INSIGHTS INTO GENDER DYNAMICS IN MARGINALISED URBAN COMMUNITIES IN JORDAN

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MARGINALISED URBAN COMMUNITIES IN JORDAN

Report on a qualitative study carried out by the
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Insights into gender dynamics in marginalised urban communities in Jordan

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ACRONYMS

CDC	Community development centre
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DHS	Demographic and health survey
HEIS	Household expenditure and income survey
JOHUD	Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development
PEER	Participatory ethnographic evaluation research

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GENDER RELATIONS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN TWO MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES IN JORDAN
Summary report

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i. Background to the study

This document provides a summary of the main findings of a study into gender relations in selected marginalised communities in Jordan. The study, commissioned by CIDA's Gender and Social Fund and implemented by the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD) was carried out in Sahab and Irbid in 2008.

The study adopted PEER, a participatory research method through which members of the target group (in this case poor and marginalised men and women) investigate the perceptions of their peers from within their own community. In this study, two teams (one for men, one for women) worked in parallel, using the same methodology. This documents summarizes the approach and then presents the findings: first for the men and then for the women. It concludes with an analysis of cross-cutting issues and a set of recommendations. (See annex b for more details of the methodology)

The themed conversations
The peer researchers were trained to carry out in-depth themed conversational interviews on three main areas of interest:
1. Social networks, perceptions of self, daily routines
2. The milestones in the life of a woman /man
3. Views about men and women's roles in work and in political life

Participatory research design and analysis
The design of the research was participatory: the researchers helped identify these thematic areas and the direction and flow of conversation according to their own perceptions of priority issues in their lives. The researchers also helped analyse the data, and provided their own interpretations to inform the analysis in this report.

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The PEER research approach / methodology
PEER is an innovative approach which provides an effective way of gaining an in-depth understanding of the social world of specific communities. PEER uses ordinary community members to conduct detailed interviews with peers from their social network. By tapping into established relationships of trust, PEER generates rich data in the form of narratives that give a depth of insight into how people view their world, conceptualize their behaviour and experiences and make decisions. The PEER approach promotes the voice of marginalised and ensures that outputs are both locally owned and programmatically relevant. PEER has been used in more than 15 countries worldwide. For more information see the annex or consult: http://www.options.co.uk/peer/

The PEER approach: third person techniques

A major feature of PEER is the use of third person interviewing through phrases such as: *"People like you, what do they say?"* Using this technique, the interviewee is less likely to provide 'acceptable' answers, especially in contexts where the subject matter is sensitive.

The PEER approach: anecdotes

The PEER approach also encourages the peer researchers to record popular anecdotes that circulate in the community. Thus a conversation prompt with women might be: *"Women like you, what do they say about their relations with their in-laws? What stories have you heard?* The peer researcher then includes these stories in the interview report.

These anecdotes are not 'true' in the factual sense; indeed some are clearly 'untrue'. However, the very fact that these stories circulate in the community, where they are told, exaggerated and retold is important. Such tales often contain explicit and implicit moral messages that shape the choices available to members of the community, especially women.

The PEER researchers and the training

Using purposive sampling, 60 researchers (30 women, 30 men) aged between 17 and 30 from poor and marginalised communities were recruited to lead this study. Two thirds of the women and one third of the men were married; four of the younger men and six of the women were still in higher education; most of the men were unemployed; none of the women worked. These characteristics were considered 'typical' of the community.

The research process

The men and women were trained separately in the PEER method and supported as they carried out the research interviews. This generated more than

450 written interviews, which formed the raw data for analysis. The lead team then examined all the interviews, looking for common features, stories that recur frequently, situations that are described in many interviews, patterns of relationships and networks, etc.

The research analysis

From this data, the team assembled a detailed picture of the lives of the men and women in this target group:
• The way men and women define their identity and their gender roles,
• Their relationships within the family and beyond,
• The critical moments of their life, and how they deal with them,
• The ways they characterize access to public and private space
• The strategies they adopt to exercise their will,
• The obstacles they face and how they deal with them,
• The sources of support and hindrance,
• The influences from the outside environment etc.,
• The stories that circulate in the community and shape their choices.

How the research findings inform development programming

From the outset, this study was intended as 'action research', which seeks to gain a better understanding of the behaviour of a target group in order to improve the design and delivery of policies, programmes and projects that aim to improve their well being. Through review and feedback, the research team identified certain key recommendations to enhance gender equity between men and women in poor and marginalised communities in Jordan. The findings of this study are available to stakeholders to help them understand poor and marginalised communities:

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The gender research publications

The findings of this study are available in a series of different documents for different audiences

Executive Summary and Main Findings contains the background to the research and a summary of the main findings, the conclusions and the implications for the design and implementation of development interventions. This document is intended to inform a wide public among government, NGOs and academic institutions.

Main Reports on the Men's and the Women's Study provide a summary of analysis with selected quotes and stories from the interviews. The target audience are development professionals who plan and manage development projects.   The annexes provide more information about the context for gender analysis in Jordan, and more details on the PEER method.

Detailed Reports of the Study with Men and Women (available on request in word format) provide the main analysis of the research with a substantial body of data (conversation responses, sound bites, stories and selected interviews). This provides a rich evidence base that can be used for project design and for communications strategies / mass media/ social marketing / behaviour change campaigns. The report targets those with a major role in project implementation and those with an interest in gender studies and the use of qualitative and participatory research methods.

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The style of the next section

This section summarizes the main conclusions that have been drawn from the analysis of the raw data for both men and women. This section aims to be concise and therefore may appear blunt. We have included 'qualifiers' – e.g. '*some men*' '*many women*' - to indicate the degree to which the situation described is widespread, based on the available evidence. In this section, the analysis is integrated into one single narrative, presenting each theme or sub-theme from the perspective of men and then of women. This allows for contrasts to be made between the different perceptions of the men and women who live in the same community. We emphasise that the analysis applies to the specific communities under study and cannot be assumed to reflect national tendencies. We do, however, consider that the views expressed are typical of many poor and marginalised communities.

The structure in the next section

The main conclusions section covers the main themes of the research: identity and social networks, the life cycle, attitudes towards work and political life and the experience of the research process. Throughout the summary of findings we have used 'headers' that indicate the main topic being presented. This helps the reader navigate the text, and also to find the matching sections in the summary report and the detailed annexes.

Identity and gender roles

Among the marginalised communities in this study, perceptions of appropriate gender roles significantly shape life choices and opportunities for men and women.

Gender roles of men

Men's experience of their role lies mainly in the obligation to provide financially for a family; this is difficult to achieve in a context of poverty and limited employment opportunity. Men recognise their peers because they share common characteristics: they choose where they go, what they wear, who they mix with. The constraints they face are factors of poverty not gender.

Gender roles of women

Women experience gender roles as constraints on their scope to make decisions concerning where they go, how they look, who they mix with, and their access to resources and information. These constraints affect almost every aspect of their daily lives from birth to old age. Increasingly, women are speaking out against this situation, seeking to enlarge the area of their lives over which they have influence. Men, on the other hand, still seek to reinforce them.

Women's daily routine

Both men and women assume that marriage and parenthood are the norm; for women this role defines their identity. Women share a daily routine based on child rearing and caring for others. Women occupy a limited space, centred on their own or their relatives' homes. Women have to negotiate permission for trips outside this space (to the market or essential services). Women seek to enlarge their access to public space, and to have more freedom to choose who to spend time with and where.

Men and decision-making

The men in this study assume that their status as a male confers the right to make decisions. Younger, unmarried males defer to their father's decisions, but resent being financially dependent. Married and unmarried men see almost no role for women in decision-making; they enjoy their right to control women's mobility, association and access to information. Women complain that this is unfair and leads to bad decisions.

Socialisation of women

The women note that they are socialized into their gender role from an early age; their mothers play the lead role in this process. As children they had less freedom than their brothers. At puberty their lives were subject to more restrictions on mobility, dress, and association. Many mothers authorize their sons to enforce the rules on their sisters. Most girls lack essential information concerning reproductive health; many were unhappy about their experience of first menstruation. Adolescence also marks the point at which public space is characterized as dangerous for girls; their protection from risk is the responsibility of others (especially their brothers).

Socialisation of men

For these men, adolescence is the period when they form their personality as adults; this involves asserting their right to public space and to spend time with their peers. In Sahab, the men characterise the local culture as linked to 'bad behaviour', especially involving taking drugs and fighting.

Adolescence also creates emotional needs and the desire to mix with females. Men recognize that this is taboo, but still they seek out girls / women with the intention of behaving inappropriately. They gain

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access to information about reproductive / sexual matters through pornography on the internet and on DVDs. Men complain of the lack of male role models: fathers are portrayed as either over-controlling or neglectful, and as unable to communicate with their sons. Young men turn to their peers for support.

Men and marriage

The man's readiness for marriage is linked to his economic status. The average cost of marriage is between JD8 and 10,000; a man is usually 35+ before he has sufficient funds. Emerging strategies to reduce the cost of marriage tend to reinforce the likelihood of marriage within the extended family / tribe. The mother plays the major role in choosing her son's wife; men want more of a voice in this process but lack effective strategies to achieve this.

Women and marriage

For women, first menstruation signals that a girl is now of marriageable status; most women consider 18 / 20 to be the appropriate age for marriage to take place. A woman over 35 is considered too old for marriage. Marriage secures the economic future of a woman; a large dowry is perceived as a form of protection against divorce. Parents choose their daughter's husband; women want more of a voice in the choosing, but are afraid to make decisions. Most women lack information about intercourse before their wedding night; they want their daughters to know about it, but lack confidence to transmit the necessary information.

Marriage and the extended family

Most married women live in an extended family home. For women, a 'good husband' is *one who respects his wife.'* Few women speak positively about their mother-in-law; most see her as a negative force, enforcing the reproductive role of child bearing / rearing and getting her to do the household chores for the extended family. Many women complain that their husband puts his mother's interests before their own. Increasingly, women aspire to live separately from

their in-laws. This trend is also reported amongst men; some men report feeling trapped between conflicts of obligation to their mother and to their wife.

Child bearing

Motherhood is an imperative, the sooner the better; early conception gives status to the new wife and confirms the man's masculinity. Failure to conceive is seen as the woman's fault and, after 12 months. a woman will have to consult a doctor. Men's role in the failure to conceive is only investigated much later. These women identify a woman's failure to conceive as justifying the husband taking a second wife, or getting a divorce.

The birth of a son is rewarded by raised status; birth of a daughter is cause for complaint by others. The sex of a baby is (erroneously) attributed to the mother. After several baby girls, a woman's failure to bear a boy may lead her husband to divorce her or to take a second wife. Young women in the same family may placed in competition against each other to be the first to get pregnant and to deliver sons thereby reducing potential opportunities for solidarity between young wives. Women complain of lack of information about reproductive health / child birth / child rearing.

Married life

Married women complain their lives are boring and their activities lack recognition and status. They have little role in household decision making, restricted interaction with others outside the family, and little opportunity to talk about their concerns. Few attend any activities outside their domestic sphere. Their stories of married life refer to ill treatment and in some cases abuse by their husbands. Women in Sahab talk often of the threat of polygamy.

Women report that men are not often present in the family home. They work, come home to eat and sleep and then go out with friends. They also spend time with their mothers. They do not seem to spend much time at home and / or interacting with their children. Some

fathers regret that they have poor relationship with their own children. Most of these men welcome the possibility of polygamy, but cannot afford it. They use the threat of polygamy to keep their wife in line with her role.

Men's world of work

For men in these communities, work is part of being a man. They are open to '*any job except women's work*'. Most of these men were either unemployed or employed in low skills / low pay employment which left them exhausted and lacking energy for family life. These was little evidence of 'careers'; vocational training was generally dismissed as inappropriate.

Men's views on women and work

Most men had negative views concerning women and work. Some rejected it, citing religion, the physical or mental capacity of women, and incompatibility with fulfilling her gender role. Others accepted the idea, but only for a jobs that conform to her reproductive role (*caring for children, home-based)* and within a framework laid down by men. Most men reject women working in a job that involves gender-mixed locations, travel, or evening work. Working as a nurse or in QIZ factories were identified as totally unacceptable. Men recount stories in which they harass women working in factories. They use this behaviour to justify restrictions on their women working there. With the worsening economic situations , more men accept a working wife who can '*reduce the burden on her husband'*.

Women's views on work

Women's reproductive role is primary, therefore employment is not seen as a priority. The main 'window' for work is between 18 and early 20s (ie after education and before marriage). Women tend to work in a very limited range of jobs, mainly related to child rearing/ girls' education, but wish to enter social work, and office work. They have to seek permission from those in authority and have to agree to 'rules' imposed by their family or husband concerning interaction with men at work, being home on time, and general behaviour.

Women note that nursing is inappropriate and express no interest in 'male' careers (e.g. engineering).

Access to higher education

Increasingly men and women from these marginalised communities are taking up higher education. The men see this in terms of preparing for work; women see it as mainly as a means to improve their marriage prospects. Parents play the lead role in selecting subject to study; for girls this is mainly limited to education. Girls in particular value the opportunity to attend college where they escape restrictions of home life; but may be subject to supervision by their brothers.

Political life

Although men are confident in their decision-making skills and enjoy their authority over women, in general they have little interest in taking an active part in political life, other than voting. They tended to characterize politicians as motivated by self interest, and delivering little value to the community. They have very strong negative views about women entering political life – referring to inadequate skills and also to the negative impact on her home and family if she fails to comply with her gender role and responsibilities. To a large extent, the women in this community shared these views. They had almost no experience of association with others or of a public role.. Although they enjoy the right to vote, they were in general opposed to women standing as candidates. The main reasons were that such women place themselves above other women.

Access to information for girls and women

A consistent thread in the research was that women have little access to important information concerning sexual and reproductive health, employment and career opportunities, and educational choices. As girls / young women they are rarely alone in the house or unsupervised, and TV viewing is almost always censored or subject to channel change. Men, on the other hand, seem to have unlimited access to information, including pornography on satellite TV, DVDs and the internet.

Reactions to role as researchers

The research gave men and women an opportunity to meet with peers, exchange information and begin to identify common causes. Men appreciated the opportunity, felt they gained knowledge and skills, but in general considered the issues trivial and more relevant to 'women' interests. However, the majority view was that their women should not be allowed to carry out such research because it broke most of the gender 'rules '(mobility, association and access to information>. Some men explicitly stated that they feared women meeting together would undermine male authority

Women, on the other hand greatly valued their role as researchers. They identified areas of common concern as women, and they appreciate being able to meet together e and exchange information. Through the research they are beginning to speak out more strongly. They are explicit that men control them and that they do not think this is fair. They want to be able to work in a wider range of jobs – and to be free of some of the restrictions placed on them. They want to associate more freely and to enter public spaces.

