



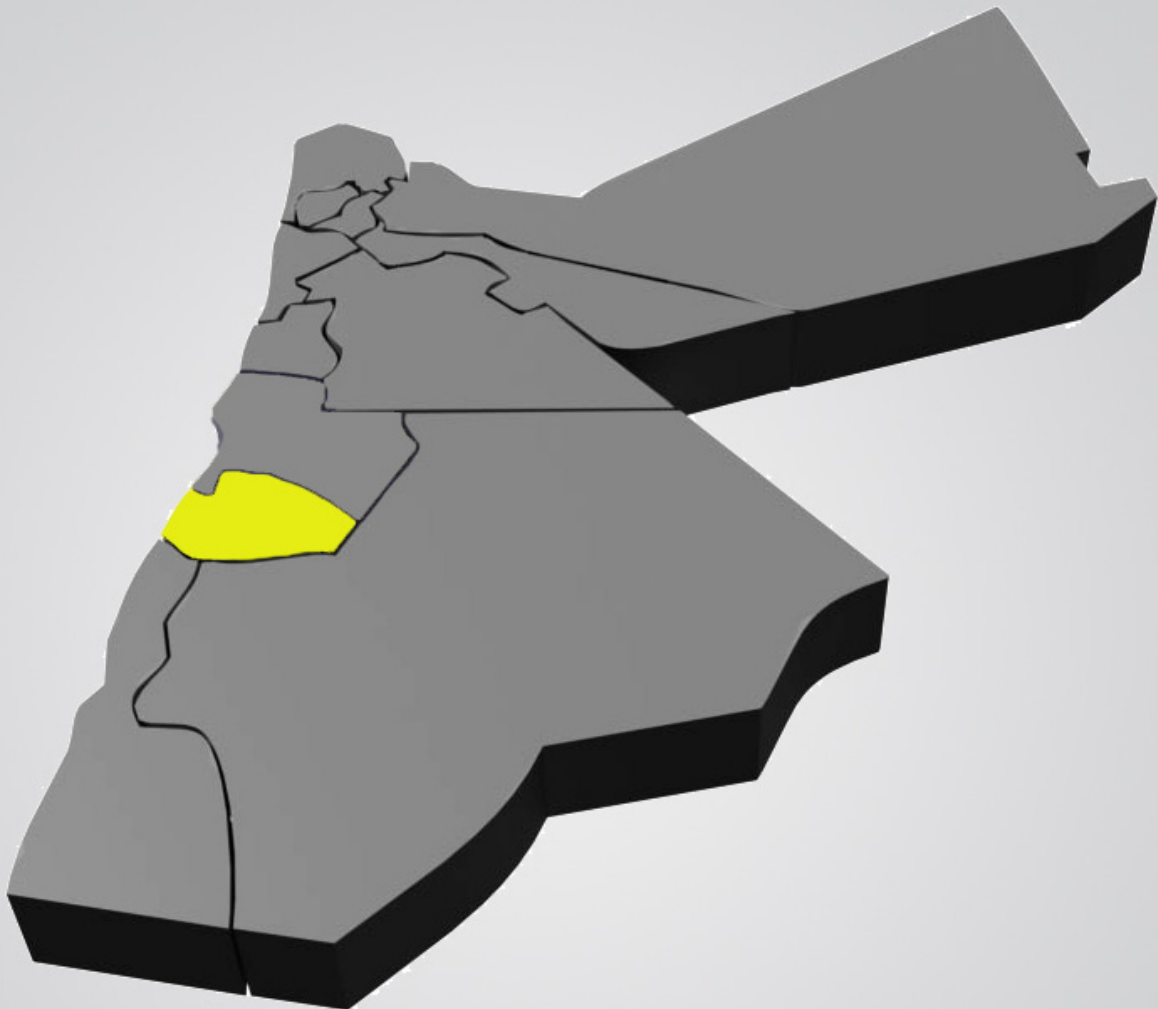
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HUMAN SECURITY IN TAFILEH: Trends and Perceptions



West Asia-North Africa Institute, April 2019



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Introduction

Discussions on the connection between human security and preventing violent extremism are a rare find in the literature on the topic. It is even more difficult to find research and policy papers that look into the impact of state security policies on preventing violent extremism. This report examines both, with a thematic focus on education and employment, and a geographic focus on the governorate of Tafileh in Jordan.

