



**USAID TAKAMOL:**  
**LEARNING BRIEF**  
**ON GENDER-**  
**EQUITY EFFORTS**  
**IN JORDAN**



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Learning Brief on Gender-Equity Efforts in Jordan

# Executive Summary

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To advance gender equity and promote women’s empowerment in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, IREX operated the USAID Jordan Gender Program *Takamol* (hereafter, USAID Takamol) for seven years, 2014–2021. A flagship program for USAID Jordan under its *Special Development Objective (DO) 4: Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Is Enhanced*, USAID Takamol’s initial design and key partners evolved over time as needs changed and opportunities arose. In its first five years, for example, the program’s objectives<sup>1</sup> included providing gender expertise to the staff of USAID’s implementing partners in Jordan to support the development objective across sectors. Also, USAID Takamol activities initially were designed to support grassroots social dialogue and advocacy on legislative reforms led by civil society as well as gender-equality mainstreaming efforts in the public sector. In its final two years, the focus was refined to working with government stakeholders and civil society partners on gender-mainstreaming priorities in four key areas of opportunity: access to justice, economic engagement, education, and political participation. Across the life of the project, a wide range of partners worked hand in hand with USAID Takamol on these shared goals, from national line ministries and local councils to community-based organizations and civil society organizations (CSOs).

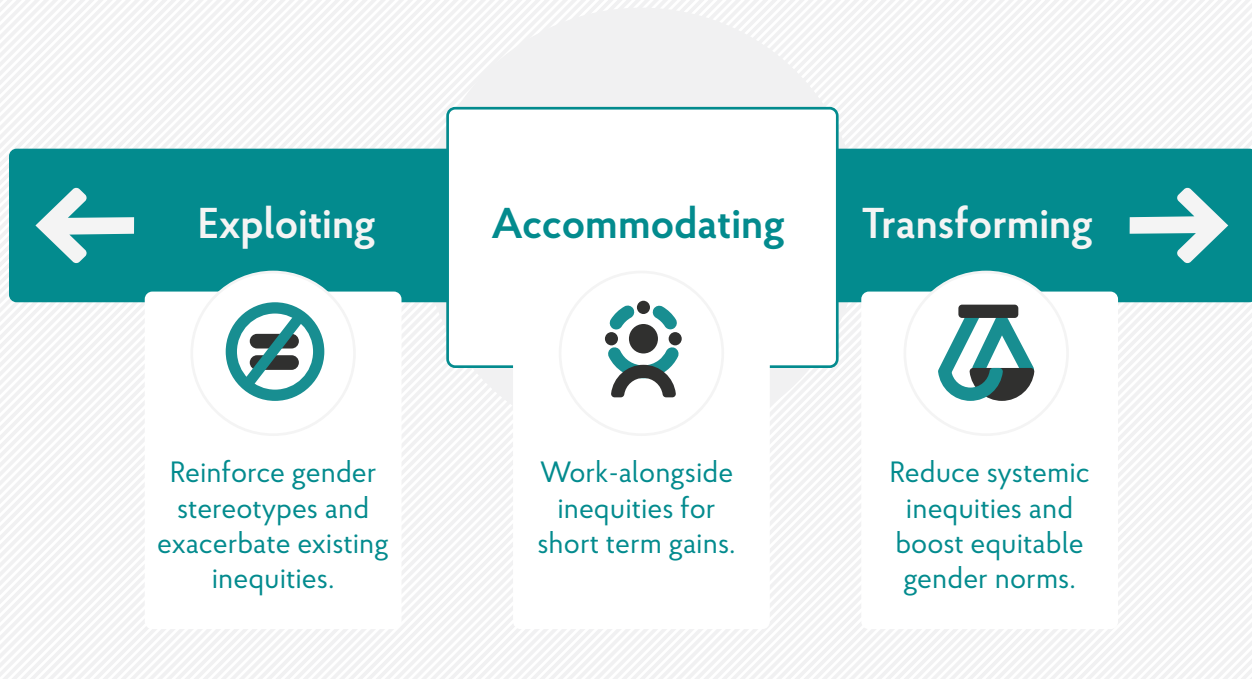


This learning brief is a final contribution by USAID Takamol to the growing evidence base of best practices and contextualized approaches to gender equity and women’s empowerment in Jordan. Three significant learning highlights are substantiated by the program’s data:

<p>A cyclical approach, with strategically widening circles of social dialogue and gender mainstreaming over time, is necessary to transform gender inequities.</p>	<p>The public-sector partners most likely to transition to more equitable gender policies and practices were those that USAID Takamol was able to build consensus with the leadership to prioritize gender equity. Thus, they provided internal support for those efforts.</p>	<p>Civil society partners often made strategic decisions to engage in partnerships with GoJ with the potential to address gender-equity gaps at a systemic level even when the joint activities fell short of transforming their root causes.</p>
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<sup>1</sup> USAID Takamol program objectives: 1: social dialogue on gender equity expanded; 2: enforcement and advocacy efforts for female empowerment supported; and 3: gender-mainstreaming efforts of USAID, implementing partners, and local researchers strengthened.

## Interagency Gender Working Group's Gender Continuum to Assess Programming and Policies



Using the framing of the Interagency Gender Working Group's Gender Continuum (see graphic), this learning brief synthesizes USAID Takamol and partner insights and provides concrete examples related to these learning highlights. It includes insights elaborated upon at a virtual learning event convened by IREX on March 10, 2021, featuring a moderated panel of speakers in Amman and diverse participants interacting via Zoom live polls and written questions submitted through the platform's Q&A box.

