

Women Overburdened by the Public Transport: Obstacles to Economic Participation in Jerash



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Table of Contents

1	Executive Summary	4
2	Paper Methodology.....	5
3	Introduction	5
4	The Legal Framework	7
5	Public transportation Status in Jerash Governorate	8
6	Discussing Challenges.....	10
6.1	Problem Tree.....	10
6.2	Challenges.....	11
6.2.1	A non-comprehensive public transportation system	11
6.2.2	Unsafe and inconvenient public transportation system.....	11
6.2.3	Women using private unlicensed transportation	11
6.2.4	Women are subject to harassment in different ways.....	11
6.2.5	Difficulty for women's mobility during different times of the day.....	12
6.2.6	Public transportation services' low quality	12
6.2.7	Frequency of public transportation accidents and their seriousness	12
6.3	Causes.....	12
6.3.1	Defect in the regulatory and control processes for public transportation.....	12
6.3.2	Scarcity of planning studies for public transportation in Jerash	13
6.3.3	Poor management of public transportation infrastructure	13
6.3.4	Poor control over unlicensed private transportation	13
6.3.5	Unclear Criteria for the quality of public transportation performance	13
6.3.6	Absence of a complaints' culture among women	13
6.3.7	Weak partnership between the public and private sectors in the public transportation sector.....	13
7	Options and Alternatives	14

1 Executive Summary

Public transportation is considered one of the vital sectors that considerably contributes to economic and social development, since good public transportation allows citizens to move freely, safely, regularly, and at a reasonable cost commensurate with their economic income. Undoubtedly, public transportation is one of the most important needs of women and men with limited incomes, and the importance of this sector for women is particularly evident due to the fact that public transportation is a public space, in which women may be exposed to a number of negative situations. However, the public transportation sector in Jordan in general, and in Jerash governorate in particular, faces many organisational and distributional challenges that constitute an obstacle to public transportation users that limits their mobility.

This study's results revealed the scarcity of public transportation in Jerash governorate, which makes the population, including working women, use private vehicles that are spread across the governorate as an alternative to public transportation. The results also revealed that the challenges that women face while using public transportation, if any, resulted from several reasons, namely: flaws in the regulatory and control process of the public transportation in Jerash governorate, scarcity of planning in the public transportation system, poor management of public transportation infrastructure, weakness of a partnership between the public and private sectors pertaining to the public transportation system, the prevailing negative stereotypes about women and the absence of a culture of complainers among women. This reality and these challenges reflect negatively on women's participation in the economic and social life.

This policy brief put forth a number of recommendations addressed to decision and policy makers in the public transportation sector, which aim to improve the public transportation system in Jerash governorate in a manner commensurate with the conditions of women, and in light of their multiple roles inside and outside the home in order to guarantee the enhancement of their economic and social participation. The recommendations are as follows:

First: Studying the status of public transportation in Jerash governorate comprehensively, in partnership and cooperation between the Ministry of Transportation (MoT), the Land Transportation Regulatory Commission (LTRC), the Greater Jerash Municipality (GJM), the Governorate Council, and research institutions.

Second: Enhancing the role of women in the public transportation sector, in partnership between MoT, LTRC and the Jordanian National Committee for Women (JNCW).

Third: Enhancing sustainable public transportation in partnership between MoT, LTRC, and the municipalities of Jerash Governorate.

2 Paper Methodology

This policy brief aims to shed light on the status of public transportation in Jerash governorate, and to study the most prominent challenges facing women in public transportation and how they impact their economic and social participation. The brief ends with a number of recommendations, which aim to ensure the improvement of the public transportation system, and to help women to engage in the labour market and thus increase their economic and social participation.

In order to achieve these objectives, the policy brief applied the following methodology:

First: Reviewing relevant studies and articles, international agreements, constitutional legislations and regulations related to the research topic.

Second: Conducting a number of in-depth interviews with official authorities and experts in public transportation, and here are their names with due respect to their titles:

Ahmed Hashem Al-Atoum	Mayor of the Greater Jerash Municipality
Muhammad Alawneh	Director of the Land Transportation Regulatory Authority, Jerash Governorate.