The report offers unique insights that go beyond the traditional discussion on employment and education gaps and addresses how specific security policies undermine access to job opportunities, thus intensifying the already volatile situation in Tafileh that is marked with high levels of both unemployment and education. The report addresses questions on the social contract at play in Tafileh and offers insights into how the residents of Tafileh understand human security.

This report is part of the project “Towards More Effective Human Security Approaches in the Context of the Emerging Threat of Violent Extremism in Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia,” led by the WANA Institute.¹ The project analyses the relation between human security, state security policies, and preventing violent extremism in 18 local communities, based on the attitudes and perceptions of the residents.

In Jordan, six local communities were chosen: Tafileh, Karak, East Amman, Rusayfeh, Ajloun, and Mafraq. This report discusses perceptions in Tafileh based on the findings from nine key stakeholder interviews, two one-day workshops, one focus group discussion (FGD), and one verification FGD. In total, 80 participants — 43 females and 37 males — took part in the research activities in Tafileh between July and November 2018.

In each community, one pillar of human security was more predominant than others in highlighting how drivers of violent extremism are exacerbated by state security policies (or traditional security measures), as well as by gaps in human security programming. Although specifically asked about education and employment, political participation, women’s empowerment, and social justice, the discussion in Tafileh emphasised education and employment.

In Tafileh, high levels of unemployment, or sometimes underemployment, correspond with high education levels. The frustration and waithood that follow are rendering young people in Tafileh, males and females, more vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremist organisations, as future prospects for economic and social mobility are slim.

A quick fact-check supports this finding. Though the governorate of Tafileh has the lowest population (recently estimated at 101,600),² it has the highest unemployment rate in Jordan (28.6 per cent in 2017).³ Notably, a closer look at unemployment by sex reveals that unemployment

¹ For more details about the project, see: <http://wanainstitute.org/en/project/towards-more-effective-human-security-approaches-context-emerging-threat-violent-extremism>

² Department of Statistics, Year Book of 2017 (in Arabic), available at: <http://dosweb.dos.gov.jo/databank/Yearbook2017/YearBook2017.pdf>

³ Ibid.

amongst females significantly surpasses that of their male counterparts (48.2 and 19.4 per cent respectively).⁴

Educational attainment levels are high, particularly amongst females, and the city is home to two of Jordan's key mining fields of phosphate and cement, thus considered rich in resources. Therefore, identifying education and employment as key factors is befitting of the governorate's numeric data showcasing high education *and* high unemployment, along with the prevailing sense that the governorate deserves more attention and opportunities, given its natural resources.

Tafileh is located around 185 kilometres south-east of Amman. It is crucial to take geography into account, as every single community outside Amman expressed a feeling that being removed from the capital is disadvantageous, hinting at the poorer educational and health services, the dilapidated infrastructure, the lack of public spaces, etc. This feeling resonated strongly in Tafileh. The fact that the city is not directly adjacent to the Desert Highway — Jordan's main highway — has further exacerbated the sentiment that the city is off the radar.

Yet despite the harsh socioeconomic reality and the strong feelings of marginalisation — two typical drivers of radicalisation in Jordan⁵ — Tafileh is not considered a radicalisation hotbed, unlike other governorates studied within the context of this project. From a research perspective, this positions Tafileh as a 'control' community, offering a point of comparison for data collected elsewhere in the country together with findings from other control communities in Lebanon and Tunisia.⁶

The discussion in this report reflects the opinions of the different stakeholders interviewed in Tafileh. These include government officials, local community-based organisations (CBOs), and security practitioners, along with marginalised individuals who may be vulnerable to recruitment by extremist groups. Whilst this report does not claim that this is a representative sample, it provides policy-makers and practitioners with insights into the local attitudes and perceptions regarding the links between (in)effective human security programming, state-centric security policies, and local drivers of violent extremism.

