

# WOMEN AND WORK IN JORDAN

## TOURISM AND ICT SECTORS: A CASE STUDY

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## TOURISM AND ICT SECTORS: A CASE STUDY

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<b>PREFACE</b>	<b>3</b>
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<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>4</b>
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<b>I. RATIONALE AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY</b>	<b>11</b>
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<b>1. THE WOMEN AND WORK PROJECT</b>	<b>11</b>
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1.1 Rationale	11
1.2 Project objectives	12
1.3 Project activities	12

<b>2. METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>14</b>
-----------------------	-----------

2.1 Approach	14
2.2 Labour demand: survey of employers	14
2.3 Labour supply: focus group discussions	16
2.4 Limitations of the research	17

<b>3. GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERSHIP</b>	<b>18</b>
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3.1 Gender equality in EU external relations policy	18
3.2 Promotion of gender equality in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership	19

<b>4. COUNTRY PROFILE</b>	<b>20</b>
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4.1 Legislation for gender equality	20
4.2 Girls and women in education and training	21
4.3 Women in the labour force	22

<b>II. RESEARCH FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>5. WOMEN IN TOURISM</b>	<b>27</b>
5.1 Sector profile . . . . .	27
5.2 Women’s employment in tourism . . . . .	28
5.3 Assessing the supply of labour: women speak up . . . . .	34
<b>6. WOMEN IN ICT</b>	<b>37</b>
6.1 Sector profile . . . . .	37
6.2 Women’s employment in ICT . . . . .	38
6.3 Assessing the supply of labour: women speak up . . . . .	44
<b>7. CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>8. RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>ACRONYMS</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>55</b>

#### **ANNEXES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

Annex A Questionnaire for employers survey

Annex B Focus group guidelines

Annex C Survey statistics

Annex D Focus group participants’ profiles

# PREFACE

Gender is an integral component of every aspect of the economic, social, daily and private lives of individuals and societies. Different cultures determine the roles, functions, responsibilities and opportunities of each sex. They also determine access to material and immaterial resources, such as land, credit, education, training and power. Gender differences, unlike the immutable characteristics of sex, are variants that are transformed over time and from one culture to the next as societies change.

Reflecting the norms, laws and social values of society, the differences in the status of men and women also have profound implications for how they participate in formal employment. The enabling factors of education and training have been improving constantly for women, but formal female labour market integration lags behind, undermining the efforts to reduce poverty and socially and economically empower both women and men. In order to be able to promote education, training and labour market policies that also tackle inequalities, it is important to try to better understand the complicated mechanisms that perpetuate gender inequalities in the labour markets.

This report is one of the outcomes of the Women and Work Project (2008–10) of the European Training Foundation (ETF), an EU agency providing advice and assistance to partner countries in the development of their human capital through the reform of education, training and labour market systems in the context of the EU external relations policy. The project's overall objective is to contribute to the promotion of gender equality policies in Egypt, Tunisia and Jordan in the areas of education, training and employment.

This report was drafted by the ETF project team – Milena Corradini, Debora Gatelli, Outi Kärkkäinen, Agnieszka Majcher-Teleon and Elena Carrero Pérez. It is based on a literature and document review, fieldwork undertaken by the local service provider – the Jordan Centre for Social Research – and various comments and inputs received from the stakeholders involved in the process.

The ETF would like to thank the Jordanian Ministry of Labour and all the consultative group members for their contribution to the lively discussions and reflections on the subject of this report and the report itself. The ETF would also like to thank the Italian Cooperation which co-financed the project.

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ETF Project Team Leader

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women's participation in economic activity brings benefits at both the micro and macro levels. In order to be employed, women need skills for which there is a demand in the labour market. It is normally expected that labour force participation rates increase with rising levels of education and training. Furthermore, in general, the more education one has, the greater one's individual income potential is.

While lot of progress has been made regarding women's education, women around the world are less well represented than men in the labour markets. In macroeconomic terms, this lesser presence of women in the labour market leads to low returns on investment in education and training and underutilisation of productive capacity, and as a result, less economic growth. In social terms, the fact that there are fewer women earning a formal wage undermines efforts to reduce poverty. And for the individual women concerned, this state of affairs works against their economic and social empowerment and signals a lack of freedom to fulfil their full potential.

Women's labour force participation rate is very low in Jordan. The activity rate in 2009 was 73.9% for men and 23.3% for women according to the ILO (KILM, 2009)<sup>1</sup>. Although the enrolment of females at all educational levels still lags behind that of males, the educational gender gap is too small to explain the gender gap in labour force participation. Women's skills and qualifications are not utilised to their full extent in Jordan.

It is the desire to help solve this riddle, which is very present in the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries – that is, why women's greater educational achievement has not translated into proportionally greater employment – that has motivated the ETF to undertake Women and Work project (2008–10) in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia. The main aim of the project is to try and promote greater gender equality in education, training and employment in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia by encouraging the authorities, international organisations and other relevant stakeholders to adopt more female-friendly policies in these areas, in line with the commitments made by the European Union (EU) and the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the Union for the Mediterranean and, in particular, the Istanbul Framework for Action for strengthening women's role in society. In order to do so, the study investigates women's opportunities in education, training and employment from a gender perspective in the three countries.

The study concentrates on formal employment in the private sector – the focus is on formal employment because it offers opportunities for decent work that the informal sector does not, and on the private sector because public sector cuts in the countries studied mean it is this part of the economy that has the greatest potential for creating jobs. The study concentrates on two sectors – tourism and information and communication technologies (ICT) – chosen due to their priority status within national development strategies and for their potential to create economic growth and to generate employment. Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia were selected as case studies in the region as they are among the priority countries of the Italian government cooperation that co-financed the project, and of the European Union. Given that youth unemployment is a serious problem in the region, indicating problems of transition from education to work, it was decided that the study should focus on young women between 15 and 29 years of age.

The study is based on a mixed methodology using both quantitative and qualitative data. It has three main components: desk research, a survey and focus groups. On the demand side, a face to face survey with employers in tourism and ICT was conducted to find out about female work in these case study sectors, and to explore employers' attitudes, skill requirements and recruitment policies towards women. On the supply side, focus group discussions were organised with young women in order to understand how the transition from education to work takes place, how education and career choices are made, how young women search for jobs, what their unemployment and initial work experiences are like, and what they perceive as the major difficulties and opportunities for joining the labour force.

## Findings

The main opportunities identified in Jordan are growing educational levels among women, the potential for job creation and the growing importance of skills in the subsectors studied, and emerging demand for new kinds of skills and skill profiles. The main obstacles are cultural norms and values (negative images of working women), inadequate institutional infrastructure and financial burden on employers, and working culture (alien working culture, sexual harassment, long working hours and difficulties in combining work and family life). Some specific obstacles are also related to skills shortages and lack of social skills.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Jordanian Department of Statistics, it was 64.8% for men and 14.9% for women in 2009 (DOS, 2010).

Considering that education increases the activity rates of both men and women in Jordan, but in particular that of women, and that female employment rates increase considerably with education beyond lower secondary school, investing in women's education and training certainly contributes positively to women's employment in the private sector.

Traditional gender roles and attitudes regarding women's work and lack of infrastructure that allows women to reconcile the demands of work and family contribute to the low activity rates of women. Gender norms and stereotyping in Jordan emphasise the role of women as caretakers in the private sector, and this is reflected in the exit rates of women from the labour market after marriage. While the activity rates of higher-educated women can reach as high as 65%, women with lower skills are much less likely to enter the labour market as non-professional jobs are often considered inappropriate for women.

High unemployment rates among educated women may partly be explained by the fact that many better-educated women prefer to wait for scarcer and scarcer jobs in the public sector and hence remain unemployed. Women's unemployment rates are also higher than men's at lower levels of education, however.

#### *Main challenges and opportunities for women's employment in the tourism sector*

The tourism industry has expanded considerably in recent years and shall remain an important sector of the Jordanian economy. Furthermore, the government is committed to the development of the sector and sets ambitious targets and strategies. This, combined with the survey results of the study, indicates a certain potential for (female) employment in the tourism sector. In fact, a large majority of the tourism companies surveyed estimated their financial situation to be good or very good, and one-third of the companies surveyed planned to take on new employees during the 12 months following the survey. Tourism provides a variety of job and career opportunities for low-skilled people and youth with limited or no work experience as well as for well-educated, high-skilled people.

Women accounted only for 20% of employees among the surveyed companies, however; this is slightly less than the share of females in the active population in Jordan in 2008, which was 26% (MEDA-ETE, 2009). If Royal Jordanian Airlines is excluded from the sample, the share of women among employees in the surveyed companies sinks to only 12%. Furthermore, the trend for female employment in the sector is not evolving positively: only about 8% of new recruits during the last 12 months before the survey in the tourism companies were females. This may indicate skills mismatch, but also a general lack of female candidates for the jobs – indeed, almost 80% of the companies reported that fewer females than men, or no females at all, applied for the jobs. In the tourism sector, hardly any genuinely unemployed women can be found.

The inadequate supply of women willing to take up jobs in the tourism sector (particularly in hotels and restaurants) is due to the sector's bad image and the fact that the character of its core jobs is alien to the culture in which women grow up. Apart from the negative image of the sector, young women in the focus groups also complained about sexual harassment, long working hours, transportation problems and difficulties in combining work and family life.

In addition to the lack of supply of female labour, mismatches still occur. Companies are increasingly seeking skilled workers with various set of skills. The shortage with regard to supply of skilled labour is general, but it is women in particular who are less likely to choose vocational education and training (VET) in preparing for skilled jobs. About 60% of employers surveyed found it difficult to find women with the qualifications and skills their companies need.

Employers reported shortages of skills in particular for professionals and skilled workers. They noted that graduates lack many skills, in particular soft skills and key competencies as well as practical skills and experience. Women in the focus groups expressed their wish to be more exposed to the practical aspects of work during their education, and to receive more soft skills training and more attention to their personal development needs. While on-the-job training is a common way of overcoming skills shortages, women tend to benefit from it slightly less than male employees, according to the survey.

Gender segregation reinforces gender stereotyping, makes women more vulnerable to low wages and lack of promotion opportunities, and deprives young women of the role models needed for enhancing female employment in the sector. Women employed in the sector are concentrated in support functions or professional jobs such as administration or finance; they are fewer in skilled jobs and managerial positions, and very few in the reception and room service and bar and restaurant departments. The allocation of new female recruits to different categories and departments indicates no change in the stereotyping of female work in the sector, though only about one-fifth of the employers surveyed specify gender when advertising jobs.

Almost half of the employers surveyed thought that employing women creates organisational problems and is costly due to legal provisions, and that it is difficult to provide transportation for women. On the other hand, employers do not seem to expect women to take on tasks or timetables such as night shifts or overtime that are inconsistent with the general perception of women's roles. Marital or motherhood status or is not considered an issue by employers, which

may indicate that female job seekers are normally young single women without family commitments due to self-selection.

The survey reveals that employers in the tourism sector are rarely prejudiced against women, and in general they consider jobs in the sector to be appropriate for women. In this respect they seem to have a different opinion than the local community. Regarding women's abilities, employers disagree with the statements that women are less committed to their jobs than men or that they perform worse than men. Also, employers do not believe that male colleagues and customers are biased against women. On the contrary, they find many advantages in employing women – women give a better image to the company and are more service-oriented and patient. The positive attitude of employers and customers is an asset that should benefit women and should be built upon by policy makers.

#### *Main challenges and opportunities for women's employment in the ICT sector*

The ICT sector has the potential to offer high-quality, relatively well-paid, mainly professional or technical jobs. Due to the nature of the sector, almost 80% of employees in the surveyed companies have post-secondary or university education. The advantage of the ICT sector, especially in terms of the integration of women, is the wide variety of ICT subsectors, jobs and tasks requiring different sets of skills and predispositions. The character of the sector also enables different working routines to be used (such as teleworking or working from home).

The study results indicate a potential for (female) employment creation. More than two-thirds of the surveyed ICT companies assessed their financial situation to be good or very good, and half of them were planning to create new jobs over the next 12 months following the survey. Most were planning to recruit professionals, a widely accepted job profile for women. Although women make up only 23% of all the employees in the IT sample, women constituted a growing share, 29%, of all the new recruits during the last 12 months before the survey.

While 60% of the surveyed companies stated that fewer women than men, or no women at all, apply for jobs with them, the employers considered the great majority of jobs in the sector to be appropriate for women, and only a minority of 15% specify gender when advertising jobs. Employers also strongly disagreed with the statement that their customers do not like to be served by women or that male employees do not like working with female colleagues. Nor do the majority of employers think that women perform less well than men or that women are less committed to their jobs.

About a quarter of the employers found that employing women is expensive due to legal provisions and that employing women can create organisational problems for the company such as the need for substitutes during maternity leave. Organising transport for female employees is a problem for an even bigger share of the employers. These figures are significant, though lower than in the tourism companies; this may be partly due to most ICT companies having fewer female workers than the threshold above which legal provisions such as the duty to provide childcare facilities apply.

The majority of respondents reported that they face skills shortages when recruiting – unsurprisingly, this is particularly true with regard to university-educated individuals. Regarding women's educational choices, it is important to note that one-third of employers found it difficult to find women with the relevant skills and qualifications. With regard to skills in general, ICT would benefit greatly from an improvement in the quality of general education and basic skills and competencies. Employers are already aware of the importance of soft skills (communication, team working, problem solving and languages), and the demand for specific ICT knowledge (hard skills) will grow, as will demand for staff with other background and skills knowledge (accounting and finance, quality control, standards application, etc.).

As in many other sectors, women in ICT tend to be concentrated in support functions or professional jobs such as administration or sales and marketing. While most women continue to be recruited as professionals, there were proportionally more women than men recruited during the last 12 months before the survey as skilled and unskilled workers, which may indicate changes in attitudes regarding non-professional female ICT jobs. There were also changes in the departments in which the new female recruits were employed: instead of sales and marketing, most were recruited in production, and the share of new female recruits in finance grew considerably. This indicates that while women maintain a strong hold in more traditional, support-type functions such as administration, they seem to be simultaneously improving their presence in other functions such as production and finance.

An interesting difference between female candidates and candidates in general was the lower percentage of employers who considered customer service attitudes important for women compared to the high percentage who considered them very important for candidates in general. This may indicate that customer service attitudes are not considered essential for jobs normally performed by women or that having such attitudes is still a culturally sensitive issue. Employers also give less importance to female candidates' availability to do night shifts, either due to legal prohibitions or due to an implicit recognition of such shifts not being seen as acceptable for women.

Similarly to the tourism sector, it became evident during the survey that hiring women has many advantages for employers – they give a better image to the company, are more service-oriented and establish better relations with



clients. Women in the focus groups stated that they find ICT challenging and feel confident about their abilities, and that they chose this particular field of study hoping for good job opportunities in the future. The number of women in ICT study programmes is a great asset, yet it constitutes a huge waste of resources if these women drop out the labour market or underutilise their skills.

The study also indicated that the problem of unemployment and discrimination in employment is more pervasive in ICT than in tourism. Women who participated in the focus groups complained about difficulties in finding an appropriate job in the ICT sector. They also claimed that they face discriminatory behaviours such as being confined to specific tasks that are often below their qualifications, being passed over for promotion, training, etc., having to prove they are capable of doing things, and sexual harassment.

## Recommendations

There are many actors who in cooperation could be involved in removing the obstacles and taking advantage of the opportunities for women in work: the government, the education system, employers, social partners, NGOs, civil society and the media. Many of the actions proposed below might be also organised and financed within the framework of donor interventions.

### *Policy options for negative images (tourism) and non-traditional fields of study and work (tourism and ICT)*

While the majority of employers are not prejudiced against women in work and see many advantages in employing women according to the survey, social norms still define what is acceptable as women's work and limit the employment opportunities of women, contributing to very low female activity and employment rates in Jordan.

Therefore it is recommended to:

- Organise media awareness-raising campaigns that would further change the negative perception of working women in general and in the tourism sector in particular. These campaigns should also promote positive images or successful stories of women in other non-traditional fields or functions. This could be addressed by civil society but also by the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education, and carried out using such platforms as TV and social advertising.
- Influence mindsets via education. Further reform of curricula and textbooks should involve presenting positive images of working women and women in non-traditional fields.
- Raise awareness about unequal division of labour in families that causes women to have to work double shifts and limits their employment opportunities.

### *Policy options for inadequate supply of skilled female labour (and high female unemployment)*

Proper career guidance and counselling can be useful for women's social and economic empowerment. Career guidance services are relatively new to Jordan, and guidance and counselling services are underdeveloped<sup>2</sup>. Projects that are being developed/implemented in the field of career guidance should put more emphasis on gender issues in order to enhance women's employment. Career guidance can also target young people, both males and females, to encourage them to take up training and job opportunities in unpopular sectors where there are skills shortages and emerging career opportunities, such as tourism.

On the other hand, no matter what their educational level or study field, women face higher unemployment than men. Therefore there is a necessity to use career guidance and counselling to also provide women with better skills for accessing and integrating into the labour market before they leave the educational system.

Therefore it is recommended to:

- Organise career guidance early enough at school level and provide information in equal measure to male and female students on the full range of occupations available. Career guidance should be targeted at students/pupils in schools when they make decisions about further education.
- Encourage girls and women, through career guidance, to consider non-traditional study fields and VET programmes (and skilled worker jobs in the sectors where such demand exists e.g. tourism).
- Target specific mentoring at female graduates leaving the educational system, including social skills training and specific training on how to look for a job, prepare for an interview, etc. Training in communication skills, assertiveness skills, intercultural issues, problem-solving skills and work ethics could also be integrated into curricula or provided by civil society or NGOs in school premises.
- Improve practical training (including internships in enterprises), exposing women to all different aspects of future work (methods, equipment, work environment and culture, including mixed-gender environments). This requires

<sup>2</sup> Some career guidance has been introduced in basic education, and counselling centres have also been established in 20 public and private universities. Career guidance as part of the employment services is almost non-existent (Sultana and Watts, 2007).

creating incentives for better school and business cooperation and better school management, and teachers' initiative.

- Include in career guidance (or curricula by content and mode of instruction) the fostering of an entrepreneurship spirit in girls, as it improves work performance and quality of life in general. This is especially useful for women, who are traditionally expected to remain passive but are now more likely to occupy positions requiring certain entrepreneurial skills, such as in sales and marketing.
- Encourage women to choose ICT and tourism programmes. This is justified by the lack of female candidates reported by employers and the prospects of job creation in the two subsectors studied.
- Encourage, through career guidance, male employment in sectors traditionally defined as 'female' as a means of raising the average pay and status of these occupations and improving gender balances.

*Policy options for skills shortages and lack of progression paths for women*

One way to deal with skill shortages apart from better career guidance and improving the quality of education in schools and universities is supporting lifelong learning and in-company training, in particular for women. Support of in-company training of women was one of the interventions cited by employers as most desired.

The lack of progression paths for women could also be addressed by in-company training and mentoring schemes. The absence of women in higher ranking positions leads to a lack of role models for young women starting work and the perpetuation of gender stereotypes in the workplace.

Therefore it is recommended to:

- Encourage employers through fiscal incentives to provide more on-the-job training for women. On-the-job-training for women should focus not only on technical issues but also on such topics as assertiveness, leadership and management, showing women the opportunities they have to grow to higher technical and managerial levels in an often male-dominated environment. Labour unions might also take the initiative in providing such soft skills training to women.
- Introduce a mentoring/buddy system for newcomers wherein new female employees are mentored at work by more senior female (or male if found appropriate) colleagues for the first few weeks or months of their employment. A special kind of mentoring scheme might be used to support women who are oriented towards a managerial career. Again, this requires only employers' or labour unions' initiative and represents one of the 'quick win' interventions. Special mentoring schemes could also be provided by civil society organisations such as NGOs, in collaboration with professional associations.

