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Submitted by: Arab Network for Civic Education-ANHRE, the Jordanian Coalition for Education for All and the Information and Research Center King Hussein Foundation (IRCKHF). (A joint Submission)
Organization website: http://www.anhre.org/index-en.html, https://irckhf.org/

ANHRE

Anhre is a regional network working in the Arab region that promotes the values of citizenship and the culture of human rights and includes the principle of gender equality, the rights of persons with disabilities, and the rights of the most vulnerable groups to discrimination and exclusion through coordination of efforts and capacity-building.

The Jordanian Coalition for Education for All

The Jordanian Coalition for Education for all (JCFEFA), a member of the Arab Campaign for Education for All (ACEA) and of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), is a national network of a group of Jordanian civil society organizations (CSOs) committed to promoting the education goals of UN Sustainable Development Goal 4.

The Coalition is committed to supporting the Jordanian government in its efforts to renew its commitments to national and universal human rights treaties and to realizing the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

Information and Research Center King Hussein Foundation

The Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation (IRCKHF) was initially launched in 1996 as part of the National Task Force for Children. Today, the IRCKHF mobilizes knowledge for positive social change. IRCKHF promotes the welfare of children, youth, women, families, communities, and vulnerable groups by providing objective, multidisciplinary research and analysis to practitioners and policymakers in Jordan and the region, enabling effective socio-economic planning and decision-making.

Challenges to the Right of Education in Jordan

1. Introduction

1.1 Jordan accepted 11 recommendations pertaining to the right to education during the third UPR cycle, including access to education for non-Jordanian children (refugees and migrants) and enhancement of access to education in terms of quality and inclusiveness. Include sections on women's rights and gender equality in the curriculum at all levels of education and on disability inclusion, especially in educational institutions[1].

1.2 This report emphasizes key challenges associated with the right to education, including those associated with the approved third-cycle recommendations.

2. Quality of learning and Extracurricular, psychosocial, and leisure activities

2.1 Students who are attending school in Jordan are not necessarily learning, as learning outcomes, measured by the OECD's Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) test, are among the lowest in the world.[2] Overcrowding and varying maintenance requirements plague schools. Teachers receive inadequate training and support, and educational outcomes continue to be subpar. Notable is the fact that only one-fifth of second- and third-grade students in Jordan can read at grade-appropriate levels[3].

2.2 Although in 2017, MOE initiated a program aimed at promoting extracurricular activities within the education system, designating 20% of the time that children spent in school for extracurriculars, schools have largely been unable to successfully implement the framework.[4] Teachers lack training in specific extracurricular fields, and schools lack the necessary funding.[5] Students are rarely consulted on what extracurricular activities should be offered and are often unaware of what types of support and activities schools could provide.[6] In cases where extracurriculars are offered, especially sports, there are often gender discrepancies, as research found that girls are 45% less likely to play a team sport than boys.[7]

2.3 Jordanian schools still fall short in the provision of mental health services and promoting social cohesion. Only 12% of schools offer counselling services, which often provide vocational rather than psychosocial support, and the burden of provision often falls on informal education programs supported by NGOs and civil society organizations.[8] Bullying and violence within schools also remain largely unaddressed, as a Global School-Based Student Health Survey found that 47% of students surveyed reported engaging in a physical fight at least once in the twelve months prior to the survey, and 42% reported being bullied on at least one day.[9]

3. School dropouts

3.1 The Jordan Country Report on Out-of-School Children found that a total of 112,016 children in Jordan were not attending basic education (Grades 1 to 10) in the year 2017/18; of which 54,761 children were of primary school age (6–11 years) and 57,255 children were of lower secondary school age (12–15 years).

3.2 The number of children at risk of dropping out is 40,647. Out-of-School rates are higher for children of non-Jordanian nationality. More than 39,800 Jordanians, 50,600 Syrians, and 21,500 children of other nationalities are estimated to be out of school. Nationally, out-of-school rates are higher for boys than for girls, except for Jordanians in the 6–11 age group, where girls have a higher out-of-school rate than boys.[10]

3.3 There is no legal mechanism to enforce obligatory school enrolment or to impose penalties on parents who deprive their children of their basic education.

3.4 Juveniles who are sentenced to juvenile rehabilitation centers or detained therein do not have access to a regular education system; only limited access to books and final exams is provided to juveniles who are undergoing the Tawjihi (final exam). During COVID, juveniles were not given access to remote education due to a lack of infrastructure, including space, the internet, and technological infrastructure.