Education and Employment

Education and employment as key factors contributing to human security⁷ refer to the individual's ability to access decent educational opportunities, followed by a suitable employment opportunity to crown his/her educational efforts. Both are highly interconnected components in the prevention of violent extremism. A number of studies has identified underemployment and the

⁴ Department of Statistics, Year Book of 2017 (in Arabic), available at: <http://dosweb.dos.gov.jo/databank/Yearbook2017/YearBook2017.pdf>

⁵ Neven Bondokji, Kim Wilkinson, and Leen Aghabi, *Trapped Between Destructive Choices: Radicalisation Drivers Affecting Youth in Jordan*, (Amman: WANA Institute, 2017), accessed via: <http://wanainstitute.org/en/publication/trapped-between-destructivechoices-radicalisation-drivers-affecting-youth-jordan>

⁶ For details on the project, see: <http://wanainstitute.org/en/project/towards-more-effective-human-security-approaches-context-emerging-threat-violent-extremism>

⁷ Although not pillars of human security, education and employment affect one's economic security, which in turn is a pillar of human security as will be discussed later on.

sense of humiliation resulting from unemployment as contributing factors in the radicalisation process.⁸

This mainly relates to the sense of relative deprivation, which follows when the gap between socioeconomic aspirations and the realities on the ground creates a class of ‘frustrated achievers’ who may be vulnerable to radicalisation in their process towards finding meaning and cause.⁹ In Tafileh, the lack of financial incentives and jobs in and of itself does not radicalise individuals, but the resulting sense of ‘social injustice’ may.¹⁰ This perception is amplified given the fact that most families bear a hefty financial burden for educating their sons and daughters, who quite often end up without a rewarding job opportunity matching the cost of their education.¹¹

Participants referred to two key issues that capture the nuance of specific education and employment gaps in relation to violent extremism. Firstly, they addressed the lack of sufficient transportation options to facilitate both education and later on employment. Transportation entails a particular gender dimension, as young women who are willing to challenge the social norms and work outside the home find it difficult to access reliable and safe transportation to get to work. Nurses were the prime example cited. After society became more accepting of their work schedules and shifts, participants stressed that females still find it difficult to make it to work during night shifts as there are no means of transportation.¹² Similarly, there are no transportation means that accommodate people with disabilities or special needs, which adds another layer to their marginalisation as a vulnerable group in society, and further limits their access to education and employment opportunities.¹³

Secondly, the issue of nepotism — or *wasta* — was denounced and linked to a sense of injustice. Put simply by one participant: “The society here suffers a very high rate of poverty, bad services, and bad infrastructure”¹⁴ coupled with a sense of “social exclusion stemming from the inheritance of positions [in the government, from father to son...] due to *wasta* and nepotism.”¹⁵ Like others in Jordan, citizens of Tafileh share the feeling that *wasta*, rather than meritocracy or education, is what allows ordinary citizens to access to employment opportunities.

⁸ Alethea Osborne and Dr Neven Bondokji, *Post-Daesh and Still Desperate*, (WANA Institute 2018), accessed via: http://wanainstitute.org/sites/default/files/publications/Publication_OngoingVEDrivers_EnglishOnline.pdf; Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Marginalised youth: Toward an inclusive Jordan*, The Doha Brookings Institute (June, 2018), accessed via: https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/June-2018_Beverly-Jordan_English-Web.pdf; and Neven Bondokji, Kim Wilkinson, and Leen Aghabi, *Trapped Between Destructive Choices: Radicalisation Drivers Affecting Youth in Jordan*, (Amman: WANA Institute, 2017), accessed via: <http://wanainstitute.org/en/publication/trapped-between-destructivechoices-radicalisation-drivers-affecting-youth-jordan>

⁹ Ömer Taşpınar, *Fighting Radicalism, Not “Terrorism”: Root Causes of an International Actor Redefined*, SAIS 2009 Review, 29(2), pp.75-86, can be accessed here: https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/summer_fall_radicalism_taspinar.pdf and Katherine Leggiero, *Countering ISIS Recruitment in Western Nations*, *Journal of Political Risk* (2015), 3(4), can be accessed here: <http://www.jpolorisk.com/countering-western-recruitment-of-isis-fighters/>

¹⁰ Verification Focus Group Discussion, Tafileh, 29 November, 2018.

¹¹ Kartika Bhatia and Hafez Ghane, *How Do Education and Employment Affect Support for Violent Extremism?* (The Brookings Institute, 2017), accessed via: https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/global_20170322_violent-extremism.pdf

¹² Verification Focus Group Discussion, Tafileh, 29 November, 2018.

¹³ Focus Group Discussion FGD participant, Tafileh, 17 July, 2018.