*Policy options for inadequate institutional infrastructure for combining family and work responsibilities, and financial burden on employers*

In order to persuade women to join the labour market and encourage them to stay once they do, smart modern policies are needed that can help women to combine work and family responsibilities without putting all of the burden on employers. Without this, there may be a growing reluctance among women to join and stay in the labour market or, in the case of growing unemployment, increasing discrimination against women by employers. If the private sector is not able to take full responsibility for ensuring equal opportunities, the state may have to play a bigger role, something which can be justified in economic terms by the positive effect of gender equality on employment and economic growth.

Related to balancing family and work life, long working hours are also very often mentioned by women as a practical problem that they have to struggle with or an element of the job that makes work less appealing. Interventions with respect to this issue may include part-time, flexi-time and teleworking.

Therefore it is recommended that the government:

- Shares the costs of maternity leave, breastfeeding breaks, transport and other measures required by law with (all) the employers.
- Supports companies in organising childcare or provides public childcare facilities.
- Regulates part-time working and teleworking with regard to social protection, access to leave, promotion, training etc. Teleworking may solve some of the transportation and limited mobility problems for women who cannot find a job in their location but who may find one somewhere else.
- Provides tax benefits for companies investing in teleworking possibilities. Teleworking requires changes to work organisation such as the introduction of task-oriented management, but also some investments in tools to enable teleworking.
- Encourages companies by means of fiscal incentives to recruit more women and to organise women-only private spaces like restrooms, changing rooms and even canteen spaces.

*Policy options for discrimination and sexual harassment*

Discrimination can be observed in the Jordanian labour market, including targeting of job advertisements at men, allocation of tasks based on gender rather than individual merit, and unequal access to benefits, training and promotion. Sexual harassment was cited by young women as a serious problem in the workplace, although no quantitative data are available to measure it. Some research suggests that sexual harassment and intimidation of women by their male colleagues and superiors is quite common (Al Manar, undated). Even sporadic instances of sexual harassment may create an unfriendly atmosphere where all women feel unwelcome or threatened.

It is recommended to:

- Include in career guidance specific training on the rights and obligations of workers and on ways to deal with problems that may arise in further studies or employment regarding harassment or discrimination.
- Undertake specific action at the company level such as awareness-raising trainings or sending communiqués on harassment and discrimination issues to employees and managers. Special rules for dealing with harassment and discrimination incidents could be elaborated, and counsellors might be also appointed to treat complaints in a confidential manner. This requires employer or labour union initiative.
- Provide practical training as part of curricula, in a gender-mixed working environment wherever possible in order to prepare women and men to work together.
- Develop a code of conduct to address discrimination and sexual harassment, or alternatively make specific amendments to the laws (e.g. the Labour Law).



# I. RATIONALE AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

## 1. THE WOMEN AND WORK PROJECT

### 1.1 RATIONALE

Women around the world are less well represented than men in labour markets. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), in 2007 the female labour force participation rate worldwide was 53%, compared to 78% for men.

In macroeconomic terms, this lesser presence of women in the labour market leads to low returns on investment in education and training and underutilisation of productive capacity, and as a result, less economic growth. In social terms, the fact that there are fewer women earning a formal wage undermines efforts to reduce poverty. And for the individual women concerned, this state of affairs works against their economic and social empowerment and signals a lack of freedom to fulfil their full potential.

Education, skills and access to work are intimately related; in order to be employed, women and men need qualifications and skills which are in demand on the labour market. Conventional wisdom has it that rising levels of education and skills boost labour force participation rates by improving people's productivity and giving them better opportunities for paid employment in the formal sector. Furthermore, the more educated people are, the greater their individual income potential will be. Various studies on the impact of education on GDP have found a positive correlation between the two.

In the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region<sup>3</sup>, there has been significant progress in providing education for both boys and girls in recent decades. Gross enrolment in primary education has reached almost 100% for both sexes<sup>4</sup>, and in secondary education, an average of almost 80% has been achieved. When it comes to translating those achievements in education into gains on the labour market, however, women lag far behind men. Female labour force participation rates in the region – 23% on average in the eight countries (ETF, 2009) – are the lowest in the world.

The proportion of females enrolled in education is still lower than that of males, but this educational gender gap is too small to explain the disparity in labour force participation rates. Furthermore, female (and male) youth unemployment remains a pressing issue, particularly the female transition from school to work, which results in many women becoming discouraged and dropping out of the labour force. Why is this the case? Does the problem lie with the quality or relevance of the education provided for women? Doesn't education equip young women – to the same extent as men – with the necessary and sufficient qualifications to enter the labour market? Are there other social and economic factors which have more of an impact? What do women have to say about this state of affairs? What do employers think? What can be done to increase the employability of women?

It is the search for answers to these questions that has motivated the ETF<sup>5</sup> to undertake this study as part of the Women and Work project. In Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia, the countries studied within this project, the gender gap in education has been reduced or even, in the case of Tunisia, reversed; however, these countries still register stubbornly low female activity rates of 22%, 23% and 26% respectively (ILO, 2009).

The study concentrates on formal employment in the private sector. This is because although the economies of the region have very large informal sectors, they usually only provide low-skilled and low-paid jobs or consist of unpaid household work, invisible in the national accounts. As workers in the informal economy do not enjoy basic rights such as social protection, this sector cannot be seen as a source of decent work<sup>6</sup>. For all of these reasons, the formal sector is the preferred option for increasing women's opportunities for employment. Furthermore, due to public sector cuts in all the countries studied, it is the private sector that has the real potential for providing more jobs for women.

The service sector is the fastest-growing sector in the economies of the region, compared to industry and, in particular, agriculture. In 2007, services represented 46% of employment in Egypt, 77% in Jordan and 49% in Tunisia (ETF, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria and Tunisia. Libya and Israel were not considered in the study.

<sup>4</sup> Except in the occupied Palestinian Territory.

<sup>5</sup> For further information see [www.etf.europa.eu](http://www.etf.europa.eu).

<sup>6</sup> The concept of decent work encapsulates fundamental principles and rights at work, international labour standards, employment and opportunities for generating income, social protection and social security as well as social dialogue and tripartism. The ILO's primary goal is to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work.

Within the service sector, tourism and ICTs were chosen for this study because of their high potential for economic growth and job creation and because they are seen as priority sectors by the governments of all three countries. They are also sectors which typically employ people for various kinds of jobs with different skills and qualifications, allowing some conclusions to be drawn on the impact of education on employment. If they continue to develop, these sectors may have the potential to create decent work for women by offering formal employment and relatively good salaries.

The research questions that underpinned this study are:

- What is the potential of tourism and ICT for creating jobs for women?
- If ICT and tourism companies do not employ many women, is this caused by problems in the demand or the supply of female labour?
- What impact does education have on women's employment in the two sectors? How can women's education be made more relevant?
- Why do young women who have trained in occupations related to the two sectors not go on to work in them? Is the labour market gender-neutral? Are there different patterns in rural and urban areas?
- What can be done to ensure more women are employed in these sectors and in the private sector in general? What incentives are needed in order to increase female labour market participation?

Secondly, the project seeks to provide conclusions and recommendations for the government and other stakeholders in these sectors and beyond in answer to the following questions:

- What could be done to support greater gender equality either through gender mainstreaming or interventions specifically targeting women?
- How could donors, in particular the European Union, support these initiatives?

## 1.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The Women and Work project is part of the Innovation and Learning projects of the ETF. Its overall objective is to contribute to the promotion of gender equality policies in Egypt, Tunisia and Jordan in the areas of education, training and employment.

More specifically, the project aims at increasing knowledge of and interest in women's employment opportunities and benefits in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia, and at enhancing the ETF's expertise by acquiring new knowledge and experience that can be used to respond to different types of request from the European Commission or to provide policy advice at the request of ETF partner countries. By involving different national stakeholders in the process and disseminating the study results at the international level, employers in the three countries and the two economic focus sectors of the study are encouraged to become actors in the promotion of gender equality and other donors are given the possibility of benefiting from the research results within the overall context of promoting gender equality and fighting against poverty and exclusion.

## 1.3 PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The project started with stocktaking missions to Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia in 2008. The ETF met with the relevant national stakeholders and the donor community. The European Commission and Italian Cooperation, the co-funder of the project, were consulted on the choice of case study countries<sup>7</sup>. Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia are priority countries for both the European Commission and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Tourism and ICTs were selected as the focus sectors of the study.

The field research, based on both quantitative and qualitative analysis of female labour supply and demand, was conducted in 2009. On the demand side, the focus was on studying the preferences, requirements and barriers to female recruitment by means of a survey of employers in the two focus sectors. On the supply side, the study looked at the obstacles and opportunities for female labour market insertion in the tourism and ICT sectors by means of focus group discussions with young women. Given that the problem is often related to the transition from school to work and the first entry into the labour market, the project's target group is young women aged 15–29 years. Small companies were excluded from the employers' survey for two reasons: they represent a smaller absolute potential for employment generation, and small (family) companies seldom have in place human resources policies of the kind the survey focused on.

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<sup>7</sup> Over many years the ETF has established strong links with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and in particular with the Directorate for Development Cooperation; within this partnership, funds have been made available under the Italian Trust Fund to co-fund this project.

A national consultative group was established in each country, including representatives from the government, the EU Delegation and the social partners, in particular professional federations, to ensure local participation and ownership of the project. The groups met three times during project implementation. Representatives of Italian Cooperation and the European Commission participated in these meetings too. Other donors in the three countries were informed about the project in order to ensure coherence and synergy among the international donor community.

A study visit to the EU for 24 participants was organised as an opportunity for members of the consultative groups to familiarise themselves with initiatives promoting women's employment in the Piedmont region, to share knowledge and experience in enhancing women's employment in Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia and the EU, and to discuss and come up with suggestions and recommendations to be incorporated in the country reports.

A synthesis cross-country report with policy recommendations was drafted and published in the second half of 2010.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 APPROACH

Gender determines access to material resources, such as land, credit and training, and more intangible resources, such as power. The implications for everyday life are many, and include the gendered division of labour, the responsibilities of family members inside and outside the home, education, employment and professional advancement opportunities, and a voice in policy making. Gender, an integral component of every aspect of life, is a determinant of the different roles ascribed by society to men and women.

This study investigates women's opportunities in education, training and employment from a gender perspective in Jordan. Access to employment is not considered as an objective in itself but rather as a means to acquire economic independence, enhance the well-being of families, fight against poverty and contribute to socio-economic growth.

While the study was undertaken to increase knowledge, the aim of the project is to contribute to the transformation of the given situation. This is why the project has aimed to involve a variety of stakeholders such as local authorities, education providers and, in particular, employers in the process, with the implicit objective of engaging them as promoters of gender equality and to formulate policy recommendations.

The research was based on three components: a literature review, and quantitative and qualitative analyses of female labour supply and demand.

- On the demand side, a face-to-face survey of employers in tourism and ICT was conducted to study women's level of participation, the barriers and opportunities affecting their entry into the labour market, and the skills requirements for them.
- On the supply side, the focus group discussions aimed to understand how education contributes to female employment and how the transition from education to work takes place. Information was gathered on education and career choices, the quality and labour market relevance of the education received, job search and unemployment experiences, and perceived difficulties and opportunities in joining the labour force.

A questionnaire for the survey and guidelines for the focus group discussions were developed in English by the ETF to be used in all three countries studied; these were then translated, adapted and piloted in Jordan to reflect the local context.

### 2.2 LABOUR DEMAND: SURVEY OF EMPLOYERS

Labour demand in tourism and ICT was assessed by means of a survey of companies in the two sectors. The survey targeted medium-sized and large companies for two reasons. Firstly, although small companies are an important part of the economy, in absolute terms they employ fewer people than medium-sized or large companies. Secondly, these types of businesses, especially family ones, do not usually have systematic human resources policies in place. Companies with less than 25 employees were excluded from the survey<sup>8</sup>.

#### 2.2.1 TOURISM

Tourism is not a homogeneous sector and consists of several subsectors including hotels, restaurants, tourist attractions (archaeological sites, museums and galleries), tourism services (travel agencies, tour operators, tour guides and souvenir outlets), tourist transport (car rental, coach and airline companies), and tourism administration such as the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and public information and visitor centres.

Due to the different categorisations and methodologies used, as well as the dynamic nature of the sector, it was difficult to get a comprehensive picture of the sector and to identify the proper frame for sampling. The decision was taken to rely on the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and sectoral association sources. According to these sources, the number of people employed in the tourism sector had reached 40 092 in 2009. In 2008 there were 481 hotels, 586 travel agencies, 776 tourist restaurants, 294 tourist outlets and 342 car rental offices (**TABLE 2.1**).

<sup>8</sup> In order not to completely exclude small enterprises (10–49 employees according to international definitions), which are important in the economies of the countries surveyed, a threshold of 25 employees was adopted.



**TABLE 2.1 TOURISM SUBSECTORS BY NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES AND NUMBER OF COMPANIES**

Tourism subsector	Number of employees				Number of companies
	2002	2008	2009	% 2009	2008
<b>Hotels</b>	10 324	13 994	14 690	36.6	481
<b>Travel agencies</b>	2 511	3 680	3 981	9.9	586
<b>Tourist restaurants</b>	5 674	15 498	16 517	41.2	776
<b>Car rental offices</b>	1 036	1 758	1 520	3.8	342
<b>Tourist shops</b>	347	732	772	1.9	294
<b>Tourist guides</b>	570	873	855	2.1	
<b>Horse guides</b>	286	713	713	1.8	
<b>Tourist transportation</b>	445	881	879	2.2	7
<b>Diving centres</b>		45	45	0.1	9
<b>Water sports</b>		120	120	0.3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>21 193</b>	<b>38 294</b>	<b>40 092</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2 498</b>

Source: Jordan Centre for Social Research, calculations based on Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities figures

A comprehensive mapping of the sector identified the total frame and which subsectors exist. The three subsectors with the highest concentration of employment were selected: hotels, tourist restaurants and travel agencies. The total tourism sample frame consisted of 278 companies.

- No administrative data are available on the size and distribution of hotels. However, USAID survey data suggest that four- and five-star hotels employ the majority of all staff working in this subsector (and in the tourism sector as a whole). For this reason, and as they can be expected to have policies on human resources in place, it was decided to concentrate on these hotels and to exclude one- and two-star hotels. Some 98 hotels were included in the frame.
- Due to the very small size of restaurants, the threshold for the number of employees was reduced to 20. A total of 112 restaurants – all those with 20 employees or more – were selected.
- Due to the even smaller size of the travel agencies, a threshold of 10 employees had to be applied in order to constitute a sample. Some 68 travel agencies – all those with 10 employees or more – were selected using data supplied by the Travel Agencies Association.

Of these, representatives of 86 hotels, 80 restaurants and 68 travel agencies were interviewed (**TABLE 2.2**). The companies were located in Amman (85%), Aqaba, the Dead Sea, Petra, Irbid, Jerash, Karak and Madaba. The distribution of the sample is in line with the geographical distribution of tourism companies as a whole. Compared to the sample frame, five-star hotels are slightly underrepresented and four-star hotels slightly overrepresented.

**TABLE 2.2 TOURISM SAMPLE FRAME, SAMPLE AND RESPONSE RATE**

	Sample frame	Interviews conducted	Response rate (%)
<b>Hotels (3–5-star)</b>	98	86	95
<b>Travel agencies</b>	68	68	100
<b>Tourism restaurants</b>	112	80	71
<b>Total</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>86</b>

## 2.2.2 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

ICT statistics are prone to bias as there is no consistent classification system for the sector. Companies can be grouped around technologies, solutions or business verticals, and ICT products and services cut across a wide range of economic activities. As a result, the ICT sector does not fit comfortably within the common industry classification definitions, except for the telecommunications sector. This has a profound impact on data collection and analysis for the purposes of this research. The Information Technology Association of Jordan (Int@j) currently has around 130 members and claims that this reflects the true number of ICT enterprises when a better definition of the sector is applied (such as ISIC 4, which excludes computer retail shops, assembly shops, vocational training providers, call centres and internet cafés).

Again, the size of the companies was too small to constitute a sample with the threshold of 25 employees, and the threshold was therefore reduced to 20. The sample frame consisted of 141 companies and the survey was conducted face to face with 100 companies, giving a response rate of 71% (TABLE 2.3). Of these, 69 were IT companies and 31 were telecommunications companies. All the interviewed companies were located in Amman. This may be due to the fact that the sources of information used to make up the sample cover only companies from Amman, or that there are no larger ICT companies outside the capital.

## 2.3 LABOUR SUPPLY: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The target groups were identified as women aged 17–29 years, living in Amman, Irbid and Petra, who were either students, employees, unemployed or inactive women with experience of either education or employment in one of the two sectors. One of the focus group discussions was organised with male family members of the young women concerned. A total of 11 focus groups were conducted from 13 to 26 June 2009. They were split into the following groups (TABLE 2.4).

**TABLE 2.3 ICT SAMPLE FRAME, SAMPLE AND RESPONSE RATE**

	Sample frame	Interviews conducted	Response rate (%)
<b>ICT</b>	141	100	71

**TABLE 2.4 ORGANISATION OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

	Sector	Type	Governorate	Number of participants
<b>1</b>	ICT	Students	Amman	12
<b>2</b>	ICT	Unemployed	Amman	8
<b>3</b>	ICT	Unemployed	Irbid	11
<b>4</b>	ICT	Employed	Amman	9
<b>5</b>	Tourism/ICT	Inactive	Amman	8
<b>6</b>	Tourism	Students	Amman	8
<b>7</b>	Tourism	Employed	Amman	10
<b>8</b>	Tourism	Unemployed	Amman	9
<b>9</b>	Tourism	Employed	Petra	11
<b>10</b>	Tourism	Unemployed	Petra	11
<b>11</b>	Tourism/ICT	Students' male relatives	Amman	7
<b>12</b>	ICT	Unemployed	Irbid	11

In order to facilitate the process of identification and selection of women to attend the focus group discussions, contacts were established with colleges and vocational training schools for the students and many companies and establishments for the working women in the IT and tourism sectors. The sessions lasted for two hours on average and were recorded (with the exception of the male groups, who refused to be recorded).

## 2.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The survey had several limitations. Firstly, micro-enterprises and the many smaller companies that account for the majority of companies in Jordan were excluded for the reasons explained above. As most companies in the tourism sector are small or micro-enterprises, the sample is only representative of larger companies in this sector. These constitute the minority of companies in the sector but account for the majority of jobs. With ICT, the larger companies sampled represent a higher share of all companies as well as the majority of jobs. For this reason, the whole ICT sector is better covered by this research. Secondly, the instruments used for the research (questionnaire and guidelines) were designed for cross-sector and cross-country comparison and therefore do not consider all local and sectoral specificities. Nevertheless, the survey gives a good overview of female employment in larger companies and in the geographical areas where most of the ICT and tourism industries are concentrated.

There were no major constraints during the course of the implementation of the survey. Some of the surveyed companies requested supporting letters from the Ministry of Labour and copies of the questionnaire before deciding whether to meet with the people implementing the survey. Some companies took a long time deciding whether or not to participate. Because there were no data on the number of employees in the ICT companies, researchers had to call all the companies to find out the number of employees and to determine the eligibility of each company to participate in the survey. The fieldwork was substantially reduced during the month of Ramadan due to the reduction of working time and the closure of restaurants.

Difficulties were faced in identifying the members of the target groups for the focus group discussions, especially for the unemployed and the inactive. Firstly, this is due to the fact that the borders between being unemployed and being inactive are blurred in Jordan. Many women claimed they were unemployed when in fact they were not actively seeking work and had actually dropped out of the labour market. Secondly, it is difficult to find unemployed or inactive women. This prompted the team to combine the inactive women from ICT and from tourism into one group. It was also difficult to find an appropriate time for working women to attend because most of them finish work rather late and it was difficult for them to come for a two-hour meeting after work. The above constraints had no major impact on the overall plan of the study and were overcome in different ways, but they did slow down the implementation.