Comments on the overall findings

For those who promote gender equity and social inclusion, the findings of this study present a negative and depressing picture. However, the reader has to take into account the research approach and the context of the community under investigation.
In 'action research' , there is inevitably an emphasis on problems that need solutions: in this case, the gender obstacles to women entering the public sphere of work and politics. Moreover, the research approach adopts an analytical framework that includes explicit discussion of the role of patriarchy in shaping the choices and opportunities open to both men and women.

Focus on the most marginalised

The target group were purposively sampled to focus on the poorest and most marginalised men and women. Most live in households around the poverty line. Economic exclusion also correlates with social exclusion; adults in such households are also typically characterized by above-average incidence of unemployment, illiteracy, school dropout, early marriage, polygamy, and with larger-than-average family size. Their stories and comments reflect this reality.

Focus on the men in context

These men reflect that profile; most were unskilled and in low-paid jobs or unemployed. Several were functionally illiterate; the majority of the older men had not completed tawjihi. They expressed almost no confidence in the political processes or the accountability of their representatives. They are intensely frustrated by their situation. Society around them is in transition – but they feel excluded. They are fearful that women of their community will have increased choices and opportunities, and that this will further undermine their own status.

Focus on the women

The situation for the women confirms that gains in gender equality achieved at the national level have yet to trickle down to this marginalised segment of the population. The negative stories are therefore to be expected. Moreover, the women researchers chose to focus on the problems of their lives. They were free to tell positive stories - but they seldom did so.

The balance between negative and positive comments in the report reflect the women's view and the quantity and quality of the raw data they provided. Sections are 'thin' where women had little to say – for example on the positive role of women in politics. The areas that are 'rich' in detail reflect the priority that the women placed on this topic as important to their lives. The common thread throughout the study is that the women themselves comment negatively about the obstacles they face in life, their frustration at lack of opportunity and the role that others play in keeping them in their allotted role.

Diversity of opinions, changing attitudes

However, this in itself is a positive attribute. Women ARE aware of their rights – and they speak positively of those situations where they claim them (the right to vote, the right to education, the right to do this research). The stories of their day to day lives were rich in detail and complex. The variations of opinion among the women were many; most subjects were hotly discussed. The fact there was discussion at all is a positive sign that women are observing, reflecting, evaluating and presenting alternative perspectives. That strengthens the platform for sustainable change from within the community.

Communities in transition

The bulk of the evidence shows that this is a community in transition. Younger men and women presented views that were more challenging of the status quo. Most of them want more voice in choices related to their marriage and family life: the costs of marriage, choice of spouse, timing and number of children. Both younger men and women want to study and have the opportunity for a wider choice of employment. Young men and young women spoke critically about their situation – noting ironies that on the one hand they had choices, but on the other they were constrained. Most commented that their views were different from those of the older generation – and that their personal situation overall was in many respects better.

Both men and women reflected the difficult economic situation was leading to changes in cultural values and that this could play to their advantage when seeking greater control over their lives. They both discussed strategies to cope with the obstacles they face. They talked of punishments, but they were willing to take the risk because they refused to accept the rules they thought were too strict.

Opportunities for a better situation for men

In some respects, the picture for young marginalised men is more depressing than for the women. The research process revealed their limitations in terms of ability to gather information, analyse and discuss problems and see different sides of an argument. As one young man said *'For men it is either 'yes' or 'no'.* The men were far less likely to express aspirations for a better future, and appeared less able to form bonds with their peers to be active agents to influence decisions in their own long term interests. The challenge for development practitioners is to help create the conditions under which these men too can be the winners from increased social economic and political development gains.

Opportunities for a better situation for women

The women, on the other hand, had strong communication skills and were able to share their views with their peers. There were indications of a growing solidarity between these women, who reported feeling empowered by their role – and want to continue as peer educators in the community. The foundation is there for organisations that actively promote gender equity to introduce programmes that strengthen these bonds among the women of all ages, so that they have the knowledge, tools and support to lead this process of social change from within their own communities

Using PEER findings to inform decisions

The research findings provide a rich body of evidence to inform decisions concerning development interventions . In the next section, we present selected development objectives that promote greater gender equity and inclusion. We identify potential constraints to the optimal effectiveness of such interventions in these communities. We then make a series of recommendations for amendments to development interventions or new policy and programmatic approaches.

These sections are indicative only - to illustrate the ways that the research can be used. A follow-up report is planned to summarise feedback and to provide real-life examples of the ways that this study has been used as an evidence base for decision-making that leads to better outcomes. That is the ultimate objective of action research.

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Objective: To enhance women's involvement in the formal labour market in order to bring about economic empowerment

Typical constraints	Potential opportunities
• This is not a priority for these women – investment may not deliver the anticipated returns • Restrictions on mobility / association /access will be major obstacles • Women with little voice in financial decisions are unlikely to control their wages • A job may undermine a woman's ability to meet her primary duty in the home – and she may get replaced and therefore end up in a worse situation • The context does·not favour investment in micro-enterprise / micro-credit targeting marginalised women • Certain workplaces are characterized as '*sexual*' and therefore off-limits	• Focus on areas where women do want to work (social work, family counseling, office work, banking) • The current economic climate is reducing opposition to women working and is therefore a motivator for social marketing targeting husbands, fathers and mothers-in-law. • Help create women-safe markets (for buying and selling) so women are exposed to more ideas, supplies and products – and begin to explore public space • Challenge male sexualisation of work space - and harassment at work

Objective: Enhancing women's enjoyment of public space and common goods

Typical constraints	Potential opportunities
• Gender roles restrict women to the home • Sexualisation of public space by peers and other community members • Women's fear of the dangers of public space especially after dark • Lack of 'safe' and affordable public utilities in the area	• Create safe space for women and family (e.g. protected parks) • Street lighting and better access to public transport • Work with traders and community to create women-friendly markets / coffee shops

Objective: Enhancing women's active role in the political arena

Typical constraints	Potential opportunities
• Political life is not seen as a priority for either men or women. • All politicians are perceived as self-serving (regardless of gender). • Weak foundation for women's association / representation even at the informal level • Lack of solidarity between women of every age and class	• Consolidate women's enjoyment of the right to vote freely – strengthen decision-making / voice • Start at local *jamaiyya* level – building skills of representation • Create stronger links between development organisations and local politicians

Objective: Enhance women's enjoyment of rights and entitlements

Typical constraints
- Patriarchal values place multiple obstacles at household level
- Females still face discrimination at every stage of life
- Restricted mobility hinders women from accessing service providers
- Constraints on access to information means that many women may not know their rights or how to claim them.
- Women often collude with male authority against the best interests of other women
- Access to higher education is subject to many restrictions

Potential opportunities
- Massive campaign to inform that the sex of the baby is determined by the father's sperm.
- Promote association and information exchange between women so they see common cause and provide solidarity
- Provide support to older women (menopausal) to reduce pressure on their daughter-in-law.
- Use peer-to-peer apporach to disseminate information about reproductive health and rights
- Train women and men in communication and negotiation
- Encourage role models from the community to speak out for women's rights
- Create links between community and university / colleges and local parents

Objective: Enhanced rights and entitlements for marginalised men

Typical constraints
- Limited job opportunities for marginalised men
- Lack of positive role models for males
- Lack of opportunity to engage positively with their family (parents, wife, children)
- Weak communication skills to express and resolve personal problems
- Distorted access to information concerning reproductive health
- Most men (all social groups) share patriarchal views and reinforce each other
- Lack of male-friendly community spaces or affordable leisure space
- Young men under-perform at school and are ill-equipped for new employment

Potential opportunities
- Promote vocational training – and in a wider range of sectors to meet labour market needs
- Peer-to-peer rights-based mentoring and role models for younger men
- Communication and negotiation skills
- Offer father / son programmes
- Use economic issue to motivate men to relax their restrictions on women taking up employment
- Use economic situation to promote family planning - the audience is responsive to this factor
- Inform men about reproductive health to challenge pornography
- Encourage men in aid agencies to challenge their own patriarchal attitudes; develop them as role models / leaders for other men
- Provide employability skills training
- Create male-friendly spaces within community centres
- Recognize that some young men are physically abused by fathers… build solidarity with sisters

GENDER RELATIONS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN TWO MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES IN JORDAN

1. Main report on the men's study

"Our mothers raised us in this way" man, Sahab

The structure of the main report on the men's study

Focus on the men

Although the Main Conclusions section integrates the different perspectives of men and women and compares and contrasts the views on specific themes and sub-themes, in the next two sections, the summary reports for men and women are treated separately. This reflects the research process – where the male and the female teams were trained and supervised separately and did not interact on the issue of the research. This structure also allows for an easier story line to develop, based on the different priority interests of the two groups.

The main themes

The men's summary report follows the same structure as the main themes of the research (Identity and social networks, life cycle, attitudes towards work and political life, followed by their reflections on the experience of research.

Headers for sub-themes

Each section is broken down into sub-themes and provided with a 'header' that aims to capture the main issue covered in that section. These headers act as 'sign-posts' to navigate the text and search for specific issues of interest (eg polygamy, adolescence etc) . The headers also allow the reader to match the conclusions with the more detailed analysis and examples provided in the annexes.

The lead researchers' analysis

The main body of text, on the left of the page, provides a summary of the analysis made by the lead researchers drawing from the raw data, backed by their research assistants and validated by professional development staff working in these marginalised communities.

Stories from the community

The stories provided by the researchers and their peers are included in the body of the text with a shaded background to differentiate them from the authors' text.

Statements from the community

The report draws heavily on comments from the researchers and their peers. They have been chosen to illustrate the analytical point being made, and to provide insights into the ways that the target communities characterizes their own world.

This data is presented in italics so that the reader is able to differentiate between the raw data and the authors' analysis. Most of these statements are set out in the side column.

GENDER RELATIONS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN TWO MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES IN JORDAN

1. Main report on the men's study

1.1 Men's identity and social networks

Men, mobility and association

The men in these communities are confident of their identity. They recognize their peers by virtue of the key characteristics that they select as defining their identity: the public spaces they inhabit, their choice of clothing and their association with chosen friends. They are visible, mobile and active in the public domain. These attributes are precisely the ones that women are denied by the men of this community.

People with our clothes
People we walk with
People we drink coffee with
People with the same mindset

Identity, family and tribe

The men also refer to their identity as being poor (as opposed to rich). They link poverty or wealth status as an attribute of membership of a tribe rather than resulting from employment or from individual effort. They did not question the position of the rich; nor did they seem to consider that they could join the ranks of the better off as a result of their own actions

There are two kinds of people in Sahab - rich and poor.

Some tribes from Sahab are rich and powerful. They have fancy houses, cars, mobiles, maybe a girlfriend.

The men characterize their lives as in transition. They are critical of some of their traditions (*addat*) such as those that waste money, but wish to retain those that give them authority over women. Men are aware that the 'old certainties' are being called into question and they are nervous about their role in this changing context. There was little evidence of them feeling that they are active agents in their lives, that they can determine their own futures, other than within the home once they are married.

The poor criticize and tell tales on the poor ... but not on the rich.

We hate some of our old customs because they no longer fit the times we live in now… especially for marriage. Like having the lunches and parties etc.

Use of free time

In practice, men's mobility is constrained by poverty: there are few places they can go within their available funds. Married men who are in work report being exhausted by their jobs and spend the whole time working or looking for more work. 'Free time' is therefore not much discussed by married men.

Time is spent working or looking for work.

Younger men

Young men tend to have lots of free time: '*the whole long day*'. But compared to married men, they have fewer choices where to go and what to do because they depend on parents for pocket money. As a result, they spend time at home with their family; they characterize this time as boring and frustrating. They accuse their families of spying on them, and constantly nagging them to behave differently (*work, study, get a job*). They want to spend time with their peers, who understand them and give them support. But the culture of paying for others means they are cannot participate, so they stay home.

Decision-making

The dominant view is that men have the right to make decisions because they are men. They say that they consider options, they sometimes consult, but in the end, it is their opinion and decision that counts. Most importantly, the man has to be seen to be the decision-maker; his authority is not to be questioned – even when he is wrong. Fathers make life-decisions on behalf of their sons.

The men in this study justify men's right to make decisions concerning expenditure '*because they earn the money*'. This same logic is not applied when women bring earnings into the home. Men state that, given more funds, they would spend it on the family, but they also believe they '*deserve*' to spend some on themselves. Men are critical of spending on entertainment – especially lavish wedding parties. They regard this as a waste of resources.

Women and decision making

The majority of these men dismiss the concept that women can or should make decisions. They support their view by reference to their interpretation of the Koran, to biology and to women's personality. Above all, they assert their right to make decisions over woman in respect of her mobility, appearance and association with people outside the family. Married men are characterized as playing an active role in enforcing this right. Some reportedly use force if necessary. Most do not question their role as decision-makers – and they treat debate on this issue as largely irrelevant.

A man does not want to appear wrong

One day, I brought home a plant. I knew it could not live inside the house, but I insisted. My wife tried to take it outside but I refused. Three days later, when the plant started to die, I started blaming my wife and telling her that it was her fault because she had not taken good care of the plant.

Our relatives are like spies. They tell our parents where we are and who we are with.

Our friends are the only people we want to spend time with. They give us the care that we need and they help. They share the same thinking and emotions. We feel comfortable.

I make decisions, because I am a guy, and I have the right way of thinking.

In front of others, a man must show the personality of the decision-maker. Sometimes he can discuss, but in the end it's his decision.

If the woman's opinion is not appealing to me, this means that it is wrong.

Women have small minds.

We were raised that women have no right to speak or take decisions ... all outside decisions are mine.

From the beginning of our marriage, we make sure that our wives get used to our right to make decisions, even by using force, until it becomes the norm.

The head of home makes financial decisions– it's HIS money because he earns it.

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1.2 The life cycle of men

Adolescence

The men note that adolescence is the period when they shape their identity as adults; they report that they are active agents in this process. As adolescents, they feel the need for the company of young women / girls, but they know that such interaction is taboo. They admit that they seek out young women, especially at schools and universities. They try to make contact by phone, to arrange to meet and sit with girls.

Many of them say that they initiate such relations because they want to 'do bad things' and that they will apply pressure and harass girls if they refuse. Some men believe that girls who agree to sit with them are in effect indicating that they are available for 'bad things'. Some men use their actions and the activities of their male peers to justify the restrictions they place on their sisters. In these stories, they seldom criticise the behaviour of the men who misbehave.

We are not used to speaking with women outside our immediate family - it means bad behaviour.

If I sit with a girl, it's because I want to do bad things with her, I know this.

If she agrees to sit with you, you can be sure she will agree to bad things…. she will do anything.

The girl may get the blame for men's bad behaviour
There was a young girl in school. Her brother used her to get the phone number of other girls in the school. He started calling those girls. His sister was helping him. But we are afraid for our sisters from such girls.

