

The National Strategy for the Jordanian Family

Family Development... Community Development



Summary
September 2005



The National Council for Family Affairs
Jordanian Identity... Global Vision



Royal Hashemite Court

“It would be wise to employ a new formula, combining traditional as well as innovative solutions and practices, that will ensure that the family unit- with all its individual members- continues to be nurtured and preserved, serving as the unshakeable foundation of any healthy and stable society.”

Her Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah

The National Strategy for the Jordanian Family

The Jordanian family faces numerous social, economic, and health challenges that limit its ability to attend to its responsibilities successfully. During the past four decades, urbanization changed the structure of the family from extended to nuclear, thus causing an imbalance in the family's unity and solidarity, which provide security in times of adversity. The large size of the family, especially if accompanied with poverty and unemployment, impedes the family's ability to meet the basic needs of its members. The repercussions of globalization have marginalized the role of the family as the primary source of socialization, and preserver of cultural values, and national identity.

Founded by Royal Decree in 2001, as a national, civil, independent body, and under the direct leadership of Her Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah, the National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA) worked with governmental and non-governmental organizations to develop a national strategy for the Jordanian family. The strategy encompasses the various aspects that affect and constitute the life of the family.

The strategy is the outcome of a collaborative effort of a group of national experts, researchers and officials under the supervision of NCFA and with constant consultation with ministries, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and families in the different governorates. The strategy is based on in-depth studies and research on the status of the Jordanian family, its characteristics, needs and the challenges it encounters. The aim was to determine the methods and means that assist the family in fulfilling its responsibilities, safeguarding its rights and assuming its role in development.

The Strategy was developed in line with Jordanian laws and legislation, international conventions and the Millennium Development Goals, which Jordan is committed to. It is based on a national vision that upholds religious and inherited values, and endorses NCFA's mission and vision as stipulated by law.

While developing the strategy, national plans and strategies developed by NCFA, in cooperation with partners, such as the National Plan of Action for Children, and the National Strategic Plan for Family Protection against Family Violence were taken into consideration. The strategy regards the family as one social and cultural unit, in terms of being the primary source of knowledge and the place where the cultural identity of its members is formed. The strategy also considers the family as an effective and productive entity not only a recipient of services and different forms of care.

Urbanization: In 1960, the urbanization rate was 42% of Jordan's population. This percentage increased rapidly to reach approximately 80% of the total population in 2000. This rapid increase in urbanization and immigration from rural to urban areas has led to a change in the family structure and in women's roles; it also put more pressure on the family and its ability to perform its roles and functions.

Mission Statement

To contribute to ensuring a better quality of life for Jordanian families in accordance with a national vision that supports the country's development policies and enables all Jordanian families to fulfill their social and cultural responsibilities.

Vision

To ensure that the Jordanian family is safe, productive stable, rooted in values derived from Islamic teachings and Arab heritage. A family where compassion, solidarity and equality prevail in terms of rights and duties. Finally, a knowledge-loving and financially self-sufficient family open to development and modernization without relinquishing its identity and national and cultural heritage.



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Strategy Objectives

1. Enhancing the family structure and unity.
2. Empowering the family to efficiently and sufficiently carry out its roles and responsibilities.
3. Enhancing the cultural role of the family and its ability to deal with the cultural consequences of globalization.
4. Contributing to the formulation of legislative policies that provide a favorable environment to establish unified family and protect it from disintegration.
5. Ensuring that the policies and programs developed for the family are in tune with demographic, social and economic programs and policies.
6. Protecting the right of the family and its members to education, work, therapeutic and preventive healthcare services.
7. Sustaining contact with Jordanian expatriate families.
8. Mitigating the family's affliction caused by environmental hazards, chronic diseases, armed conflicts and natural disasters, which threaten the family's entity.

Strategy Themes

Eight themes were identified, each tackling one aspect of the family's life, and presenting the priorities that require intervention to achieve better quality of life for the Jordanian family. These issues create the foundation for the national executive plan developed by NCFA in cooperation with its partners from the civil society and governmental and non-governmental organizations. The themes are:

Theme One : The family structure and how it can be strengthened

Theme Two : Basic roles and responsibilities of the family and how to enable the family to fulfill them

Theme Three : The family's cultural role as a preserver of identity and cultural values in the globalization era

Theme Four : The status of the family and the regulation of its affairs in national laws and legislations

Theme Five : Family policies and their integration in national policies for sustainable development

Theme Six : The basic needs and rights of the family and its participation in public life

Theme Seven : The expatriate family and its relationship with the homeland

Theme Eight : Social, health, environmental and security related threats to the structure of the family

Theme One : The family structure and how it can be strengthened

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This theme analyzes the effects of urbanization and the rapid population growth on the family structure and quality of available services. It also discusses the effects of increased divorce rates, domestic violence, poverty rates, and unemployment, which are the major causes of broken families with children as the main victims.