# 3. GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERSHIP

## 3.1 GENDER EQUALITY IN EU EXTERNAL RELATIONS POLICY

The European Union has reaffirmed gender equality as a common objective and a common value for the entire EU, and as a goal in its own right. To progress towards greater gender equality, most EU Member States and the European Commission have adopted a twin-track strategy: on the one hand, mainstreaming gender equality in all policies, strategies and actions, and on the other, financing measures which directly support women's empowerment. Progress has been considerable, but much remains to be done. As an indicator relevant to this study, according to Eurostat (2008), the average EU labour force participation rate for women is only 64% compared to 78% for men.

The promotion and protection of women's rights figure high in EU external policy. The European Union acknowledges that gender equality is not only crucial in itself but is a fundamental human right, a question of social justice (European Commission, 2007) and a prerequisite for poverty reduction. The European Consensus on Development, agreed by the EU's General Affairs and External Relations Council on 22 November 2005, identifies gender equality as one of the five key principles of the EU development policy (Council of the European Union, 2006):

'The gender aspect must be addressed in close conjunction with poverty reduction, social and political development and economic growth, and mainstreamed in all aspects of development cooperation. Gender equality will be promoted through support to equal rights, access and control over resources and political and economic voice.'

On International Women's Day 2010, in commemoration of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995, the European Commission reaffirmed its commitment to the vigorous pursuit of gender equality in its relations with third countries (European Commission, 2010):

'Our ambition is not limited to the borders of the Union. Gender equality must be fully incorporated into our external policies too so as to foster the social and economic independence and advancement of women and men throughout the world. The EU is committed to promoting gender equality in all contexts, including conflict and post-conflict countries. Reducing gender inequalities, tackling gender-based violence, and promoting women's rights are essential for developing sustainable and democratic societies.'

For the period 2007–13, EU external cooperation in the field of gender equality and women's empowerment is financed through four geographical instruments – the European Development Fund, the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) and the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) – at the national and regional levels, and by thematic instruments (Investing in People and the Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights)<sup>9</sup>.

The ETF adheres to the principles and objectives of the European Commission as regards promoting gender equality in external relations. The ETF works with 29 partner countries<sup>10</sup> which are involved in the ENPI<sup>11</sup> or in the EU enlargement process under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)<sup>12</sup>. Additionally, the ETF works in a number of the countries of Central Asia<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> See [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/gender/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/gender/index_en.htm).

<sup>10</sup> The ETF's partner countries are: Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Egypt, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244), Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, the occupied Palestinian Territory, Russia, Serbia, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

<sup>11</sup> The ENPI was developed in 2004, with the objective of avoiding the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged EU and its neighbouring countries, aiming rather to strengthen the prosperity, stability and security of both the EU and its neighbours.

<sup>12</sup> The IPA is an EU external relations instrument that aims to provide targeted assistance to countries which are candidates and potential candidates for EU membership.

<sup>13</sup> Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

## 3.2 PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERSHIP

The relationship between the EU and the Mediterranean countries was previously governed by the Declaration on the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (also known as the Barcelona Process)<sup>14</sup>. Its five-year work programme, agreed at the Euro-Mediterranean Summit in November 2005, included gender equality as a key priority. The work programme remained in force when the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership was relaunched, at the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean in 2008, as the Union for the Mediterranean.

In November 2006, at the first Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society, the Euro-Mediterranean ministers approved the Istanbul Framework for Action for the promotion of women's rights and gender equality in the civil, political, social, economic and cultural spheres. The measures agreed upon that are most relevant to this study, regarding the economy, employment, education and training, and which were confirmed in the Ministerial Euromed Conference of Marrakesh in November 2008 and November 2009, are listed below.

### Economy and employment

- Create equal opportunities and remove obstacles for women to work or to be recruited/employed or to stay employed.
- Promote family-friendly policies, aiming at reconciliation between professional and family life, in particular affordable care services for children, elderly people and other dependents, and ensure a professional environment that is suited to women in terms of transport and safety and non-discrimination in the workplace.
- Promote and strengthen national capacities to regularly collect and analyze gender-disaggregated data, including on the informal sector and on the impact of macroeconomic reforms on women and men.
- Strengthen knowledge of the impact of macroeconomic policies on women's and men's employment and develop research focused on gender to enable the elaboration of efficient strategies aiming at strengthening the role of women in the economy.
- Promote women's representation and participation in economic decision-making positions, in particular in employers' associations, workers' unions and other socio-economic structures.

(EMHRN, 2006, pp. 4–5)

### Education and training

Ensure empowerment of women, including through greater access to education at all levels and to vocational and technical training. In this regard:

- Promote specific vocational and technical training courses for women in diversified job sectors.
- Promote post-training support through appropriate linkages between relevant partners such as training institutions and governmental employment agencies.
- Ensure greater access to lifelong learning to provide women with skills responsive to the rapidly changing labour market.
- Provide guiding programmes to help women return to the labour market after an absence or to direct them to new sectors.

(EMHRN, 2006, pp. 5–6)

The cooperation instrument for the region, the ENPI, identifies gender equality as one of the common values between the EU and the Mediterranean countries and a possible area for further subregional cooperation. ENPI Country Action Plans for the region include the promotion of women's participation in economic, political and social life.

In this context, and in line with the EU strategic guidelines for the promotion of gender equality, the ETF has included a gender approach in its activities related to education, training and employment. As stated in its Mid-Term Perspective 2007–10, gender equality in participation in education and employment will continue to be a priority for the ETF. The Women and Work project was designed in this context.

<sup>14</sup> The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, initiated in 1995, is a wide framework of political, economic and social relations between the Member States of the European Union and partners of the southern Mediterranean. It comprises 35 members – 25 EU Member States and 10 Mediterranean partners (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey). Libya has had observer status since 1999. The three main objectives of the partnership are: (i) the definition of a common area of peace and stability through the reinforcement of political and security dialogue (Political and Security Chapter); (ii) the construction of a zone of shared prosperity through an economic and financial partnership and the gradual establishment of a free-trade area (Economic and Financial Chapter); and (iii) the rapprochement between peoples through a social, cultural and human partnership aimed at encouraging understanding between cultures and exchanges between civil societies (Social, Cultural and Human Chapter).

## 4. COUNTRY PROFILE

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a constitutional monarchy with a population of 5.7 million people (DOS, 2007). In early 1990 the government began reforms to restructure economic activities and encouraged the privatisation of community services; it also joined the World Trade Organisation and signed a free trade agreement with the United States and a partnership agreement with the European Union. As a result of these reforms, the kingdom's GDP grew by 6% in 2007, reaching a total of USD 15.83 billion. Foreign direct investment (FDI) amounted to USD 1.835 billion in 2007 compared with USD 815 million in 2000<sup>15</sup>. Jordan's gross national income per capita was USD 3 470 in 2009. The percentage of the population below the poverty line was 13% in 2006 (World Bank, 2009).

There is high demographic pressure, with the under-15s forming some 37% of the population. Fertility rates have fallen over the past 30 years but remain high (3.7 children per woman) (DOS, 2007). It is estimated that 60 000 new entrants are joining the labour market on a yearly basis, posing a major challenge for the government and society at large. With growth rates falling from 7.9% in 2008 to 3% in 2009<sup>16</sup>, the need for job creation has become even more urgent.

Unemployment, around 14% in 2009 (Al Manar, 2009), affects educated young people in particular: 75% of the country's unemployed are under 30, and over one-third of all unemployed people are highly educated. The high unemployment rate is combined with a low activity rate (40% in 2009). The combination of strong economic growth with high unemployment and inactivity rates indicates a paradox in the Jordanian economy and proves a strong mismatch between the needs of the labour market and the availability of skills: most jobs are created in urban areas, whereas the largest number of unemployed people is to be found in rural areas, and young people still seek higher education that is often incompatible with the less sophisticated jobs on offer, preferring to be idle for some time while waiting for a job in the public administration or to migrate to the West or the Gulf countries.

Migration has two significant features: (i) emigration of highly educated people, and (ii) immigration of people looking for low-skilled jobs. Over the last 10 years, over half the new jobs created annually in Jordan have been filled by foreign workers. The informal economy is increasing faster than the formal economy, with high participation of foreign labour. There is a long tradition of high-skilled migration among Jordanians, and the percentage of remittances from Jordanians employed worldwide as a share of GDP is 22.8% (World Bank, 2008a).

Even though the present government is putting significant effort into rationalising the public administration, the public sector still accommodates one-third of the total labour force. Private sector growth has been faster than growth in the public sector, but wage levels and other benefits in the public sector are still higher. This is one of the reasons why young people often choose to live at home with their parents until getting a stable, well-reputed government appointment.

As a young nation with a rapidly growing population and a lack of natural resources, human resources are a priority for Jordan. In recent years some major reforms in the education and training system (general education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), higher education) have been introduced based on the government's National Agenda 2006–15. The main priorities of the National Agenda include reducing the high rate of unemployment, addressing the mismatch between labour supply and demand, increasing the participation rate of women in the labour market, developing a coherent approach to poverty reduction and reducing inequalities of participation in the labour market.

### 4.1 LEGISLATION FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Although the Jordanian Constitution proclaims that all Jordanians are equal before the law, the principle of gender equality is not enshrined in all laws. This is because most of the laws regulating marriage and family follow the logic of complementary gender roles rather than granting men and women the same rights. Hence, in laws regulating the private sphere – issues such as marriage, divorce, custody and inheritance – women and men are treated differently, while in the public sphere – employment, participation in political life and rights in criminal courts – they enjoy the same rights.

The different treatment of men and women in the private sphere has implications for female participation in the public sphere, however. The Personal Status Act stipulates that a woman must live in the domicile of her husband and accompany him if he changes his domicile. Similarly, a married woman must have her husband's permission to perform work outside the home without losing her rights (Al Manar, undated).

<sup>15</sup> World Bank indicators.

<sup>16</sup> Source: International Monetary Fund.

Jordanian law does enshrine the principle of the equality of all citizens in the field of employment, but it makes no provision for penalties for those who discriminate against women. Furthermore, some legal provisions reinforce the idea of women's work as being of secondary importance and reduce the incentives for married women to work. For example, female employees in the public sector are not entitled to receive a family allowance if the fathers of their children are alive and fit for work<sup>17</sup>. Additionally, a deceased wife's pension cannot be transferred to her husband (and children) unless he is unfit for work and does not have any other source of income<sup>18</sup>. A lower mandatory retirement age for women also forces women to accumulate less social benefits than their male counterparts (Economic and Social Council, 2010). With a few exceptions such as jobs in hotels, airports or hospitals, women are prohibited from working at night, and they are barred from taking on certain jobs.

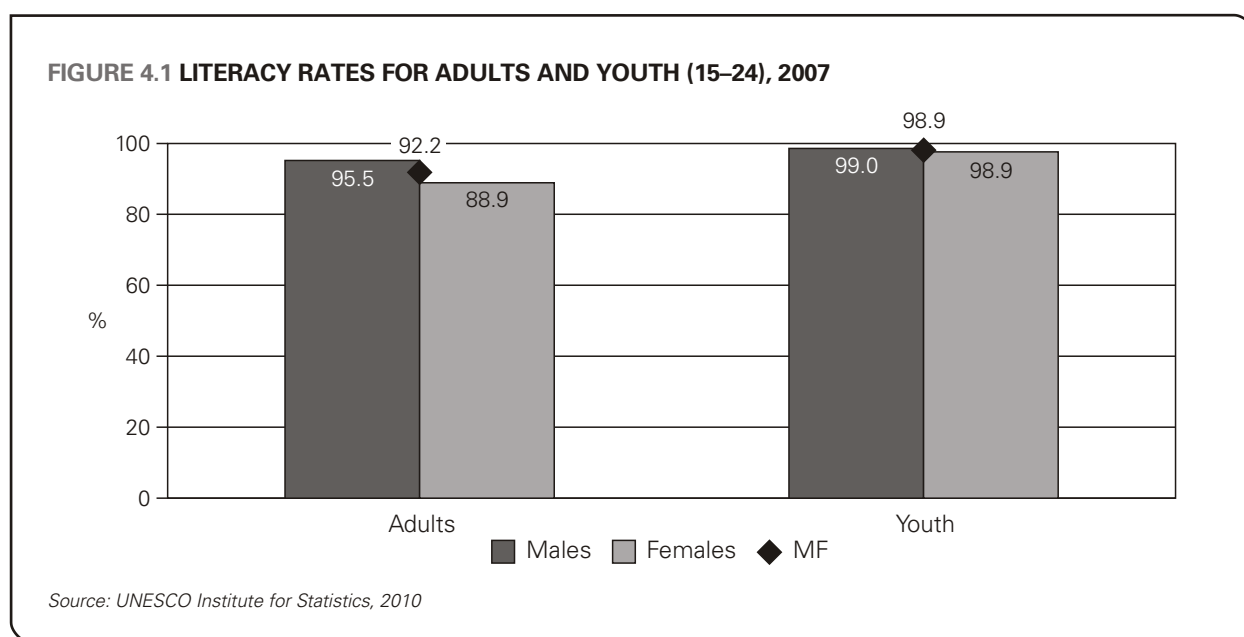
The Jordanian labour code of 1996 protects pregnant women from dismissal, though only from the sixth month of pregnancy onwards and during maternity leave, and grants 70–90 days' paid maternity leave<sup>19</sup>. Women working in enterprises employing 10 or more workers are also allowed to take one year of unpaid leave to raise a child and to shorten their working day by one hour to nurse the baby. The labour laws include an obligation to provide children's daycare facilities at the workplace in enterprises employing 20 or more married women. Private sector employers are required to provide maternity leave allowances and childcare facilities at their own expense; this discourages enterprises, especially small and medium-sized ones, from employing women (Al Manar, undated). Firms may prefer to hire unmarried women and employ only up to 19 married female employees (Economic and Social Council, 2010). It is only recently that the Maternity Fund, based on social security payments, has been introduced.

The Ministry of Labour has established a gender unit that addresses gender issues and contributes to ministry policies relating to the inclusion of women in the labour market. The Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) providing workforce training has set up a three-year gender committee with a limited mandate on capacity building and training. The Employment and TVET (E-TVET) Council Secretariat (see Section 4.2) has also developed a gender Action Plan.

Jordan ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1992, with reservations regarding equality before the law and governing marriage and families. Jordan has not ratified ILO conventions on women working underground and at night, maternity protection or the rights of workers with family responsibilities, although it has ratified the conventions on equal pay and non-discrimination at work (RWELP, 2008).

## 4.2 GIRLS AND WOMEN IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Adult women in Jordan remain slightly less educated than men, although the gender gap in educational attainment is quickly disappearing among younger cohorts. Primary enrolment rates are high; 90% for girls and 89% for boys in 2008 (UNESCO, 2010). Jordan has one of the highest literacy rates in the region for both men and women (96% and 89% respectively), and literacy among young people is almost universal (**FIGURE 4.1**).



<sup>17</sup> Civil Service Statute, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Social Security Law 19, 2001.

<sup>19</sup> Maternity leave is 90 days in the public sector and 70 days in the private sector (Economic and Social Council).



In 2008, more Jordanian girls attended secondary school than boys – 84% compared to 80% (UNESCO, 2010). However, women are less likely to choose the vocational stream (41% of all pupils). Furthermore, most education in Jordan, especially at primary and secondary levels, is provided separately for boys and girls, a reflection of continuing cultural sensitivity about co-education. Although this helps to attract and keep girls in school, it may affect both men's and women's ability to handle mixed situations in the workplace in later life.

Following the launch of the National Agenda reform process, the VET system is part of a wider E-TVET system. The Ministry of Education provides vocational education as part of its comprehensive secondary schools in grades 11–12; the Ministry of Labour provides workforce training (pre-service and upgrading) through the VTC; and the Ministry of Higher Education provides post-secondary non-tertiary educational programmes, as well as tertiary professionally oriented programmes, through the community colleges (coordinated by Al-Balqa University).

A VET career is not considered attractive for both social and economic reasons, and therefore many students opt for general and academic education rather than vocational or technical streams. Furthermore, for women vocational education and training has been limited to only a few programmes, and social restrictions on the labour market participation of non-professional women have not encouraged girls to continue their education in vocational streams.

Currently the participation of women in vocational education and training varies greatly between the three main types of provider: community colleges, VTC programmes and apprenticeships. More than 60% of community college (technician education) students are women, although there has been a dramatic fall in the female enrolment rate, probably as a result of the increased intake at Jordanian universities. On the other hand, the female participation rate in VTC programmes increased from 6% in 2001 to 27% in 2006. The increase in the proportion of female students is attributed to the expansion of female vocational training centres and the offer of new programmes that are attractive to female students such as information technology, personal services and secretarial work. Regarding apprenticeships, in 2006 the most popular fields of study chosen by females were information technology, personal services and secretarial work. According to the Jordanian Department of Statistics, females constituted 1.5% of students in industrial, 48% in trade and 15% in agricultural vocational education in 2008 (DOS, 2008b).

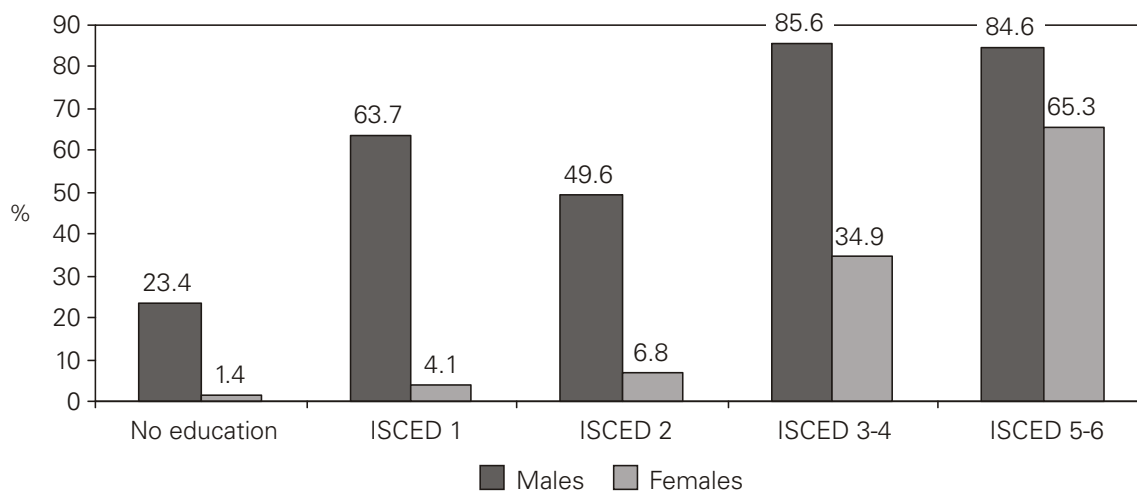
There are also more women than men in higher education in Jordan, giving gross enrolment rates of 43% and 39% respectively in 2008 (UNESCO, 2010). In 2006, however, women constituted only 45% of those awarded bachelor's or master's degrees and 29% of those completing advanced research programmes but earned 66% of tertiary non-university degrees from community colleges (UNESCO, 2006), though this trend is changing. Academic programmes are considered the most prestigious, so when more places are made available in university education, fewer female (and male) students are interested in enrolling in technician programmes in the community colleges. Almost two-thirds of the 33 000 students at the largest Jordanian university, the University of Jordan in Amman, are women. Women are more likely to attend public universities than men. This may be due to the high costs of private higher education, since families may be more willing to invest in boys' education if they believe boys are more likely to find employment on graduation. In higher education, women are in the majority in education and teaching, social sciences, humanities and religious studies, while men make up the majority in scientific and technical areas such as mathematics and computer science, engineering and medicine.

### 4.3 WOMEN IN THE LABOUR FORCE

Participation of women in the labour force is among the lowest worldwide despite very visible increases in educational attainment and success. The activity rate in 2009 was 73.9% for men and 23.3% for women according to the ILO (KILM, 2009). According to the Jordanian Department of Statistics, it was 64.8% for men and 14.9% for women in 2009 (DOS, 2010).