Third: Holding one focus group discussion session with 7 working women who use public transportation.

Fourth: Holding one focus group discussion session with 4 members of the (decentralised) governorate council in Jerash governorate.

It must be emphasised here that the information contained in this policy brief does not necessarily reflect their views, and they are not responsible for its contents. Rather, it represents the positions and conclusions of the policy brief team in analysing what was provided from experiences and information related to women, and public transportation in Jerash governorate, as well as analysing the outcomes of the results of the focus group discussion sessions, in addition to the desk research conducted by the team.

3 Introduction

Public transportation is defined as the service that the state provides to citizens with the aim of facilitating their movement to fulfil their life requirements directly through being an operator of means of transportation, or indirectly by regulating operators through the laws and regulations in force in the state. At the local level, it is noticeable that the quality of public transportation services provided to citizens is inadequate, and the ratio of public transportation means per 1,000 citizens is inadequate, which is approximately 0.88 vehicles per 1,000 citizens, compared to the average

ownership in middle-income countries, which is 2.66 vehicles per 1,000 citizens. It is also less than the average for low-income countries which is 0.99 vehicles per 1000 citizens.¹

Public transportation is one of the basics of human life, and an important means of economic and social development. Given its great importance, many countries focus on supporting the public transportation system and expanding its network. Due to its economic importance at the individual, community and state levels. The availability of safe and organised public transportation at a reasonable cost is one of the important and necessary factors that help citizens easily and quickly reach their intended locations within organised times. This also encourages citizens to use public transportation as their first choice instead of private cars, and thus contributes to solving traffic jams, which is one of the problems that Jordan suffers from.

Public transportation sector is vital to development in general but also of great importance in transporting persons, whether working or studying, to multiple destinations. It is also one of the most **basic rights of citizens in any country, and one of the practical means to achieve social justice among people.**²

In Jordan, according to a Central Bank report, the estimated cost incurred by Jordan as a result of shortcomings in public transportation amounted to approximately US \$3 billion annually, or no less than 6 per cent of GDP. This doesn't include calculating its impact on working women's participation in public transportation. The report added that women make up around a third of passengers in public transportation in Jordan, and less than 50 per cent of the population actually uses public transportation, and thus these shortcomings make it difficult for women and youth who do not own private cars to work. It is worth noting that the low participation of women in the labour market could result in losses for the Jordanian economy productivity of around US \$65 million annually by 2030.³

Accordingly, highlighting the status of the public transportation sector in general in Jordan and in Jerash governorate in particular is very important because Jerash is a main attraction of internal and external tourism due to its historical and archaeological value from the time of the Roman Empire, and its location within the alliance of the ten cities "Decapolis". Jerash is also of great agricultural value for Jordan, as the Jerash governorate is located within the northern region of Jordan with an area of 410 square kilometres and is composed of the Jerash district and two sub-districts; Barma sub-district and Mastaba sub-district, in addition to five municipalities.⁴

The estimated population of the governorate, according to the Department of Statistics for the year 2021, reached 274,500 people, with women constituting 131,000, approximately 48 per cent

¹ Shabib, Lina, A Review of the Public Transport Sector in Jordan: Challenges and Opportunities, Al-Balqa Journal for Research and Studies, 2018.

² Obeidat, student, public transport culture in Jordan, Land Transport Regulatory Authority. <https://www.ltrc.gov.jo/?q=ar/node/221702>

³ "Jordan: Growing Demand for Public Transportation Requires Comprehensive Solutions," Report issued by the Central Bank, 2022. <https://www.albankaldawli.org/ar/news/press-release/2022/06/07/jordan-increasing-public-transport-demands-call-for-inclusive-solutions>

⁴ General information about the governorate - Jerash, Ministry of the Interior. https://moi.gov.jo/AR/Pages_جرش_عمامة_عن_المحافظة_جش

of the total population of Jerash.⁵ According to a report issued by the Jordanian Women's Solidarity Is Global Institute – SIGI, the percentage of married women working in Jerash governorate was only 10 per cent.⁶ This percentage makes us wonder about the direct and indirect reasons behind 90 per cent of married women who are not economically active. After being married, women in particular look for job opportunities commensurate with their multiple roles and responsibilities. However, before the process of searching for work, attention must be drawn to the mechanisms of going and returning to the workplace in light of the scarcity of the public transportation network. This makes the status of public transportation in Jerash a main direct factor in Women's refusal to work or their withdrawal from the labour market.