Issues requiring intervention to achieve the strategy's objectives:

1. The socio-economic changes and their impact on the family
2. The family size.
3. Urbanization and social relations in the family
4. Marriage and the sound bases for establishing a family
5. Knowledge about the marriage articles as stipulated in the Personal Status Law
6. Domestic violence and its effect on the family's unity
7. Divorce and its effect on the family's unity
8. Female-headed households
9. Organizations concerned with family affairs

Family Size: The Jordanian family is characterized with its large size. The Household Income and Expenditures Survey (2003) showed that the household size was 6.2 family members, whereby the rate in rural areas reached 6.8 compared to 6.5 in urban areas. There were also regional disparities, with Ma'an scoring the highest rate (6.8) and Amman the lowest (5.8).

Households of 9 members or more constituted 18% of the total. The rate increased in rural areas, reaching about 27% of households in rural areas compared to 16% of households in urban areas.





Marriage Age: The minimum age of marriage has increased for both females and males. 2001 official statistics showed that the average marriage age was 29.8 for males and 26.5 for females.

Campaign "Plan for our future ..Plan for our family/Center for Communication Programs / Johns Hopkins University / Jordan

Theme's Sub-Objectives:

1. To increase knowledge about the family's characteristics, status and the effect of socio-economic changes on it
2. To increase community awareness about the negative impact resulting from the large size of the family
3. To increase community awareness about family issues and changes affecting families, in addition to expanding the spread of family culture
4. To work towards integrating a subject within universities' curricula on family structure, relationships, roles and responsibilities
5. To expand the family's social network
6. To ensure a sound basis for the family
7. To raise awareness about articles related to marriage as stipulated in the Jordanian Personal Status Law
8. To increase awareness about domestic violence; its social and cultural context; and its consequences on the individual, the family and society as a whole
9. To work towards integrating concepts of "family prevention and protection against family violence" in all curricula at all educational levels
10. To enhance the unity and protection of the family through combating arbitrary divorce
11. To empower female-headed households
12. To build the capacity of organizations concerned with family affairs



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Theme Two : Basic roles and responsibilities of the family and how to enable the family to fulfill them

This theme highlights the factors that enable families to carry out their social, economic and cultural roles and responsibilities. It also sheds light upon the transformation in these roles and responsibilities as a result of the rapid changes in the last decades and the boom in information technology.

Issues requiring intervention to achieve the strategy's objectives

1. The family's economic resources.
2. Participatory parenting practices.
3. Family relations.
4. School dropouts and child labor.
5. Services provided to the families of people with disabilities
6. Services provided to the families of the elderly

Crude Activity Rates: According to the Department of Statistics, crude activity rates reached 23.6%. This percentage varies between males (39.6%) and females (7.1%).

The Theme's Sub-Objectives :

1. To promote the concept of productive families
2. To enhance participatory parenting practices in the family
3. To reinforce sound family relations through participatory and democratic socialization.
4. To combat dropping out of school and child labor
5. To raise awareness about the characteristics of people with disability and the needs of their families
6. To provide cognitive and financial support to the families of people with disabilities
7. To empower the families of people with disabilities
8. To provide mechanisms to integrate people with disabilities in the society
9. To provide cognitive and financial support to the families of the elderly

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Theme Three : The family's cultural role as a preserver of identity and cultural values in the globalization era

This theme tackles the role of the family as a cultural unit, and a carrier of cultural values and national identity within a Jordanian society that enjoys cultural diversity, is open to the outside world, and respects the other.

The theme stresses the importance of enabling the family to deal with change and globalization with awareness and openness.