Education increases the activity of both men and women in Jordan, but it has a stronger effect on the activity rates of women (**FIGURE 4.2**). Women with less education are more likely to remain inactive. Having a university education (ISCED 5–6) instead of upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 3–4) does not increase men's activity rates any more, while university education has a very strong effect on women's activity. The high male activity rates among upper-secondary- and post-secondary-educated men can be explained by the importance of technical education in the community colleges. Women compose the majority of graduates from the community colleges (66%), but that level of education seems not yet to be enough to encourage female participation to the same extent as university education. The very small agricultural sector is notable for its low activity rates among women without education.



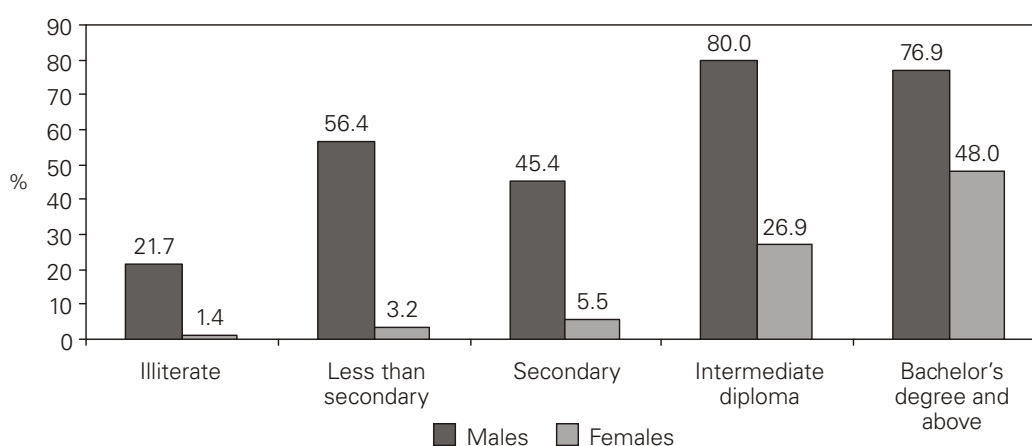
**FIGURE 4.2 ACTIVITY RATES BY GENDER AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL, 2007**

Source: National statistics offices, according to MEDA-E TE data collection

The employment rate also rises with educational level, especially among women. For men employment rates are highest for better-educated individuals, but they also remain relatively high for men with secondary education or lower (**FIGURE 4.3**).

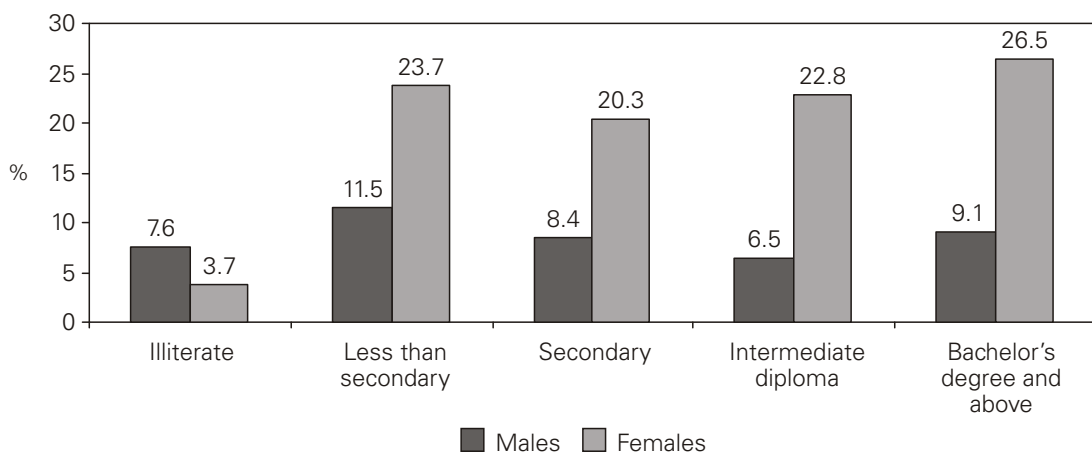
Men's unemployment is close to 10% regardless of education level and for women it stands at around 20–25%, although it is much lower for illiterate women (**FIGURE 4.4**). According to the Jordanian Department of Statistics, the unemployment rate is especially high for young men aged 15–19 (up to 28%) and for young women aged 15–24 (up to 50%) (DOS, 2008a).

Both the female activity and employment rates increase considerably with education beyond lower secondary school, but unemployment increases more for women than for men with the higher educational levels. This can be seen in the wider gap between activity and employment rates for women than men with tertiary-level education (**FIGURE 4.5**).

**FIGURE 4.3 EMPLOYMENT RATES BY GENDER AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL, 2007**

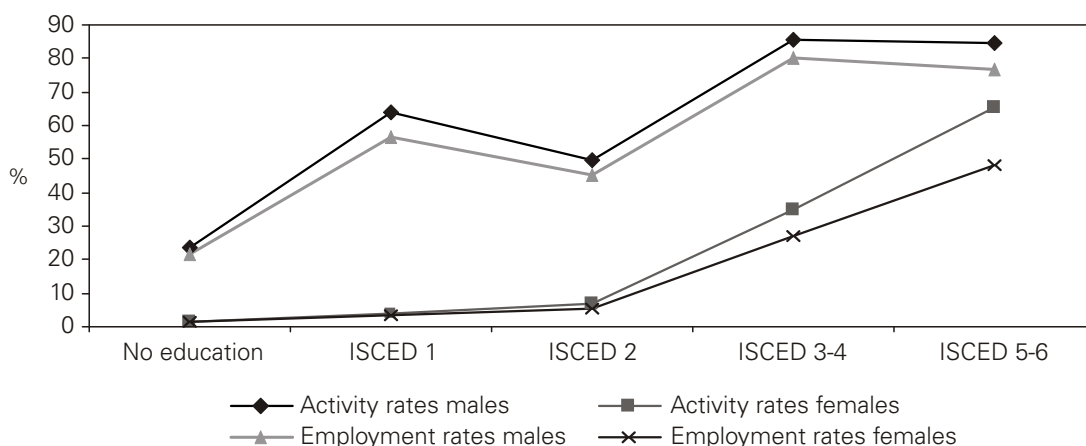
Source: National statistics offices, according to MEDA-E TE data collection

**FIGURE 4.4 UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY GENDER AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL, 2007**



Source: National statistics offices, according to MEDA-E TE data collection

**FIGURE 4.5 ACTIVITY AND EMPLOYMENT RATES BY GENDER AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL, 2007**



Source: National statistics offices, according to MEDA-E TE data collection

Social norms on what is appropriate work for women limit women’s options, and women tend to enter overcrowded female-dominated sectors. Women are concentrated in education (38% of working women) and health and social work (15%) (DOS, 2010), and are represented least in agriculture, construction, transport, trade and production. There seems to be least resistance to women working in skilled, high-level and mid-level occupations such as teaching, nursing and secretarial work. Hence, women are more likely to work as professionals and technicians. Cultural constraints militate against women working in areas of low prestige and in jobs requiring travel, unsocial working hours or contact/proximity with strangers, and such jobs are often in areas with the most critical labour shortages, such as tourism at the present time. The attitudes of parents and husbands towards women’s education and employment also play a vital role, and usually influence the decisions made by young girls and women (El Kharouf, 2000).

Although shrinking, the public sector remains the largest employer, employing half of all working women and a third of all working men. Higher wages, along with social benefits such as longer maternity leave, shorter working hours and secure tenure, have made public sector employment much more appealing for women. Women hold only 19% of formal private sector jobs. The private sector is overwhelmingly made up of small enterprises: 94% have four workers or fewer, and they employ some 40% of the total workforce (DOS, 2006). Some 77% of the employed population works in the service sector (MEDA-E TE, 2007).

Women are being paid almost 29% less than men in the private sector and around 5% less in the public sector (Al Manar, 2007). Underemployment may also dissuade women from looking for jobs: the average female wage earner is likely to have 12.3 years of education compared to 9.3 years for a male counterpart holding the same job (Economic and Social Council, 2010).

Finally, the traditional division of labour between men and women within the family has remained relatively unchanged. Women's work at home has often been taken up by other women rather than shared between men and women. Women earning lower incomes have relied on their extended network of female relatives to help with childcare and housework, while upper- and middle-income women hire maids (usually foreigners from the Philippines, Sri Lanka or Egypt) to look after their homes and children. It should be emphasised that the infrastructure allowing women to reconcile the demands of work and family is underdeveloped. The number of kindergartens remains very low, and those that do exist accommodate only five-year-olds for a pre-school year.

It is also worth noting that no data exist to allow female activity in the informal sector to be evaluated. However, World Bank research shows that the incidence of informality in Amman was much less than expected at only 2% for women in 2008 (Economic and Social Council, 2010).



## II. RESEARCH FINDINGS

# 5. WOMEN IN TOURISM

### 5.1 SECTOR PROFILE

Tourism is one of the most dynamic economic sectors in Jordan and has been identified by the government as one of the priority sectors to be developed. Tourism receipts have surged by 12% year-on-year to JOD 1.639 billion in 2007, according to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. The number of arrivals has increased from 4 700 000 in 2002 to 6 528 626 in 2007, and employment in the sector has risen from around 23 000 people in 2004 to 34 500 in 2007. In 2008, tourism accounted for 10.5% of GDP.

One of the objectives Jordan's National Tourism Strategy 2004–10 has been to develop high standards of training and education for the sector. Jordan has also chosen eight priority tourism segments to develop: cultural heritage; religious; eco-tourism; health and wellness; cruising; meetings, incentives, conferences and events; adventure; and scientific, academic, volunteer and educational). Several actions have been implemented, including: improved marketing and public relations strategies, developing and expanding quality products and services, investing in human resources (expanding employment opportunities), supporting tourism-related small and medium-sized enterprises, developing high-standard education and training, and improving institutional and regulatory frameworks. The efforts from E-TVET providers to align the programmes and didactic activities more to the needs of the labour market, to search for partnerships with the private sector and to introduce more soft skills and competences have been successful in promoting the sector and attracting students to the tourism and hospitality programmes offered by the VTC and community colleges.

Education and training in the hotel and tourism sector is currently offered in comprehensive secondary schools, VTC centres, community colleges and universities in both public and private establishments. The central region and in particular Amman is the main location for the education and training institutions, with five (private) universities, seven colleges and the Jordan International School for Hotel and Tourism Studies (high school) located there. The northern region has three universities and two colleges. The southern region has two universities offering tourism-related programmes and one college. There are also 11 VTC centres offering hospitality programmes.

The implementation of the current tourism strategy was supported by the USAID/Jordan Tourism Development Project (Siyaha), with a focus on institutional reforms, product and site development and human resources development. The capacities of the VTC were greatly improved in the framework of the Siyaha project, and a new curriculum was designed and implemented (Certificate in Hospitality Skills Level 1). An important feature of the intervention was establishing public–private partnership with the hospitality industry, aimed firstly at designing curricula according to industry needs and secondly at improving practical training internships (currently six months of internship following six months of training at the VTC). Over the project duration, some 3 000 students completed training and some 70% of graduates found a job. The work continues with the USAID/Jordan Tourism Development Project II, including further upgrading of vocational training in tourism.

The 27 comprehensive secondary schools offering hospitality programmes suffer from weak quality of curricula, teaching and, in particular, practical training, resulting in high drop-out rates and low relevance to labour market needs. In 2009 agreements were concluded between Al-Balqa University, USAID, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to reform the curricula and training programmes in hospitality and tourism offered in comprehensive secondary schools and community colleges.

Tourism studies have not been very attractive for women. Comprehensive secondary schools produce the highest number of graduates, with the VTC second and universities third. The majority of women in tourism education are concentrated in universities (16% of all students in the field in the academic year 2007/08), however, and most of them are enrolled in tourist guidance and hotel (and tour) management studies. A minority of women are enrolled in community colleges and vocational training centres. In the school year 2008/09, women constituted 2% of all pupils in hotel programmes in comprehensive secondary schools. Only 0.3% of working women in 2009 were employed in hotels and restaurants (DOS, 2008b).

## 5.2 WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN TOURISM

Tourism is a relatively new sector in Jordan. Some 37% of the surveyed companies were established after 2000, with another third being established in the 1990s and another third before 1990. The average size of the tourism companies in the sample was 71 employees, while half have 30 or less. There are considerable differences between subsectors, however, with hotels usually employing more people and travel agencies generally employing fewer. A quarter of the hotels in the sample employ 100 or more employees.

Over the 12-month period leading up to the survey, 22% of the surveyed companies took on more staff, while a quarter reported a drop in the number of their employees. One-third of the companies planned to take on new employees during the next 12 months. Hotels are the most likely to create new jobs (48% planned to do so), followed by travel agencies (43%) and restaurants (just 9%). Most of these new jobs will be filled by skilled workers and professionals, though there is also some demand for unskilled work. With regard to future investment, 29% of the companies mentioned that they are planning to invest in technology and infrastructure, particularly hotels (45% of these).

Young people below 30 constitute the majority of workers in most companies. Full-time employment is the prevailing pattern in the sector for both men and women (some 95% of employees work full-time).

### 5.2.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

#### Employment by gender

Women account for 20% of all employees in the tourism sector. There are marked differences between subsectors. Females constitute 11% of all employees in hotels and only 9% of all employees in restaurants. Conversely, according to the survey, women make up 49% of all employees in travel agencies. This figure is around 20% higher than other sources report (e.g. MoTA, 2008), however; this is due to the definition of the subsector used and the inclusion of Royal Jordanian Airlines in the sample. If Royal Jordanian – a large company employing many women – is excluded, women's share in the tourism sector sinks to 12% overall and 27% for travel agencies. These percentages are consistent with other sources. Finally, 24% of all companies do not employ any women – 61% of restaurants, 6% of travel agencies and 2% of hotels.

According to the survey, foreign workers constitute some 7% of all employees in the sampled companies. Women account for some 22% of all foreign workers, especially in hotels; almost 20% of all females in the hotel sector are foreigners, compared to merely 5% of male employees. Foreigners constitute 8% of all tourist restaurants' workers, and they are predominantly men.

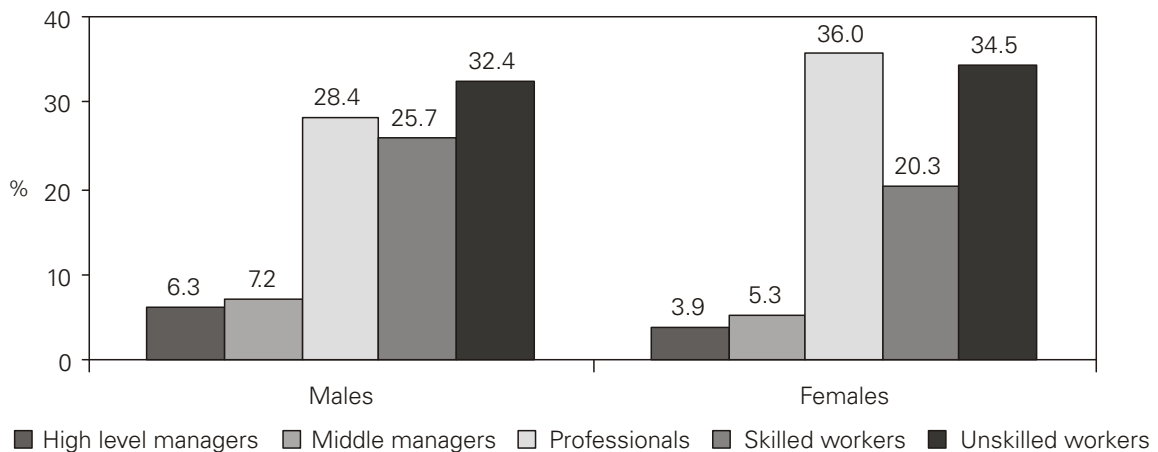
#### Employment by gender and category

Women are most present in the professional and unskilled worker categories – 24% and 21% of all staff respectively<sup>20</sup> (**FIGURE 5.1**). Only 17% of skilled workers are women. This reflects women's preferences and constraints. Jordanian women rarely enrol in vocational education and training, and highly educated, professional women are more likely to join the labour force. However, it should be noted that 72% of the companies surveyed have no female high-level managers, 27% have no female middle managers and more than half (56%) have no female professionals.

Another important indicator of women's roles is the structure of the male and female workforce: there is a high concentration of women in professional jobs (36% of women work as professionals) and unskilled jobs (35%) in the tourism sector (**FIGURE 5.2**). Men, on the other hand, tend to be less concentrated and are better represented in each category of workers. A higher concentration of women in some roles makes them more vulnerable to job shortages, as new jobs are mainly created for skilled workers.

Similar trends are observed across subsectors, with some exceptions. Women's share in high- and middle-level management in hotels is higher than the average for the sector (women constitute 21% and 22% of high- and middle-level managers respectively). In restaurants, women work predominantly as professionals (45% of all women) or unskilled workers (38%), while men are more likely to work as skilled workers or managers. In tourist agencies women predominate as professionals, followed by unskilled labour, while men are slightly more likely to work as unskilled workers or managers.

<sup>20</sup> The following categories were used: high-level managers, middle-level managers, professionals (i.e. people who have at least some tertiary education), skilled workers (i.e. people who perform tasks that require possessing specific occupational skills at pre-university level) and unskilled workers. The categories are not clear-cut according to educational credentials; the respondents were assigning employees to different categories at their discretion, and inconsistencies between different employers might have occurred.

**FIGURE 5.1 EMPLOYEES BY CATEGORY AND GENDER IN THE SURVEYED TOURISM COMPANIES****FIGURE 5.2 EMPLOYEES BY GENDER AND CATEGORY IN THE SURVEYED TOURISM COMPANIES**

### Employment by gender and department

Women constitute 27% of staff in maintenance and 22% in administration, above the average of 20% of female employees among the surveyed companies (**FIGURE 5.3**)<sup>21</sup>. Women are the least represented in reception and room service (13%) and bar and restaurant work (10%).

This concentration of female employment is evident also when looking at the repartition of female and male employees in different departments (**FIGURE 5.4**).

## 5.2.2 RECRUITMENT

### Current recruitment trends by gender

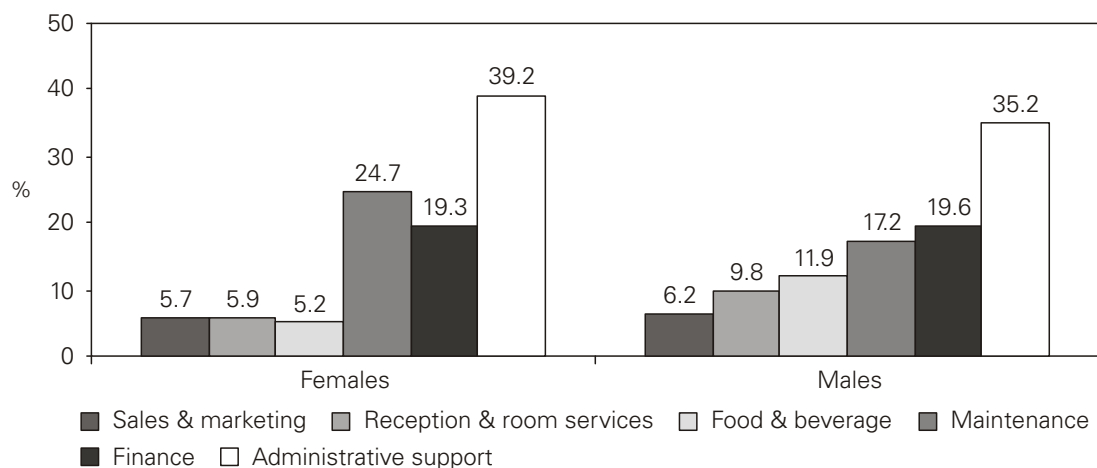
As the sector is growing, new recruitment is taking place. Women on average constitute between 5% and 11% of new recruits in the hotel subsector and 29–32% in travel agencies. No women have been recruited in the restaurant subsector. The average percentage of women among new recruits in the hotel subsector corresponds more or less to their current share among employees. This may indicate that the pool of potential female recruits is rather stable. It also

<sup>21</sup> The proposed structure by department is artificial, though based on functions that are normally found in any given hotel or tourist establishment. The respondents were assigning employees to different departments at their discretion and inconsistencies between different employers might have occurred. Due to the prevalence of multi-tasking and the fact that administrative support is a function to be found across several departments, the distinction between departments is again not clear-cut.