3.5 Boys are more likely to drop out of school due to poor academic achievements, child Labor, and violence at school (violence and bullying). Boys are also more likely to repeat grades and less likely to finish primary school.[11] For Syrian refugee students, studies have shown that social tension and a lack of social cohesion are key factors in dropout rates.[12] Teachers are insufficiently trained to address the needs of refugee students and deal with symptoms related to trauma.

3.6 Although corporal punishment was formally banned in schools per School Discipline Regulation, Instruction No. 4 on School Discipline 1981[13] violence in schools and the use of corporal punishment are still prevalent, and research indicates that they have become endemic. GAGE research with adolescents showed that boys are twice as likely to experience violence as girls (58% and 25%, respectively) and that this violence drives them to leave school. Adolescents are also at high risk of bullying, with some groups more vulnerable than others. Overall, boys are at greater risk than girls (46% versus 38%), younger adolescents are at greater risk than older adolescents (49% versus 33%), and those with disabilities are at greater risk than those without (53% versus 40%). Syrian refugees tend to face verbal violence from host-community members resulting from their resentment towards the changes brought about by the Syrian crisis, but are in some cases also subject to severe physical violence.[14]

3.7 The law does not permit corporal punishment in schools; however, this is not properly organized. The law does not set a disciplinary consequence or process for a teacher who commits violence against students. Parents find themselves having to submit criminal charges of assault to obtain justice for their children, and usually, the criminal course is not optimal as the child cannot prove the assault in many cases.[15]

3.8 Financial hardship is one of the reasons leading to school dropouts in Jordan. While basic and secondary education are free of charge in public schools for Jordanian and Syrian refugees, school attendance comes with other costs such as transportation, textbooks, school supplies, and uniforms. The UNICEF Out of School Report finds that children from the poorest wealth quintile have a 10% chance of dropping out before completing basic education.[16]

3.9 Child marriage is a negative coping mechanism that many families living in poverty resort to; by marrying off their daughters, they reduce their financial burdens. Social norms, including the need to protect the honor of girls, are also drivers of child marriage in Jordan. According to the Supreme Judge Department's annual statistical report and based on registered marriages, 0.28% of marriages (194) included a male under the age of 18 and 11.8% of marriages (7,964) included a female under the age of 18 in 2020. The percentage of registered marriages involving underage girls started to decrease in 2018 but then increased again in 2020: from 13.35% in 2015, 13.40% in 2016, 13.43% in 2017, 11.6% in 2018, 10.7% in 2019, and 11.8% in 2020[17]. Young married women still have limited access to the education system.

4. Sexual and Reproductive Health

4.1 There are limited efforts in schools to improve adolescent health, including through sexual and reproductive health education and the improvement of mental health youth services.

5. Implications of the COVID-19 pandemic

5.1 During the COVID-19 pandemic (during and after the stricter lockdown periods), education transitioned to an online modality. Distance learning became a new routine, but not without serious challenges. The government announced in March 2020 the launch of the online educational platform 'Darsak', which provided educational content for students from grades 1-12 between 7 a.m. and 4 p.m. Besides Darsak, two TV channels – Darsak 1 and 2 – were also dedicated to broadcasting lessons for all grades. To facilitate teachers and school management, a web-landing page has been introduced for teachers that provides professional development courses focused on new technological tools and their use. In addition, the government set up 'Noorspace', a learning management system, to provide teachers and schools with instruments to easily track attendance, monitor student engagement, and set assessments online.[18]

5.2 Many students, especially those from vulnerable groups, were unable to access the platforms because they did not have access to the internet or to a computer, did not have enough internet data, or due to a lack of guidance by teachers. Some families were only able to access televised lessons[19]. Other challenges cited include inequality in education, which has resulted from the disparity in families' access to the technology required for online education, the deficiency of Internet networks in many regions, particularly

remote and rural areas, and teachers' dearth of administrative and technical expertise to administer online-appropriate educational content.