4 The Legal Framework

Public transportation is considered an integral part of sustainable development. This was announced at the United Nations' Earth Summit in 1992, which was documented in Agenda 21, and in the Johannesburg Implementation Plan for the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, where the importance of a sustainable, safe, affordable and easy to use transportation network was emphasised. The importance of the role of sustainable transportation and mobility in promoting economic advancement was also emphasised, while taking into account environmental protection, improving social justice, and the ability to link governorates and villages for achieving equal access to the health, education and labour sectors.

Goal No. (11) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development presents a set of targets, including: “Providing access for all to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transportation systems, and improving road safety, in particular by expanding public transportation domain, with particular attention to the needs of people living in vulnerable conditions, women, children, people with disabilities and older persons, by 2030”.

Locally, and based on the Public Transport Regulatory Commission (LTRC)) Law of 2011, LTRC was established with the aim of regulating and controlling land transport and its services, in addition to encouraging investment in the land transport sector in line with the goals of economic and social development, according to Article No. 5 of the law. In 2017, the Passenger Regulation Law was issued,⁷ with a general aim to regulate the services provided to passengers in a manner that guarantees compliance, safety and security conditions.

Since the Jordanian government attaches great importance to the role of public transportation in improving the country's economic and social development conditions, it has invested heavily in expanding and developing land roads through the implementation of a number of major projects between and within governorates. During the process of developing and modernising transportation systems, the need arose to draw up a document at the national level that defines the

⁵ Estimated population of the Kingdom by locality, gender, and households for the end of 2021, Department of Statistics http://dosweb.dos.gov.jo/DataBank/Population_Estimares/PopulationEstimatesbyLocality.pdf

⁶ “The majority of married women in Jordan are not economically active, have never worked, and are not looking for work.” A report issued by Jordanian Women's Solidarity Is Global Institute, 2020. <https://www.sigi-jordan.org/?p=8583>

⁷ For more information on the passenger regulation law, visit the following link: https://www.ltrc.gov.jo/sites/default/files/qnwn_tnzym_nql_lrkhb_lsn_2017_0.pdf

general policy for transportation, and highlights the basic components and the main challenges facing the transportation sector.⁸

The Ministry of Transport (MoT) is currently developing a five-year strategy for the transportation sector from 2022 to 2027 in cooperation with sector partners such as the World Bank and the European Union. The plan is characterised by a comprehensive view of the public transportation system in Jordan, targeting a number of measurement indicators, most notably raising the contribution of the transportation sector to GDP from 2.6 per cent to 7 per cent, and creating more job opportunities in the sector by 18 per cent of the number of current workers in the transport sector, which according to MoT currently employs 98,000 workers.⁹

5 Public transportation Status in Jerash Governorate

According to the director of the Public Transport Regulatory Commission (LTRC), the public transport network in Jerash governorate consists of 54 transportation lines, of which 37 are internal lines and 17 are external lines with other governorates. Based on the results of a study prepared by LTRC, the total length of the public transportation network reached 254.5 km, and covers 85.5 per cent of the area of Jerash governorate. This is considered a second level public service according to the Global Network Density Index, yet it is a good percentage compared to other governorates such as Irbid. However, the percentage of the public transportation network length compared to the percentage of its spreading and outreach, shows a clear disparity in the percentage of public transportation that is necessary to cover most areas of the governorate and its fair distribution. According to the Department of Statistics, the number of licensed public vehicles in Jerash is 141 vehicles of the saloon category and 165 buses.¹⁰

The Public Transport Regulatory Commission (LTRC) worked on a comprehensive plan for the transportation sector in Jerash governorate since 2010, which was divided into three phases: 1) The first phase dealt with the establishment of a new departure and arrival centre; 2) The second phase was the construction of 212 passenger parking umbrellas, *most of which are currently in need of maintenance*. 3) As for the third phase, it included the restructuring of public transportation lines and their operation according to a Rapid Transit System to be commenced in June 2022.