**FIGURE 5.3 EMPLOYEES BY DEPARTMENT AND GENDER IN THE SURVEYED TOURISM COMPANIES**



**FIGURE 5.4 EMPLOYEES BY GENDER AND DEPARTMENT IN THE SURVEYED TOURISM COMPANIES**



seems that there is some skills mismatch, as most demand in the hotel sector is for skilled work, while women rarely choose this educational path. Young people below 30 represent the majority of new recruits.

The newly recruited women have mainly been hired as professionals (68% of all newly recruited women), while unskilled women constituted 14% of the total, skilled workers 11% and managers 7%. Men have mainly been recruited as skilled and unskilled workers (44% and 34% respectively) (FIGURE 5.5).

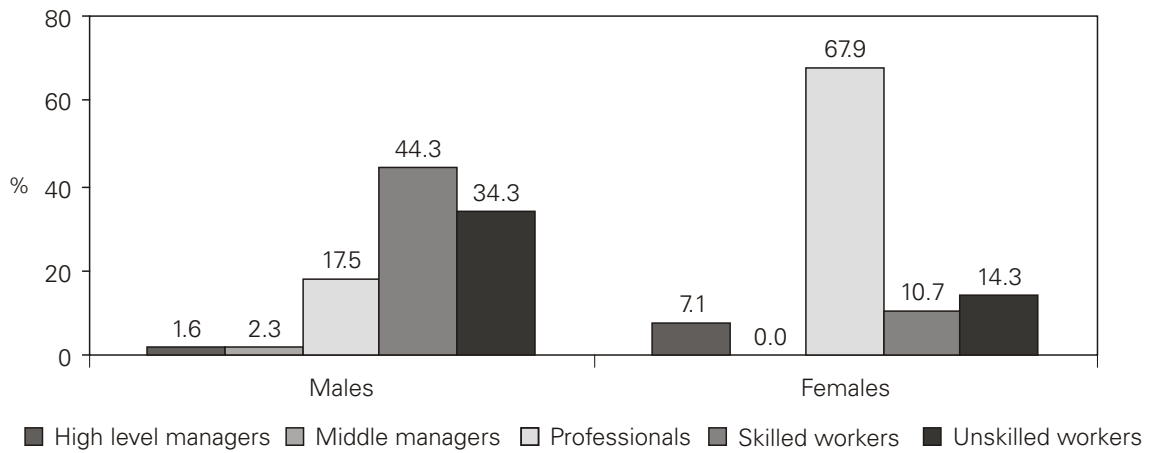
Nearly half of the new female recruits are employed in administration (FIGURE 5.6). In the hotel subsector, women have been hired in administrative support at an even greater rate (56%); in travel agencies, the main areas for women are administrative support and sales and marketing (24% and 37% respectively). In contrast, 48% of all new male recruits in hotels were hired in the bar and restaurant departments.

**Recruitment channels**

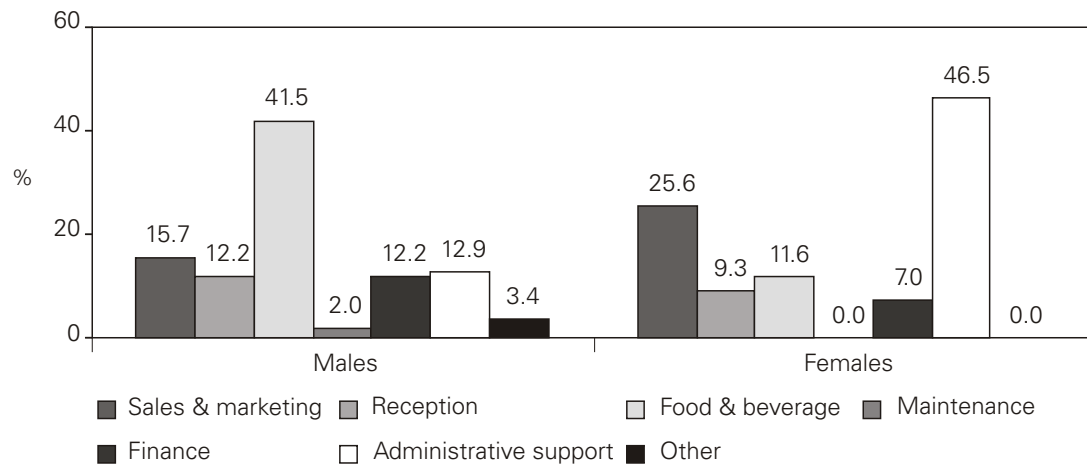
The two most important methods for recruitment are job advertisements in newspapers (40%) and personal contacts and recommendations (30%). Recruitment through educational and training institutions was also used by 14% of the companies surveyed, and online advertising was used by 12% of companies (FIGURE 5.7).



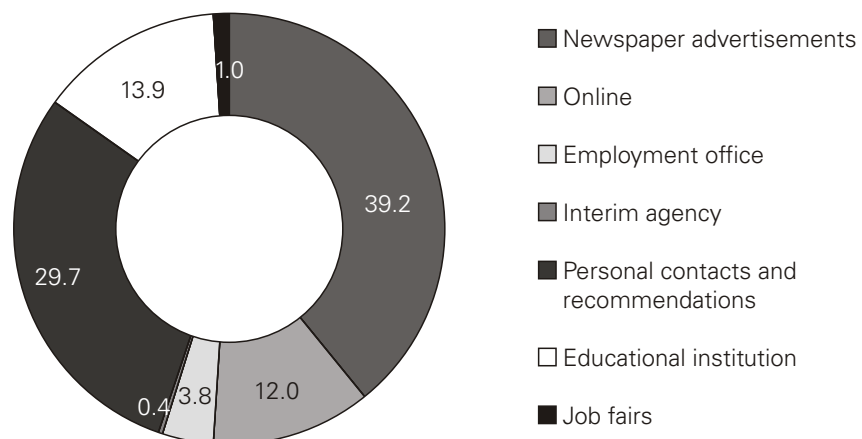
**FIGURE 5.5 NEW RECRUITS BY GENDER AND CATEGORY IN THE SURVEYED TOURISM COMPANIES**



**FIGURE 5.6 NEW RECRUITS BY GENDER AND DEPARTMENT IN THE SURVEYED TOURISM COMPANIES**



**FIGURE 5.7 RECRUITMENT CHANNELS FOR YOUNG NEW EMPLOYEES IN THE SURVEYED TOURISM COMPANIES**



The majority of the companies stated that they received job applications from women; 10% of the companies, often travel agencies, received more applications from women than from men, and 10% of the companies had as many female applicants as male applicants. However, 57% of the companies received fewer applications from women than from men, and 20% of the companies, many of them restaurants, did not receive applications from women at all.

Furthermore, even though it is an illegal practice, 15% of companies always specify the desired gender of new recruits (FIGURE 5.8). Interestingly, over 60% of travel agencies never specify gender and the rest do it only sometimes, while 43% of restaurants specify gender always or often. Some 82% of hotels never or only sometimes specify gender. The data suggest that hotels and travel agencies display less strong gender bias when advertising vacancies. For obvious reasons, it is not possible to assess whether there is a gender bias when employers look for staff through personal contacts and recommendations.

**Importance of different characteristics in recruitment**

Employers attach the greatest value to soft skills such as commitment to work and discipline (very important for 86%), customer service attitudes (84%) and ability to work in a team (81%). Educational credentials are only seen as very important by a minority of employers (17%), mainly hotels and travel agencies rather than restaurants. However, work experience is seen as very important and probably makes up for any lack of formal skills and educational credentials.

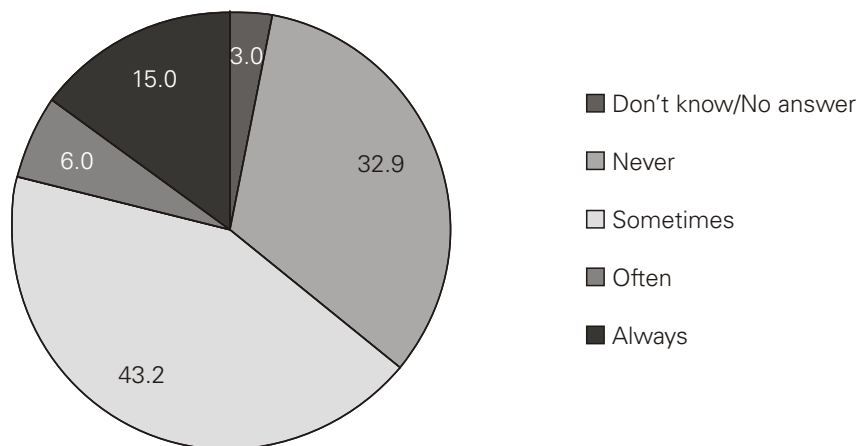
The availability to work night shifts or at weekends seems to be of medium importance for employers. Requirements vary according to the subsector as patterns of work are also very different; the ability to travel is very important for travel agencies, for instance, while working at weekends matters for restaurants. Virtually no hotels work on a day-work-only basis, while 77% of travel agencies and 25% of restaurants work on this basis.

With the exception of physical appearance and nationality, personal characteristics do not play much of a role in employers’ attitudes to either men or women. Again, however, there are some differences between subsectors. Personal characteristics such as marital and family status are slightly more important in hotels, while physical appearance and physical strength are more important in the hotel and restaurant subsectors.

When employers are asked the same questions just about female candidates, there are some interesting similarities and differences. Firstly, it seems that employers have a much less clear idea of what is important with regard to female employees (the share of employers who claim a given characteristic to be very important is always lower). However, they still attach slightly more importance to soft skills such as commitment to work and discipline (63%), ability to work in a team (62%) and customer service attitude (57%) than to other characteristics. Educational credentials, on the other hand, are considered less important, and employers do not expect as much work experience from women as they do from men.

Interestingly, availability for overtime, night shifts or weekends is considered less important when assessing female candidates. Personal characteristics such as marital or family status do not receive much attention; physical appearance is somewhat important, but interestingly, less so than for potential candidates overall. First impressions scored slightly lower too. One explanation may be that employers may not expect women to take on tasks or timetables such as night

**FIGURE 5.8 SPECIFYING GENDER WHEN ADVERTISING JOBS IN THE SURVEYED TOURISM COMPANIES**



shifts or overtime that are inconsistent with their general perception of women's roles. Women may well not be perceived as competing with men for the same jobs (as they tend to concentrate in different positions), and they may be assessed differently. Similarly, marital status or having young children may not be seen as important selection criteria as female job seekers are normally young single women without family commitments.

There are some differences between subsectors, however. Firstly, employers in restaurants do not have any special requirements when it comes to employing women except for availability to do night shifts. This may be due to the low number of females working in this subsector. Travel agencies seem to have higher expectations both in terms of skills such as IT and languages and in terms of customer service attitudes, qualifications and work experience. This is probably due to the fact that most women in travel agencies are only recruited for professional jobs. Travel agencies are also more likely to take into consideration ability to work overtime and to travel.

Finally, whether a woman is veiled is not an issue overall but it is important or very important for 40% of hotels and for a few travel agencies and restaurants. This does not necessarily mean veiled women face discrimination in hotels, but evidence from focus groups shows that employers who recruit veiled women often do so for positions such as the back office, where they believe this will not be a problem. Employers may not be prejudiced themselves, but they may assume that others – such as customers or other employees – do hold this prejudice.

### 5.2.3 COMPETENCES, NEEDS AND ATTITUDES

#### Skills needs

Employers do see skills as very important, although they mainly mention soft skills, work experience and job-related skills and refer less to qualifications. There is some evidence of skills shortages; 37% of employers find that newly hired young workers do not have the necessary skills. Skills shortages are most acute among new recruits with university education (55% of employers find shortages here always or often), vocational education and training (47%) and secondary education (45%).

In general terms, employers reported the biggest shortages in terms of knowledge of English (24%), public and customer relations and job-related skills (20%) and communication skills (19%). A weak work ethic and insufficient computer skills were also cited.

It is hardest to find personnel with adequate skills for reception and room service (60% of employers find skills shortages always or often), bars and restaurants (56%) and sales and marketing (36%). Similarly, shortages are reported mostly for skilled workers (46%), professionals (40%) and, surprisingly, unskilled labour (40%). Shortages were rarely reported for managerial categories, and hiring for managerial positions is rare, especially for young people.

#### Training of new recruits

On-the-job training seems to be a common way of overcoming skill shortages – 86% of employers mentioned that they organised training for their new recruits.

Women do participate in this training, though to a lesser extent than new recruits overall – 70% of the companies surveyed organise training for all new recruits, 6% organise training for most of them, and 18% do not organise any training for any newly recruited females. This may indicate that highly educated women hired mainly for administrative positions do not require specific training, or that many women hired as unskilled labour are not being trained. Another explanation could be that employers avoid investing in upgrading the skills of women who might not stay for long in their jobs.

#### Employers' attitudes to female employees

Perceptions about women's abilities or perceived difficulties with women's integration in the workforce may influence the decision to hire and retain female workers. Interestingly, the research did not indicate the prevalence of negative stereotypes about women. Employers quite disagree with the statements that women are less committed to their job than men or that they perform worse than men. Also, employers do not believe that male colleagues and customers are biased against women. They also tend to perceive their companies as appropriate workplaces for women.

However, 60% of employers agree that it is difficult to find women with the qualifications and skills their companies need, 50% of employers think that women create organisational problems for companies, and 43% find it difficult for their company to provide transportation for female employees. Also, 38% think that it is too expensive to employ women because of legal provisions, and 31% think that it is difficult to employ married women. Furthermore, 38% think women looking for jobs have unrealistic expectations about the job they may acquire.

There are considerable differences between subsectors. Employers from restaurants are the most likely to negatively assess women's performance and commitment. They more often believe that male employees do not want to work with female colleagues (33% compared to 14% in hotels and 10% in travel agencies) or that customers do not like to be served by women (20% compared to 8% and 4% in hotels and travel agencies respectively). They are four times as likely to say that a restaurant is not an appropriate place for a woman to work. Interestingly, but unsurprisingly, they are less likely to complain about the organisational or financial problems that employing women creates, as they employ very few. Employers from the hotel sector were reasonably positive about employing women. Only 13% said hotels are not an appropriate workplace for women. Few admitted that there are prejudices against women on the part of male employees and customers. They were, however, most likely to agree that it is difficult to find women with appropriate skills. Employers from the travel agency sector were least likely to witness or exhibit any prejudice towards women, although they were likely to say that employing women can sometimes create organisational problems or increase the financial burden on the company.

Finally, responding to a question on the advantages of employing women, 49% of employers strongly agreed or quite agreed that women improve the image of a company, 63% that they establish better relations with clients and 49% that they are more service-oriented than men. Employers tend to agree less with the statement that women will accept a lower salary than men or that they are more qualified than men. Other advantages of employing women mentioned were that women create a friendlier atmosphere and that they are better organised than men.

When asked about the types of incentives they would like to see for hiring women, employers mentioned sharing the costs for training (21%), subsidising salary for the first year (16%), supporting awareness-raising programmes (7%), supporting part-time work, and sharing the cost of nurseries and covering maternity leave (5% and 3% respectively).

## **5.3 ASSESSING THE SUPPLY OF LABOUR: WOMEN SPEAK UP**

### **5.3.1 STUDENTS (VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES)**

There was a general opinion among the women interviewed that most female students tend to choose the literary stream in high school because they feel it offers better work opportunities and is more suitable for women. The majority of the focus group discussion participants said that females do not join the tourism sector because of negative attitudes toward women working in the sector, especially those working in hotels.

Female students in tourism said that they had chosen to study tourism because they still found it attractive. To pursue their goal they often had to overcome their families' opposition because their parents thought that only students with poor grades join this field of study. Some of them said that they were encouraged by relatives or family friends who were working in this sector. This indicates the importance of adequate role models for young women. Some participants mentioned that their families allowed them to study knowing that they would not allow them to work in the sector. It is also true that some of the students expressed their desire to work in this sector after they graduate, but others did not. Those who said that they would not like to work in the sector cited negative social attitudes towards women who work in tourism. They said that they would seek to work in other sectors.

Assessing the relevance and quality of their studies, most students said that their studies were enjoyable but were too theoretical and based more on memorisation than on the practical dimensions of the field. They also mentioned that some teachers lack the experience and skill to teach in this sector, and complained about the lack of extracurricular activities that they feel are necessary for their overall development.

Female students in vocational schools mentioned that they are not allowed to mix with their male colleagues outside of the classrooms and that instruction is also normally provided separately for young men and women.

Most participants mentioned some of the difficulties that they might face in working in the tourism sector. These difficulties included negative social attitudes towards the sector (especially hotels) because of serving alcohol and working in enclosed places, and the fact that it is difficult to work in faraway places because of long hours and lack of transportation. Some also said that they would be willing to work in faraway places if the transportation problem was resolved.

### 5.3.2 WORKING WOMEN

Women working in the tourism sector in both Petra and Amman asserted that they personally suffer from the negative attitudes towards women who work in tourism, especially in hotels. This view was more evident and crucial for women in Petra. They said that society refuses women work in tourism in general and considers tourism a sector for males. One of the participants from Petra had a different view:

'I have a BA in archaeology and I work in the field because I do not like office work, and my family does not object to that.'

*Young woman employed in tourism*

Working women in Petra said there was no relation between their initial field of study and the jobs that they have. All of them had the high school certificate and had received training from the VTC. They mentioned that they got their jobs through that channel too.

Women in Petra said that they get preferential treatment from employers and are treated with respect. Employers are very flexible concerning work arrangements and women receive various incentives, and transportation is secured as well. Also, women in Petra mentioned that they receive 70% discounts on the training courses that are offered. The special arrangements women enjoy in Petra are due to the efforts undertaken by the Siyaha project. However, it should also be noticed that there are few female participants in the project and it is possible to deal with them on case-by-case basis. Female workers in Petra also said that they had no difficulties in balancing work and family roles and obligations because of the flexible working hours that they are offered and the close proximity of their workplaces to their homes; conversely, women working in Amman mentioned that they face difficulties in this respect. Women in both Amman and Petra said that the burden of taking care of the house and children falls on them and that they do not get help from anybody, including their husbands.

Females who are working as tourist guides in Amman said that their salaries are the same as those of men, and that the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has set the minimum daily rate at JOD 50 but they negotiate their salary with their employers. They also mentioned that their salaries are not stable and fluctuate according to the season, and that their jobs do not offer any benefits such as health insurance or social security.

Participants generally asserted that there are limitations on promotion to upper-level management positions for females in the sector.

### 5.3.3 UNEMPLOYED WOMEN

Women in both Amman and Petra are faced with negative stereotypes about women who work in tourism (especially hotels), which assert that working in this sector contradicts the so-called 'female nature' and women's ideal role in society. This negative view was stronger in Petra than in Amman.

The main reason that families in Amman allow their daughters to study tourism is that it will enable these young women to find administrative or teaching jobs in the public sector. As for families in Petra, they allow their daughters to join training courses (although they oppose their work in tourism) because of the financial incentives that women receive through participation in training programmes.

The reasons that were mentioned by women for not working in the sector were opposition from their families because of society's negative views, long working hours, lack of transportation, lack of English language skills, and the fact that many employers do not hire women who are veiled. One of the participants who used to work in a hotel mentioned that she left the job because she was asked by her employer to be smiling all the time and to be 'sweet' with customers. From the discussion, it was obvious also that some of the participants had their own stereotypes about the sector.