The men say they know about sex and mainly get this information from internet pornography. They say this is wrong, but still they do it. They say they would have preferred to get the information from their father.

Men like us make bad use of the internet – they view sites that are bad… even though there are good sites.

Adolescence and aggressive behaviour

Adolescence is characterized as a period of fighting between groups of youth. They state that they settle problems *with their fists* rather than through discussion. Youth in Sahab get involved in fights based mainly based on family / tribal affiliation. Some would prefer not to support their 'tribe' when they are wrong, but they fear criticism from relatives.

We wish we had got it from our fathers because it would be more like the real and right things. Instead of doing things we don't like.

I am a man … we hit and beat to get our rights.

Young men question loyalty to the tribe and family
OI hate it when I see two people fighting and one is my cousin. I directly start to hit the other person, even if I don't know why. But many times we are sure that it's our relative who started the fight or who did the wrong thing. But I have to join in because of our customs' If I don't , the other relatives will complain that I was bad.   If I was out of Sahab, I would not have to do this.

If I don't do it, the other relatives will complain that I was bad.

Drug taking

The marginalised youth of Sahab actively create the impression that Sahab is a 'bad' 'dangerous' place; they speak with some pride of this bad reputation. They recognize that at this period of life, their choice of friends carries risk; their parents (and especially their fathers) urge them not to mix with the '*wrong type*' of young men. The '*wrong type*' includes young men who take drugs. In Sahab, drug-taking appears to be a common part of the local culture among marginalised youth. The youth do not really express strong views against this behaviour; on the contrary, among some marginalised young men it appeared to be an issue of pride / identity. In focus groups, young men told stories with a moral message. against drug taking. But the majority of their comments were far less critical of drug-taking.

A moral tale: the perils of drug-taking

There was a university student who started to take drugs. Then he got lazy and at the end he had to leave school. Then he started to depend on crime to get money. He was caught stealing and got sent to prison. As a result his father had a heart attack and died.

Risky behaviour and role models

The men were aware of the temptations of inappropriate / risky / bad behaviour concerning drugs, pornography etc. They stated that they would prefer not to engage, but they also acknowledged that they did not always resist the temptation. They spoke often about the lack of strong male role models in their family and community to advise them, guide them and to help them resist such temptations. In particular they spoke critically of their fathers who were charaterised as either absent and careless of the situation of their sons, or else were controlling and restricting of their sons. Most of the men stated that there was very poor communication between fathers and their sons and that they wished that were not the case. Young men resent being treated badly by their father in front of their peers.

Young men do not like to lose face in front of their peers

The father did not allow his son to bring his friends home, because they have sisters at home. One day the father was away and the son asked his mother to allow him to bring his friends. The father came home unexpectedly and he hit the son in front of all his friends. That devastated the son.

A quarter of the men round here spend half their money on their leisure – and that means on drugs.

They try drugs and they know that is it not good. But they keep taking them.

It's easy to reach bad things easily… it's hard to get the good things.

We make rumours about Sahab that it's dangerous, there are murders, they take drugs, have bad habits.

There are no models for young guys We don't have encouragement to have hopes and aspirations.

If I waited for my father to take an interest, I would never have done the tawjihi.

It's either full control or else they have given up.

Fathers should talk to their sons to help them understand and to reassure them.

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Relations with others

There was a point of tension for younger men that they were financially dependent on their parents, and they came into conflict when they asked their father for money. Younger men tended to express the belief that they had the right to pocket money and that their fathers were unreasonable in not granting them their request. They also commented on the frustration that lack of money was an obstacle to them getting married.

Adolescence is a period of change and uncertainly; the young men noted that they have personal and emotional problems at this stage. They choose to talk to their peers, who understand their issues. They stated forcefully that they never talk to their parents about relationships or emotional problems. The young men are aware that they are treated differently from their sisters, but they portray this as impacting negatively on themselves (our sisters hate us) – rather than questioning whether their sisters are treated fairly. They enjoy the traditional right to exercise power over their sisters.

Access to higher education

In these communities, poverty is less of a barrier to higher education than in the past, and many younger men attend university. Parents exercise a strong influence over the field of study. These young men tend to take courses which develop skills that will be used in the workplace- and favour subjects such as engineering.

Some men characterize the university as a 'bad place' because it involves men and women mixing in the public space. This interaction is perceived as permissive towards inappropriate sexual activities. The dorms, where young women live away from home and without family supervision are particularly singled out for the most negative comments. Some men complain that this distracts them from study.

A young man explains why his sisters should not study

I have a tawjihi, but didn't go university because it's a bad place. There are all these stories. If you go there what do you see? All these boys and girls on the corridors, all these girls dressed in fancy clothes.

I hate all universities. I have many sisters, but none of them will go to university, not even if they are excellent at school.

Fathers hit and shout and make your life hell if you even ask for half a JD.

If there were no red lines, we could consult with our fathers. But we are not used to speaking with them on private issues.

We always got the best, I feel that our sisters hate us for this.

Some habits we love: that we have the rights in family and that we control our sisters. Our mothers raised us in this way.

At university, it affects the guys that they spend time watching girls – not studying.

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Women and higher education

Some men reject the idea of women taking up higher studies, or if they are permitted, believe that they should only study a narrow range of subjects. They are most concerned about them accessing inappropriate information, staying out late and being unsupervised. They characterise women students as displaying their bodies to gain preferential treatment. Some men state forcefully that they will act to prevent their sisters from entering this space.

From the comments of men, one can infer that some of these extreme negative reactions occur when young men feel jealous of their sisters who are entering 'their' space and out-performing them. Many of the men's stories end up with the woman leaving university and then '*staying at home doing nothing*'.

> **A moral tale about a girl at university**
>
> There was a young girl at university who got friendly with a group of women, but they were bad. They started making her bad like them. So she started taking off her scarf when at university. She started to smoke and do bad things. When her family discovered, they stopped her going to university. Now she is at home.

Marriage

Marriage and a family are the norm; marriage provides stability, comfort and status. The right age for a man to marry is related to his financial assets (not to age, maturity or social status). In these communities a man is usually over thirty before he has sufficient money. Increased economic hardship means men are waiting longer. Being older is not seen as an obstacle to finding a wife. After the age of thirty, w omen, however, are perceived as '*past marriage*'. Such women are portrayed as eager for marriage on any terms (e.g. *paying for costs, or being a second wife)*. In extreme cases such women are portrayed as *desperate for sex*.

Strategies to cut the cost of marriage

Men are concerned that the rising cost of marriage badly affects their position in the pool of potential husbands. They note the strategies being adopted to reduce the cost of marriage, including keeping financial transactions private and cutting back on celebrations. Such strategies require common understanding between the two families; this reinforces the likelihood of marriage between relatives and within tribes.

Women should not go to university, because even women's brains are different from men's brains.

Because at university the girls use their bodies and their looks and their status as females and they go to the professors' offices.

The financial issue also prevents us attending university. So they say bad things because they can't go anyway.

The unmarried man wants to get married. The married man wishes that he was not married.

If you have no work you have no income, so you forget about marriage.

Guys can get married at 40 and still have a young lady.

An older woman will marry an old man and be his nurse.

An older woman won't be able to get married, so she will have sex.

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The selection of a wife

When a man is ready for marriage it is his mother who plays the strongest role in the selection of his wife. Mothers are perceived as preferring a girl they know, rather than one the son chooses. Most men still appear to prefer to marry within the extended family. Some explicitly state they want an uneducated wife who will defer absolutely to the authority of her husband.

The men want more of a role in choosing their wife. They are, however, apprehensive about making bad choices, and then not getting support. They note the limited opportunity to meet young women and to get to know them before they get married. However, women with whom they have become friends are not considered suitable; their act of friendship brings their reputation into question.

Marriage and the woman's future

The men did not express many comments about marriage and 'romantic love' for women. The dominant view was that women marry to secure their economic future, and that a woman was entitled to choose the man with more resources. They did however speak out against fathers who demand too much money when an honest man approaches for his daughter's hand.

It's 'right' for a girl to marry for money

There was a man who fell in love with a girl who loved him too. But when a richer man, an engineer, came and asked, she married him.
At first he felt bad. But then he realized that she was right because that man had money.

Men's expectations from marriage and family life

The men were reluctant to talk about their wedding night and the intimate / emotional side of married life. In the research, peers would simply ask the researcher to move to the next question. In the debrief, there was a strong impression that the men considered such issues to be trivial, and more appropriate for 'women's talk'.

Most married men say they spend their time working or looking for work. At the end of the day, they are tired and appear to have little time for their family. Home is the place where they eat and sleep. Some men complain of unwelcoming wives who neglect their household duties. Many prefer to spend free time mainly with their friends and out of the house.

The parents love the girl that they know to be the wife for their son. More than the girl that a man chooses for himself.

If you marry a graduate, she may act as if she is superior to you.

I don't want anyone to interfere in the choice of my wife. Because I am the one that will live with her, not my family.

How to choose a wife if you only meet her for half an hour?

The father doesn't ask himself if the man is kind, will he respect her, will he beat her? All that matters is the amount of money the son-in-law will pay.

Fathers treat their daughter like an object they wish to sell at a specific price.

There are problems between couples because of sex.

A man comes home from work and wants to sleep. That's why he needs all his things done.

He wants to see his wife looking happy, laughing. But she just starts complaining.

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Conflicting obligations to mother and wife

Some married men state that they are torn between their obligations to their parents (and especially their mother) and their desire to have an easy life with their wife. As a result, those that can afford it are looking to set up independent housing. Many unmarried men state they will not look for a wife until they have enough money to live independently from the time they get married.

I will go crazy if I live near my parents. I will never have any rest because that's my mother, and that's my wife.

If you spoil your boys they become bad.

Men on child rearing

The men did not talk at length about their role as fathers; child-rearing is presented as the role of the wife / mother and was not a subject of any real comment. Most of the men accepted the concept of family planning – because they are constrained by their lack of money. Some fathers commented that they treat their sons more severely than their daughters. Others say they perpetuate with their children the same unsatisfactory relationships they had with their fathers. A few stated that they want a better relationship with their own children

If a woman has many kids, she can't look after them all, and they can't give her what she needs either.

I faced a problem in childhood with my father. I will never forgive myself if I pass this on to my kids. I want a better life for them.

A man regrets the way he treats his kids

I know that they respect me at home because they fear me. Even my child tries to smile out of fear. I know that this is not healthy. I used to hit my son to show him that I am the man at the house. He has started to hate and fear me. Why? I do not want to deal with my kid in this way.

The moment we get married we forget that we had fathers.

Polygamy

Most of the men accepted the concept of polygamy (more so in Sahab than Irbid). Most saw it as a right, and an option for men in their community. However, the main obstacle was that they lacked sufficient funds. Some men considered finding a working woman as a second wife. Many admitted that they use the threat of polygamy to control their wife.

In Sahab, if a man has extra money he will take another wife.

If you take care of your first wife and family, no one would say anything about you if you take a second wife.

A second wife may also cause problems to the husband

There was a married man whose wife was not good, so others encouraged him to get another wife. So he did … But then she started making problems with him, and he said that he wished he had stayed with his first wife. And so he divorced both of them.

If my wife stops being nice to me… I will tell her "I will take a second wife."

These (discussions about relation-ships) are not issues for men.

The men note that they do not discuss their relationships and their problems with others. In extreme cases married men talk to their brothers and as a last resort their father. There was little evidence of men talking to their wives about their problems.

Men use new technologies to access information of a sexual nature

The men have access to new technology such as the internet and mobile phones. They comment that they use these tools to access / exchange information that is sexual in content. They use mobiles to establish (inappropriate) contact with young women. They characterize these tools as inappropriate for women, because they believe women will use them for similar purposes to men.

Talking on the mobile is bad because it opens their (women's) eyes to secret issues.

Talking with men on the phone leads to bad things

A schoolgirl was talking on the phone with a man ... without her parents knowing. She met him, and when her family found out they beat her and said she was bad

'orfi' relationships

The men also speak about the emergence of 'orfi' relationships, where the man and woman marry without an official contract. Judging by the men's comments, this trend appears to be on the increase. In these stories, the woman is seen to pay the price for such a relationship, typically by being placed in protective custody. The man is not reported as being punished.

A friend fell in love with this woman. She loved him very much. She was a bad woman - easy prey. She's a student in the university. They rent an apartment and they live there together like husband and wife.

Women pay the price of orfi marriage

There is a young lady in her 20s she got married orfi style. The witnesses were the man's friends. She got pregnant by him. She went to the police station because she was afraid of her family. The police found that the man was making counterfeit money and documents. She was placed in jail for her protection. Now she has a baby and she's still in jail.

A man uses orfi to destroy a woman's reputation

There was a girl in college. A guy went to her family to ask for her in marriage but the family refused because they think he's a bad guy with a bad reputation. So he said he would have her anyway. He went to the police station to say that he had her in orfi marriage. She had many problems She was taken into protective custody for three days. Her family made her leave the college. Now she's at home doing nothing.

Work and male identity

For the men in this study, work is an imperative, and an integral part of their identity as men (and that which differentiates them from women). Education is primarily seen as a means to gain skills for work. Work is characterized as important because it provides money. Work is exhausting, and not personally rewarding. Men with a day job often seek an evening job.

The employment situation is portrayed as desperate – with few jobs available and intense competition. The older men are largely unskilled. Young graduates are entering a competitive labour market (and even having to compete with women). The men did not refer to any institutional support in getting jobs, but relied mainly on informal links and their family and friends.

Employment opportunities and choices

Most men have a limited choice of jobs. They state they will do anything, but will NOT accept work they consider more appropriate to women, such as working from home or dealing with small children. In spite of the low skill base locally, most men did not value the role of vocational training and the sector of 'trades and crafts'. Some parents and youth dismissed vocational training as beneath their status. This resistance may be weakening. Those who were forced to do vocational training report that, with hindsight, this was a positive move.

A father rejects vocational training for his son

There was a young guy did not want to study at university. He wanted to go towards vocational work. His father told him not to go, that it was the lowest form of work. He started shouting and arguing with his son for thinking in that stupid way. His father thinks it is a mark of shame that his son goes to vocational training.

The men are critical of the use of child labour, and state that it is against the child's rights. At the same time, they justify it when the family is poor or the child unsuited to learning. Disturbingly, the dominant discourse is critical of the child labourer himself rather then his parents / employer.

We know that the men should go out to work and the women should stay at home. The man earns the money, the woman builds the home.

Whatever kind of work - it all becomes suitable if you get money from it. Especially if it covers the man's material needs.

The men who do not work can feel aggressive and angry towards everything in life.

Almost all kinds of job except those which are done at home or working with small kids in a KG.

The working guy's life is not good but he has an ambition to be better.

Those who are taxi drivers have a hard time. They work long hours. They want to come home, eat and sleep. They don't sit with the kids and their wife.

It's work, sleep, work, sleep.

