving themselves in the different sectors (health, education, ...etc). However they are still

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considered a secondary player in both politics and the economy sector.

Ms. Wafaá supported her statement by talking about her experience and the obstacles she faced until she reached the parliament. Her strategy was to seek the support of the tribe elders by convincing them of her abilities and her achievements, by which as a result they supported her cause afterwards and mobilised supporters and voters. When she became an MP, she became the first lady in the legal committee, which would definitely attract more supporters in the next parliamentary cycle.

In the workshop of Karak, the main speaker **H.E. Dr. Samir Habashneh**, who was a minister and a member at the parliament for several times, stated that there is no difference between women and men before the Jordanian law, and with regard to participating in political life, Jordan was among the first Arab countries which allowed women's access to the parliament but unfortunately, the problem lays in the hands of these women who are ruled by tradition and by the domination of men and tribes. Even though he does not agree with women quota because it brings unprofessional women to the parliament, he considers it as a pavement to bringing back the confidence among women to support each other.

Afterwards, the trainer Ms. Suhair Jaradat started her training by focusing on three topics:

- Women's Rights in the Jordanian Constitution and laws
- Women's Rights in International Conventions
- Obstacles Facing Jordanian Women in Participating in political life
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Ms. Suhair Jaradat started the workshop by pointing out that she has been foiled with

insignificant Arab women movement during the Arab spring, although it has been a golden chance for getting the missed rights.

Ms. Suhair stated the fact that the Jordanian constitution guarantees equality for both gender in all life aspects by giving some examples on laws which were developed in the constitution to meet international standards. She added that it is the responsibility of women to be aware of those laws and to work through them to get more rights.

The trainer tried to stimulate participants' thoughts by giving examples about several laws which didn't give equal rights to men and women, and other laws which included some rights but which are not being implemented on the ground. But she mainly blamed women themselves for marginalizing their own roles.

Ms. Suhair explained then, that Jordan usually seeks to sign the international agreements in order to avoid being backward listed, and to fulfil them as an essential condition to get financial grants. She also added that although Jordan has signed the CEDAW international agreement, it has kept restraints on some articles which are in sharp disagreement within the Jordanian society (e.g a mother has the right to give her nationality to her husband or at least to her children).

Ms. Suhair pinpointed to the fact that there are people who are suspicious of those international agreements, because it comes from the west, but she clarified that most of the articles under those agreements can already be found in the Shariaa' (the moral code and religious law of Islam).

During the last session, participants were divided into three groups; each group was asked to discuss Jordanian women's current situation, the obstacles facing them as well

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as their needs. After the groups' brainstorming sessions, the groups presented and discussed their work results as below:

Jordanian women's current situation:

- The lack of knowledge of her constitutional and international rights,
- Women restrict themselves through customs, traditions and a culture of shame,
- Women waive their rights in inheritance,
- Women don't invoke their rights of holding properties,
- Women's low percentage in holding high positions in the different work sectors,
- Some constitutional laws are not activated in Jordan.

Obstacles facing Jordanian:

- Traditional and cultural constraints,
- Women are not independent as regards their economic situation,
- Educational level,
- The rule of patriarchal society,
- The social status and background,
- Women's surrender toward their status.

Jordanian women needs

- Financial and moral support from the family, society and official authorities,
- Fight the culture of shame,
- Obtain women's rights which are already guaranteed by law and religion,
- Promote and support women's self confidence,
- Obtain a good level of education and knowledge.

After the group work, **Ms. Suhair Jaradat** rearranged and divided the participants into four groups, and then distributed papers containing one suggested recommendation for each participant and asked each group

to discuss and amend on the received recommendations.

- Stop underestimating women abilities while working with the social forces to change the limited and negative image of women in the traditional roles,
- Highlight Jordanian women's achievements in different aspects (politics, economic, social, etc)
- Women's support usually starts from her small family before it comes from the tribe,
- Eliminate social pressure on women to elect certain candidates in the parliamentary elections, and open the way to choose the appropriate one,
- Change society's perception of women's political role is an ongoing process requires a joint effort from all social and political forces,
- Amend the laws and regulations that hinder women's political empowerment,
- Amend laws and legislation to allow real representation of women,
- Provide material, moral and logistical support for women's associations and unions in order to support their goals,
- Promote women's engagement in the economic sector and the labour market,
- Political parties should include special programs to activate women's role in the party and to attract more female members. In addition by-laws should be amended to allow women to reach leadership positions in their parties.

Conclusion

The two workshops provided an excellent forum for discussions and deliberations on women rights, their current situation, obstacles and solutions. The training allowed participants to meet a role model from the north who almost shares the same traditions, obstacles and their situation. The trainer was successful to encourage the participants to share their thoughts towards their problems and could feature some constructive solutions. The participants, who came from different backgrounds, holding different leadership positions, were enabled

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to send the message of the training to their own communities.

Press coverage could be found on the below links:

http://www.petra.gov.jo/public_news/Nws_NewsDetails.aspx?Menu_ID=&Site_Id=2&lang=1&NewsID=87480&CatID=15

<http://hasadjo.com/local>

<http://www.facejordan.com/inews.php?id=546664>

http://www.addustour.com/ViewTopic.aspx?ac=%5CLocalAndGover%5C2012%5C10%5CLocalAndGover_issue1821_day14_id443641.htm

<http://urdoni.com/index.php/محلي.html?start=25>