Despite the comprehensive plan, Jerash governorate suffers from a lack of internal means of transportation, and the insufficiency and effectiveness of the means available to passengers. This led to the increase in the private cars' phenomenon operating in exchange for fares on various lines.¹¹ Accordingly, the Director of LTRC confirmed, in one of the reports issued that the authority allocated about 2 million dinars annually to support the public transport sector in Jerash

⁸ Ministry of Transport, Land Transport General Policy Document.

https://www.mot.gov.jo/Ar/Pages/وثيقة_السياسات_العامة_لِلنقل

⁹ Al Dustoor, "Transport: a five-year strategy to raise the sector's contribution to the GDP," Al-Dustour newspaper, June 30, 2022.

<https://www.addustour.com/articles/1289497-النقل-«استراتيجية-خمسية-لرفع-مساهمة-القطاع-في-الناتج-المحلي»>

¹⁰ Department of Statistics, Jordanian Statistical Yearbook 2021, Transport Chapter.

¹¹ "The comprehensive plan for transportation in Jerash...just promises," published article, the official website of the Land Transport Regulatory Authority, October 29, 2022.

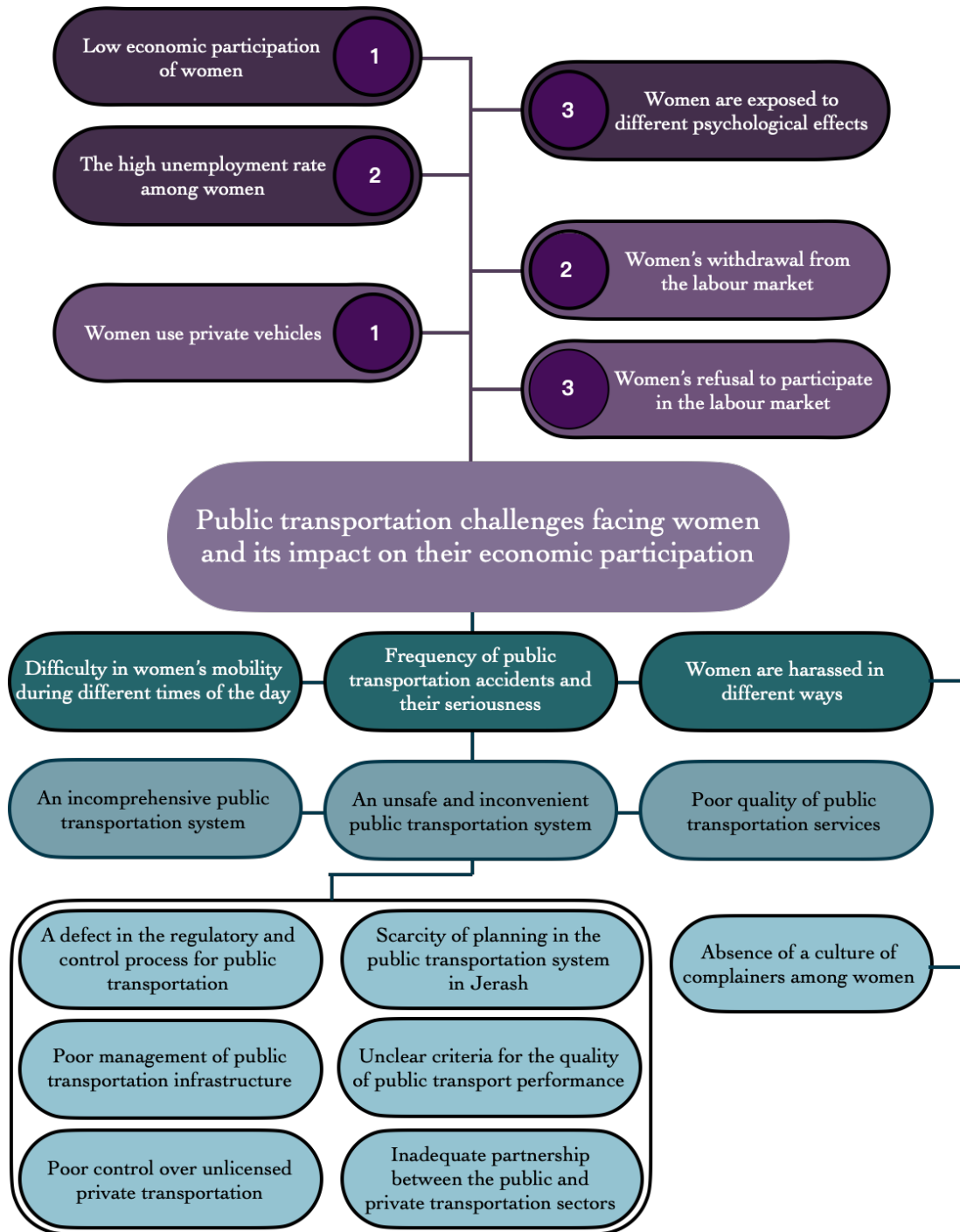
<https://ltrc.gov.jo/?q=ar/node/225360>

governorate starting 2022, in order to reach an effective, developed and safe land transportation that contributes to economic growth.¹²

¹² "2 million dinars annually to support the public transport sector in Harash," published article, the official website of the Land Transport Regulatory Authority, September 15, 2022.
<https://www.ltrc.gov.jo/?q=ar/node/225764>

6 Discussing Challenges

6.1 Problem Tree¹³



¹³ A methodology to identify the problem and its causes and effects. The trunk represents the main problem, the roots represent the causes of the basic problem, and the branches represent the effects resulting from the problem. <https://sswm.info/ar/taxonomy/term/2647/problem-tree-analysis>

6.2 Challenges

Women are no exception to the challenges that the public transport sector suffers from in Jerash governorate. This was clear from the focus group discussion session that was held with working women who use public transportation, as it showed that they suffer from many challenges, which constitute obstacles to their movement to and from work places. It was also clear that these challenges affect many aspects of their social, economic and family life, and even their psychological being. The challenges were as follows:

6.2.1 A non-comprehensive public transportation system

The public transportation system is non comprehensive in many aspects, such as: affordability, organisation, safety, distribution, and access to public transport service with specific departure and return times. There is no system of departure and return times from one point to another, and even if they exist, individual bus operators do not adhere by them.

6.2.2 Unsafe and inconvenient public transportation system

The respondents affirmed that the drivers do not adhere to the required speed and that they are frightened by excessive speed, especially in a mountainous area like Jerash. They also confirmed that they do not feel comfortable as a result of the general atmosphere that was not appropriate for women and their conditions, such as: using negative words, foul smells, unclean seats, damaged curtains and unhealthy air conditioning system.

6.2.3 Women using private unlicensed transportation

Working women are forced to use unsafe private means of transportation to reach their work places or homes due to the lack of public transportation in their areas or the lack of public transportation service commensurate with the times of their travel. This exposes them to exploitation and greed from some owners of private vehicles, who charge high fares, causing additional financial burdens. As a result, many women refuse job opportunities or joining the labour market because there is no economic benefit from their work and most of their income is spent on commuting to and from the work place.

6.2.4 Women are subject to harassment in different ways

Many women were subjected to harassment in various forms, such as harassment and bad language during public transportation, which is one of the most important motives for the withdrawal of women from the labour market in Jerash governorate. This was confirmed by one respondent, who confirmed that she had to put a sharp tool in her bag for fear of any threat or harassment from the vehicle driver. She stressed that changing the route by the owners of private vehicles exposes women to embarrassment and family problems. Women are also exposed to embarrassment when the driver asks private questions or asks the woman to sit in the front seat because he wants to avoid traffic police violations if they find out that he uses his private car for public transportation and receives fees without an official license.