First, the brief provides a short description of USAID Takamol's theory of change and main activity streams. Next, the three learning highlights are contextualized within the two guiding questions in the USAID Takamol Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plan, followed by sections dedicated to examining concrete examples for each highlight. The brief also includes a set of actionable recommendations for gender-equity champions in Jordan.

The intended audience for this learning brief comprises gender experts; global development practitioners and donors, including USAID Jordan; and all global development professionals who seek to understand the circumstances under which mainstreaming gender-equity principles and practices appear to be more viable and sustainable. We hope this contribution supports the ongoing work of the many champions of gender equality in Jordan and around the world.

# Introduction

The purpose of this brief is to share key learning insights on effective gender mainstreaming in the public sector and social dialogue on gender equity from seven years of implementation of USAID Takamol. The insights are drawn from analysis of results achieved between 2014 and 2021 and a learning event with key partners held on March 10, 2021, to explore a set of learning questions and test several assumptions related to the documented results. Within each learning highlight, examples were selected to represent individual, institutional, and policy levels of change. More information on specific gender inequities in Jordan and program activities and results to date is available in past quarterly and annual reports.<sup>2</sup>



Poetry slam on gender equity, an in-person social dialogue event (2015).

<sup>2</sup>. <https://jordankmportal.com/organizations/usaids-takamol-gender-program>.

# Background of the USAID Takamol Program

## GOAL AND PARTNERS

USAID Takamol (2014–2021) aims to advance gender equity and promote women’s empowerment in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. During that time, USAID Takamol partnered with over 104 governmental entities and supported 162 community-based and civil society organizations (CSOs) to contextualize, prioritize, and coordinate national, governorate, and community efforts toward that shared goal.<sup>3</sup> Key governmental partners included the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs, the Legislation and Opinion Bureau, the Social Security Corporation, and the Jordanian National Commission for Women. In its last two years, USAID Takamol also worked closely with the Secretariat of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Women’s Empowerment (IMC).

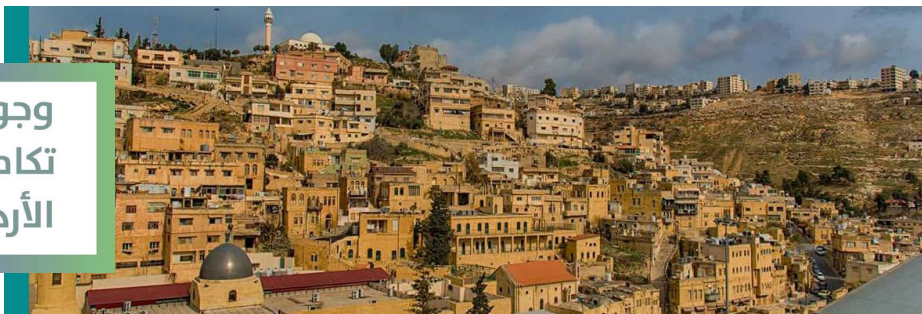


## TECHNICAL APPROACH

USAID Takamol activity streams have focused on the *mainstreaming* of gender-equity principles and practices within public-sector institutions; strengthening the *technical expertise* of institutional gender champions such as the Jordanian National Commission for Women and the IMC’s technical working group and the network of individual Gender Focal Points whom they support; *advocacy* by CSOs and research institutions in support of mainstreaming mandates and policy reforms; and expanding *social dialogue* among diverse groups of Jordanians on equal opportunities and women’s rights (e.g., see the [Faces of Takamol](#) platform, shown below).



وجوه  
تكامول  
الأردن



USAID Takamol’s online social dialogue platform has almost 45,000 followers and nearly 319,500 likes, comments, and shares (2014–2021).

<sup>3</sup> A full list of governmental, civil society, and community-based organizational partners will be included in the USAID Takamol final report, available by September 2021 in the USAID Jordan knowledge management portal referenced in footnote 2.

## THEORY OF CHANGE

In its first five years, USAID Takamol focused on gender mainstreaming in the public sector through partnership with the government of Jordan (GoJ) entities, and on social dialogue in communities driven by CSOs and curated online together with the Jordanian National Commission for Women. In its final two years, USAID Takamol and partners identified opportunities for GoJ entities and CSO counterparts to work collaboratively to make progress toward gender equity and women’s empowerment in four technical areas: justice, political participation, economic opportunities, and education. The program’s *theory of change* is below.



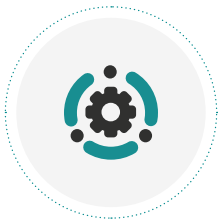
### USAID Takamol Theory of Change for Gender Equity and Women’s Empowerment

	<p><b>DIVERSE JORDANIANS</b></p>	<p><b>IF...</b></p>	<p><b>positive changes in discriminatory social norms and practices are promoted,</b></p>
	<p><b>CIVIL SOCIETY + PUBLIC SECTOR</b></p>	<p><b>AND IF...</b></p>	<p><b>advocacy and policy reforms for women’s issues are strengthened,</b></p>
	<p><b>GENDER-EQUITABLE ATTITUDES &amp; BEHAVIORS</b></p>	<p><b>THEN...</b></p>	<p><b>female empowerment and gender equality will be enhanced.</b></p>

# Learning Highlights from Gender-Equity Efforts in Jordan

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Through program implementation, an internal learning retrospective, and analysis of data from seven years of the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plan's efforts, the USAID Takamol team has documented the following learning highlights:



1. A cyclical approach, with strategically widening circles of social dialogue and gender mainstreaming over time, is necessary to transform gender inequities.



2. The public-sector partners most likely to transition to more equitable gender policies and practices were those that USAID Takamol was able to build consensus with the leadership to prioritize gender equity, so that they provided internal support for those efforts.