The issues of the theme that require intervention to achieve the strategy's objectives:

1. Citizenship and loyalty
2. Cultural diversity
3. Socialization and citizenship
4. Prejudice and groupism
5. The cognitive gap amongst family members
6. The family's ability to deal with cultural globalization
7. Children's approach to the internet and satellite channels



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The Theme's Objectives:

1. Increase the social awareness about concepts of citizenship and affiliation .
2. To highlight cultural diversity in the Jordanian society, and teach family members to respect it
3. To raise the family's awareness about concepts of citizenship and diversity to ensure that children espouse concepts of mutual respect, tolerance and equality
4. To promote trends and attitudes about cultural diversity to combat prejudice and groupism
5. To bridge the cognitive gap among family members and enhance trust and cooperation among them
6. To facilitate the family's access to information technology
7. To recognize the effect of information technology on the relationship among family members
8. To recognize the effect of globalization on the Jordanian society's values and behavior of family members
9. To build the capacity of family members to acquire skills that enable them to deal with cultural globalization
10. To protect children from unguided usage of internet and telecommunications

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Theme Four : The status of the family and the regulation of its affairs in national laws and legislations

This theme stresses the need to adopt a family-based legislative approach, which protects the interests of the family as an entity without overshadowing the interests and rights of its members. On the other hand, the importance of the government's intervention in caring for the family cannot be overlooked in ensuring its unity and stability as a basis of social security.

The issues of the theme that require intervention to achieve the strategy's objectives:

1. Marriage and the sound basis of a family
2. Divorce and the family unity
3. Domestic violence and its impact on family unity
4. Alcohol, drugs, and psychotropic substances
5. Family health and environmental pollution
6. Healthy housing in residential areas
7. Children and the internet
8. Children and recreational outlets
9. Legislation regarding providing care to people with disabilities
10. Services available to the elderly and their families

Family Disintegration and Female Adolescent Marriages: The annual average number of registered marriage contracts for girls between 15-19 years old has reached approximately 14,000 marriages per year; and the percentage of divorces among them has reached 10%.

The Theme's Sub-Objectives :

1. To work towards a sound family basis
2. To ensure that legislations protect the family from social disintegration and minimize the damage caused by arbitrary divorce
3. To ensure that legislations protect the family from social disintegration and minimize the damage caused by domestic violence
4. To protect families from passive smoking
5. To protect the family from addiction to drugs and psychotropic substances
6. To protect the family from environmental pollution
7. To activate laws to ensure healthy housing conditions
8. To activate regulations governing the work of internet cafes
9. To protect children in public recreational outlets
10. To improve the services available to children with disability and their families
11. To ensure the availability of legislations for the care of the elderly

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Theme Five : Family policies and their integration in national policies for sustainable development

This theme highlights the importance of having cross-sectoral family policies comprising the educational, health and services components, as well as the importance of having these policies complement the socio-economic developmental planning at the national level.

Issues of the theme that require intervention to achieve the strategy's objectives

1. Family Policies
2. Partnership between governmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with family affairs and coordination amongst them
3. Technical and financial rehabilitation of the governmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with family affairs

The Theme's Sub-Objectives :

1. To formulate family policies that complement those of development
2. To provide recommendations and means of intervention to improve the family's livelihood
3. To enhance the partnership and the coordination between governmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with family affairs
4. To build the capacity of governmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with family affairs to enable them to implement their policies and programs of development, and evaluate the extent of their impact

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Theme Six : The basic needs and rights of the family and its participation in public life

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The theme analyzes the basic needs and rights of the family and its members, and the family's participation in different aspects of life as poverty and unemployment represent a challenge to sustainable human development. It also demonstrates the importance of the family's role in instilling in its members the concepts of dialogue and participation in public life.

Issues requiring intervention to achieve the strategy's objectives

1. The financial burden and its implication on the family's fulfillment of its responsibilities
2. Vocational training
3. Poverty and unemployment
4. Expenses of healthcare services
5. University education fees
6. Family's role in raising its children to understand and appreciate participation



The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature

Poverty and unemployment: The percentage for unemployment reached 14.5%. However, it is higher for females (20.8%) than males (13.4%). Official statistics indicate that an increase in the unemployment rate among the population in the age group 15-34 years. It is highest in the age group 20-24 years (41.2%), and 25-39 years (33.3%) followed by youth between the ages 15-19 years (16.5%). The statistics of the Household Income and Expenditures Survey (2002/2003) showed that the percentage of the poor in Jordan reached 14.2% of the population in 2004, with 4% being chronically poor.