6.2.5 Difficulty for women's mobility during different times of the day

Among the challenges that were noticed in the villages of Jerash is the suffering of women from the unavailability of public transportation during all times of the day. As public transportation is often available in only two periods, the morning and the evening. This is what drives many citizens to buy private vehicles that increase the financial obligations on the family. It also prompted a number of women to leave work due to the lack of budget for purchasing a private vehicle that meets their basic needs for transportation to and from the work place.

6.2.6 Public transportation services' low quality

The service lifespan of buses in Jerash is relatively long, which exceeds the globally acceptable service lifespan, as it usually ranges between 12 years for small public vehicles such as taxis to 20 years for large buses.¹⁴ The longer the service lifespan of buses leads to lower quality of service provided especially with poor periodic maintenance.

6.2.7 Frequency of public transportation accidents and their seriousness

The research team was unable, despite several attempts, to reach the percentage of accidents that are caused by means of public transportation in Jerash, whether they are run over, collision or roll over. Thus, it is important to highlight the importance of the availability of this type of studies and to know the root causes of the occurrence of such accidents in order to find appropriate solutions to the main problem. The research team noticed the long working hours of drivers "individual operators" with the absence of a clear system that determines the number of daily driving hours, thus increasing effort and fatigue, which have negative impact on the drivers' concentration and focus, thus the recurrence of accidents in Jerash governorate.

6.3 Causes

The previous challenges that public transportation suffers from in Jerash governorate, which impact on women, are the result of the following reasons:

6.3.1 Defect in the regulatory and control processes for public transportation

The public transportation system in Jerash governorate suffers from a clear regulatory issue, which is reflected in challenges and problems faced by many public transportation users thus affecting the effectiveness of the service provided. This is aggravated by the weak supervision and control of public transportation means, and evaluation of the quality of the transportation service provided, and the length of the operational lifespan of the vehicles.

¹⁴ Her Excellency Lina Shabib, Review of the Public Transport Sector in Jordan: Challenges and Opportunities, Al-Ahliyya Amman University, 2020, page 10.

6.3.2 Scarcity of planning studies for public transportation in Jerash

Planning helps in setting standards through which the services provided to citizens, such as public transportation, are improved by identifying their needs and the places that should be served by public transportation. The lack of this type of planning results in a scarcity of realistic data on the real needs of citizens in general and women in particular, and how to provide a service that is able to meet the needs of the residents of the local communities, especially women.

6.3.3 Poor management of public transportation infrastructure

The lack of an efficient and appropriate public transportation system results from a poor infrastructure and lack of future planning that can manage the various traffic burdens that Jerash is currently suffering from, such as: the lack of public bus gathering points, the presence of the bus complex in places that serve only a small percentage of the population of the governorate, in addition to the existence of villages that are not connected to any type of public transportation, or do not even have a street designated for that.

6.3.4 Poor control over unlicensed private transportation

With regard to the spread of private vehicles that provide transportation services in an unlicensed manner, there is a clear challenge for the regulatory authorities to control the spread of this type of transportation, especially for women who live in areas that suffer from little or no access to public transportation. Therefore, these women are forced to use unlicensed transportation to meet their daily needs. Also, the lack of a clear and approved complaint mechanism for women is another problem related to their ability to use private transportation as it is not licensed, and the driver is anonymous thus making the complaint mechanism rather complicated.

6.3.5 Unclear Criteria for the quality of public transportation performance

The participants confirmed the absence of criteria for departure times, lane selection, fare costs, and number of passengers, which often depend on the mood of the service operator. This leads to significant differences in the quality of service provided from one operator to another, from setting departure times and the number of passengers to the cost of transportation itself.

6.3.6 Absence of a complaints' culture among women

The participants expressed their low awareness of a complaints system in public transportation, as they do not file any complaints formally with the competent authorities because of fear from their family, or fear from tarnishing their reputation and the family's reputation, and the negative view of society towards them.