6. Vulnerable children

6.1 Children from poor socio-economic backgrounds, children involved in child labor, refugee children, and children with disabilities are at higher risk of being out of school.[20]

6.2 Children with disabilities also face discrimination within the educational system. Currently, students with disabilities are educated in separate, non-inclusive educational spaces.[21] Ministry of Education statistics regarding the 2018/19 academic year find that while 1,396,868 students were enrolled in mainstream schools, 21,859 students with disabilities were helped by the MoE. A further 5,859 students with disabilities were assisted in institutions associated with the MoE and the private sector in 2018, suggesting that the total number of students with disabilities receiving educational services was approximately 27,694, or approximately 1.9% of the total number of students.[22] Research has also shown that males with disabilities are more likely to attain an education than females with disabilities.[23]

6.3 While the Ministry of Education has on occasion partnered with civil society organizations and NGOs to promote inclusion in classrooms, these initiatives are not institutionalized and have had little impact on the general education environment.[24] The UNICEF report on the Situation of Children in Jordan states that the Ministry of Education lacks the necessary financial and technical resources to comprehensively implement inclusive education.[25] Similarly, the 2020 Global Education Monitoring Report stated that Jordan acknowledged that the majority of their schools were prepared to practice inclusion, as they had not provided for baseline transportation, access, and curricula needs. [26] Refugee children with disabilities are similarly excluded from mainstream education systems. A Humanity and Inclusion 2018 study found that of refugee children with disabilities aged 13 and up in Jordan, 19% did not attend school and were illiterate, compared to 6.7% of those without a disability. [27]

7. Other challenges
7.1 Despite initiatives on gender mainstreaming in education, there is a persistence of deep-rooted negative stereotypes against girls that undermine the image that girls have of themselves.

7.2 Due to a lack of interest in vocational guidance and counseling programs in the Ministry of Education and a reduction in the budget allocated to these efforts[28], the unemployment rate increased to 23.2% in the third quarter of 2021, while the economic participation rate fell to 34.5% overall and 14% for women[29].

7.3 The strategic plan for education dealt with inclusive education in a confined and restricted manner, and its view of inclusive education was constrained by the fact that it is related to special education and education for the disabled[30].

7.4 Public Spending on education is limited[31].

7.5 The Education Law No. 3/1994 has no reference to promoting understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups or furthering the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace in accordance with Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

7.6 Jordan has achieved significant growth in enrollment and equity in primary and secondary education. However, the education system in these stages faces challenges related to school dropout rates, inclusive education, traditional curricula, appropriate governance, teacher recruitment and training, technology utilization, student assessment methods, and aligning with the needs of the labor market[32].

8. Recommendations:

8.1 Amend Education Law No. 3/1994 to include the principle of human rights, promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups, and further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace within the Philosophy of Education in Jordan.

8.2 Improve the quality of education by constantly monitoring children's learning outcomes by looking at different variables such as ages, nationality, vulnerability, gender, etc. This would provide more effective insights for improving the quality of education.

8.3 Support students who have been left behind because of the COVID-19 pandemic by providing them access to financial and social assistance, education-support programs, and psychosocial counseling.

8.4 Adopt the needed legislation to regulate the process of handling corporal punishment in schools, including penalties imposed and complaints mechanisms.

8.5 Increase the budget for educational programs and schools. This is fundamental to guarantee a resilient COVID-19 recovery and ensure the right to a proper education to every child.

8.6 Ministry of Education should develop flexible curricula for schools, providing them with the tools to be able to switch easily between face-to-face and remote learning as needed. It is fundamental to build a future education system that can make better use of online learning models. That will allow us to reach all students at their level and provide more individualized approaches to teaching.

8.7 Train and support faculty members and teachers to deal with the side effects of distance learning solutions.

8.8 Enact and implement access to remote education in juvenile centers. Ensure all children in conflict with the law in juvenile rehabilitation centers and shelters have access to school education in all its stages.

8.9 Implementing the national plan for integrating persons with disabilities into educational institutions, creating conditions that allow their access to educational institutions, and allocating the necessary budget for that plan.

8.10 Improving children's access to education in rural and remote areas and ensuring that no child is deprived of educational services.

8.11 Training teachers before and during service in line with the best practices

8.12 Focusing on inclusive education with its broad view to meet the needs of all learners, including gifted, creative, outstanding, and people with different inclinations.

8.13 Increasing the allocations allocated to the public education sector so that they are not less than (20%) at the level of the general budget and (6%) of the gross domestic product.

8.14 Adopt a comprehensive sexual and reproductive health policy for adolescents and ensure that sexual and reproductive health education is part of the mandatory school curriculum and targeted at adolescent girls and boys, with an emphasis on preventing early pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

8.15 Ensure that pregnant teenagers and adolescent mothers are supported and assisted in continuing their education in mainstream schools;

8.16 Take the necessary measures to improve the accessibility and quality of education and provide good-quality training for teachers, with a particular emphasis on rural areas, with a view to addressing school dropout;

[1] Human Rights Council. (2019). *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review – Jordan*, A/HRC/40/10, paragraphs 135.85, 135.88, 135.89, 135.90, 135.97, 135.107, 135.115, 135.121, 135.127, and 135.128