Participants from Petra mentioned that the VTC is trying to change the negative societal view towards women working in tourism by organising family visits to hotels and other tourist sites, but the responses of the families involved were rather weak.

In addition to vocational and/or educational qualifications, employers in Amman require females to have communication skills, English language skills and computer skills, and some prefer that women do not wear the veil. On the other hand, employers in Petra do not require English language skills and are more likely to allow women workers to wear the veil because most of the jobs offered do not require interaction with customers.

Most women mentioned that the strongest objection to their working in tourism comes from their brothers and not from their parents. This trend was more emphasised by participants from Petra than from Amman.

### 5.3.4 MALE FAMILY MEMBERS

Most male participants approve of women working in the ICT sector but not in the tourism sector, especially in hotels or restaurants or as tour guides.

The reasons mentioned by the participants for their opposition to women working in tourism were: what they saw as a contradiction with the traditional values of society and with family roles and obligations, long working hours, night shifts, and the bad image of the tourism sector in society. Most of the male participants stated that they prefer women to work in education, health, industrial companies or large companies, or in the public sector.

Most male participants stated that the following conditions must be met for them to agree to women working in tourism or ICT: sex-segregated workplaces and no night shifts. Some participants did not think that women working with men are a problem. They asserted that, in order to increase the participation of women in both sectors there must be a reduction in working hours, and women should be able to balance their work and family obligations.

Most participants said that in general, women's work could be valuable because it reflects positively on the women themselves, on their families, and on society as a whole.

All of the male participants stated that the decision for women to work or not, and the type of work that women are allowed to do, should be decided through consultation with their fathers, husbands or brothers and should be with their approval.

# 6. WOMEN IN ICT

## 6.1 SECTOR PROFILE

Jordan has recently taken steps to upgrade its physical ICT infrastructure, deregulate the sector and increase accessibility for all members of society. In addition, the government has identified the ICT sector as an engine of growth and as a priority sector due to its potential for creating jobs, attracting investment and boosting exports. The National ICT Strategy 2007–11 encompasses a number of revised policies and directions that are aimed at taking advantage of new markets, enhancing business maturity, investing in research and development, capitalising on regional demand, cultivating foreign investment and improving the ICT labour market. The Strategy defines three high-level strategic objectives to be achieved by 2011, which involve increasing internet penetration in the kingdom from 11% to 50%, raising the number of workers in the ICT industry to 35 000, and increasing the ICT sector's revenue to USD 3 billion. The Strategy also focuses on eliminating regulatory challenges to business and advocating for the interests of ICT companies to ensure continued sector growth (Int@j, 2010). The government has also stated its willingness to promote more investments in research and development for the ICT sector with the aim of providing higher value added, increasing competitiveness and taking better advantage of ICT through adaptation, localisation and experimentation<sup>22</sup>.

A series of obstacles for sectoral growth have been identified, including legal and regulatory hurdles, limited understanding of ICT and its potential by consumers, businesses and the public authorities, deficiencies in the investment climate (e.g. changing taxation), insufficient adoption of new technologies or business practices and standards by Jordanian companies, and a very low level of investment in research and development. Despite the moves toward greater ICT accessibility in schools, a lack of training, financing and appropriate ICT tools and technologies continues to hold schools back from providing their students with the necessary ICT media and skills.

ICT accounted for 14.3% of GDP in 2008, making it one of the largest contributors to the economy. Total domestic revenue from the sector amounted to USD 735 million and export revenue to USD 227 million, representing a total growth of 9% on the previous year. Foreign direct investment (cumulative) was USD 111million in 2008 (**TABLE 6.1**).

According to Int@j, 24% of employees in the sector (including telecoms) are females (Int@j, 2010). Employment growth in the sector in general has been low, the number of people employed increasing from 10 712 in 2006 to 11 334 in 2009. Major telecoms operators employ an additional 3 594 people.

Courses in ICT skills and computer literacy have become one of the most popular VET streams at secondary level, especially among women. While these do not prepare people for employment in the ICT sector, this does indicate that women are interested in the field. Information technology (IT) does not project the image of being an overly masculine field, and this may help to persuade talented women to consider careers in ICT.

**TABLE 6.1 ICT SECTOR KEY INDICATORS**

Key indicator	2001	2008
ICT market revenues (\$million)	170	962
■ Domestic revenue (\$million)	130	735
■ Export revenue (\$million)	40	227
Employment (2009)	8 000	11 334
FDI, cumulative (\$million)	60	111

Source: Int@j, 2010

## 6.2 WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN ICT

More than two-thirds of the companies in the sample are IT companies, and the rest are communications companies. As ICT is generally a new sector it is no surprise that more than two-thirds of Jordanian ICT companies were established in the period 2000–09. The average size of companies in the sample is 81 employees, and only 13% have more than 100 employees.

One-third of the surveyed companies stated that they had had an increase in staff over the last 12 months before the survey; just under a quarter reported a decrease. More than two-thirds of companies said that their financial situation was very good or good, and only 5% estimated their financial situation to be either bad or very bad. More than half of the companies surveyed stated that they are planning to make material investments, and 50% were planning to create new jobs over the 12 months following the survey. This indicates the potential of job creation in the sector. Most were planning to recruit professionals, while a small percentage was intending to recruit managers and skilled workers. The average number of jobs to be created per company did not exceed eight, however.

### 6.2.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

#### Employment by gender

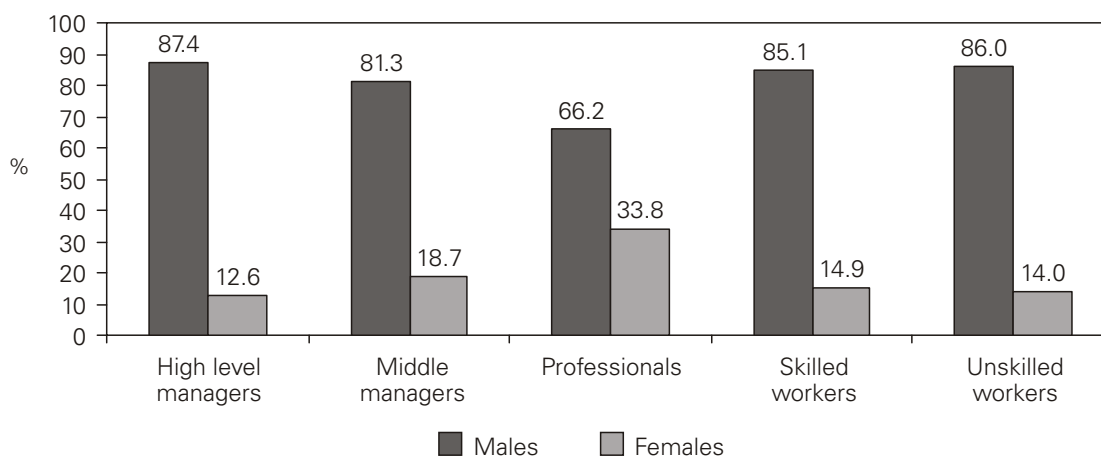
Women make up 23% of all employees in the surveyed ICT companies. The proportion of women employed decreases as the size of the company increases, although there are exceptions to this rule as some big enterprises employ a high number of women. Most employees are young people below the age of 30. This is due to the fact that most of the companies are new ventures that recruited their staff recently, and that young people are more likely to possess the skills they require.

#### Employment by gender and category

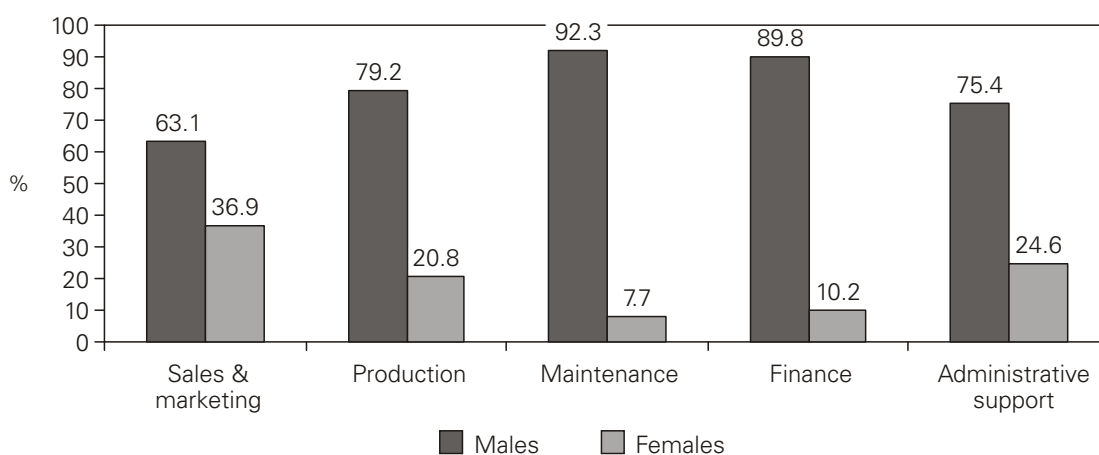
Women account for 13% of top managers and 19% of middle managers, 34% of all professionals, 15% of skilled workers and 15% of unskilled workers (**FIGURE 6.1**). Thus they are underrepresented in managerial positions and skilled and unskilled jobs and overrepresented in the professional category.

Women are most likely to be found in professional occupations (64% of all female employees), while men tend to be more evenly distributed (**FIGURE 6.2**). This pattern of gender segregation poses several questions. Firstly, it seems that unlike men, women with less than tertiary education have limited possibilities to work in the ICT sector. There is a need for further investigation into what the current skills profiles in the sector are and whether new skills profiles could be made accessible to women. Secondly, although the majority of women in ICT hold professional jobs with relatively attractive working conditions, they are still underrepresented in managerial positions. This may be due to the fact that their current jobs offer little chance of promotion or due to the existence of practices and mechanisms for promotion that exclude women or demotivate them.

**FIGURE 6.1 EMPLOYEES BY CATEGORY AND GENDER IN THE SURVEYED ICT COMPANIES**





**FIGURE 6.2 EMPLOYEES BY GENDER AND CATEGORY IN THE SURVEYED ICT COMPANIES****FIGURE 6.3 EMPLOYEES BY DEPARTMENT AND GENDER IN THE SURVEYED ICT COMPANIES**

### Employment by gender and department

Women are slightly underrepresented in production (21%) and slightly overrepresented in sales and marketing (37%) and administrative support (25%) compared to their overall share of employees in the surveyed companies (23%) (**FIGURE 6.3**).

Women tend to be concentrated in administration (29% of all female employees) and sales and marketing (32%). Another 32% are in the production department. Male workers are concentrated in production and administration (**FIGURE 6.4**).

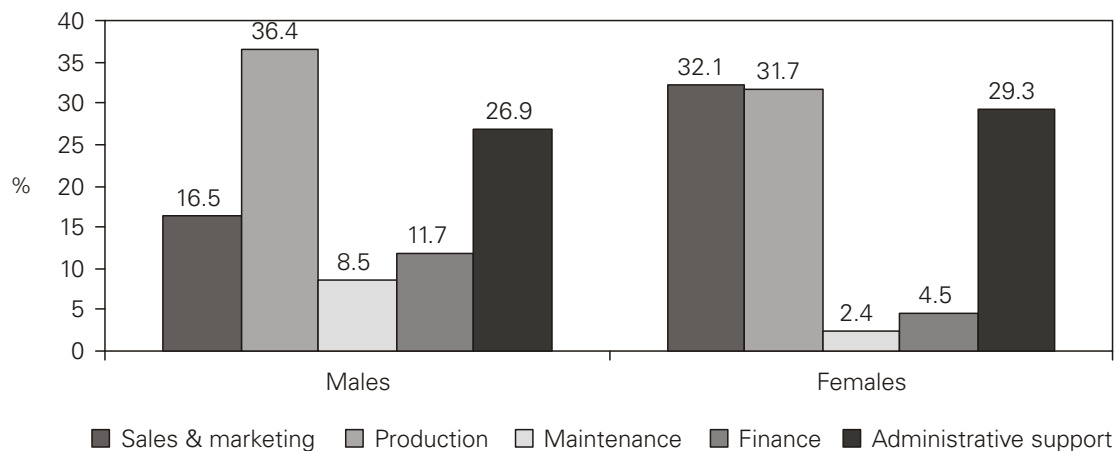
## 6.2.2 RECRUITMENT

### Current recruitment trends by gender

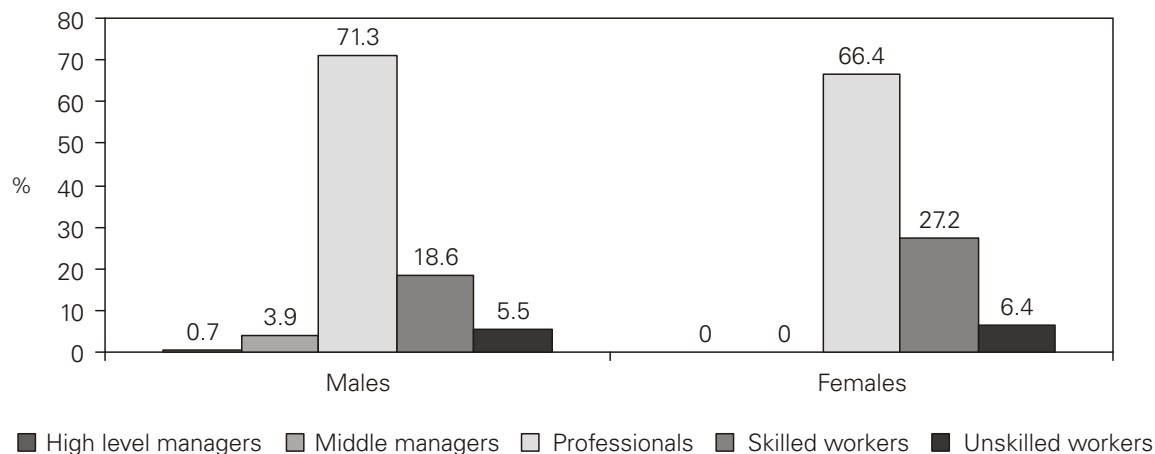
Overall, 29% of all new ICT recruits during the 12 months before the survey were women; this is slightly higher than their current share of jobs in ICT (23%).

No women were recruited as top- or middle-level managers during the last 12 months. The majority of women recruited were in the professional category (67%) (**FIGURE 6.5**). Contrary to the current shares of male and female employees in different categories, proportionally more women than men have been recruited as skilled (27%) and unskilled workers (6%).

**FIGURE 6.4 EMPLOYEES BY GENDER AND DEPARTMENT IN THE SURVEYED ICT COMPANIES**



**FIGURE 6.5 NEW RECRUITS BY GENDER AND CATEGORY IN THE SURVEYED ICT COMPANIES**

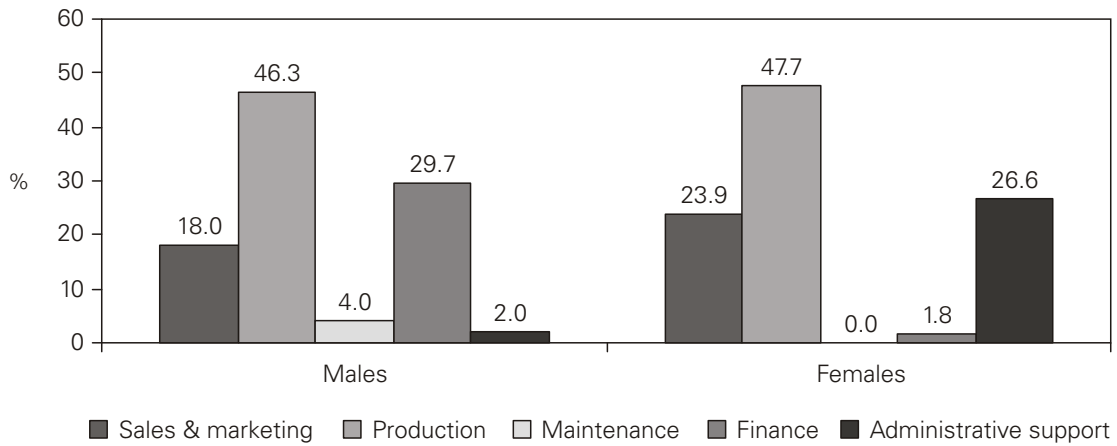
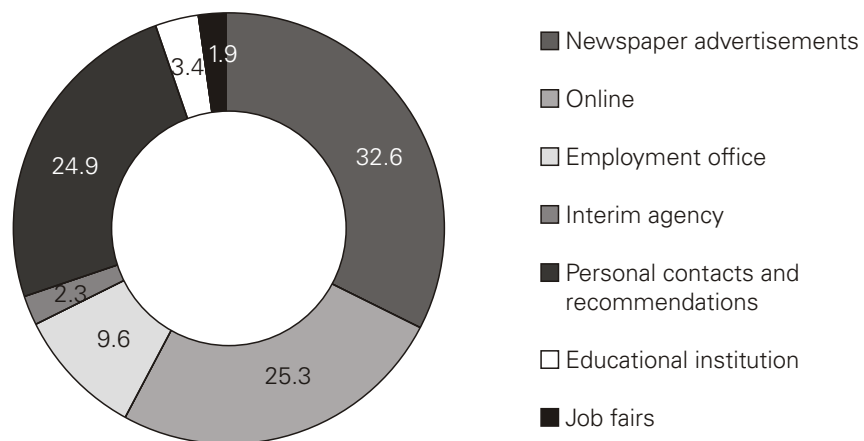


In terms of job categories, 48% of all new female recruits were hired in production departments (FIGURE 6.6), while only 32% of the current female employees were reported to work in production (FIGURE 6.4). Also, 27% of the new female recruits were hired for positions in finance, while currently only 5% of all female employees work in finance in the surveyed companies. Conversely, a smaller proportion of new female recruits (24%) than of all current female employees (32%) work in sales and marketing. This indicates that while women maintain a strong hold in more traditional, support-type functions such as administration, they seem to be simultaneously improving their presence in other functions such as production and finance.

**Recruitment channels**

Various methods of recruitment were used; advertising in the non-virtual media was the most popular (33%), followed by online advertisements (25%), personal contacts and recommendations (25%), employment offices (10%), interim agencies and educational institutions (3%), and job fairs (2%) (FIGURE 6.7).

When asked about the share of women applying for jobs, only 10% of respondents said there were more women than men applying; 27% said that the numbers were almost the same for both sexes, and 59% mentioned that fewer women were applying than men. While gender is less often specified in ICT than in tourism when advertising jobs, 10% of ICT employers said that they specify gender often or always, 36% sometimes and 54% never. While the percentage of companies that never specify gender is high, the substantial minority that does reveal that gender preferences do exist for certain jobs.

**FIGURE 6.6 NEW RECRUITS BY GENDER AND DEPARTMENT IN THE SURVEYED ICT COMPANIES****FIGURE 6.7 RECRUITMENT CHANNELS FOR YOUNG NEW EMPLOYEES IN THE SURVEYED ICT COMPANIES**

### Importance of different characteristics in recruitment

Employers attach the greatest importance to soft skills when recruiting. A commitment to work and self-discipline were considered as very important by 90% of employers, a customer service attitude by 83%, the ability to work in team by 81% and language skills by 70%. IT skills and specific job-related skills were seen as very important by 88% and 79% of employers respectively. Work experience scored relatively high – very important for 55%. Educational credentials were considered very important by 64%, but which educational institution the candidate attended was not seen as important. This goes to show that in ICT, a sector which offers technically sophisticated products and services, job-related skills and educational credentials are important factors when recruiting, as opposed to tourism, where they are less valued.

Detailed analysis shows that night shifts are not expected from employees but that the ability to work overtime and work at weekends is somewhat important.

When the same questions were asked with regard to recruiting women, the responses showed no substantial differences. Again, IT, job-related and soft skills were seen as most important. Qualifications ranked quite high, followed by work experience. An interesting difference between female candidates and candidates in general was the lower percentage of employers who considered customer service attitudes important for women compared to the high percentage who considered this very important for candidates in general. This may indicate that customer service attitudes are not considered essential for jobs normally performed by women, or that having such attitudes is still a culturally sensitive issue.