(Child labour) makes the child become a bad person, without manners. He will learn to smoke cigarettes. He will teach his brothers to steal and to have bad habits.

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A child labourer - at risk

This guy's brother did not understand anything at school. They used to beat him to make him study, but it was useless. They made him leave school when he was 12 and he went to work at a car repair shop. He has done well - after three years he can teach others. But the guy has to keeps an eye on his brother at home and at work.; he makes sure he is exhausted and goes to sleep so that he won't do anything wrong.

Men's views on women and work

The majority of the men spoke against their women working. The reasons men give that women should NOT work were mainly related to the primacy of their reproductive role (home, children, caring). Working women's families would suffer.

In particular, the men rejected the idea of work that required that women would come into contact with men. The mixed workplace is portrayed as a highly sexualized environment in which women are subject to abuse from male managers who were acused of using their authority to get women to behave inappropriately. Some men implied that working women seek such attention. Others expressed the fear that a working woman will have a stronger personality than her husband. The accumulation of all these negative attributes concerning working women is perceived as likely to lead to problems to the home and the family: this brings divorce. There was also a general view that dismissed women's work as non-essential, and as displacing men from employment opportunity.

Economic hardship and working women

However, there was another discourse that said that a woman could work because of the difficult economic situation. The justification for working women was portrayed as lifting the burden off the men. Those women who are allowed to work carry this role out in a very restricted framework in terms of choice of job, mobility, hours worked, and behaviour in work Men think it is appropriate that the woman hands her earnings over to her husband.

Economic pressures lead to changes in gender roles

Five years ago most men would refuse a working woman and he would prefer to have the management of money in his hands. But with the rise in the cost of living, the men are starting to say that these things are OK so as to build a family.

The only role for a woman is to stay at home cooking, washing, cleaning.

We fear for women working in a mixed environment. It's all about honour.

She wants to wear make up and attract men to her.

If women work it will split her family – and lead to divorce.

Young women get jobs – even if they have no experience – they have more chance than young men.

(When a woman works) it helps men carry the obstacles of life.

Some husbands take a written paper from their wives so that she gives him her salary and she does not have the right to ask about it.

Men's views on QIZ factories

The men identify the QIZ factories as particularly inappropriate as a work place for women in their community. The main objection is that there is sexual harassment. They know this is true, because their peers admit to seeking out women in QIZs and engaging in inappropriate behaviour. They characterize women working in QIZs as complicit in such behaviour. They state that they need to protect 'their' women from such a situation.

Men's views on nursing

The men also single out nursing as an unacceptable job for women. They object to the issue of the use of public transport and shift work, as well as the necessity to come into contact with men's bodies. Again, they characterise nursing as leading to inappropriate sexual activity, and accuse female nurses of complicity. They do not want 'their women' to be nurses.

The overall impression from the study is that these men are resistant to the idea of women working outside the home. They place obstacles in the path of those who do work. They characterize the working space as dangerous - and they recognize their own role in creating this danger. Women who choose to work there are not to be trusted.

Men's views on women in the political sphere

In the focus groups to prepare this research, the men stated that women can meet together and join associations. However, in their comments and stories, they reveal that they do not in fact allow 'their women' to participate in this way. They question women's mental and emotional suitability for such roles. They doubt their organisational and decision-making skills. They accuse those women who are active politically of using their bodies to influence other men. They raise their fears that when women get together they may challenge male authority.

1.4 Men's views on the research role

Research - a public role

Participation in the peer research process involved the men in a new set of roles in the family and community. They went out and met people, asked them questions, accessed information and wrote it down. They reported back to the group and he joins in discussions about intimate aspects of life. They analysed the comments of others, made value judgments about the lives of their peers.

Do not dream of being a pharmacist or working in a factory even if you will earn JD1,000.

I have known 150 girls (at the QIZ). They have no respect and have bad reputations.

I know, I met with women. I do not want my wife or daughter to be subjected to this.

My sister graduated in nursing. The stories we hear about nursing, some of them are true but not as many as they say. I trust my sister, but I don't trust the people she will interact with.

Women aren't well organized, they don't work within the rules, they can't make laws or give instructions, and they are less qualified than men.

They will spend time outside the house; that this will impact on home life.

They should cancel the quota; women don't have the ability to be in that position.

It's the first time I have been involved in a study like this, and having to write.

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In this respect, the role of a researcher has brought him into a new public sphere, with much in common with a political role. The men noted that they had to renegotiate their role as researchers in front of their peers, and that being 'like them' was an advantage because their peers were more willing to open up.

Before I didn't think, my role was to ask these questions... now I feel curious.

Performance as researchers in the public sphere

The process of adopting this new role was challenging for the men, and for the trainers / research facilitators. The men were clearly more comfortable with male trainers than with female trainers. They adopted more formal seating / working arrangements and were less inclined to refer to their own experiences of a personal nature. The drop-out rate among men was quite high. The reports of the interviews they carried out were 'thin' both in terms of quantity and also the depth and complexity of the response. The men were far less inclined to collect and report 'stories' from the community than were the women.

You already asked me that, why are you asking again?

We asked: do men like you make decisions? The response was often: "Of course? Are you silly? "

We asked the questions about things like the wedding night and suddenly his faced changed. He said: I have work... time to go.

From feedback, the researchers commented that their peers found many of the questions '*silly', 'not important', 'repetitive'.* A frequent response was that the answer was self evident, and that the researcher was foolish for even asking. This was especially true concerning the questions about men's authority and his role in decision-making.

They also stated that some issues that made their peers uncomfortable and embarrassed, especially those that referred to their experience of puberty and the wedding night. Only when debriefing with them one-on-one did we get the sense that men wanted to talk about challenging personal issues. This was in stark contrast with the women.

Gaining new skills

The men stated that they now have better communication skills, can initiate discussions with their peers and that they have stored the information gained in order to play a stronger role in advising others. With the men there was more of an attitude that the techniques helped them '*manipulate'* their peers in order to get access to secrets. The need for secrecy was linked to the role of the '*mukhabarat'.* This contrasts with the women's response; women had more difficulty getting their peers to stop telling them stories, and had their peers friends demanding to be in the research and tell their story too.

By asking others - it's as if I am asking myself.

We have new methods of knowing the secrets of other people's lives.

With my friends we are not used to dialogue and long conversations.

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Relevance of the research

During the debrief they noted that the focus of this study was more appropriate to the interests of women (opinions, feelings, discussion) than of men (money, economic issues, work). They also noted that as men they are not used to having long discussions or to considering issues in depth. They assumed that the women would go into these issues in more depth. For some of the men, that was a concern

Men's attitudes to women carrying out the research

Most of the men expressed negative views about 'their' women doing such research, citing incompatibility with their primary reproductive role, and the restrictions on mobility and interaction with outsiders. They were concerned that she would access 'taboo' information and that, as a woman, she did not have the necessary skills to deal with this information. Many expressed the concern that she might share the information with others, and that, as a collective group they would act in ways that led to an undermining of male authority.

Men express the concerns about women doing this research

If they meet as a group and each presents an idea, that might not be good, because we cannot control the dialogue. Everybody will have an opinion. There might be bad things that might affect. Now the younger girls know things that older people don't know

When they meet as a group they will learn more how to dialogue and have discussions. Like us, we men used to say things without thinking. Now through the research, we can deal with this information. But women should not get into this. Our fear is that we don't want women to be subject to these bad things . Why not close the door on these things?

These comments are extremely valuable: they present a real picture of how men react when they see the women of their community stepping outside their role. Thus the men's reactions and responses are not 'in theory' (what do you think of women's rights, women's voice?) but in practice (how do you respond when women take on roles in the public sphere?). There is a gap between what they say, and what they do.

One man comments on women and research

I would not allow my sister to do this research. She's a woman. For a man it's OK. I am resolving my issues, I am building my confidence, I am learning. I can deal with the information. A girl learns from education but within a framework of traditions and from her husband.

Maybe because we are men we are not used to giving answers to questions. It's either 'yes' or 'no'. With girls they have to give answers and explain.

I assume girls will talk more. Because they are more open.

Because girls are restricted and they need someone to talk to.

What are they (women) going to learn?
How will they benefit from it?

Why shouldn't women do the research? Because:
- *They already have their own work load - cooking, cleaning*
- *It's OK as long as it does not affect my daily program*
- *The most important thing is to know exactly where she is going*
- *If she goes from door to door then this is not OK*

Obstacles to gender equity

This summary of the study into the lives of poor and marginalized men in Sahab and Irbid provides a portrait of a group of men who, to a large extent, actively enforce the gender roles that restrict the women in their community from claiming and enjoying their equal rights. The men themselves speak proudly of their role in this respect – asserting that they are motivated by the desire to 'protect' women from the risks and dangers in public space. Married men also claim and enjoy their rights to make decisions in the household; unmarried men enjoy their right to exercise their authority over their sisters.

From the perspective of those promoting women's equal rights in Jordan, these men evidently represent a problem. They play a key role in preventing women's 'rights on paper' from being translated into 'rights in practice' for a significant number of women. Their role undermines attempts to increase women's participation in the public arena – whether in the labor force or in the political sphere. Through their actions they represent an obstacle to sustainable and equitable development in Jordan.

However, in many respects, it would be unfair to blame them for this situation. The men's stories and comments reveal that they are also clearly excluded and restricted from participation in society. Their economic marginalization is to be expected: the researchers were purposively sampled to focus on the poorest segment of the population (the 15% on or around the poverty line). Economic exclusion also correlates with social exclusion – these men had been let down by an education system that failed to meet their needs: many of the male researchers were

functionally illiterate; the majority of the older men had not completed tawjihi. Their comments on local leaders demonstrated that they have little confidence in the political processes or the accountability of their representatives.

The role of men as the breadwinner

A common thread through the research is that these men are very frustrated. They are unable to fulfill the gender role into which they were socialized as boys and young men. Their identity as men is linked to the ability to fulfill the responsibility to assure financial security for their family. Yet, as unskilled men they have little access to permanent employment other than in low-paid jobs.. Their poverty means that most men expect to wait until their late thirties before they can marry and have a family. This extended 'waithood' , where they live at home, dependent on their father for money, with limited access to productive opportunity is clearly a period more likely to form bad habits than for them to learn essential skills of autonomous decision making that will serve them as fathers in the future.

Lack of choice over married life

The need to 'meet family needs' is often the primary criteria for key life decisions such as the selection of a wife. Yet men are increasingly vocal in their desire to have more of a voice in this process and to choose a woman who meets their own needs. The combination of family pressure to conform, and the context of poverty, means that few young men in this community will establish an independent home for their own family, even though there is a growing aspiration towards that life style.

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Certainty in a period of social change

This is a society in transition. The men talked about changes in society around them. They commented on those aspects of their culture they want to change (e.g. at reduce wasteful expenditure) and those that they wish to retain (e.g authority over sisters). In a context where men are socially, politically and economically excluded, and where social transformation is rapid and appears to offer them little opportunity of self-advancement, then it is hardly surprising that these men hold on to their authority over the women in the immediate family.

In both the communities studied, the local community centre has played an active role in engaging women in development processes. This has been supported by high-profile national campaigns to promote women's rights. The women in these communities are seizing opportunity, and often they are outperforming the men (especially in terms of educational achievement). In a context of scarce resources, the gains made by women may be locally perceived as paid for by losses for men. The more extreme statements made by some of the younger men, can thus be interpreted as a backlash against an unstoppable process of change in which they see themselves as the victims.

The research focuses most of all on the reality of day-to-day life and especially on relationships, interaction, perceptions and feelings. The responses from the men indicate that they are not very comfortable with discussion about such issues, and indeed they categorize them as being more appropriate to women. As they say: *"For men it's just 'yes' or 'no'. For women they have to explain".* They also note that it is important for men to be seen to be decisive, and that extensive consultation is considered a sign of weakness. As a result, their

views tend to be quite polarized, and their stories few and limited in complexity. During review sessions the researchers were less likely than the women to engage in detailed discussion, to display or to accept ambiguity and to offer multiple perspectives. This could be considered as a significant barrier to social change and greater equity within these communities.

Limited aspirations

It was noteworthy that the men's aspirations towards a better life were far less articulated than those of the women. The fact that they primarily link their identity as men to their ability to provide financially for a family places them in a weak situation. These men are among the most excluded – and national gains in terms of better educational achievements, improved vocational training, the creation of employment are unlikely to trickle down to them in the near or medium term future. They witness the women of their community outperforming them – and being the beneficiaries of an improved situation for gender equity. From this perspective, the comment from one male researcher about women's increased role: *'why not to close the door on these things?'* should be interpreted as a rather futile plea for a lost world of certainty which no longer in fact exists for these men.

The challenge for development practitioners is to help create the conditions under which these men too can be the winners from increased social economic and political development gains.

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GENDER RELATIONS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN TWO MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES IN JORDAN

2. Main report on the women's study

"We hope something will come of this study"

The structure of the main report on the women's study

Focus on the women

Although the Main Conclusions section integrates the different perspectives of men and women and compares and contrasts the views on specific themes and sub-themes, in the next two sections, the summary reports for men and women are treated separately. This reflects the research process – where the male and the female teams were trained and supervised separately and did not interact on the issue of the research. This structure also allows for an easier story line to develop, based on the different priority interests of the two groups.

The main themes

The women's summary report follows the same structure as the main themes of the research (Identity and social networks, life cycle, attitudes towards work and political life, followed by their reflections on the experience of research.

Headers for sub-themes

Each section is broken down into sub-themes and provided with a 'header' that aims to capture the main issue covered in that section. These headers act as 'sign-posts' to navigate the text and search for specific issues of interest (eg polygamy, adolescence etc) . The headers also allow the reader to match the conclusions with the more detailed analysis and examples provided in the annexes.

The lead researchers' analysis

The main body of text, on the left of the page, provides a summary of the analysis made by the lead researchers drawing from the raw data, backed by their research assistants and validated by professional development staff working in these marginalised communities.

Stories from the community

The stories provided by the researchers and their peers are included in the body of the text with a shaded background to differentiate them from the authors' text.

Statements from the community

The report draws heavily on comments from the researchers and their peers. They have been chosen to illustrate the analytical point being made, and to provide insights into the ways that the target communities characterizes their own world.

This data is presented in italics so that the reader is able to differentiate between the raw data and the authors' analysis. Most of these statements are set out in the side column.

GENDER RELATIONS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN TWO MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES IN JORDAN

2. Main report on the women's study

2.1 Women's identity and social networks

Identify and marital status

Women in these communities define themselves mainly in relation to their marital status – they are either married or not yet married All the women take their reproductive role as wife and mother as central to their identity, and as more important than any productive or community role. Only married women discuss marital relationships - unmarried women have little access to this world. The younger unmarried women also tend to define their identity in terms of whether they go to college (*students like us*). This is also a generational issue - in this community higher education for women is a relatively new trend

The daily routine and restrictions

The women describe the routine of their lives at home and caring for other people. They identify this routine as the characteristic they share with their peers; they also see little chance to change it. The women describe lives that are constrained by restrictions on their mobility, on their interaction with others, and on access to information. Even within the home, they complain that their actions are controlled by others in order that they conform to their gendered role. Most report they are frustrated and bored; they feel that they lack status in the eyes of those around them. Most wish their husbands would spend more time with them.