3. Civil society partners often made strategic decisions to engage in GoJ partnerships with the potential to address gender-equity gaps at a systemic level even when the joint activities fell short of transforming their root causes.



To probe these findings and share the program learning behind these trends, USAID Takamol formulated a set of learning questions drawn from two guiding questions in the USAID Takamol MEL Plan. The learning questions were designed to frame a discussion with key partners at the aforementioned learning event. The goal of the event was to explore potentially new perspectives on those questions as well as test the assumptions behind them. The event agenda featured a subset of case studies selected by USAID Takamol in consultation with USAID, and the learning questions were embedded in the moderator’s prompts as well as in live polls to engage participants in the process.

The next section explores illustrative examples for each of the three learning highlights noted above, including insights into the following two learning questions from the event:

#### Learning Question 1:

How best to institutionalize capacity for national gender expertise by transitioning away from reliance on external support in the future?

#### Learning Question 2:

What are the most effective ways to create positive CSOs–GoJ partnerships for gender equity and women’s empowerment?

## Learning Highlight #1



1. A cyclical approach, with strategically widening circles of social dialogue and **gender mainstreaming** over time, is necessary to transform gender inequities.

Normative change is not an on/off switch, but a **gradual, nonlinear process** during which people often espouse contradictory beliefs and expectations for their own and others' gender-related roles. USAID Takamol's cyclical approach to working with key individuals and institutions involved tapping into the crucial role of normative reference groups,<sup>4</sup> which research shows can be both positive (e.g., allies in addressing rigid gender roles within institutions) and negative (e.g., community influencers who block attempts to transform beliefs underlying gender inequities). Below we consider several trends seen in the research literature that are supported by USAID Takamol participant survey data and learning studies on the Souk Takamol<sup>5</sup> community activities and gender-mainstreaming efforts.

First, in Jordan there is **general support for women expanding their roles** (taking on more responsibilities, e.g., in the labor force) **but less for changing the role of men** (ceding power and privileges, e.g., leadership positions in the workplace). In the words of one Takamol trainer,

“ When you start with how gender equality vs. equity works, they will all be nodding their heads agreeing, this is logical, etc., but when we reach the part about the redistribution of power, participants will forget everything they've agreed with you in the first session, and you have to start again. ”

4. Research on social and behavioral change underscores the importance of an individual's normative reference group, that is, the group whose implicit and explicit rules and expectations provide a frame of reference for socially acceptable behavior (e.g., see the [UNICEF Behavioural Drivers Model \[2019\]](#) and [McDonald and Crandall \[2015\]](#)). Normative reference groups may be composed of relatives, neighbors, friends, authority figures and peers at work or school, community members, religious leaders, national heroes, celebrities, etc.

5. Souk Takamol was a small grants program for community-based organizations to conduct social dialogue and advocacy activities on a range of local issues, such as women's political and economic participation, gender inequities and the environment, and child marriage. Over four rounds, 88 organizations engaged over 38,000 Jordanians in every governorate, 71% of whom were female (Y1-7).



Second, ***understanding of gender-equity principles does not necessarily lead to support of more equitable gender norms***. USAID Takamol participant surveys often reported very high levels of knowledge, such as a survey of 7,500 Souk Takamol participants in which 94% reported an increased level of knowledge and understanding of gender-equity principles and women’s rights as a result of USAID Takamol interventions. At the same time, learning retrospectives with USAID Takamol staff revealed a consistent countertrend over multiple activity streams during seven years of implementation: From community discussions to training workshops, it was common for support for equity in principle to be retracted or diminished when the conversation shifted to decision-making about one’s own family members (e.g., whether a wife/daughter has a job or studies a nontraditional subject).

“ People can accept [examples of women in nontraditional gender roles] being around them but not within their inner circle. – USAID Takamol staff trainer ”

Third, ***support for gender equity and behavior change is often stronger in online than in-person forums***. While 82% of online comments during a Faces of Takamol campaign<sup>6</sup> on masculinities supported the concept of masculinity taking many forms, offline community dialogue sessions held in parallel by USAID Takamol network members revealed greater resistance. Over the course of 34 such sessions with 684 men, women, and schoolchildren (70% of whom were female) across 10 governorates, most of the participants expressed disapproval when the campaign’s stories depicted a man contributing to housework and raising children. Interestingly, they were more willing to relax norms related to fulfilling the “ideal” masculine role for men with disabilities or other hardships.

6. USAID Takamol’s online social dialogue activities logged over 1.5 million engagements, 80% of which was driven through it Faces of Takamol (FoT) **Facebook** Page. Launched in 2014, FoT promoted online conversations through more than 300 human-centered stories that challenge gender stereotypes, reduce the culture of shame around certain gender issues, and spark a dialogue between supporters and nonsupporters of gender equity. More than 20 thematic FoT campaigns were conducted and received over 23,000 comments.

In the example below, USAID Takamol’s support to a network of governmental employees who had been designated as Gender Focal Points (GFPs)<sup>7</sup> presents an interesting case study in the interdependent nature of social and behavioral change; for example, how changes in individual attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors affect, and are affected by, institutional changes in practices and policies. Over time, USAID Takamol documented institutional changes – catalyzed by individual GFPs – that represent progress along the Interagency Gender Working Group Gender Continuum from gender-exploitative to gender-accommodating practices and policies within GoJ entities.

 **KEY TERM:** Gender-exploitative programming and policies deliberately or inadvertently worsen existing gender inequities because they ignore or obscure them.