[2] OECD. (2018). *Jordan Student Performance PISA 2018*. https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=JOR&treshold=10&topic=PI

[3] https://2017-2020.usaid.gov/ar/jordan/education

[4] USAID. (2020). *EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE JORDANIAN MINISTRY OF EDUCATION: RAPID REVIEW OF NEEDS, GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES*. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/76620.pdf

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[7] Jones, N., et al.. (2019). *Adolescent well-being in Jordan: Exploring gendered capabilities, contexts and change strategies - A synthesis report on GAGE Jordan baseline findings.* https://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/adolescent-well-being-jordan-exploring-gendered-capabilities-contexts-and-change

[8] World Health Organization. (2021). *Mental Health in Jordan*. https://www.emro.who.int/jor/jordan-news/mental-health-in-jordan.html

[9] USAID. (2020). *EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE JORDANIAN MINISTRY OF EDUCATION: RAPID REVIEW OF NEEDS, GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES*. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/76620.pdf

[10] UNICEF. (2020). *JORDAN COUNTRY REPORT ON OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN*. https://www.unicef.org/jordan/media/4886/file/Out%20of%20School%20Children%20Study%20.pdf

[11] UNICEF. (2017). *Situation of children in Jordan*. https://www.unicef.org/jordan/media/506/file

[12] University of Sussex. (2019). *A Review of the Social Cohesion Initiatives and Challenges with a Focus on Jordan and Education.* http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/id/eprint/85327/

[13] UNICEF. (2020). *JORDAN COUNTRY REPORT ON OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN*. https://www.unicef.org/jordan/media/4886/file/Out%20of%20School%20Children%20Study%20.pdf

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[15] Justice Center for Legal Aid. (2018). *Analysis of the legislations governing corporal punishment in schools in Jordan*.

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[17] Supreme Judge Department. *Annual Statistical Reports*. https://sjd.gov.jo/Pages/viewpage.aspx?pageID=206

[18] UNICEF. (2020). *UNICEF and the COVID-19 Response for Education in Jordan: One Month On.*. https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:EU:79e90e19-857d-467d-8edd-e8fcc22c29b6

[19] Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation. (2020). *Marginalized Girls in Jordan: Rapid Assessment of the Impact of COVID-19*. https://haqqi.info/en/haqqi/research/marginalized-girls-jordan-rapid-assessment-impact-covid-19

[20] UNICEF. (2017). *Situation of children in Jordan*. https://www.unicef.org/jordan/media/506/file

[21] MoE and HCD (2017) The 10-Year Strategy for Inclusive Education

[22] IBID

[23] Institute of Development Studies. (2020). Disability Inclusive Development Jordan Situational Analysis

[24] MoE and HCD (2017) The 10-Year Strategy for Inclusive Education

[25] UNICEF. (2017). *Situation Analysis of children in Jordan*.

[26] Institute of Development Studies. (2020). Disability Inclusive Development Jordan Situational Analysis

[27] IBID

[28] "The Economic and Social Indicator Report of the Country 2021, Human Resources Axis, Labor Market and Employment, Education and Vocational and Technical Training Sector, page 20 states, 'This is due to the lack of sufficient attention to career guidance and counseling programs in the Ministry, as well as a decrease in the allocated budget. The Ministry allocated a sum of five thousand dinars from its budget to the Career Guidance Department for all schools in the Kingdom in 2020, which is insufficient to achieve the desired goal.'"

[29] IBID, page 46, states, 'The government has succeeded in achieving a number of objectives, while it has not been successful in achieving the required goals in other important areas, leading to an increase in the unemployment rate to 23.2% in the third quarter of 2021 and a decrease in the overall economic participation rate to 34.5%. The participation rate for females has also declined, reaching 14%.'

[30] "The Economic and Social Indicator Report of the Country 2021, Human Resources Axis, General Education Review, Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education 2018-2022 (Item 10, page 10) states, 'The plan addressed inclusive education in a narrow and limited manner, limiting its perspective to special education and education for people with disabilities. However, a broader perspective considers inclusive education as a means to meet the needs of all learners, including the gifted, creative, high-achieving, and those with different inclinations,

emphasizing the importance of focusing on diverse competencies, including emotional, social, aesthetic, professional, and others.'

[31] Jordan Strategy Forum (2022), K–12 & Vocational Education Sector Jordan's Economic Vision Roadmap, p 12. National Center for Human Rights, 18th Annual Report, p 88

[32] The Vision for Economic Reform 2023-2025, page 77