Theme's Sub-Objectives:

1. To assist families in putting up with the financial burden to carry out their responsibilities effectively
2. To activate the family's role in guiding and raising the awareness of their children about the importance of vocational training
3. To mitigate the negative effects of unemployment and poverty that are taking their toll on the family
4. To improve the livelihood of the Jordanian family and meet its basic needs
5. To train the unemployed on professions the labor market needs
6. To enhance the positive attitudes regarding women's employment in all sectors
7. To provide healthcare services to the impoverished
8. To provide financial support for needy students in higher education, and help them to further pursue their education
9. To enhance the family's role in raising its members to understand and appreciate participation

Theme Seven : The expatriate family and its relationship with the homeland

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This theme discusses the Jordanian expatriate family and the problems it faces. It also highlights the importance of enhancing its relations with the homeland, and reveals that Jordan lacks recent documented information on the status of Jordanian expatriate families and their characteristics.



Issues requiring intervention to achieve the strategy's objectives

1. The relationship between expatriate families and the homeland
2. The availability of documented information on the status and characteristics of Jordanian expatriates

The Theme's Sub-Objectives :

1. To enhance continuous contact with Jordanian expatriate families at the economic, cultural and social levels, and facilitate their re-integration after coming back home
2. To enable embassies to carry out their responsibility in contacting Jordanian communities abroad
3. To enhance the sense of belonging to the homeland
4. To provide information about the characteristics and status of Jordanian expatriates

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Theme Eight :

Social, health, environmental and security related threats that target the structure of the family

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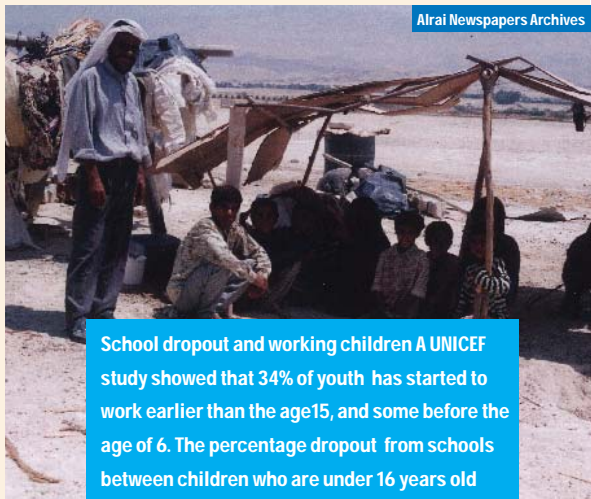
This theme summarizes the most pronounced socio-economic challenges that face the Jordanian family, such as the high rates of fertility, poverty, unemployment, the aggravation of child labor, and the increased number of the elderly. Malnutrition and the spread of chronic diseases, such as diabetes and hypertension, and the implications of consanguineous marriages constitute the most important health challenges. Water scarcity and inappropriate health conditions of houses compared to the increased number of population, and the deterioration of the infrastructure services in some areas represent important environmental threats.

Issues of the theme that require intervention to achieve the strategy's objectives:

1. Sound health environment
2. Health threats the family is subjected to
3. Healthy lifestyles and the chronic diseases
4. Priorities of family's expenditure
5. Effects of wars, natural disasters and armed conflicts on the family

The Theme's Sub-Objectives:

1. To raise community and family awareness about the environment
2. To develop the infrastructure to ensure a sound environment
3. To activate environmental laws and regulations.
4. To raise awareness about the health implications of smoking, alcohol and drugs
5. To raise awareness about the sound health practices with regards to chronic diseases
6. To raise awareness about the advantages of investing in the family's health
7. To activate the laws relevant to controlling the import of substances detrimental to the environment
8. To protect families from the inflictions of natural disasters and wars
9. To raise awareness about the measures that should be taken in cases of wars and accidents



Alrai Newspapers Archives

School dropout and working children A UNICEF study showed that 34% of youth has started to work earlier than the age 15, and some before the age of 6. The percentage dropout from schools between children who are under 16 years old was 0.8%. The important factors for school dropout were school failure, poverty, and unemployment.



Yusef Allan

The 'National Strategy for the Jordanian Family' is considered the main reference of the plan of action currently being developed by NCFA in cooperation with governmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with family affairs. To this effect, four workshops were held in different regions of Jordan. Discussions highlighted the issues of the themes, objectives, suggested activities to deal with these issues, outputs, target groups, the main implementing and cooperating parties, performance indicators and timeframe.