## Illustrative Example from Individual to Institutional Change through Cadre of Civil Servant Champions

### BRIEF ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

An important first step in many development interventions is to redress gaps in knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors of individuals whose active support is required to initiate, maintain, or expand new practices that result in institutional change. Since civil servants are essential to effective gender mainstreaming, USAID Takamol and the Jordanian National Commission for Women provided basic and advanced training on gender-equity topics to an existing but nominal network of 136 GFPs from 92 GoJ entities, 117 of whom were women. For most of them, the GFP designation was not a full-time position but rather an addition to their regular job responsibilities, and the majority had been appointed rather than self-nominated. In 2019, USAID Takamol also began convening a Community of Practice for GFPs to provide additional training, coaching, and peer-to-peer learning opportunities on common skills (such as collecting and analyzing data on gender differences) and to foster mutual support.







<sup>7</sup> Gender Focal Points are public-sector employees tasked with translating governmental mandates related to gender equity into concrete reforms of policies and practices in their home institutions as well as representing those institutions on coordinating bodies for issues on equity and inclusion.

## CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

Individual GFPs face a range of individual and institutional challenges to effectively carry out their responsibilities and contribute to gender mainstreaming:



- 
 Despite the GoJ mandate that all public entities should have at least one GFP, not all entities have an administrative structure (e.g., Women’s Directorate) in place to support effective work by GFPs.
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 Among those GFPs from GoJ institutions with Women’s Directorates, all identified challenges related to unclear or limited authority within their institution’s organizational structure, and all described the need for more staff and/or control over resources in order to effectively apply their skills and provide technical assistance to colleagues within their mandates.
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 Many GFPs shared the need for effective strategies to overcome resistance from individual colleagues and/or leadership; this was sometimes related to overlap in administrative lines of authority (e.g., whether gender audit recommendations for certain administrative reforms fell under the purview of the Women’s Department or the Human Resources Department). Disinterest among leadership was also cited, often because senior management thought that current levels of gender equity were sufficient within the entity.
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 Effective external coordination on shared equity priorities was also cited as lacking between GoJ institutions themselves, as well as between their institutions and the global community.

## Insights Related to Learning Question 1


**LQ1:**

How best to institutionalize capacity for national gender expertise by transitioning away from reliance on external support in the future?

First, although the GFP designation began in 1997, without clarity as to role, responsibilities, and resources for gender mainstreaming, the title was essentially a formality that required attendance at periodic gender workshops and little else. Understanding that individuals need motivation and an enabling environment as well as knowledge and skills to change their behavior, the USAID Takamol team consulted closely with GFPs and their senior management to understand existing **institutional incentives**, and then worked with the Civil Service Bureau to formalize GFP job descriptions. This formalization made a difference in **individual performance** over time: In a survey of individual GFPs in 2018, the majority of whom had been appointed the same year, only 44% reported performing the tasks within their job descriptions such as analyzing gender data or reviewing institutional policies “at least sometimes.” In contrast, among the GFPs surveyed in February 2021, most of whom had been GFPs for three or more years, 81% reported performing those tasks “at least sometimes.”



Second, to supplement coaching from the Jordanian National Commission for Women and peer support provided through the Community of Practice, USAID Takamol also sought to reinforce **institutional practices** supportive of GFPs, including from their senior management. Short-term strategies included involving GFPs as liaisons and leaders of high-visibility, high-impact gender-equity activities (see Learning Highlight #2 graphic below). The long-term strategy was to identify a partner capable of systematically increasing understanding of and support for GoJ mandates on gender equity, thus supplementing the technical assistance provided by GFPs to their colleagues. The Institute of Public Administration (IPA) was selected for its unique ability to engage GFPs to sustainably embed gender-mainstreaming skills in the public sector through its training programs. By program end, USAID Takamol had developed gender-equity materials for integration into five IPA courses<sup>8</sup> and secured a commitment

<sup>8</sup> The courses are New Employee Orientation; Development of Incumbents in the Position of Director; Human Resource Policies; Policy and Decision-Making; and Change Management.

from the Institute to engage GFPs from a range of GoJ entities in rolling out these courses for new public-sector employees and managers. By promoting institutional best practices through mandatory courses, the IPA will boost the potential for more consistent adoption of gender-equity policy reforms across GoJ entities; ideally, in the future, the IPA will also serve as a mechanism to provide ongoing professional development support to GFPs (see the *process of change graphic below*).

Third, while the Jordanian National Commission for Women has a mandate to provide technical guidance for gender-mainstreaming efforts, including support for GFPs, it lacks the *political* authority to issue instructions to ministries or make decisions regarding resource allocations. When the IMC became a permanent body within the Prime Ministry in 2020, USAID Takamol leveraged its potential to serve as a **coordinating and implementing body** for GoJ gender-equity mandates. For example, the IMC played a significant role in securing the commitment of the IPA to train all government staff on gender-equity concepts. Establishing such a base of understanding across all GoJ entities will lessen the burden carried by individual GFPs related to the cycle in which each new gender-equity reform or initiative necessitates persuading a new set of colleagues, many of whom are indifferent or resistant.

## ISSUES FOR FUTURE LEARNING

While USAID Takamol learning indicates that the IMC, of which the Jordanian National Commission for Women is a member, played a positive role in institutionalizing support for GFPs, further study of the IMC's potential and limits is warranted. A relatively short time elapsed since it became a permanent body, and partners did note that its work is often hindered by its management structure: The IMC's strategy changes according to its rotating chair, who determines its vision and goals. The current IMC has fully embraced the need for more accessible gender data, and the role of GFPs in providing it, but this may change. Finally, to better understand the extent to which GFPs who received USAID Takamol training and support have contributed to their institutions' effective implementation of gender-equity



reforms, gathering data from their peers and supervisors would yield additional useful perspectives on workplace norms and effective modes of institutional change management in Jordan.