Finally, marital and family status do play a greater role when assessing women than assessing candidates in general according to employers, but respondents generally claim that being married and/or having young children is rather unimportant. According to employers, whether a woman is veiled or not is not an issue, but physical appearance and first impressions are quite important (but less so than when assessing candidates in general).

### 6.2.3 COMPETENCES, NEEDS AND ATTITUDES

As has already been mentioned, skills and educational credentials are very important when recruiting personnel in the ITC sector. Furthermore, the majority of respondents (89%) stated that they face skills shortages when recruiting young people under 30 years of age.

When it comes to recruiting university graduates, 81% experience skills shortages always or often. The problem is less acute when recruiting people with lower educational levels, although these constitute a minority of new recruits. Around half of employers see graduates of public universities as better prepared than those of private ones, and graduates of foreign universities were also seen as slightly better prepared.

The greatest shortages were reported for sales and marketing, production departments and professional jobs. The least severe shortages were reported for administration departments (**FIGURE 6.8**).

When asked an open-ended question about which skills are in shortest supply, employers reported mainly soft skills including communications (31%), English language skills (23%), computer and internet skills (13%), public relations (10%) and a weak work ethic.

#### Training of new recruits

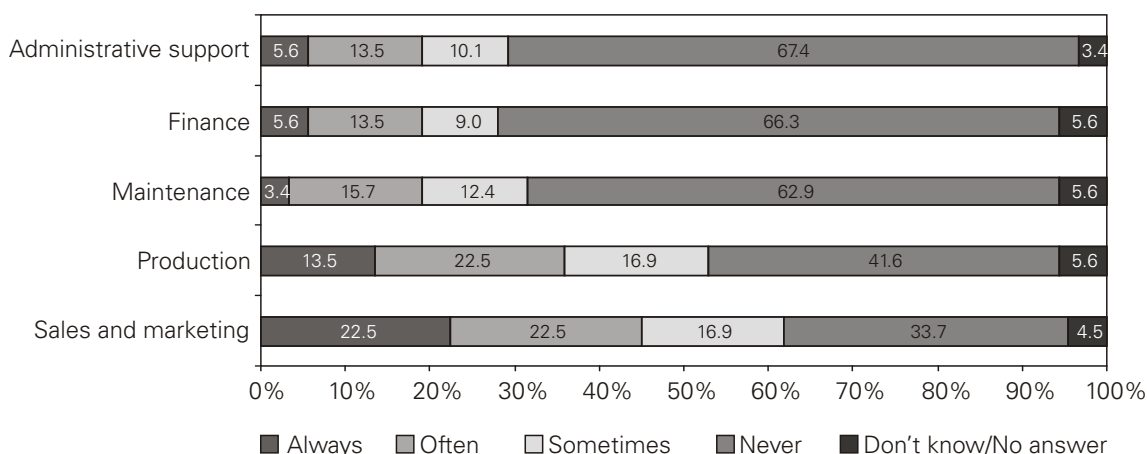
As for the training of new recruits, 71% of companies reported that they organise training for all of their employees, 18% for most, and 7% for some.

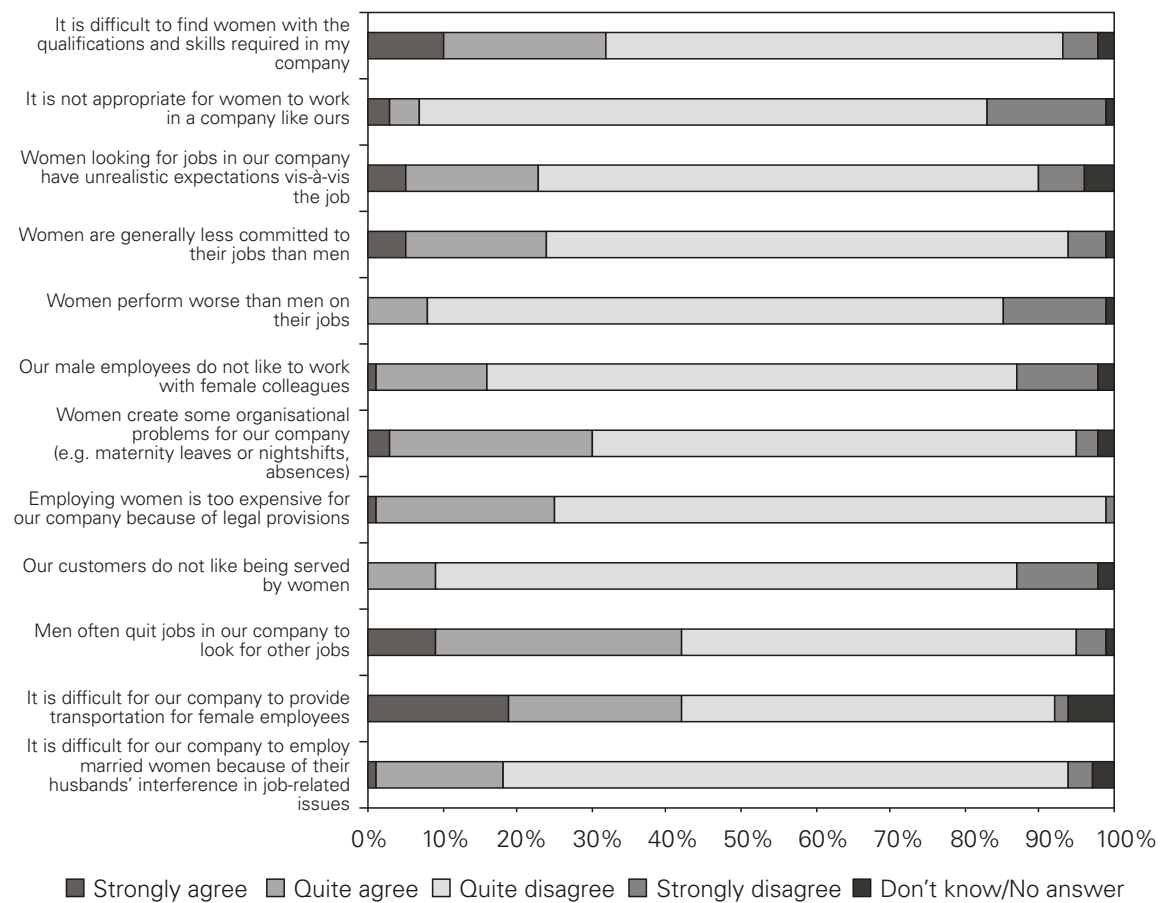
Some 77% of employers reported that all newly recruited females participated in training. However, new female recruits benefit slightly less from training opportunities than new male recruits. While 4% of companies do not organise any kind of training for their new recruits, 11% said none of the new female recruits receive training. This may indicate that women are more often given tasks where no specific training is required, such as in administration, where skills shortages are rarely reported.

#### Employers' attitudes to female employees

An overwhelming majority of employers (92%) do not think it is inappropriate for women to work in a company like theirs or that women perform worse than men (91%) (**FIGURE 6.9**). They also strongly disagree with the statement that their customers do not like to be served by women (89%) or that male employees do not like working with female colleagues (88%). There is, however, a substantial minority of employers who still agree that women are less committed to their jobs (24%) and that women have unrealistic expectations about their jobs (23%).

**FIGURE 6.8 SKILLS SHORTAGES BY DEPARTMENT IN THE SURVEYED ICT COMPANIES**



**FIGURE 6.9 EMPLOYERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS EMPLOYING WOMEN**

Regarding educational choices by women, it is important to note that 32% of employers find it difficult to find women with relevant skills and qualifications (32%).

Some 21% of employers think it is difficult for the company to employ married women because of their husbands' interference with their working lives, 25% think that employing women is too expensive for the company due to legal provisions, and 30% think that employing women can create organisational problems for the company such as the need for substitutes during maternity leave. These percentages are significant although lower than in the tourism companies, which may partly be due to most companies having fewer female workers than the threshold above which legal provisions apply.

Responding to an open-ended question on the advantages of employing women, employers cited a strong work ethic (25%), better skills (16%), the ability to establish a better relationship with clients (12%) and create a friendly atmosphere (9%), and better organisational skills (8%).

When more directive questions were asked, employers rated the advantages of employing women as higher; 63% said women can establish better relations with clients and are more patient than men, 57% said that women are more service-oriented, 50% that they will accept lower salaries than men and 21% that they are better qualified than men.

Finally, the main incentives employers believe may encourage them to employ more women included: subsidising salaries (15%), facilitating part-time work (15%), supporting training programmes (10%) and sharing the cost of childcare facilities (9%).

## 6.3 ASSESSING THE SUPPLY OF LABOUR: WOMEN SPEAK UP

### 6.3.1 ICT STUDENTS

The majority of participants asserted that stereotypes about the ICT sector are still prevalent in society. Participants stated that ICT is seen as more appropriate for males than for females and that according to popular opinion men are more capable than women in certain specialisations in the sector. They cited examples such as engineering and computer sciences as male specialities and management information systems as female specialities.

The majority of participants noted that females are beginning to study 'scientific' majors more than humanities. They stated that the reasons behind this have to do with the belief that these fields provide better job opportunities, and because female students are doing well in these fields.

Some participants mentioned that their families pressure them to study in scientific streams rather than the other streams for better job opportunities in the future, while others have said that their families encourage them to study easier majors.

*'Parents prefer that girls study easy subjects because eventually they will get married and stay home.'*  
*Female ICT student in a private school*

Participants noted that they chose IT in high school because it combines characteristics from both the scientific and literary streams.

They asserted that teaching ICT in universities and schools depends more on theoretical rather than practical or applied methods. They feel that they are not trained in the practical or applied side enough, and that this may cause problems once they leave college to start work.

Participants stated that they feel that they have shortages in basic skills that are not related to their field but are necessary for the job market such as leadership skills, dealing with customers, and English language and communication skills. These skills are not currently taught in schools or universities.

The majority of participants mentioned that the IT sector has many positive features for them as women, such as challenging work, the opportunity to be creative, and an enjoyable atmosphere. They believed that the sector offers good salaries, and that it fits very well with female characteristics such as patience, good organisation and precision.

Some participants expressed their willingness to work long hours and in distant places in order to get the jobs that will satisfy their ambitions and expectations. They also expressed their ability to balance their work with their family roles and obligations. On the other hand, some participants said they are not willing to work for long hours and will leave work if it conflicts with their family roles and obligations. Some students asserted that 'Jordanian men are afraid of successful women and they would prefer simple women because they can control them'.

### 6.3.2 WORKING WOMEN

The majority of participants mentioned that society still thinks that education and health are the best fields for women to study in because of work conditions and the nature of the work itself. However, they noted that women are now exploring work in sectors such as engineering, law and IT because of the challenge that these fields offer and the opportunity for women to excel in these fields.

Most participants mentioned that they suffer from the still prevalent stereotypes in the ICT sector and that they have to work harder to convince their colleagues and business owners of their abilities.

Participants asserted that they can work in all ICT fields, while some of their male colleagues think that women cannot work in certain fields such as mechatronics and networks because they require more effort and fieldwork. Some participants mentioned that men are becoming sensitive towards their work and abilities and feel that women are now competition for them.

As for the relationship between the education and training they received and their current jobs, participants mentioned that education was helpful but did not provide them with many of the skills they needed in their jobs, and that they were mainly trained at work.

Participants cited many methods that were used to get jobs, the most important of which were personal contacts and networks (families, relatives and friends), applications through the internet, and getting job offers after attending training programmes or sessions.

Participants stated that they still prefer public sector work to private sector work because of the shorter working hours and the benefits that the public sector offers such as job security and maternity leave.

Participants mentioned that owners and managers prefer not to hire veiled women because they think that this will have negative consequences on work atmosphere and on customers. They also mentioned owners' and managers' preference for hiring single women because they are afraid that married women might have more family obligations and cost them more (i.e. maternity leave).

'The first question that the owner asked me, even before he had asked about my qualifications, was whether I was married or engaged or had plans to get married or engaged soon.'

*Young woman employed in ICT*

The participants stated that there is no wage discrimination where they work but that there is discrimination in terms of incentives, external training and promotion to higher-level management posts. Some participants also mentioned that there are stereotypes about what women can or should do and that employers refuse to assign certain tasks to women, even if the job is within the woman's speciality, because they believe that certain jobs are reserved for males.

'I have specialised in networks, but the manager of the company refused to assign me to work in that department and assigned me to other tasks where I do not have to go to the field because he feels that the network department is for males.'

*Young woman employed in ICT*

Most participants said that many customers and colleagues are suspicious of females' professional abilities at first, but once they have been served by them or work with them, trust is established.

Many of the married participants stated that they have difficulties balancing their work-related obligations and their family roles and requirements. The majority of women listed the following difficulties and challenges in their work: lack of transportation, long working hours, discrimination on incentives such as promotions, low salaries, sexual harassment at work and lack of open dialogue on the subject, and lack of nurseries around or close to the workplace.

### 6.3.3 UNEMPLOYED WOMEN

Many women mentioned that they suffer from the traditional perception of society that the ICT sector is not appropriate for females. Furthermore, the majority of participants said the job opportunities that are available to them are not suitable for their majors or specialisation, and that they are instead offered roles such as office work, secretarial work and marketing.

'I graduated with excellent grades in programming and received training; after that I applied to work in a company and I was offered the job, but in marketing, not in programming. I decided to decline the offer and look for another job.'

*Young unemployed woman*

Most participants cited the following reasons for not being able to work: employers require work experience, long working hours (difficult for married women), low salaries, and shortages in communication and English language skills. Also, they said that many employers prefer to hire men over women. Participants from Irbid cited a lack of opportunities in the city and the fact that many employers ask them to do other things besides the job such as cleaning the office or serving coffee.

Participants in both groups cited employers' preference for male workers especially in the 'hardware' field and for hiring females for their 'soft' IT skills. Participants from Irbid cited employers' preference for male college graduates over female university graduates because of their applied skills that university graduates do not have.

Participants from Amman stated that companies prefer not to employ veiled women. Participants from Irbid did not think this was an obstacle for them but said that sometimes they are asked to make modifications to the veil such as colour, especially in jobs that require dealing with customers. Most participants mentioned that most employers are concerned with physical appearance more than abilities or qualifications, and that they mainly want to hire women for customer or public relations.

'I have applied to a job in person, and when the manager saw me he refused even to take my CV.'  
*Young unemployed woman*

Most participants said that they feel disappointment, boredom and frustration because they are not able to work with their educational qualifications. They also said that they feel helpless and totally dependent on their families, and that they feel ashamed because of that. Most of them spend their time sleeping, watching TV and visiting family and friends. Some participants stated that they gradually begin to lose their skills because of their long period of unemployment, and that this makes it even more difficult to get a job. Participants from Irbid showed willingness to work in Amman if there is work opportunity and secured transportation.

### **Inactive women**

Most of the inactive group members stated that they have not worked before and are not seeking employment.

Those who were previously working and left their jobs cited the following reasons for leaving work: good financial situation, getting married and having to take care of a family, and difficulties in balancing work and family. They also mentioned a lack of appropriate nurseries for children, long working hours, and discrimination on the job.

'I have worked in an IT company, taken many training courses and had a good work record but was never promoted, while my male colleagues were always preferred over me. That left me feeling disappointed; I resigned, and have no desire to work any more.'  
*Young inactive woman*

Married women who quit their jobs cited the impact of the attitude of their husbands on their ability to work after marriage. Some husbands do not want their wives to work, and others do not help or provide support for women who are working.

Most women mentioned that they would like to go back to work when their children grow up, if they were to receive support from their family or husbands, or if they could get domestic workers to help them at home. Their concern was to balance work and home requirements.

Many participants said that they will face problems if they go back to work or get new jobs. These problems include lack of experience, loss of skills because of the long period out of the job market, age and the difficulties of adjustment to work conditions after being out of work for some time.

Participants cited minor advantages for women who are not working, such as the ability to more easily take care of children and fulfil family obligations. Most participants, however, emphasised that being out of work negatively affects their personalities and well-being, and their ability to raise their children. Their thinking becomes limited in their family affairs and daily lives, and they lose touch with the outside world.

Most importantly, the participants asserted that they become economically dependent on their husbands and/or families, which weakens their ability to participate in the decision-making process in the family and makes them feel humiliated because they always have to ask for money from their husbands or parents.

'The woman who does not work feels humiliation and shame whenever she asks her husband for money.'  
*Young inactive woman*



## 7. CONCLUSIONS

Women in Jordan are becoming better and better educated, and there is a lot of effort invested in improving women's human capital. Data show, however, that Jordanian women are only slowly integrating into the labour market, despite their improving educational attainment levels and the high priority given to gender equality on the political agenda.

At the same time, the private sector is growing and workforce shortages and skills gaps are apparent in the labour market and emerging industries. The high dependency ratio is becoming increasingly difficult for households to sustain in light of the rising cost of living (Economic and Social Council, 2010).

Higher labour market participation among women is essential for economic growth and poverty reduction. It also allows for more efficient use of resources spent on women's education and training. Gainful employment also increases women's self-respect and gives them more say in child-rearing and family-related matters.

This study has endeavoured to throw some new light on why women's progress in employment is taking so long to materialise, and this chapter will attempt to draw some conclusions and suggest what can be done to remedy this. The study has analysed both supply of and demand for female labour in the tourism and ICT sectors using desk and field research. It has identified and illuminated obstacles and opportunities for women's employment, including the potential of these sectors to offer decent work for women, the impact of education on employment, where occupational and vertical segregation exists, how employers choose their workers and to what extent gender influences their decisions, what women can offer the sectors in question, and whether the working environment they will find there is female-friendly.

Considering that education increases the activity rates of both men and women in Jordan, but in particular those of women, and that female employment rates increase considerably with education beyond lower secondary school, investing in women's education and training certainly contributes positively to women's employment in the private sector. The activity rates of women still remain among the lowest in the southern and eastern Mediterranean region, however, and women's unemployment is much higher than men's at 24% in 2008 compared to 10% of men according to the ILO (KILM, 2009).

The traditional gender roles and attitudes regarding women's work and lack of infrastructure to allow women to reconcile the demands of work and family contribute to the low activity rates of women. Gender norms and stereotyping in Jordan emphasise the role of women as caretakers in the private sector, and this is reflected in the exit of women from the labour market after marriage (Economic and Social Council, 2010). While the activity rates of higher-educated women reach as much as 65%, women with lower skills are far less likely to enter the labour market since non-professional jobs are often considered inappropriate for women.

Higher unemployment rates among educated women may partly be explained by the fact that many better-educated women prefer to wait for scarcer and scarcer jobs in the public sector and hence remain unemployed. Women's unemployment rates are also high at lower levels of education, however. One explanation for this may be that while the public sector is not offering jobs any more, the majority of employers in the private sector cannot afford to offer women attractive working conditions; the financial burden related to employing women (maternity allowance, childcare facilities) is borne by the companies in the private sector.

### **Main challenges and opportunities for women's employment in the tourism sector**

Two of the main weaknesses of the tourism sector are low productivity (low profit margin and low added value) and low levels of education and skills among employees. At the same time, tourism is a labour-intensive, non-substitutable industry that provides a variety of job and career opportunities for low-skilled people and youth with limited or no work experience as well as for well-educated, high-skilled people. The diversity of skills needed in the sector was also observable in the survey: about a third of employees in the surveyed companies had post-secondary or university education, one-third had general secondary education and about a quarter had vocational education.

The tourism industry has expanded considerably in recent years and shall remain an important sector of the Jordanian economy. The pressure for better quality and diversification of products and services requires more and better skills, and a skilled workforce will eventually add value to the sector. New demand can be expected to emerge for management, sales and marketing, financial and administrative, logistics, quality assurance and finally service/production skills. Furthermore, the government is committed to the development of the sector and sets ambitious targets and strategies, and this combined with the survey results of the study indicates a certain potential for (female) employment in the tourism sector.