A woman talks about her home life

I want to spend time with my husband. But my husband never ever gives me the chance. Even if he's sitting at home, because he's the kind of man who keeps silent, he doesn't notice me, whatever I try to do. He prefers to spend time watching TV as if I am not there. I feel so frustrated. But he doesn't notice and he doesn't care. I go to my room, I sit there and he still doesn't notice.

Women like us? You know what they do... it's the same everywhere. It's a waste of time even asking the question!

It's just children, husband, house … She's always doing something and yet there is nothing to show the fruit of her work.

This is the routine of my life. There is no chance to change it.

Young women stay at home because their families are so hard and restrict them so much.

A woman wants to take her kids to play with other kids. But other people say which families she can and can-not visit.

I spend my time at home so that people will not talk about me.

Women and mobility

The women in this study occupy a very small physical space: their family home, their husband's family home, the house of selected family members. In their daily routine they scarcely enter the public arena; some are not allowed out alone to the market. Some women have to gain permission simply to visit health services. Most women have to account for the time they spend outside the house. A woman who fails to return on time risks punishment.

A woman who breaks the rules can expect to be punished.
I knew a woman once went to the doctor for a follow-up appointment. The appointment went a little longer than expected and she came home late. Her brother was so angry that he hit her with the sewing machine.

Women and public space

The coffee shop was most frequently mentioned as the place that women want to visit. They want to meet there with female friends and see the world. However, other people in their community (both women and men) characterize the coffee shop as a 'bad' space that facilitates inappropriate behaviour. Thus a 'neutral' social space becomes characterized as a sexual place, and is therefore off-limits.

This tension between 'safe' space, 'neutral' space and 'sexualised' space was a constant theme in this research. Women who seek to enter 'sexualised space' risk being negatively stigmatized. If they are abused in this space, they are likely to be treated as complicit and therefore they may be punished and confined to the home from then onwards.

Women's access to public space
There was a young woman, and she was with her fiancé .
She said to him: 'Let's go to this coffee shop.'
He said: 'Did you come to this place before we were engaged? Well, now you have to choose between me and the coffee shop'.

There is a girl and she's just got engaged. She only goes out with her fiancé to buy something. Even then, there is another person with them. She asked her fiancé : Why don't we go out for a picnic, somewhere romantic? But he said 'No, we only go out to buy things'.

My husband doesn't like me to go out. He says: 'Better a woman should die rather than go to the market'.

I want to go out to some places. But I'm only allowed to go out to my sister's or my mother's house. This is the boundary for me and my family. These are the borders of my life.

I want to go out alone and sit in a coffee shop with my friends away from people spying on us.

Young women say: 'please let my parents allow me to enter a coffee shop'.

There are some coffee shops with a bad reputation – you go there to do bad things.

If you go out to a coffee shop, people will see you and tell others about you.

Enforcement of gender roles

The women comment that the rules that govern their behaviour and restrict their choices are set by men and mainly enforced by men. They say that men are afraid of letting women meet and share information because they fear this might undermine their authority. These women also play an active role in ensuring compliance of other women. For example, most women in the study agreed that women should be off the streets by *maghrib* prayers and questioned the motivation of women who seek to change that situation.

Imposing gender roles... and the women's complicity

I am a widowed woman with four kids. For me, each step is calculated. Even going to the doctor, to the market or to visit the family. Wherever I want to go, I have to think about it a million times.

I am always afraid of what people will say. It's the whispering. Even by my sisters in law. They have long tongues. They are like woodworm. We are together but fighting each other. We women are like this.

Men are afraid their women will go to the community centres and that this will open their minds.

Go out after maghrib prayer? What for? Alone? She would be afraid. And her in-laws would not let her.

A woman feels afraid of men at night. There are bad men out there. They drink alcohol.

2.2 The life cycle of women

Childhood

The women in this study did not generally portray their childhood in positive terms. They often linked their unhappiness to vulnerability and lack of protection. They resent the fact that their brothers had better treatment. Many women complained that they (and not their brothers) had to help their mother to do the household chores They state that this restricted their life choices as adult women – especially where their access to education was neglected. The women were conscious of the active role played by their brothers in enforcing gender roles, and they did not like it. They also note that the mother encourages the son to play the role of enforcer.

A mother fails to protect her daughter from abuse

My memories from my childhood are of my father's beatings. I can't even remember why he was beating me in the first place. One day he beat me so hard that my mother had to take me to the hospital. But when they examined me my mother told them I was clumsy and that I had fallen. I couldn't sit or walk for a month and was in pain for much longer.

Most women we interviewed had a sad childhood. They didn't have a chance to play or go out.

They asked me "What are you?" Are you a boy? No - You're a girl. "Girl's don't play ball games".

Parents invest more in boys than in girls, yet it's the girls that do all the work in the home and help them.

The mother brings up the boys that way "You have to be a man … You have to deal with your sister like this."

A girl may have to defer to many brothers

My friend has a private tutor in physics and I wanted to join her. So I had to ask my first brother, my second, my third and so on. By the time they had all said 'yes', the lessons were over.

Puberty and menstruation

All the women noted that the onset of menstruation is a major milestone in the life of a young women. Few reported having had access to sufficient information to prepare them to deal effectively with this event. The onset of periods carried connotations of fear, shame, embarrassment and confusion. The mother was unlikely to have played an active positive role in this moment of transition. None of the women reported positively on their experience of this important moment in their lives.

Menstruation is the signal that a girl is ready for marriage. The need for protection is focused on a girl's reputation / honour, the ultimate symbol of which is her virginity. Yet the young girl is not able to access enough information about reproductive health that might help her fully understand how or why she should protect herself. According to these researchers, in general married women do **not** discuss sexual matters with unmarried women. Young women are aware of pornography as a source of information about sex for men, but assert that they do not have access, nor did they seem to seek access to such information in that form.

Puberty and restrictions

Puberty / first menstruation is accompanied by restrictions on a girl's life. The most commonly cited are stricter restrictions on mobility within public space (e.g. playing in the street) and on interaction with males outside the family group. Women comment negatively on the role of their mother as she socializes them into behaving 'appropriately' in public space (*eyes down, invisible*).

The constant message after puberty is that the outside world is a dangerous place in which a girl must always be careful. The people around her who restrict her movements and actions are acting in her best interests to 'protect' her. Their stories indicate that sexual abuse against adolescent girls may take place, but that girls do not report this for fear of punishment.

Childhood is freedom… until she has her period.

Most of them were afraid – they didn't know what was happening.

When she is growing up she is told that everything is forbidden. She thinks her period is something forbidden too. So she cannot talk about it.

You must keep your eyes down, you must do this and you must not do that.

Be careful – now you can get pregnant with anyone. You cannot even touch them. That's why they have to stay in the house… it gets like a prison.

If she wants to go out, a girl has to ask her brother. She doesn't ask her father. If she went without his permission she would be beaten by her brother.

There was a girl and she was talking to a guy. When she went home her brother beat her.

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Brothers' authority over their sisters

The stories indicate that after a girl reaches puberty, her brothers play a significant role in enforcing gender roles. Girls develop strategies to negotiate with their brothers to enlarge their choices. These strategies tend to reinforce the brother's status. Women note that their brothers commit inappropriate acts against other women, then use this to justify their control over their sisters in the name of 'protection'.

Many stories included reference to brothers hitting or beating their sisters and to the mothers authorizing this role. The women appeared to approve of a boy beating his sister under circumstances where she had seriously transgressed the rules, for example by *being disrespectful of her grandparents.*

It's also because of what they (men) themselves do to girls: they don't want it to happen to their sisters.

She gave her son a stick and gave him authority to beat his sister. From the 10th grade, a girl is ready to be married.

Brothers constrain their sisters

There was a girl and she was a graduate and she wanted to give private lessons. Her brother would not let her go out to their houses so she arranged for them to come to her own house. Her brother said: What's going on? Are you setting up a school here?

Marriage issues

None of the women questioned the inevitability or desirability of the progression from girl to woman through marriage and a family. The concept of 'spinsterhood' was not raised or considered an issue of importance. Some women stated that they were ready for this progression to marriage as soon as they reached puberty, and that they were motivated by the desire to escape family restrictions and to experience new things. In general, the women though it was acceptable for a girl to marry once she was 16, but more appropriate when she was over 20.

I am beautiful, and I am ready for marriage.

I want to grow up quickly, have my period, get married and leave my family.

Six of my (young female) relatives were married at 16.

A mother regrets marrying off her daughter

I made my daughter get married 5 years ago when she was 16. Now she already has three young girls. Marrying her off so young is the biggest mistake I've ever made. I advise all mothers to not marry their daughters until they are at least 20 and have a bit of education.

Because they see it on TV… romantic things that they cannot find from their parents. They look for it.

Education, information and risk

Some reported that there is a trend towards early marriage – especially among parents who were concerned that their daughter's honour was at risk. They attribute this risk to the fact that girls now have access to information about taboo issues. The rationale was that information about sex leads to experimentation. They perceive satellite TV as one of the channels for such information and impose restrictions on unsupervised viewing.

Some parents consider that the school is bad because girls gain access to information, and then act inappropriately. Evidence from the men's study indicates that young men hang around girls' schools – and this places girls at risk. This increases the factors leading to parents withdrawing their daughter from education.

Other parents, however, actively support women's access to school and higher education. Several young women from these communities attend community college. However, the motivation did not appear to reflect investment in a girl's career, but rather that a college education enhances a girl's marriage prospects.

The trend to early marriage as explained by the researchers
In the past girls didn't go to school, and they married young. But now girls are educated and so there are many educated women who are not married – because they don't want a husband who is not educated. The family are afraid they will get involved in an inappropriate relationships with boys . So they marry them off early.

Women's expectations from marriage

The choice of husband will have a major influence on the quality for life for women as adults. The general consensus among all women was that parents aim to secure their daughter's financial security through marriage. The money aspect of choice was perceived as important; a large dowry is perceived as reducing the likelihood of divorce.

At the same time, parents who over-emphasize the financial transaction were accused of not looking after their daughter's interests. Women were happy to marry an older man, because he would have appropriate resources and would be less likely to take a second wife later on. The women also noted that a woman might accept being a second wife to an older man if she felt that this was the best on offer.

Complex motivations for marrying an older man
A girl wanted to marry an older man. He had money. Her father didn't agree with the idea. She would be the second wife. Why did she choose this man? Because her mother kept saying "if you don't want to marry, you will end up a spinster".

A large dowry makes him think again and again before he gets a divorce, especially if the price is high. If the price is low, like JD1,000 , he would just do it without thinking. So it's good to have a big sum.

If there is a guy who is young and has no money, and then there is an old guy and he has money, I will choose the old guy.

There was a girl and she was in love with a man for 18 months. She told her parents she wanted to marry him. But her parents said 'No, he doesn't have a house or a car'.

The selection of a husband

In all the reported cases in this study, it was the women's parents who made the choice of who their daughter would marry. The extent of the girl's participation was minimal and if she rejected one man, it seemed unlikely she would be able to reject a second who met her parents' approval. There was also a perception that when a girl has no parents, the brothers or her uncles are less inclined to consider her interests and welfare when they arrange her marriage.

From their stories, women think some parents do make bad choices, and that they should listen to their daughters' views more often. However, when a girl refused to accept her parents' advice and asserted her own choice, this tended to be portrayed as a mistake. If things went wrong in the marriage, it was the girl who would bear the negative consequences. These stories served as a warning; the researchers noted that young women are fearful of making their own decisions.

A woman regrets her lack of voice over choice of husband
I was forced to marry my cousin, but my father's predictions turned out to be less than accurate. So far I've been extremely unhappy with my husband. If only my father had given me some input into the choice of husband, I know I would be much happier right now.

Once engaged, the women report that they have little real interaction with their fiancé. They are reminded to protect themselves and to deter any physical interaction; meetings tend to be chaperoned. A woman who decides she and her fiancé are incompatible is unlikely to be able to break the engagement.

The wedding night

There as a general consensus that most women did not understand the nature of intercourse before their wedding night. Many thought it just involved kissing. The reports of the actual experience are mostly negative and portray embarrassment, confusion, men's frustration, and in some cases women being forced to act in ways they did not understand. Many women spoke about men being very rough / brutal. Nearly all the women stated that women should know about intercourse before their wedding night. Yet some of the women researchers who are mothers admit that they also failed to transmit this information to their daughters.

She had a failed engagement... so she started to feel afraid of other experiences.

They avoid taking decisions. They leave it to family.

I was engaged for fourteen months, but during that time I never even met my fiancé because everything was forbidden.

When my fiancé used to visit us, all my family would come and sit with him. My role was only to bring the tea. I hated that.

*When I wanted to break the engagement my parents said:
"Don't ever think of saying this. When you get married it will be better". So we got married and then we got divorced.*

I blame my mother, she didn't tell me anything.

I felt like an animal. It was very traumatic for me.

My husband didn't really know anything either and he was angry at me for not knowing. I bled a lot and was in pain for days.

A mother fails to inform her daughter about the wedding night
I made the same mistake with my daughter that my mother made with me. I didn't tell her anything about marriage before her wedding. So on the wedding night, my daughter refused to let her new husband touch her. She thought it was forbidden.

It's so expensive to get married. So men have to wait. And then they have to pay for sex. So they are experienced.

Women assume that men know about these things, but that they will have gained their information from pornography. They also assume that most men are not virgins when they get married, and that they will have gained this sexual experience with migrant women workers and / or university students.

I want a husband who respects my opinion, supports my position, asks for my help.

Seeking respect from husbands
The women assert that, above all, they want to be respected by their husband. They want to feel that he puts the interest of his wife and children before those of others. Their stories imply that this is generally not the case. They state that after marriage a man tends to neglect his wife, and to defer to the opinions of others in ways that undermine his wife.

If her husband treats her kindly, she will be a good wife.

A woman came to ask for the daughter in marriage for her son. But the girl said 'no', because she didn't want this woman for her mother-in-law.

The role of the mother-in-law
The women recognize the important role that their in-laws will play in their life as a married woman. Unmarried women strategise to handle their mother-in-law, by deferring to her authority and meeting her interests rather than asserting their own. Some women reject a potential husband if they feel his mother will be a negative force in their life.

When I get married I will talk to my mother-in-law nicely even if she is hard with me. She will see how I can be nice with her.