This graphic represents the detailed *process of change* by which Takamol technical assistance to GoJ GFPs has supported efforts to institutionalize gender expertise within the public sector and reduce reliance on unsustainable forms of external support:





## Learning Highlight #2



2: The **public-sector partners** most likely to transition to more equitable gender policies and practices were those that USAID Takamol was able to build consensus with the leadership to prioritize gender equity, so that they provided internal support for those efforts.

From 2015 to 2019, USAID Takamol supported 11 government entities that conducted a participatory gender audit of their human resources and institutional policies and practices in order to identify and ameliorate gender-based disparities in internal work conditions. Many of the audits, including one with the Ministry of Education (MoE), found human resource issues such as a gender pay gap and fewer women in senior leadership positions, which negatively affected the entity’s ability to develop and implement actionable gender-equity mandates and workflows. Such audits have catalyzed a process of incremental but steady institutional change in the public sector.



### Illustrative Example from Participatory Gender Audit to Gender-Responsive Teacher Training

#### BRIEF ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Recognizing that educators play a crucial role in maintaining gender norms, USAID Takamol has worked with both civil society and the MoE to address inequities perpetuated in the education sector. Initially, these were separate activity streams. USAID Takamol supported CSOs to develop gender-sensitive early reading materials and socialize them through community events. It also provided technical assistance to the MoE Gender Department on the MoE Gender Equality Action Plan and conducted a participatory gender audit of the ministry’s institutional processes and practices. The GFP Community of Practice (as described under



Learning Highlight #1 above) includes three staff members from MoE. In addition to their role in the participatory gender audit, these GFPs facilitated USAID Takamol assistance to the staff of the MoE Legal Affairs Directorate to complete a gender review of the Education Law No. 3/1994, which included adding the promotion of equality between men and women in the philosophy of the national education system and ensuring no less than 25% representation of women in on all local education committees. All suggested changes were approved by the minister and will be sent to the Legislative and Opinion Bureau<sup>9</sup> for final review and approval together with other proposed changes to the law being compiled by the Ministry.

After years of gradually expanding collaboration, in 2020 the MoE Gender Department and USAID Takamol turned integration of gender-equity principles into professional development competencies for teachers. Specifically, the MoE Gender Department successfully worked across multiple departments (teacher training, curriculum development, and legal) and with Takamol technical experts to add three days (16.5 instructional hours) of competency-based content on gender mainstreaming within learning and school environments and school-related gender-based violence as mandatory training for novice, intermediate, and expert teachers. Among the 84 supervisor-trainers from 42 MoE directorates across Jordan who participated in Training of Trainers workshops on the new curriculum, agreement with a series of statements about gender equality as an abstract concept and the role of teachers in dismantling stereotypes related to women increased consistently across nearly all questions. This is similar to observations noted under Learning Highlight #1; however, results also revealed less agreement with statements regarding changes to male privilege and power (see graph below). Pending final MoE approval, as of 2021 the new content will be offered to 3,000–5,000 public school teachers annually, as well as through supplementary courses offered for professional development – a major achievement for systemic change. These teachers will educate approximately 315,000 students.



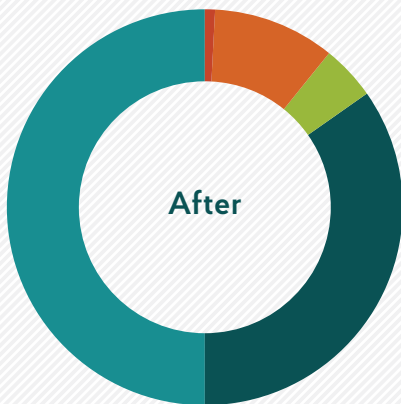
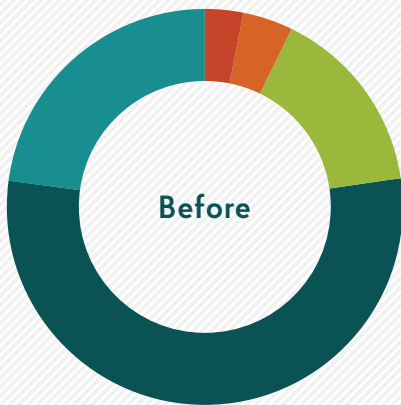
**315,000**  
students

<sup>9</sup> The mandate of the Legislative and Opinion Bureau is to review all draft legislation and proposed modifications to existing laws and regulations.

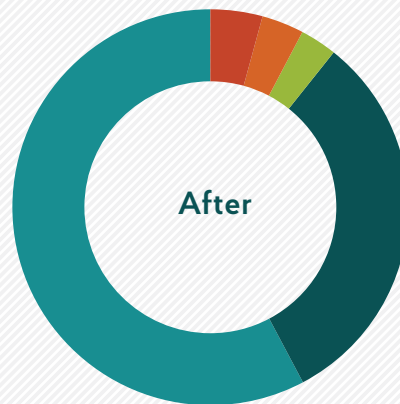
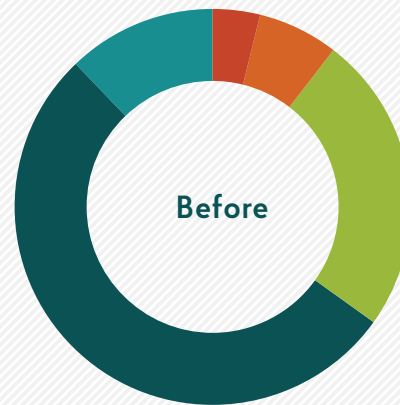
### Attitudes Toward the Role of Teachers in Countering Gender Stereotypes among MoE Supervisor-Trainers (n = 62)



The teacher should encourage the dismantling of stereotypes of the role of women as the caregiver of the family and children.