6.3.7 Weak partnership between the public and private sectors in the public transportation sector

The bridges of real partnerships between the public sector and the private sector are very important to provide a safe and affordable public transportation service in Jerash, where the role of the state is prominent in decision-making and drawing up policies and laws, the private sector's role is manifested in investments and implementing projects. Jerash governorate lacks this type of partnership, which may play a major role in improving the conditions of the sector, taking into account the needs of women.

7 Options and Alternatives

The policy brief came up with a set of suggested recommendations, which aim to reach solutions to the challenges of public transportation in Jerash governorate, in a manner that contributes to increasing women's participation in the economic and social life. These recommendations are as follows:

First: Studying the status of public transportation in Jerash governorate comprehensively, in partnership and cooperation between the Ministry of Transport (MoT), the Land Transport Regulatory Authority (LTRC), the Greater Jerash Municipality, the Provincial Council, and research institutions.

Objective: Access to sufficient data about public transportation in Jerash governorate.

Programmes:

- Holding focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with public transportation users, including women in order to identify the challenges they face in public transportation.
- Preparing a database dedicated to public transportation in Jerash governorate showing the numbers and distribution of public transportation means. This will help in determining its suitability for the numbers and distribution of the population.
- Preparing reports and research on public transportation and its suitability for women's needs, in partnership with civil society organisations and international organisations concerned with women's rights.

Advantages and opportunities of the proposed recommendation:

- Provide sufficient research information about the reality of public transportation.
- Directing development work in the public transportation sector in line with its realities.
- Ease of carrying out the study within short periods of time.
- Does not need a big financial budget.

Challenges facing the implementation of the proposed recommendation:

- Implementation needs strong partnerships and expert research teams.

Second: Enhancing the role of women in the public transportation sector in partnership and coordination between MoT, LTRC and the JNCW.

Objective: To prioritise women's need in the process of organising the public transportation sector.

Programmes:

- Women's participation in the decision-making process in the public transportation sector, such as: trade unions, control, regulatory or legislative entities, , etc.
- Awareness programmes about the complaint mechanism if women are exposed to any form of violence or abuse.
- A hotline through which women can submit complaints in an urgent and private manner, and work on disseminating it in public places and public transportation.
- Placing women within the cadre responsible for receiving incoming calls from hotlines.

Advantages and opportunities of the proposed recommendation:

- Ensuring the participation of women in the public transportation sector.
- Encouraging women to file complaints regarding public transportation.

Challenges facing the implementation of the proposed recommendation:

- Implementation requires a long period of time and a reasonable financial budget.
- The long period of time required to change the stereotyped image towards women, and involving them in the public transportation decision-making process.

Third: Enhancing sustainable public transportation in partnership between MoT, LTRC, and the Jerash governorate municipalities.

Objective: To achieve a sustainable, environmentally friendly, safe, regulated and affordable public transportation service.

Programmes:

- Accelerating the implementation of the comprehensive plan for the public transportation sector in Jerash governorate.
- Reconsidering the basis for managing and operating public transportation by individual owners, and regulating their work through a unified system that is easy to manage and control.
- Increasing the financial allocations of the municipality and LTRC so that they can work each according to their competence, to develop the public transportation sector.
- Establishing general quality and safety standards commensurate with Jordanian laws, and making them an essential part in renewing licenses.
- Increasing penalties for unlicensed private vehicles.
- Using smart applications to publish trips' schedules, track locations and number of public transportations means.

- Organising departure and return times for public transportation.
- Determine the transportation fare and place it in prominent places inside the means of public transportation.

Advantages and opportunities of the proposed recommendation:

- Increasing the volume of investments directed towards the public transportation sector.
- More organised and sustainable public transportation.
- Establishing various partnerships with decision makers.

Challenges facing the implementation of the proposed recommendation:

- Implementation needs long periods of time and a big financial budget.
- Implementation needs the preparation of a complete control and inspection system.

Based on the foregoing, public transportation and its status are among the important factors that directly affect the economic participation of women. In order to improve the public transportation system in Jordan in general, taking into account the gender dimension, a strong political will is required for the planning, implementation and follow-up of this issue. This is vital to facilitate women's mobility and to enhance opportunities for their comprehensive participation in the economic, social, political, development and environmental fields.



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