Married women repeatedly portray their mothers-in-law as using them to do the chores, but denying them respect. There is an element of an expectation for a return on investment for the dowry paid. They report that the mother-in-law interferes between her son and his wife. If the son helps his wife, his mother rejects this. The women attribute the mother-in-law's behaviour as driven in part by jealousy. They speak negatively of a husband who spends all his time with his mother rather than his wife. They commented that a 'bad husband' is: *A man who loves his mother too much'*.

She was tired and her husband cleaned the steps. The mother-in-law said: "Why did we bring you to our house. We paid our life blood for you. You should do the cleaning". This made a problem between her and her husband.

The mother-in-law: jealous of the wife
There is a woman and every day her husband goes to his mother's home to eat and to sleep. He doesn't go out with his wife.
The woman went to her mother-in-law and said: Please give me time with my husband'.
But the mother-in-law replied: 'you took my son from me'.

The 'good wife'

The distinction between perceptions of *a good wife* and *a bad wife* lies in the extent to which the woman fulfils the basic tasks associated with her reproductive role. These were identified as cl*ean house, well behaved children, food on the table, and 'ready' for her husband (i.e. sexually available and attractive).* A woman who fails to do this is a 'bad wife'. A woman who betrays the secrets of her husband's family is also a 'bad wife'. The mother-in-law reminds her of these duties.

Do the chores, make babies.

A man wants to come home and find a clean and tidy house so he can eat, relax, rest and sleep.

It's important not to go home and tell tales.

Views on pregnancy

A 'good' wife is also one who gets pregnant very soon after the wedding – preferably within a month. Pregnancy reinforces the self esteem of the husband, and raises their status in the extended family. Women are encouraged to compete with female relatives to get pregnant first. Failure to conceive is seen initially as the woman's fault and after 12 months she will have to visit a doctor. Only after she has undergone extensive tests will the husband also visit the doctor.

When women got pregnant fast it meant their husband was a real man. They wanted to make their in-laws happy with them.

Because if I don't get pregnant my husband will marry a second wife.

Failure to conceive is portrayed as the woman's problem
There was a woman who could not get pregnant. She and her husband went to the doctor, and the problem lay with him. Then they had a baby boy. But then she didn't have any more children. So she suggested that her husband go to the doctor again.
He replied: 'Why should I go? I am not sick. It's your problem.'

Access to information about pregnancy

Lack of information concerning reproductive health undermines women's ability to optimally manage their pregnancy (or their failure to conceive). Women are afraid of giving birth and they feel that some people round them (family and professionals) fail to give adequate support.

If I had just known what to expect, it would have been a lot less trau-matic.

The tree that does not bear fruit – cut it down.

A woman's health neglected by her in-laws
There was a woman and she was pregnant and no one in her in-laws' family wanted to help her. They keep telling her 'cats have babies'. They made her get up from the next day after the birth. From that day on she started to hate her husband because he didn't say anything.

Sons and daughters

The women all note that if they deliver a son they are better treated than if they deliver a daughter. Those who also fail again to deliver a boy the second time are subject to criticism and threats, including the threat that

Why did you have a girl? Why not a boy? We already have a lot of girls in the family, we don't need another girl.

the husband may take another wife. No women raised the fact that the
sex of the baby is a result of the male sperm of the father.

Pressure to have a son... and then more sons.
If the other ladies in the home only have girls there is pressure to get
pregnant and to have the boy. If she has a boy she will be the queen of the
house. Then there will be pressure to have another baby so she can have
another boy. Even if there is not enough money.

The punishment for failure to deliver a boy
There was a woman and she had a baby girl and her situation was bad with
her mother-in-law. Her mother-in-law talked to her husband. He got angry
and he beat his wife.

Motherhood and status

The women mostly spoke highly of their role as mothers: they referred
to it as their destiny, and it brings status. The more boys they have, the
better their power in the family.

*I have three kids. I wish I could have
more because they are 'izwa'.*

The advantages of a large family
If our material situation was better then women like us would like to
have more kids. It's 'izwa' it's empowering. If we have more children, we
are stronger in the family and in the home. The woman who has many
children, as she gets older she is stronger. If there is a fight between uncles,
the one with most boys wins.

*Family planning shows that a
husband thinks about her – he will be
more careful with his money.*

*Its important only to have two or
three kids and to have space between
them… Because of financial issues
and it's hard to have more than four
kids.*

They do, however raise the issue that there may be advantages to waiting
a short time before they have children, but they recognize this is unlikely
to be accepted. Most of the women see the economic situation as the
major factor justifying family planning, and note that their husbands
adopt the same position.

Child rearing:

The bad relationship between women and their mother-in-law is
often centred around child-rearing practices, especially in extended
family homes. Women accuse their mother-in-law of interfering and
undermining their authority. As a result, some younger couples have set
up home separately from the extended family.

*Women don't like being in their
mother-in-law's house... because
they want to raise their children
themselves their way.*

Women experience abuse within marriage

The stories of women's married life often contain reference to the husband abusing his wife: verbally, physically, and/or financially. The women state that he has not right to do so, but there does not appear to be a culture of outrage at such actions, nor a network through which women can get support. Women who were unhappy in their marriage (and there were many stories) appear to have few mechanisms to deal effectively with the situation. Some leave their husband and go back to their families, but report that they are not always well received.

If I go back to my father's house, I will have my father and my brothers telling me what to do.

Polygamy

Women report that men who are unhappy with their marriage often threaten to marry a second wife. They use this as leverage to get the women to conform to her expected role. Almost all the women spoke against polygamy except in certain very limited cases (e.g. a woman's failure to conceive or to have sons).

There's no stability. At any time he can turn the home upside down if he takes another wife.

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If a man has a lot of money he will look for a new wife.

Women's life under the control of men

The stories of women's lives reveal a picture of women under the control of men at all stages. They note that men set the rules and enforce them. Most of the women's stories reveal that they do not like this, but have little choice in the matter. They recognize the pattern of authority – with their brothers and fathers being replaced by their husbands once they marry and leave home. Women also note that their mother, and then their mother-in-law are complicit and act as a proxy for the men, enforcing these roles on the daughter / daughter-in-law.

From the moment I was born, I had males telling me what to do.

We start talking about each other. Believe me, if the issue was left to men they will never notice whoever goes out and comes in.

Women and public space

Given the above description of restricted mobility and lack of choice of association, it is hardly surprising that women of these communities are seldom active in 'public' space. The one public space they all do occupy

at some stage in life is the school. Even though they may attend a single sex school, they occupy the public space that lies between the house and the school gates.

Access to higher education

However, with the expansion of higher education, young women are now beginning to enter the public space of college. Although the colleges these women attend are usually single sex, they are located within mixed gender spaces, and require women to travel on mixed transport etc.

Among the researchers, there were young women who do attend college. But there is still a strong voice that asserts that higher education is inappropriate – and incompatible with the woman's reproductive role. Those women who are allowed to study find that their choice of subject is decided mainly by their parents; the range of choice is generally restricted to subjects related to teaching and to child care. It appears that university is seen by parents as a stepping stone to a 'better' marriage rather than as the foundation for a job.

Young women appreciate the relative freedom of university, that they can mix and talk with their friends. From the responses in the interviews, it appears that even young women who are not enrolled in college still visit the campus. So the experience of mixing freely may be open to a wider group of young women than simply those who study there. Young women students are aware that their right to attend college is dependent on them accepting 'rules' of conduct laid down by their parents.

Parents don't want girls to study anything that requires them to be out of the house, and in mixed company.

University is bad. It's mixed and it opens a girl's mind and teaches her about freedom.

The biggest problem is that families don't let women study what they want... They all prefer them to study something like early childhood education.

At university it's more open. A girl can go to the restaurant, she can talk to boys. She can wear what she wants.

A woman negotiating the rules

There is a girl who wanted to go to university. But her father said: if you want to go to university, you have to wear the hijab. She refused. So they found her a girls-only college instead and that way she could choose her own clothes.

Girls at college are likely to checked up on by their brothers (or their fiancé if they have one). They state that they will be punished for breaking the rules. In extreme cases they will be withdrawn from study and confined to their home. They do not like being watched, and regard it as spying; most of all they resent the fact that their 'innocent' actions are misinterpreted.

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A brother enforcing rules on his sister at college

There was a girl who removed her hijab at college. By chance, her brother saw her. He was angry and he hit her. He didn't explain why. She couldn't negotiate or explain to him. It was simply "Do this or don't go to the university".

Men try to control 'their' women at college

There was a girl and she was engaged. When she went to university, her fiancé followed her. When she got back she asked: Why did you follow me? He asked: Why did you talk to that man? She said: He's a fellow student. I said 'good morning' ... I didn't have a relationship with him.

Older women characterize university as a bad place for girls

The older, married women in this study had a different view about women and university. Many of them characterized university as a bad place for girls to study and accused some women students of acting immorally. They also identified the dorms as a particular problem, because young women are out of their parents' control.

Their families should watch these girls. They should explain to them about the consequences of such actions.

Women researchers portray university as a bad place

First woman: There are some girls who get paid to have sex. I overheard a girl talking in the toilets at university. And she got enough money to pay for her studies. She goes out and she comes home late at night.
Second woman: "About 70% of the students sell sex".

Clearly the above comments are not factually correct, but they represent views that many women hold (perhaps to a lesser degree) and say out loud, seemingly without contradiction from their peers. If such comments and stories are in circulation among this community, then it reinforces the stereotype that girls who go to university are immoral.

2.3 Women And Work

The reproductive role and the productive role

In these communities, the women themselves portray women's productive role as of limited importance. In general, work is considered simply a transition phase before marriage and child-bearing. The decision to allow a girl to attend university is mainly justified on the ground that it places her more advantageously in the

marriage market. Even though she may have mixed with men in a public space, this does not appear to count against her in the search for a 'better' husband. The rules change when a woman chooses to enter the world of work. All choices concerning work are filtered through this lens: the work should not impinge on her ability to fulfil the broader reproductive role.

The choice of appropriate jobs is limited

The women state that the most appropriate ages for women to work are between 20 and 25. They say that the only jobs that are widely accepted as appropriate for a woman are child care and teaching in a girls' school. Women do not really speak positively of such work, which may not be suited to their skills or personality. Most women state that they want more choices – especially the opportunity to enter the field of social work.

Women who work have to accept rules for behaviour

The women have to negotiate their permission to work from the males in authority over them (father, brother, fiancé, husband). They are presented with clear rules guiding their behaviour and concerning mobility, dress, association with men.

The rules for working women identified by young women in Sahab
- Don't be familiar with the men
- Take care of yourself
- Don't chew gum
- Don't go into any room if there is no-one else there
- Don't get on an empty bus
- Don't trust anyone
- Respect yourself
- Respect others
- Don't come home late (come home before 6… before Maghrib prayer)

Only by agreeing to this code of conduct is the woman allowed to work. If she breaks it, and is found out, she is withdrawn from work. If anything bad happens in the workplace, and especially if a man takes advantage of her, she is generally deemed to have been complicit, and may be forced to quit work. As a result, harassment at work may be under-reported.

Nursing

Of all the possible jobs, nursing was singled out as inappropriate for women. The factors against it were that it involved late hours, use of public transport, close proximity to men, contact with men's bodies,

When I marry, I want to stop work. Look to what happens to working women who are also married.

In the men's eyes it's only good to be a teacher in a school.

There was a young woman whose mother made her work in the home of a relative. She was harassed by a man. She went home and told her mother. Her mother said: It's your fault because you encouraged him. You must go back because we need the money.

My mother) didn't want me to go to work – she wanted me to stay at home and help her to do the work.

When a girl gets a job her family gives her lots of instructions what to do / not do. If you cannot accept these rules and obey them, you will not be allowed to work.

If a girl wants to study nursing, her family say NO. "You can study to be a doctor but not a nurse. A nurse is like a

and the abuse of power by male workers in positions of authority. The women recounted many tales of '*bad things' t*hat happen to nurses. The clear inference was that a woman who chooses to be a nurse is asking for trouble, and if it occurs, '*it's her fault'.*

maid. But a doctor is on a higher level. It's about staying out late and working at night. It's about touching men.

Exaggerated stories 'demonise' nursing as a job for women.

There was a big doctor, and he worked in a hospital. This doctor told my uncle, who is a taxi driver, that no girl who goes to work there remains a virgin. If she says 'no' they give her drugs and then they do it. So the family said I could not be a nurse.

There was a girl and she was poor and she studied nursing. She was working in a hospital and a patient got her into a room and raped her. Her family killed her. They consider that she gave herself to him.

There are lots of stories like that. Nursing is forbidden, especially in a hospital.

Women do not trust other women who are nurses

There was a married lady. Her husband was working in hospital and there were female nurses. One of the nurses helped him have a relation with one of the other nurses and he wanted to marry her. The first wife said "It's one of the worst places he could have worked for that".

The men's views concur with those of the women on this issue of nursing. Similar messages were conveyed about the law as an inappropriate working environment for women. Thus many women are denied routes to a career; possible economic independence for women is closed off.

You can't study law because you will have to deal with criminals and bad people.

Changing attitudes towards nursing

On a more positive note, there did appear to be a slight change in perception of nursing – perhaps as a result of recent campaigns. One woman reported that in Irbid *'many families do let their daughters study nursing and do that work because it's well paid'.* Others commented that nursing has also a good message: '*She's like an angel* ' *(malak al rahmah*).

Women who nurse bring income to the family

There was a family who let their daughter be a nurse. An uncle said: 'You are sending her to nursing college? She works in a hospital?" He didn't approve. But now the three children – two daughters and a son – they all do nursing. The family has a car. They've seen a big change in their financial situation.

The double burden

In spite of the above constraints, women are seeking paid employment. But an added deterrent is that working women are still expected to fulfil their gender roles in the home; they will have to still do the housework after they get back from work. The mother-in-law is portrayed as the enforcer of this obligation. In particular, working women report that their mother-in-law prevents the husband from helping with the chores.

Mother-in-law reinforces gender roles on working women

There was a women who was working. When she was pregnant, her husband helped her in the house. The mother-in-law asked her "Who is doing all the cleaning?" . She said "I am". The mother in law said: "You are a liar. You should go back and do it all again".

Women also fear that paid employment may leave them exhausted and without enough time to spend with their children. Another woman stated that working women were fearful they would be too tired to meet her husband's sexual needs, and that he would take another wife.

Control over earnings

The 2008 DHS survey states that the majority of working women keep their earnings. This does not appear to be the situation in these communities. Their stories imply that many women give over their earnings to their husband in order to secure his permission that she should work. Women who do hand over their earnings are reported as having to ask for pocket money. A woman who spends her earnings without the husband's agreement may be punished.

A working woman may not control her earnings

There was a woman who worked outside the home and made her own money. She wanted to buy a new refrigerator for her home. She had discussed it with her husband earlier, but then one day she went and bought it without telling him. He came home and discovered her purchase. Since she had bought it without him he made her sell it. They weren't able to get the full amount back and ended up losing money.