The teacher should contribute to dismantling gender stereotypes about the role of males as responsible for decision-making and the protection of females in the family.



● Strongly Disagree   ● Disagree   ● Neutral   ● Agree   ● Strongly Agree

## CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

Some of the challenges encountered when working with the MoE were common across many GoJ entities that engaged in a participatory gender audit, and a handful were not:



- ✓ In general, sustained momentum for more equitable institutional policies and practices was complicated by frequent reshuffling of the Cabinet, which caused residual delays as middle managers awaited news of shifts in institutional priorities or practices.
- ✓ The audits also found commonalities across GoJ entities related to an informal workplace culture that looks at women employees as a luxury rather than a necessity and to structural barriers to women ascending to leadership positions such as an earlier retirement age for women, inequitable family responsibilities, and exclusion of women from the social and clan networks used by men to secure favoritism-based promotions. These factors hinder both management support for and operational momentum behind gender-equity reforms to institutional practices.
- ✓ Specific to the MoE, the teachers strike in 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic's massive disruption to the educational system affected stakeholders' availability and priorities. When the MoE decided not to offer its annual teacher induction training in the autumn of 2020, it created a misalignment between their timeline and that of USAID Takamol for testing the new gender-equity content.

## Insights Related to Learning Question 1


**LQ1:**

How to institutionalize capacity for national gender expertise by transitioning away from reliance on external support in the future?

First, initial resistance to gender mainstreaming among senior staff in national public-sector institutions was often based on the conviction that female colleagues already enjoy full rights and face no challenges. The Takamol team credits changes in high-level leadership support not just to evidence of concrete inequities in the **gender data** generated by the audits, but also to the **participatory audit process** itself. When confronted with the findings of gender audits that were generated by a team of respected colleagues rather than outsiders, most realized that several measures need to be taken to ensure equitable access to job benefits, compensation, and career advancement, and did so. While this approach to **building diffuse institutional capacity** was time and labor intensive – sometimes it took a year or two, sometimes two or three months – over time, diverse team members (including but not limited to GFPs) became effective advocates within their own institutions for gender-equity practices.



Second, where advocates also had a strong internal mandate – such as the MoE’s Gender Equality Action Plan – leveraging high-level leadership support for cross-department collaboration was most productive. For example, this approach paid dividends when the opportunity arose to review professional development standards for the in-service teacher training. Initially, the MoE’s Gender Department – with a dauntingly expansive mandate within one of Jordan’s largest ministries – had been regarded by colleagues with suspicion (if it was regarded at all), as peers did not understand its purpose. The Gender Department’s worth became readily apparent as it became an **efficient liaison** for multiple concrete opportunities involving the MoE training department, vocational education, career counseling, and early childhood development. Suddenly they found themselves dealing daily with seven or eight departments within the ministry, obtaining approvals quickly and facilitating necessary introductions for the Takamol team.

“ When you introduce gender equity to people, it’s one thing to give them a lecture and it’s another to have them develop understanding of the concept by going through a concrete experience. For example, when we started working with the public sector, we started with little things. We asked officials at one ministry, "Do you think it is fair that all trainings are being done after working hours so women cannot attend due to family obligations?" They said, "Yes, we agree with you" and issued a decision within a few months that these trainings should be done within working hours. You start with small but important things and then you build on this until they are convinced. – USAID Takamol Audit Lead ”

This became an unprecedented opportunity to not just explain but also to **demonstrate their role to peers**, ranging from national heads of directorates to GFPs at the field level. This process was thus able to connect more abstract mechanisms such as the MoE’s Gender Equality Action Plan and findings of the participatory gender audit to current workflows involving curricula reform and parent engagement. Whereas difficult remote working conditions caused delays to other Takamol activities that relied on the availability of GoJ partners, the staff at the MoE were so eager to make progress that many worked throughout the lockdown, including late-night calls with USAID Takamol staff and consultants working to implement activities within the MoE Gender Equality Action Plan.

## ISSUES FOR FUTURE LEARNING

Since the coronavirus pandemic caused significant delays with the pilot training of the new gender-responsive classroom and school-related gender-based violence teacher training content, further study is needed to assess teachers’ skills uptake and application in the classroom, as well as the subsequent impact on student learning and gender-equity outcomes. In particular, the potential of the curriculum to reveal and reinforce nonequitable gender norms and beliefs related to male power and privilege among a small subset of participants should be carefully assessed, and trainers selected accordingly. While USAID Takamol learning indicates current MoE commitment to rolling out the new content, the long-term impact of the coronavirus pandemic on educational enrolment and attainment rates is likely to put pressure on MoE resources and priorities.



## Learning Highlight #3



3. **Civil society partners** often made strategic decisions to engage in GoJ partnerships with the potential to address gender-equity gaps at a systemic level even when the joint activities fell short of transforming their root causes.



**KEY TERM:**

*Gender-accommodating* programming and policies deliberately coexist with existing gender inequities in order to achieve important short-term gains.