In fact, a large majority (83%) of the tourism companies surveyed estimated their financial situation to be good or very good, and one-third of the companies surveyed planned to take on new employees during the 12 months following the survey. However, among the surveyed companies women accounted for only 20% of employees, slightly less than the share of females in the active population in Jordan in 2008, which was 26% (MEDA-ETE, 2009). Furthermore, there were marked differences between the subsectors: in hotels females constituted only 11% of all employees, in restaurants 9% and in tourist agencies 49%. If Royal Jordanian Airlines is excluded from the sample, women's share of employees in the surveyed companies sinks to only 12%.

According to the survey results, the trend for female employment in the sector is not evolving positively. Only about 8% of new recruits in the tourism companies during the 12 months before the survey were females, much less than the current share of female employees (20%). Even though they had recruited more workers than had the hotels and restaurants, travel agencies had also recruited less women (about 30%) during that period than the share of current women workers (49%). This may indicate skills mismatch but also a general lack of female candidates for the available jobs. Almost 80% of the companies surveyed stated that fewer females than men, or no females at all, had applied for the jobs advertised. In the tourism sector, hardly any genuinely unemployed woman could be found.

The inadequate supply of women willing to take up jobs in the tourism sector (particularly in hotels and restaurants) is due to the sector's bad image and the character of its core jobs, which is alien to the culture women grow up in. Women are more reluctant to choose tourism and hospitality programmes at school and still too often choose this field of training and study with no intention of working in the sector, according to the focus groups. Apart from the negative image of the sector, young women in the focus groups also complained about (potential or actual) sexual harassment, long working hours, transportation problems and difficulties in balancing work and family life. Without a change in the image of the sector and investment in more women-friendly and harassment-free workplaces, it can be expected that women will not enter the sector or will continue to drop out.

In addition to the lack of supply of female labour, and despite the fact that the education and training system is trying to catch up with the emerging demand for new and better-quality skills, mismatches still occur. While the demand for unskilled labour for the elementary occupations has not dried up in tourism, companies are increasingly seeking skilled workers with various set of skills. The shortage with regard to supply of skilled labour is general, but it is in particular women who less often choose vocational education and training in preparing for skilled jobs. About 60% of employers surveyed stated that they have difficulties finding women with the qualifications and skills that their companies need.

On the other hand, attracting women to poorly designed and delivered vocational education and training will not improve their chances in the labour market. The VET system still caters for low performers, and the quality of education, existing infrastructure and arrangements for practical training have many deficiencies despite outstanding examples of some private institutions and 'bubbles' of innovation and quality such as those created by the Siyaha project. The current TVET system does not sufficiently respond to the needs of the sector. According to the employers' survey, graduates lack many skills, in particular soft skills and key competencies as well as practical skills and experience. Women themselves in the focus groups expressed their wish to be more exposed to the practical aspects of work during their education and to receive more soft skills training and more attention to their personal development needs. While on-the-job training is a common way of overcoming skills shortages, women tend to benefit from it slightly less than male employees according to the survey.

Gender segregation reinforces gender stereotyping, makes women more vulnerable to low wages and lack of promotion opportunities, and deprives young women of the role models needed to enhancing female employment in the tourism sector. When women access the sector they tend to be concentrated in support functions or professional jobs such as administration or finance, but also unskilled jobs. Women are fewer in skilled jobs and managerial positions, and there are very few in the reception and room service or bar and restaurant departments. Almost 70% of new female recruits had been employed in professional jobs and nearly half in administration, which indicates no change in the stereotyping of female work in the sector. However, only about one-fifth of employers surveyed stated that they specify gender when advertising jobs.

Perceptions about perceived difficulties with women's integration in the workforce may influence the decision to hire and retain female workers. Between 40% and 50% of the employers surveyed stated that they think employing women creates organisational problems, that it is difficult to provide transportation for women and that employing women is costly due to legal provisions. On the other hand, employers do not seem to expect women to take on tasks or timetables such as night shifts or overtime that are inconsistent with the general perception of women's roles. Marital or motherhood status is not considered an issue by employers, which may indicate that female job seekers are normally young single women without family commitments due to self-selection.

Women in the focus groups were able to identify positive characteristics of jobs in this sector such as an interesting work environment and contact with different cultures. This was particularly true for women studying in good-quality (private) schools and colleges, reflecting the importance of school environment in fostering positive attitudes. Women who benefited from the Siyaha project generally assessed the conditions that were negotiated for them as very good,

and the project represents one of the best practices in the field (particularly with regard to the design of study programmes, good-quality internship and job brokering).

Interestingly, the survey reveals that employers in the tourism sector are rarely prejudiced against women, and in general they consider jobs in the sector to be appropriate for women. In this respect they seem to have different opinions than the local community. Regarding women's abilities, employers often disagree with the statements that women are less committed to their job than men or that they perform worse than men. Also, employers do not believe that male colleagues and customers are biased against women. On the contrary, the findings suggest that hiring women has many advantages for employers; women give a better image to the company and are more service-oriented and patient. The positive attitude of employers and their customers is an asset that should benefit women and should be built upon by policy makers.

### **Main challenges and opportunities for women's employment in the ICT sector**

The ICT sector has been expanding and has the potential to offer high-quality, relatively well-paid, mainly professional or technical jobs. The advantage of the ICT sector, especially in terms of integration of women, is the wide variety of ICT subsectors, jobs and tasks requiring different sets of skills and predispositions. The character of the sector also enables different working routines to be used, such as teleworking or working from home. Furthermore, while the working environment and culture in the ICT sector can be female-unfriendly (for example, long working hours or working round the clock, male-dominated workplaces and sexist, competitive environments), as has been documented in research carried out in Western countries, in the Middle East there seems to be less gender stereotyping in the ICT sector.

The study results indicate a potential for (female) employment creation. More than two-thirds of the surveyed ICT companies assessed their financial situation as very good or good, and half of them were planning to create new jobs over the 12 months following the survey. Most were planning to recruit professionals, a widely accepted job profile for women, while a small percentage intended to recruit managers and skilled workers. Although women make up only 23% of all employees in the ICT sample, less than the share of females in the Jordanian active population (26%), women constituted a growing share, 29%, of all new recruits during the 12 months before the survey.

The low level of participation of women in the ICT sector can partly be explained by the lack of supply of female labour: about 60% of the employers reported that fewer women apply for jobs. Employers themselves seem to have few prejudices against women. The great majority of them consider jobs in the sector to be appropriate for women, and only a minority of 15% specify gender when advertising jobs. Employers also strongly disagree with the statement that their customers do not like to be served by women or that male employees do not like working with female colleagues, and nor do the majority of employers think that women perform less well than men or that women are less committed to their jobs.

About a quarter of employers stated that they find employing women expensive due to legal provisions, and that employing women can create organisational problems for the company such as the need for substitutes during maternity leave. Organising transport for female employees is a problem for an even bigger share of the employers. These figures are significant, though lower than in tourism companies, which may partly be due to most companies having fewer female workers than the threshold above which legal provisions such as the duty to provide childcare facilities apply.

The majority of respondents (89%) reported that they face skills shortages when recruiting, and unsurprisingly, this is particularly true with regard to university-educated individuals: due to the nature of the sector, almost 80% of employees in the surveyed companies have post-secondary or university education. Regarding educational choices by women, it is important to note that one-third of the employers stated that they have difficulties finding women with relevant skills and qualifications.

With regard to skills in general, ICT would greatly benefit from an improvement in the quality of general education and basic skills and competencies. Identification of current and future skills needs and improved matching between demand and supply is another challenge. Employers are already aware of the importance of soft skills (communication, team working, problem solving and languages). The demand for specific ICT knowledge (hard skills) will grow, as will demand for staff with other background and skills knowledge (accounting and finance, quality control, standards application, etc.) and specific skills mixtures (e.g. IT knowledge or deep knowledge about the product, sales and marketing skills, and strong entrepreneurial and intercultural skills). Women could be particularly interested in following more interdisciplinary programmes, yet special attention should be given to ensuring that they are attracted to the different ICT study programmes and given equal opportunities to develop their talents and abilities.

In IT, as in many other sectors, women tend to be concentrated in support functions or professional jobs such as administration or sales and marketing. Women are also quite well represented in the production departments of the surveyed companies. While most of the women continue to be recruited as professionals, there were proportionally more women than men recruited during the 12 months before the survey as skilled and unskilled workers, which may

indicate a change in attitudes regarding non-professional female ICT jobs. There were also changes in the departments in which the new female recruits were employed: instead of sales and marketing, most were recruited in production, and the share of new female recruits in finance grew considerably. This indicates that while women maintain a strong hold in more traditional, support-type functions such as administration, they seem to be simultaneously improving their presence in other functions such as production and finance. Given the nature of the sector, however, both men and women with less than tertiary education have limited possibilities to work in ICT.

An interesting difference between female candidates and candidates in general was the lower percentage of employers who considered customer service attitudes important for women compared to the high percentage who considered this very important for candidates in general. This may indicate that customer service attitudes are not considered essential for jobs normally performed by women, or that having such attitudes is still a culturally sensitive issue. Employers also give less importance to female candidates' availability to do night shifts either due to legal prohibitions or an implicit recognition of this not being acceptable for women. Marital and family status does play a greater role when assessing women than when assessing candidates in general according to the survey.

Similarly to the tourism sector, it became evident that hiring women has many advantages for employers – they give a better image to the company, are more service-oriented and establish better relations with clients. Moreover, women that participated in the focus groups were quite open towards ICT, as demonstrated by the statistics on their involvement in IT streams in secondary education and in various subfields of ICT studies (despite the fact that they still form a minority of ICT students and are reluctant to take up engineering programmes). As demonstrated by the study, they find ICT challenging and feel confident about their abilities. They choose this particular field of study hoping for good job opportunities in the future. The number of women in ICT study programmes is a great asset, yet it constitutes huge waste of resources if these women drop out of the labour market or underutilise their skills.

The study also indicated that the problem of unemployment and discrimination in employment is more pervasive in ICT than in tourism. Women who participated in the focus groups complained about the difficulties they face in finding an appropriate job in the ICT sector. Women also claimed to be faced with discriminatory behaviours such as being confined to specific tasks that are often below their qualifications, being passed over for promotions, training, etc., having to prove they are capable of doing things, and sexual harassment.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has identified many opportunities for and obstacles to fuller women's participation in the workforce. The main opportunities are growing educational levels among women, the potential for job creation and the growing importance of skills in the subsectors studied, and emerging demand for new kinds of skills and skill profiles. The main obstacles are cultural norms and values (negative images of working women), inadequate institutional infrastructure, financial burden on employers, and working culture (alien working culture, sexual harassment, long working hours and difficulty balancing work and family life). Specific obstacles are also related to skills shortages and lack of social skills. There are many actors who in cooperation could be involved in removing the obstacles and taking advantage of the opportunities: the government, the education system, employers, social partners, NGOs, civil society and the media. Many of the actions proposed below might also be organised and financed within the framework of donor interventions. Most of the problems are common for both sectors, although the measures applied to overcome them might differ in some instances as indicated.

### **Policy options for negative images (tourism) and non-traditional fields of study and work (tourism and ICT)**

While the majority of employers are not prejudiced against women's work and see many advantages in employing women, social norms still define what is acceptable as women's work and limit the employment opportunities of women, contributing to the very low female activity and employment rates in Jordan. A lot has already been done with regard to awareness raising and promotion of the image of working women, but these efforts should be continued as a change in mentality takes a long time.

Therefore it is recommended to:

- Organise media awareness-raising campaigns that would further change the negative perception of working women in general and in the tourism sector in particular. These campaigns should also promote positive images or successful stories of women in other non-traditional fields or functions. This could be addressed by civil society but also by the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education, and carried out using such platforms as TV and social advertising.
- Influence mindsets via education. Further reform of curricula and textbooks should involve presenting positive images of working women and women in non-traditional fields.
- Raise awareness about unequal division of labour in families that causes women to have to work double shifts and limits their employment opportunities.

### **Policy option for inadequate supply of skilled female labour (and high female unemployment)**

Proper career guidance and counselling can be useful for women's social and economic empowerment. Career guidance services are relatively new to Jordan, and guidance and counselling services are underdeveloped<sup>23</sup>. Projects that are being developed and implemented in the field of career guidance should put more emphasis on gender issues in order to enhance women's employment. The employers surveyed noted a lack of female candidates for jobs, and in particular for skilled jobs (mainly in tourism, though in ICT the demand for female skilled workers also seems to be increasing). Career guidance should target young people, both male and female, and encourage them to take up training and job opportunities in unpopular sectors where there are skills shortages and emerging career opportunities, such as tourism.

No matter what their educational level or study field, however, women face higher unemployment than men, and there is a necessity to use career guidance and counselling to provide women with better skills for accessing and integrating into the labour market before they leave the educational system.

Therefore it is recommended to:

- Organise career guidance early at school level and provide information in equal measure to male and female students on the full range of occupations available. Career guidance should be targeted at students/pupils when they make decisions about further education.
- Encourage girls and women, through career guidance, to consider non-traditional study fields and VET programmes (and skilled worker jobs in the sectors where such demand exists, such as tourism).
- Target specific mentoring at female graduates leaving the education system, including social skills training and specific training on how to look for a job, prepare for an interview, etc. Training in communication skills,

<sup>23</sup> Some career guidance has been introduced in basic education, and counselling centres have also been established in 20 public and private universities. Career guidance as part of the employment services is almost non-existent (Sultana and Watts, 2007).

assertiveness skills, intercultural issues, problem-solving skills and work ethics could also be integrated into curricula or provided by civil society or NGOs in school premises.

- Improve practical training (including internships in enterprises), exposing women to all different aspects of future work (methods, equipment, work environment and culture, including gender-mixed environments). This requires creating incentives for better school and business cooperation and better school management, and initiative on the part of teachers.
- Include in career guidance (or curricula by content and mode of instruction) the fostering of an entrepreneurship spirit in girls, as this improves work performance and quality of life in general. This is especially useful for women, who are traditionally expected to remain passive and are now more likely to occupy positions requiring certain entrepreneurial skills, such as in sales and marketing.
- Encourage women to choose ICT and tourism programmes. This is justified by the lack of female candidates reported by the employers and the prospects of job creation in the two subsectors studied.
- Encourage, through career guidance, male employment in sectors traditionally defined as 'female' as a means of raising the average pay and status of these occupations and improving gender balances.

### **Policy options for skills shortages and lack of progression paths for women**

One of the ways to deal with skill shortages apart from better career guidance and improving the quality of education in schools and universities is supporting lifelong learning and in-company training, particularly for women. Support of in-company training of women was also one of the interventions cited by employers as most desired.

Also, the lack of progression paths for women could be addressed by in-company training and mentoring schemes. The absence of women in higher-ranking positions leads to a lack of role models for young women starting work and the perpetuation of gender stereotypes in the workplace.

Therefore it is recommended to:

- Encourage employers, through fiscal incentives, to provide more on-the-job training for women. On-the-job-training for women should focus not only on technical issues but also on such topics as assertiveness, leadership and management, showing women the opportunities to grow to higher technical and managerial levels in an often male-dominated environment. Labour unions might also take the initiative in providing such soft skills training to women.
- Introduce a mentoring/buddy system for newcomers wherein new female employees are mentored by more senior female (or male if found appropriate) colleagues for the first few weeks or months in the job. Special kinds of mentoring schemes might be used to support women oriented towards a managerial career. Again, this requires only employers' or labour unions' initiative and represents one of the 'quick win' interventions. Special mentoring schemes could also be provided by civil society organisations such as NGOs, in collaboration with professional associations.
- Develop specific measures targeting training of unskilled female workers. One possibility is to earmark a proportion of the E-TVET Fund to initiatives focusing on promoting women's and low-skilled women's training or to provide incentives for the creation of sectoral training funds (co-financing).

### **Policy options for inadequate institutional infrastructure for combining family and work responsibilities, and financial burden on employers**

In order to persuade women to join the labour market and encourage them to stay once they do, smart modern policies are needed that can help women to combine work and family responsibilities without putting all of the burden on employers. Without this, we may either see a growing reluctance among women to join and stay in the labour market or, in the case of growing unemployment, increasing discrimination against women by employers. If the private sector is not able to take full responsibility for ensuring equal opportunities, the state may have to play a bigger role, something which can be justified in economic terms by the positive effect of gender equality on employment and economic growth. Support for measures enabling a better balance of work and family was also cited by employers as a needed intervention. Related to this, long working hours are also very often mentioned by women as a problem that they have to struggle with or an element of the job that makes work less appealing. Interventions with respect to this may include part-time, flexi-time and teleworking.

Therefore it is recommended that the government:

- Shares the costs of maternity leave, breastfeeding breaks, transport and other measures required by law with (all) employers.
- Supports companies in organising childcare or provides public childcare facilities.



- Regulates part-time and teleworking with regard to social protection, access to leave, promotion, training, etc. Teleworking may solve some of the transportation and limited mobility problems for women who cannot find jobs in their location but who may find one somewhere else.
- Provides tax benefits for companies investing in teleworking<sup>24</sup> possibilities. Introducing teleworking requires changes to work organisation such as introducing task-oriented management, and also investment in tools to enable teleworking. One recommendation could be to use the E-TVET Fund to finance pilot projects promoting teleworking for young women in the ICT sector (in cooperation with the Ministry of ICT).
- Encourages companies by means of fiscal incentives to recruit more women and to organise women-only private spaces like restrooms, changing rooms and even canteen spaces.

### Policy options for discrimination and sexual harassment

Discrimination can be observed in the Jordanian labour market, including targeting of job vacancies at men, allocation of tasks based on gender rather than merit, and unequal access to benefits, training and promotions. Sexual harassment was cited by young women as a serious problem in workplaces, although no quantitative data are available to measure it. Some research suggests that sexual harassment and intimidation of women by their male colleagues and superiors is quite common (Al Manar, undated)<sup>25</sup>. Even sporadic instances of sexual harassment may create an unfriendly atmosphere where all women feel unwelcome or threatened.

It is recommended to:

- Include in career guidance specific training on the rights and obligations of workers and on ways of dealing with problems that may arise in further studies or employment regarding harassment or discrimination.
- Undertake specific action at the company level such as awareness-raising trainings or sending communiqués about harassment and discrimination issues to employees and managers. Special rules for dealing with harassment and discrimination incidents could be elaborated, and counsellors might be also appointed to treat the complaints in a confidential manner. This requires employer or labour union initiative.
- Provide practical training as part of curricula, in a gender-mixed working environment wherever possible in order to prepare women and men to work together.
- Develop a code of conduct to address discrimination and sexual harassment or alternatively make specific amendments to the laws (e.g. the Labour Law).

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<sup>24</sup> Teleworking is a new form of work with several positive and negative features. The advantages are greater autonomy and control over one's work and better harmonisation of work with family life. The disadvantage is that it may erode some of the high standards of working conditions and job security. It may also alienate workers and hinder their promotion perspectives. On the positive side we should also note that such flexible working time arrangements might be used with regard to female workers coming back from maternity leave, to reintegrate women after long career breaks or in various job creation programmes aimed specifically for women.

<sup>25</sup> This was also confirmed by gender experts from the National Centre for Human Resources Development during the meeting in October 2008.

# ACRONYMS

<b>ENPI</b>	European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument
<b>ETE</b>	Education for Training and Employment
<b>ETF</b>	European Training Foundation
<b>E-TVET</b>	employment and technical and vocational education and training
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FDI</b>	foreign direct investment
<b>GDP</b>	gross domestic product
<b>ICT</b>	information and communication technology
<b>Int@j</b>	Information Technology Association – Jordan
<b>ISCED</b>	International Standard Classification of Education
<b>IT</b>	information technology
<b>JOD</b>	Jordanian dinar
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organisation
<b>TVET</b>	technical and vocational education and training
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>USD</b>	US dollar
<b>VET</b>	vocational education and training



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