Married women who do not work recount tales that working women 'seduce' their husbands; working women are therefore a threat to marriage and the family. This confirms the predominant view of the men's research: that women who work undermine families values, their marriage breaks down, they end in divorce. Only a very few voices were raised that working may have a positive impact on the woman and her family life.

Most importantly, women who work are too tired and have no time for sex.

Our husbands want us to be with them early and we can't do it. And if we don't meet his needs he will look outside the home.

The working woman gives her husband the money; she has to ask him for her pocket money.

Some give 100% of the salary to her husband. She tells him "It's all for you… but don't marry another woman".

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How working improved one woman's family life

Working has made my life so much better. Before I started working I had so much free time and I was very bored at home. I had no social network and rarely interacted with anyone but my husband and children. But when I started working it opened my eyes to the outside world. Not to mention that it has given me confidence, and my husband and I get along much better now.

There are some women who are 'pioneers' and take up jobs identified as only appropriate to men (e.g. army and police) but they face many obstacles - especially from community pressure.

A young female soldier reports other people's reaction to her job

You have a boss and you have to respect him. If you see him in the street, you have to salute him and say the right thing. But others don't understand this is about work. If they see a girl on the street talking to a man they don't know it's her boss.

There was a woman who worked in the army. She fell down in the street, but her uncle refused to help her. Strangers helped her. She saw her uncle and said "You are my uncle, why didn't you help me? He replied: You are not my brother's daughter, so go away.

Positive trends

There were, however, some positive trends: the failing economy provides a face-saving rationale for men to allow their women to work. Most importantly, there is a trend for the mother to look for a working woman as a suitable wife for her son.

The first thing men look for when they marry is a girl with a salary and a good job so she will help him.

A working woman makes a good daughter-in-law

In the past it was different: Our grandmothers did not think it was acceptable for women to work. But now the mothers-in-law want a working woman for their son.

Maybe the girl can go to work to look for husband. It's become an essential issue – he wants his fiancée to be a working woman.

As women establish themselves in the public domain, and enter new sectors, this may counteract the negative views. However, it is far easier to spread negative tales about working women, than it is to spread positive ones.

Opportunity to associate

The world of politics is not high on the agenda of the women in this community. Both in focus groups and in the research, women had little to say about public life and public roles. The only real experience of association is through membership of a rotating credit scheme (ROSCA), motivated by economic reasons rather than social solidarity. The women who attend university are aware they can join associations but in general do not. Few of the women students vote in student elections at the university.

Women and elections

Most women do, however, speak positively about their right to vote in national and local election. They report that when men try to tell them who to vote for, they agree with him, and then in the booth they decide for themselves.

They do not speak positively of women who stand for elections, and most of the stories portray the process as one of failure and humiliation. One main objection is that she will become higher in status than they are.

A woman candidate who failed to get votes

One woman she wanted to stand and all her family and tribe said they would support her. She thought she would get a lot of votes. But then on the day of the election nobody voted for her. She didn't even vote for herself, she was so sure of winning.

A woman candidate who lost the support of her family

There was a woman who wanted to run for office in a local election. She tried to convince her husband and family to allow her to run, but everyone was against it. She eventually ended up running without their consent. When her husband found out, he divorced her on the spot. Her family disowned her. She lost the election, and when she tried to go back to her family they pretended they didn't even know her.

Political life holds little attraction for marginalised women

The main conclusion from the interviews and discussion about women and political life is that, for these women, it is simply not an issue of interest. The women had really very little to say about their role in democratic

I am zero in public.

I have no role in the public sphere; my role is only to satisfy the people around me so that no problems are raised.

I came to university to study, not to join a political group.

My husband said 'Vote for X.' I said "OK". But when I went into the booth I chose a different person... I made my own choice

It's a right… but I will never vote for a woman.

I don't like the idea of a woman having a higher position than me.

Women like us don't want to vote for a woman because we don't want to see that lady from that tribe behaving in a higher way from us.

There was a woman near here she got a seat in the quota system. But what did she do? She didn't do anything for education here. She's just proud now.

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processes. This does not create a very fertile ground for the kind of projects that civil society promotes concerning women and elections

> **One woman gives her opinion about female candidates**
>
> I am a woman, and I would never vote for another woman in an election. Even if she had a doctorate degree. Men think more with their brains than their emotions, and are physically stronger. An elected official also needs to be available to the community and should interact with the people as often as possible. Women cannot do this. This is why I'd always vote for a man over a woman.

Being a researcher

Participation in the peer research process involves the women in a new and different set of roles in the family and community. She goes out, she meets other women outside her immediate family, she has a formal task to accomplish, asks them questions, accesses information, records this information in a written format. She returns to the group and joins in discussions about intimate aspects of life; she helps analyse the comments of others, makes value judgments about her own life and the lives of her peers. In so doing, she comments on the lives of men, and puts forward views that they may not appreciate. She hands the information over to outsiders (including foreigners) In this process, she views her peers in a different light, and the peers also perceive her differently and comment on it.

Others around her, and especially men, commented on this activity. Most of the comments were negative. The women noted that they had to renegotiate their role as researchers in front of their peers, and that being '*like them*' was an advantage because their peers were more willing to open up.

When I wanted to go out to do the interviews, I had to explain everything about the research – where I was going, who I was seeing, what I was going to do. They said "Don't be back late".

In this respect, the role of a researcher has brought the woman out into the public sphere, with much in common with a political role. Her performance in this role gives us insights into the ways that women might adapt best to engaging in associations and the value that they would bring to those processes.

Obstacles to the role of researcher

The women faced few challenges during the research training – but they did face obstacles once they started to carry out the actual interviews. The people around them, especially the males in authority, asked questions. Their concerns were focused precisely on the issues noted earlier in this study: women's mobility, interaction with others, access to

Normally a woman visits her family outside the house only once or twice a month. Her husband doesn't like her to go out.

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information, use of time, fear that others will talk about her. Their peers also faced similar obstacles to being available to participate in the study, and many simply refused / were unable to cooperate.

Information

The peers noted that they had given a valuable commodity – information - and they wanted to see a return. Some peers wanted a financial reward, but others simply said that they wanted something useful to come from it and for their lives to improve.

In general the women wanted to share their experiences. Their desire to tell their story often over-rode their willingness to respond in the agreed format of 'people like us'. The women noted that the use of 'people like us' does not necessarily protect identity in a small community – where they only know a limited number of people. They feared even stories of 'there was a woman' would be traced back to the real case. The women were concerned, therefore that the information was confidential.

A woman explains why she is afraid to talk openly
'This is a small neighbourhood. Women like us cannot go many places. So everyone knows each other. So whatever story you tell – they know it's my neighbour, it's my community... Swear to god you will not tell anyone.'

The women noted that the men around them were most unhappy that they were gaining access to information that they (men) could not control or filter. The women had to gain permission to do the study and then keep maintaining this license. They stated that their husband would simply stop them if they did not consider it the right time. The women who were unmarried faced least obstacles because they carried them out where they studied (college).

The men around the women were particularly resistant to the idea that the women would access information and that they would then share this with other women and use it to undermine their authority.

A mother-in-law comments on the researchers
My mother-in-law knew the peer's house where I did the interview. She told my husband: "*My daughter-in-law is giving them a way to be open – That's bad*" The mother-in-law didn't like this happening because "*Then she won't obey her husband*" The husbands round here don't want there wives to be strengthened by the stories of other women's experiences.

You are going around the neighbourhood from house to house!

I want to express all the things of my life.

I want to open up my heart to you... If I talk, I feel better.

This is MY life and at least someone will write about it.

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The man fears that when a woman gets access to information, she starts to ask for her rights.

All the time men want to keep us under their wings. They don't want us to escape and fly without them.

The value of the research experience

The overall impression was that the women enjoyed doing the research, and they valued the time they spent with their peers and with each other. Their role raised their status in the eyes of the other women – who reported being jealous of the researchers' freedom and opportunity to escape the house.

One women with a very difficult home life stated that the research gave her a sense she had an important role – and that this empowered her not to be undermined by her husband. They noted that they had gained skills of talking about difficult issues, and they also empathized with their peers – recognizing their shared predicament and also the fact that others wanted to change their situation.

I wish my family were like yours, to give you some freedom to go and do these things.

We can open a conversation and are able to get information. Before we didn't have the means to do it.

I found out about problems that I did not know about before.

They hope that something good will come of this study

> ### A more public role builds self esteem
>
> I'm married and my husband also has a second wife. When my husband went to his second wife's house, I said to him *"I have work to do"* because I was doing the research. I feel strong because I am doing the research. It's like getting revenge on my husband for taking a second wife.
>
> I always used to do what my husband asked. But now, I have my own things to do and he has to respect me. My husband said: *"How can you collect all this information and write all this?"* He's illiterate. A first wife always tries to be ready for her husband. She looks for ways to win him to her more than the second wife, because she has nothing else to do. But after being part of the research, I feel that I have more useful things to achieve. I have stopped waiting for him and I don't care about him any more.

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The context

On the surface, this summary of the study of the lives of these women in Sahab and Irbid presents a rather depressing picture of gender discrimination, social exclusion, lack of opportunity and limited choices. The stories and comments indicate that many of the women in this study fail to achieve their full potential in life, and that they talk about this situation with a degree of anger. However, this negative portrait has to be seen in the approach of the study and the context of the community where it took place

Targeting the marginalized

First of all, the researchers were purposively sampled to focus on the poorest and most marginalized women. Most of them are from households who live just above, or below, the poverty line. The HEIS survey shows that adults in such households are also typically characterized by above-average incidence of illiteracy, polygamy, school dropout, early marriage, and with larger-than-average family size. The men in these households, on whom the women depend, are generally unskilled and in low paid work, or else unemployed.

Many women in these communities grew up with little access to the goods and services that the majority of the population took for granted. When they were young girls, few of them would have participated in the activities of the local community centre or received information about rights. Recent statistical data across Jordan indicate that rights on paper do not necessarily translate into rights in practice for women. Those gains in gender equality that have been achieved

at the national level have yet to trickle down to this marginalized segment of the population. The negative stories are therefore to be expected.

The focus on daily life

The research focuses most of all on the day-to-day reality of life for these women – what they feel about themselves, how they interact with the people around them, what they do with their time, and how they characterize their world.   The lack of studies that take this focus creates an information gap that undermines the effectiveness of development planning. Only through viewing life through the lens of poor and marginalized women themselves can we gain an insight into their world. Armed with better understanding, we can then design and deliver programmes that effectively promote gender equity and the enjoyment of equal rights.

Action research

Moreover, the approach of the peer study tends to elicit the more negative stories from people's lives and the more polarized views. In 'action research' the analysts also inevitably concentrate on identifying the problems and obstacles that women face and on investigating the linkages between cause and effect that generate a cycle of exclusion. The lead researchers also undertook their analysis from the perspective of a rights based approach and using an analytical framework that, where appropriate, includes explicit discussion of the role of patriarchy in shaping the choices and opportunities open to both men and women. From such an analysis, more effective strategies to promote equity, rights and inclusion for women (and men) can be developed and implemented.

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Priority issues

To a large extent, it was also the women researchers who chose to focus on the problems of their lives. In the research the women are free to tell positive stories - but they seldom did so. When there is a section in this summary that is rich in detail – then that reflects the quantity and quality of the raw data. Similarly, the sections that are 'thin' are those where the women themselves had little to say – for example on the role of women in politics. The common thread throughout the study is that the women themselves comment negatively about the obstacles they face in life, their frustration at lack of opportunity and the role that others play in keeping them in their allotted role.

Evidence of changing attitudes

However, this in itself is a positive attribute. They ARE aware of their rights – and they speak positively of those situations where they claim them (the right to vote, the right to education, the right to do this research). The stories of their lives were rich in detail and complex. The variations of opinion among the women were many. Most subjects were hotly discussed (for example whether women should go out after Maghrab prayer, whether they could go to the coffee shop, the appropriateness of nursing as a job etc). The fact there was discussion at all is a positive sign that women are observing, reflecting, evaluating and presenting alternative perspectives. That strengthens the platform for sustainable change from within the community.

Communities is in transition

The bulk of the evidence shows that this is a community in transition - the unmarried younger women in particular presented views that were more challenging of the status quo. Some of them want later marriage, more role in choosing a husband, to delay child-bearing, to study at university, to have a job. They spoke critically - commenting on the irony of being allowed to attend a mixed university, but not to work in a mixed office in a bank. They laughed knowingly when one woman noted that the men in her family were illiterate but spent much time in the internet café. They noted that their views were different from those of the older generation – and that their situation was in many respects better.

They noted that the economic situation means that mothers look for a working woman for their son, and that this played to their advantage . They discussed strategies to cope with the obstacles they face (such as forming alliances with their brothers in order to relax supervision, or accepting rules and then breaking them in secret to go to the café, meet with friends) They talked of punishments, but they were willing to take the risk because they refused to accept the rules they thought were too strict.

The hope that things will get better

The fact that so many women expressed hopes and aspirations during the research and shared their views with the other women is also a positive sign that there is a growing solidarity between women. The researchers reported feeling empowered by their role – and want to continue as peer educators in the community. The foundation is there for organisations that actively promote gender equity to introduce programmes that strengthen these bonds among the women of all ages, so that they have the knowledge, tools and support to lead this process of social change from within their own communities.

The final word lies with one of the women who took part in the research: *We hope that something will come of this study.*

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Over recent decades in Jordan significant gains have been achieved in some aspects of gender equity (e.g. access to health and education). But this has yet to be accompanied by a parallel advance in the role of women in the public sphere. Jordan's 2005 GEM value of just 0.299 reveals the extent of gender exclusion.[1]

The trend for women's empowerment

The trend is getting worse over time: The figures for women's employment in decision-making positions have actually decreased since 1997.[2] The figure for political participation has only risen because of the introduction of the quota system. Failure to participate in political life means that women have limited voice in public institutions, and fail to ensure that policy / programme decisions meet their interests. Above all, women have little influence over the allocation of public budgets The lack of female voice in the public arena is matched by lack of voice in the private sphere: studies reveal that women's role in household decision-making tends to be restricted to a narrow set of issues related to their domestic role.[3]

Entrenched gender inequality

Structural and systemic gender inequality is the major obstacle impeding women's empowerment. It acts as a significant constraint preventing women from exercising their rights to lead a full life in both the public and private sphere. Gender inequality affects the level to which women have control over resources (wealth, land, property, water, fertile soil, transportation etc) – and this in turn reduces their ability to enter public life (establish a business, find employment, travel to markets, stand for office, speak out in public etc).