The women’s rights movement in Jordan has a long and vibrant history, and USAID Takamol and its partners both benefitted from and built upon its legacy. Resistance to gender-equity efforts is also extensive, and USAID Takamol often took its cues from local leaders to carefully calibrate support for *gender-transformative* approaches. For example, USAID Takamol supported the Jordanian National Commission for Women’s Legal Department to articulate ambitious legislative demands; among those that were adopted into law are an equal pay mandate with violation fines in the amended Labor Law No. 19/2019 and an amendment to Article 306 on sexual harassment in the Penal Law No. 27/2017. At the same time, USAID Takamol sometimes elected to support *gender-accommodating* approaches that guaranteed broader public support in the face of deeply entrenched opposition, such as training legal experts on strategic litigation on a narrow range of issues governed by the sensitive Personal Status Law (see Key Term box above). The example of policy change in this section is drawn from USAID Takamol program data and the case study presented at the learning event on the work done by the Arab Women’s Legal Network to co-create legal guidelines related to domestic violence with the Judicial Council and Family Protection Department.



## Illustrative Example from Advocacy to Implementation of the New Law on Domestic Violence

### BRIEF ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

USAID Takamol has provided extensive support to policymakers and CSOs to advocate on regulatory reforms related to the prevention of and response to gender-based violence. Gender-based violence includes both intimate partner violence and harmful cultural practices, such as child marriage. After several years of fostering social dialogue on gender-based violence incidence rates, legal prohibitions, and available services for survivors, in 2019 USAID Takamol provided a grant to the Arab Women's Legal Network to work on institutionalizing recent legal improvements governing GoJ protection and response. This involved three mutually reinforcing components:






1. Collaboratively drafting legal clarifications with explanatory notes to 35 gender-based violence-related terminologies within the Anti-Trafficking Law, Penal Law, and Labor Law, which awaits approval by the Judicial Council before distribution to other relevant institutions, including the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) and the Family Protection Department within the Ministry of the Interior
2. A mapping study on the implementing entities and services provided under the Protection Against Domestic Violence Law (2017; PADV), which revealed some progress in identifying shared institutional responsibilities for the law's implementation (e.g., since the beginning of 2020 the MoSD has provided the Family Protection Department with social workers)
3. Publishing guidelines to adjudicating cases involving the new settlement procedure established under the PADV Law that allows domestic violence disputes to be resolved outside of a court trial (see the table below) and guidelines related to alternative measures such as restraining orders and community restitution



## CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

The Arab Women’s Legal Network’s work with the Judicial Council and Family Protection Department (FPD) faced challenges common to advocacy seeking to transform gender-inequitable norms as well as issues related to the sensitive nature of domestic violence in particular:



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 Since GoJ ratification (with some reservations) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1992, national strategies and legislation for gender equality and women’s empowerment have faced uneven implementation and, in some instances, active resistance from actors who contend that these reforms are at odds with Jordanian values. For example, one area of extreme sensitivity is reform of the Personal Status Law, which includes the system of male guardianship that codifies women’s inequality in property rights, mobility, and bodily integrity (see the quotation below).
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 Even GoJ actors who support-gender equity strategies and policy reforms lack impact data on their implementation due to the absence of a comprehensive monitoring system. For example, the impact of the National Strategy for Women (2013–2017) has not been measured, and nuanced approaches to areas for continued investment cannot be identified with confidence.<sup>10</sup>
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 As elsewhere in the world, some measures designed to protect women’s rights become obstacles to equal opportunities due to social norms that frame a “fixed pie” approach to power and opportunities.<sup>11</sup>

**10.** See, for example, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *Concluding Observations on the Sixth Periodic Report of Jordan*, 9 March 2017, CEDAW/C/JOR/CO/6, paragraph 26/c, which highlights that no impact assessment of the National Strategy for Women (2013–2017) has been done, and therefore an evaluation of the progress made toward gender equality cannot be determined.

**11.** Several studies confirm that the rights enjoyed by working mothers are among the main factors that affect their economic participation (World Bank *Jordan Country Gender Assessment: Economic Participation, Agency and Access to Justice in Jordan*, 2013; Phenix Center, 2016). For example, when Article 72 of the Labor law obliged the employer who employs not less than 20 female workers to provide a suitable place under the care of a qualified childcare giver to look after the female workers’ children aged less than four years old provided that the number of children is not less than 10, the result was that the employers, intentionally, would not employ more than 19 female workers so they could avoid having to provide childcare facilities.



- ✓ On gender-based violence policy reform, there is evidence from GoJ partners and CSOs that the PADV Law has not been implemented effectively, with reasons ranging from the lack of nuanced data to inadequate the FPD staff training on its new provisions.

“ The parliamentary discussions on PSL [Public Status Law] No. 15 [in 2019] showed how advocacy for women’s rights continues to battle criticism that women’s rights are a foreign agenda. Two days before the PSL was discussed in Parliament, an international human rights watchdog issued a statement about Jordan’s international obligations related to child protection and women’s rights. Many Members of Parliament (MPs) used the INGO [international nongovernmental organization] statement to support their claim that women’s rights are an imposed foreign agenda. The statement clearly impacted how MPs voted on the law. – USAID Takamol progress report

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## Insights Related to Learning Question 2


**LQI:**

What are the most effective ways to create positive CSO-GoJ partnerships for gender equity and women's empowerment?

First, to reduce resistance to gender-equity efforts framed in terms of GoJ compliance with international conventions like CEDAW, USAID Takamol adapted its early approach to legal and policy change by pivoting to support GoJ and CSO partnerships that leveraged localized entry points such as human rights–based interpretations of the Constitution. When national and institutional self-interests aligned with international human rights mechanisms like the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR), they too were leveraged. For example, Takamol supported several CSOs to compile submissions under the latest UPR cycle advocating for gender issues,<sup>12</sup> and in a major achievement, all 43 UPR recommendations were approved. On April 9, 2019, the prime minister issued a circular to all ministries and GoJ entities requesting the implementation of the approved UPR recommendations within five years.