Pressure to conform to norms

Social pressure to conform to relatively restrictive gender roles is a major factor impeding women's entry into this public sphere. This pressure to conform is exercised at every level of society: the immediate family, the extended family / tribe, the community and the broader social class. Interventions designed to reduce this social pressure require up-to date, in-depth information concerning the dynamics of this social pressure, and how it is subject to external influence. This research aims to deliver that information in the form of a rich contextualized evidence base on which to draw when making decisions concerning policy, programmes and projects related to gender equity and women's empowerment.

The research provides qualitative data concerning the perceptions of women and men from poor and marginalized urban communities towards gender roles – especially within the family and the immediate community and how those perceptions affect women's ability to play a larger role in the public sphere.

The family and gender relations

As the basic unit of society in Jordan[4] the family plays a major role in determining the perceptions and expectations of young people. Studies conclude that a supportive family (or its absence) is an important factor affecting whether young women will play a proactive role in the public sphere.[5] Yet very little is known

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References
1. The data for GEM for Jordan reveals little increase in women's role in public life, the GDI data shows little improvement in women's share of income. See draft Chapter 1 of new NHDR (2009)
2. UNDP / DoS data: source draft for as yet unpublished NHDR2008
3. JOHUD/ OXFAM Quebec 2006: How Women Save
4. See, for example, statements from the National Council for Family Affairs

about the way women negotiate their roles within the family and immediate community, nor about the ways that others around them exercise their power to either support to hinder their aspirations.

The policy / legal / institutional environment is relatively supportive for women to take up an enlarged role in the public sphere. The Constitution does not allow for discrimination on basis of gender and women have equal access to education and health facilities. Employment is a right and labor laws accord the right to equal opportunity and equal pay, and maternity entitlements are also relatively favorable. Women are targeted as entrepreneurs and have access to credit. A national body (JNCW) is mandated to monitor progress towards the Beijing commitments and many NGOs promote women's empowerment. Yet this has not led to a large role for women in the public sphere.

Research into women in public life

Much has been written about this lack of female involvement in public life in Jordan. Most research and analysis has focused on quantitative data derived from surveys carried out by the Department of Statistics including the HEIS, Population and Family Health Survey, and the Employment and Unemployment Survey. Further analysis is provided by national reports such as the National Human Development Report (2000, 2004 and draft for 2008) and the Jordan Poverty Assessment (2006) and work carried out by regional bodies such as ESCWA, CAWTAR and the regional division of UNIFEM and other UN agencies. More recently the Arab Human Development Reports (UNDP 2005)[6] also drew attention to this phenome-

non in Jordan and other countries of the region, noting that lack of gender equity is one of the 'three deficits' that undermine human development in the region. These studies have been effective in demonstrating the scope and scale of gender inequality in Jordan.

Quantitative data: the limitations

However, these quantitative reports do not provide adequate information about the dynamics of social change as it affects men and women, nor do seek to investigate in depth issues of motivation and agency in social change. As a result the data does not really help inform the design and focus of programmes that aim to accelerate the pace of social change towards greater equity.

Qualitative studies – their limitations

There have been some small-scale questionnaire-based studies carried out by civil society organizations with an interest in women's economic[7] or political empowerment.[8,9] Qualitative studies tend to be based on focus groups / semi-structured interviews and case studies. While these may deliver interesting and useful findings – they do not present a picture of the dynamics of social change and gender relations within the household. Very few of them fully disaggregate data by gender, or carry out the research with men and women separately with the intention of contrasting their different perception.[10]

When these studies tackle 'sensitive issues' they also fail to deliver in-depth understanding of the gap between the statements / perceptions made by respondents and the evidence of actual behavior that often contradicts it.

References
5. See for example NHDR2004 Chapter 5, and Al Khalidi K (2001) The Way Forward: Journeys of Jordanian Women Entrepreneurs
6. AHDR (2002) Creating opportunities for future generations and AHDR 2005: Towards the rise of Women in the Arab World
7. Al Khalidi K (2001) The way forward: Journeys of Jordanian Women Entrepreneurs, UNIFEM / JOHUD (2002): National gender sensitive programming guidelines for small and micro enterprises in Jordan; JOHUD / OXFAM Quebec (2005) How women save etc
8. For example UNIFEM 2006 – Towards Political Empowerment for Jordanian Women
9. UNIFEM (2004) Status of Jordanian Women: Demography, Economic Participation, Political Participation and Violence
10. Even JOHUD's research for the NHDR2004 failed to tackle this important issue in depth.

Many reports note structural / institutional obstacles in terms of access to and control of resources from which to launch a public life (eg limited female ownership of assets, formal and informal inheritance systems, lack of collateral, restrictive clauses within the Personal Status Laws etc.).[11, 12, 13]

Rights on paper... less in practice

Most reports also note that the legal framework may be supportive of rights on paper, but they are inadequately applied in practice. Nearly all studies cited here note the impact of patriarchal structures in Jordan and the relatively entrenched views concerning appropriate roles for men and women. They note that among poor and marginalised communities, there is considerable peer pressure on women from within the family and community to conform to these ascribed gender roles. Many studies also note, however, that these roles are changing, and that some women have evidently developed effective strategies to negotiate a wider role for themselves. Few studies, however, investigate in-depth issues of causality, motivation, prioritization, strategizing or the dynamics of social change.

Qualitative data for project design

JOHUD's experience is that the use of participatory approaches generating qualitative information is that this approach delivers data essential for programme design. JOHUD's own research into the perceptions of the poor concerning the nature of poverty led to JOHUD's reorienting many of its programmes towards a more pro-poor perspective. For example, in response to women's own analysis of their poverty, JOHUD developed its Makana programme to increase women's political role and also to help them claim their social rights to better health and education. This programme

has created a cadre of hundreds of women activists promoting a louder voice for women in local decision-making. JOHUD has also developed programmes concerning land and water rights and inheritance rights as a result of the NHDR2004 study.

The target audience - the focus of JOHUD's work

This research targets poor and marginalized men and women, who are the focus of all of JOHUD's work. The poor and near poor constitute around 20 – 25% of the population.[14] It targets younger people (16 – 35) because they have the most to gain from challenging restrictive gender roles and thereby expanding their social, economic and political choices JOHUD 'will concentrate this research on urban areas, which is where 80% of the population lives. It is also the area where women will, potentially, have most opportunity to play an enhanced role in the public sphere.

Filling the information gap

The summary of secondary data reveals a gap in current understanding in respect of the perceptions of poor and marginalised men and women concerning appropriate gender roles. Above all, it demonstrates a lack of data expressed in the language of the people themselves, drawn from the context of the lives of the urban poor.

Action research - for immediate action

This study is 'action research' which investigates an issue in order to provide answers to specific questions – and then uses those answers to inform programme decisions (whether at policy or project level). The data is available to a wide range of stakeholders, who will also be encouraged to participate through all stages of the research process.

References
11. JOHUD study of inheritance rights for COHRE (2006) In Search of Equality: A survey of law and practice related to women's inheritance rights in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region
12. Sonbol, Amira El-Khazary (2003) Women f the Jordan: Life, labor and law
13. NHDR 2004: Chapter seven: claiming gender rights
14. Based on 2002/3 HEIS data and assuming worsening economic situation

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JOHUD as a major user of data.

The fact that JOHUD is both a research and a practice organization is of immense importance. JOHUD has demonstrated its ability to use research findings to improve their programmes.[15] JOHUD currently has more than 25 major projects, with an annual project budget of around $3 million, and core services to the value of $1.5 million annually. ALL these projects aim to be gender mainstreamed, and therefore the findings of this research will impact on their design and implementation. This can affect projects reaching thousands of beneficiaries. JOHUD will also use the research as a platform for on-going activities in the target communities. The selected research method creates a cadre of up to 60 local researchers, who are then available to monitor on-going social change and measure the impact of interventions designed to promote women's empowerment.

JOHUD's radio audience: Farah al nas

JOHUD will also use the information generated to develop programming that will appeal to mass audiences through radio. JOHUD already has a successful radio production unit [16] and will work with JNCW on Farah al Nas, community radio station launched in 2008 with JNCW.[17] This station covers the Amman / Zarqa / Irbid area where two-thirds of the population lives. The ability to use this mass media channel effectively to advocate for gender equity depends on an in-depth understanding of the aspirations / perceptions and dynamics of the lives of the poor. This research will inform that process.

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15. See above in relation to NHDR2004
16. AUTOSTRAD radio production
17. Jordanian National Commission for Women

The PEER approach

The PEER approach was used to carry out this study. The PEER approach is designed to investigate sensitive issues and to help enhance our understanding of the world from the perspective of the target group: in this case poor and marginalised people

Main characteristics of the PEER approach

The PEER research approach has 4 major characteristics which met the overall objectives of the CIDA GSF programme:

Qualitative: It provides contextualised information concerning perceptions, aspirations and motivations of the target group and the way they interpret their roles in society

Participatory: the target of the research play an active role in framing the research questions, collecting the data and carrying out the analysis.

Action-oriented: it provides data that can be used immediately to enhance the design of gender programmes (policy process, projects, practice).

Rights based and empowering: it empowers poor and marginalised people to play an active role in knowledge generation and validates their understanding of their reality.

The basics of PEER:

PEER is an innovative approach to participatory research and evaluation, which provides a rapid and effective way of gaining an in-depth understanding of the social world of specific communities and groups. PEER uses ordinary community members to conduct detailed interviews with others in their social network. By tapping into established relationships of trust, PEER rapidly generates rich data of narratives and stories that gives a depth of insight into how people view their world, conceptualize their behaviour and experiences and make decisions on key issues.

The PEER approach promotes the voice of marginalised and in the process ensures that outputs are both locally owned and programmatically relevant.

The PEER approach has been adapted for a number of specific applications globally. JOHUD is the regional PEER partner and has already carried out a similar study in Yemen into married men and women's perceptions of reproductive life cycle, health and family planning.

PEER and conventional qualitative research:

PEER addresses the weakness with other qualitative research methods such as focus group discussions, PRA, semi-structured interviews or

The PEER approach was developed in a partnership between the Centre for Development Studies at Swansea University and OPTIONS with support from the UK Department for International Development (DFID). For more details see: http://www.options.co.uk/peer/

formal interviewing, that they often result in people talking about socially expected standards of behaviour rather than actual behaviour.

Third person interviewing

A major feature of PEER is that the interviewing method is based on the technique of 'third person interviewing'. The questioning techniques uses phrases such as: *"People like you, what do they say?"* . In this way, the interviewee is less likely to provide 'acceptable' answers, especially in contexts where the subject mater is sensitive. This fundamental aspect of PEER addresses the concerns identified by CIDA that there is often a contradiction between perceptions and practice. By using the third person technique and by working through trusted members of the community enables programmes to capture an understanding of actual behaviour and where this differs from social norms.

Collecting anecdotes:

The PEER approach encourages interviews to record popular anecdotes that circulate in the community. Thus a conversation prompt with women might be: *"women like you, what kind of stories do they tell about dealing with opposition when they wanted to get a job?"* By tapping into current stories and perspectives offered in private, PEER provides insights into how people understand and negotiate behaviour in detailed context, including how relationships of power are experienced and managed.

Researchers: local community members

The PEER approach recruits members of the target community to act as local researchers. In this case, there were 60 researchers in all: 15 men and 15 women in each of the two selected locations. They were trained to carry out in-depth conversational interviews with 4 individuals from within their own social networks. This generated a sample of around 200 interviewees. The research interview process

took about 6 weeks, ensuring that the researchers remain motivated.

The main themes

The interviews covered 4 main themes and built up from the most general towards the specific. For this study the themes were: :

1. Social networks, routines, household relations
2. The life cycle of a woman / man
3. Perceptions of work
4. Perceptions public / political life

How PEER findings are used:

PEER helps reveal genuine relationships, behaviour and attitudes, and can reveal why programmes may not be working as expected. JOHUD's experience conducting PEER research in Yemen has reaffirmed their belief that this is the most effective way of generating useful data. JOHUD believe they can successfully draw on this experience to investigate sensitive areas of private life relevant to gender empowerment: adolescence, puberty, expectations from married life, roles within the family unit, domestic relations, abuse, attitudes towards family planning, personal aspirations, pressure to conform to prescribed roles.

Validate the role of local researchers:

It is important to note here that the PEER approach validates the contribution made by local researchers – and challenges the false assumption that only professional researchers have the skills of research.

PEER and voice

The PEER approach has been used to great effect with non-literate communities, people who have never been to school, people who speak minority languages. PEER has demonstrated its potential to capture voice and promote accountability. It has built capacity amongst members of marginalised communities to

participate in discussions around research findings and programme design. It provides a supported and credible platform from which community members can engage with development partners JOHUD wishes to extend these attributes to Jordan.

Sampling

The research focuses on two relatively distinct urban locations: Sahab in Amman and Irbid City in Irbid. This allows the researchers to investigate whether the dynamics of changing gender relations are affected by factors such as the degree of social homogeneity or the impact of rural-urban migration.

Sahab and Irbid shared characteristics: poverty and social exclusion; densely populated; opportunities for women to join the formal labour force; rapidly changing social, economic and political change. They also have interesting differences: Sahab is a mixed community, and has always developed as an urban community. Irbid is more socially more homogeneous, and most of the residents in the community where the research will take place come from rural backgrounds.

Purposive sampling

Through the use of 60 local researchers, the study investigated the perceptions of 200 people from the target communities.(50% women, 50% men). The sampling is purposive as opposed to random. Purposive sampling is a recognized method that deliberately seeks out communities (or households of individuals) with certain characteristics which the researcher wishes to investigate. In this research, both the researchers and the interviewees come from the same community (hence peer).

The researchers were identified through outreach mechanisms of local civil society organizations. PEER research works best when the cadre of local researchers are relatively homogenous in terms of education and social status, since then they are more

likely to feel equally empowered by their role as researchers and less likely to adopt the attitudes of any dominant group members. The PEER researchers then select their interviewees purposively, based on their perception that they are 'like them'.

Representation:

The research does not aim to be 'representative' in the strict statistical use of the word. It does, however, aim to select communities that are 'typical' of urban poor households in Amman and Irbid. The research generates data from which generalizations can be drawn and then subsequently tested in new communities.

Analysis methodology:

Data analysis: The data is gathered by peer researchers from the target community through themed conversations and written up by the researcher . This is typed up by the facilitators. At the end of the research, the lead team de-briefed the researchers in person – randomly selecting interviews to review together. The team also met with some of their interviewees. This provides an element of triangulation and quality control.

The lead team examined all the interviews, looking for common features, stories that recur frequently, situations that are described in many interviews, patterns of relationships and networks, etc.

From this data, the team assembled a picture of the lives of the target group, their relationships within the family and beyond, the critical moments of their life, the way they pass through rites of passage (adolescence, marriage, parenthood, employment etc), the ways they characterize their relationships, the strategies they adopt to exercise their will, the obstacles they face and how the deal with them, the sources of support and hindrance, the influences from the outside environment etc.

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