Second, the Arab Women's Legal Network recognized that while it shared a mutual goal with the Judicial Council and FPD to improve GoJ's implementation of the PADV Law, a partnership would require a slow and deliberative process among diverse institutional partners that each had their own methodology, priorities, and workplace norms. There were also inconsistencies in implementation of the law across governorates that needed to be addressed. By avoiding a prescriptive approach and ensuring a focus on integrating the many different functions required to ensure access to justice for survivors of domestic violence, the Arab Women's Legal Network successfully convened all the responsible GoJ entities named in the PADV Law to define and operationalize complex new procedures that had been dormant for three years. From a baseline of zero, in less than six months, 81 cases had been reviewed by FPD staff trained by USAID Takamol and deemed eligible for the new settlement procedures, and 41 were settled out of court by judges trained by USAID Takamol.

<sup>12</sup> Human Rights Council Fortieth Session, February 25–March 22, 2019, *Universal Periodic Review Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review—Jordan, A/ HRC/40/10*, paragraph 135.



## ISSUES FOR FUTURE LEARNING

The very recent designation of judges to review settlement cases for domestic violence complaints, as well as the absence of any settlement cases prior to the work of USAID Takamol and the Arab Women’s Legal Network, prevented USAID Takamol from establishing a meaningful pre-intervention baseline. Due to confidentiality concerns, USAID Takamol also did not have access to details of the cases that would have enabled the development of metrics to assess the extent to which outcomes for survivors and abusers were improved through settlement compared to previous procedures used by the FPD and judges. The PADV Law also has provisions for alternative measures such as protective orders, community service, and psychosocial support services, which hold promise for improved law enforcement response to domestic violence, and for which the Arab Women’s Legal Network also produced guidelines, but USAID Takamol was unable to track their implementation before program end. These learning questions are important given the potential scale of their application: while it is too soon to make a credible calculation of how many cases may be eligible for out-of-court settlements or other alternative measures, an estimated 10,000–14,000 domestic violence cases pass through the FPD annually.



**10,000–  
14,000**  
domestic  
violence  
cases

# Recommendations

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Each learning highlight above included a brief discussion of issues for future learning, which institutions and individuals working for gender equality in Jordan may find fruitful to explore further. Recognizing that there is still much work to be done, this section offers a set of actionable recommendations related to each highlight for their consideration.

## Recommendations for Gender-Equity Champions in Jordan

1

Cultivate a collaborative rather competitive relationship between key institutional actors such as the Jordanian National Commission for Women and the IMC to optimize the potential for innovation when bringing together diverse perspectives and approaches to entrenched gender inequities. The potential of the IMC needs to be carefully considered, given the issues with its brief tenure and structure described above.

2

Consider non-gender-related institutional obstacles to the ability of skilled GFPs to effect changes in GoJ practices and policies. Contextualizing training programs within a deep understanding of institutional change management in Jordan, including data from GFPs' peers and supervisors, could yield important insights as well as strengthen their support systems.

3

Explore the possibility of the IPA serving as a mechanism to provide ongoing professional development support to the network of governmental GFPs. Turnover within the current cohort is to be expected, as well as the need for continuing education to keep up with the pace of gender-equity reforms and evolving institutional priorities.

4

Assess the effectiveness of the mandatory the IPA courses in improving civil servants' knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to GoJ gender-equity mandates, and adjust the gender-equity content and delivery platforms, as needed, on a rolling basis. In addition to assessing participants' mastery of the concepts, measures of their application in the workplace should be made and used to improve the content design and delivery options.

5

Support the MoE rollout of its gender mainstreaming within learning and school environments and school-related gender-based violence courses and assess their effectiveness in improving teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to gender equity in the classroom and their roles and responsibilities related to prevention of school-related gender-based violence. This should include careful screening criteria for supervisor-trainers who will deliver the training.

6

Enhance coordination among all GoJ entities tasked with delivery of the new alternative measures under the PADV Law, such as restraining orders for survivors, community restitution by perpetrators, and psychosocial support services for all affected family members, and develop metrics to assess the extent to which they contribute to safer and more effective law enforcement response to domestic violence.

7

Support CSOs that conduct advocacy and provide survivor services to raise public awareness of both settlement options and alternative measures, and to contribute to the evidence base on their effectiveness from a survivor-centered perspective.

# Concluding Remarks

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As USAID Takamol draws to a close in 2021, insights from program data and practice-based learning may be of interest to global gender experts; global development practitioners and donors, including USAID Jordan; and global development professionals who seek to understand contextualized approaches to gender equity and women's empowerment in Jordan. Using the framing of the Interagency Gender Working Group's Gender Continuum, the three learning highlights presented offer examples of both obstacles encountered and progress made in working with governmental and CSO partners toward more gender-transformative programming and policies.

The obstacles are many, and Jordan is a challenging environment for gender-equity and women's empowerment work, as evidenced by the country's rankings on international equity indices such as the World Economic Forum's annual Global Gender Gap report.<sup>13</sup> But while incremental along many indicators, progress is demonstrable – and due to the dedication and persistence of the Jordanian women's movement and local gender champions, many of which were USAID Takamol partners. IREX acknowledges their efforts and commends their commitment.

We welcome comments and questions related to the learning highlights shared in this brief, the proposed issues for future learning, and the recommendations for action. Inquiries may be directed to: [communications@irex.org](mailto:communications@irex.org)

Please note that a comprehensive accounting of USAID Takamol achievements and challenges will be detailed in the final report covering the entire program implementation period (2014–2021). It will be available through the USAID Jordan knowledge management portal<sup>14</sup> by September 2021.

13. [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2021.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf)

14. <https://jordankmportal.com/>



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