¹⁴ Workshops’ participant, Tafileh, 15 – 16 July, 2018.

¹⁵ Workshops’ participant, Tafileh, 15 – 16 July, 2018.

On this note, the participants also voiced their dismay over the perceived lack of engagement of parliamentarians with the local community, and the fact that they play no significant role in tackling the unemployment challenges faced by the people of Tafileh. Rather, they are seen to use their political leverage and influence to secure employment opportunities for their own relatives, as opposed to serving the community at large.¹⁶ According to the participants, their parliamentarians do not have offices in Tafileh, hence there exists no platform for them to channel their concerns. This stresses not only the role of *wasta* in securing an employment opportunity, but also explains the lack of trust in the parliamentarians and the institute of parliament at large.¹⁷

These structural and cultural factors directly impact access to jobs, which in return leads to relative deprivation and can result in support for radical ideas as an outlet for frustrations with the government, parliamentarians, and the state. However, to clarify the full circle of frustrations in relation to education and employment, it is important to examine the role of state security policies.

The Impact of State Security Policies

In this research project, two components of state security policies are looked at: the procedural and the legislative. Procedural policies refer to security measures such as arrests, raids, and prison arrangements. Legal state security policies refer to laws that govern the execution of procedural security policies. Examples include the anti-terror law, cybercrime law, trials of civilians before military courts, etc.

Generally, participants agreed that state security policies practised in Tafileh can have an adversarial impact on human security programming, and thus on efforts aimed at preventing violent extremism. To clarify this link, three factors are discussed below that explain the relation between education and employment on one side, and state security policies on the other.

First, security harassments limit the employment opportunities for individuals who voice their political views. The personal story of one participant clarifies this:

“All state-centric security measures were applied here in Tafileh. My sisters and wife were harassed [for his political views] and denied employment opportunities, and there were many arrests. These measures have enhanced radicalisation. And even those who are not subject to these measures because they conform [with the authorities], they might explode at any moment. And those who refuse to conform, they live in worry and fear.”¹⁸

A female participant echoed a similar concern, explaining that “our fear of joining a political party increases every day because the mind-set of the martial/emergency laws still exists.”¹⁹

¹⁶ Workshops’ participants, Tafileh, 15 – 16 July, 2018, and a number of FGDs participants and interviewees.

¹⁷ Jordan Strategy Forum Report, *Social Capital in Jordan: What is the Level of Trust in Our Institutions & Why?* (Amman, 2018), accessed via: <http://jsf.org/sites/default/files/EN%20Social%20Capital%20in%20Jordan.pdf>

¹⁸ Male interviewee from the Tafileh Governorate Council, interviewed by the WANA Institute in Tafileh, 18 July, 2018.

¹⁹ Workshops’ participant, Tafileh, 15 – 16 July, 2018.

The frequency with which these harassments impact employment prospects was not specified by the participants. In fact, a number of them were clearly intimidated by merely having the discussion around this issue, which is just as telling of its extent and impact.

Second, participants discussed the concerns related to issuing ‘No Criminal Conduct’ certificates for former convicts.²⁰ This certificate is typically issued by the Ministry of Justice pending the proper security clearance. It is an essential requirement for most employers before offering a job to a potential candidate. Former convicts may not be able to issue this certificate for years after having served their sentence, which prevents them from getting a job and re-establishing a normal life. There were no doubts in Tafileh that the issuance of ‘No Criminal Conduct’ certificates is a real obstacle preventing the integration of former convicts. It is also seen as a clear state security policy limiting employment prospects for a vulnerable portion of the population, even beyond Tafileh.²¹ It is worth noting that experts and relevant stakeholders in Jordan have repeatedly raised a similar concern, warning that the existence of such a policy actually increases the risk of recidivism and puts society at large in danger, for its impact extends to the families and children of those concerned.²²

Third, participants referred to one ad hoc measure that can be taken by the Administrative Officer (الحاكم الإداري) as an obstacle limiting access to jobs. As a nomenclature, the Administrative Officer is the Governor (المحافظ) at the governorate level, the County Executive (المتصرف) at the county level, or the District Administrator (مدير القضاء) at the district level.²³ Participants lamented the ability of the Administrative Officer to hold individuals in custody even after their legal cases were processed and closed in courts, wielding the capacity to “put them back in jail”²⁴ or to detain individuals without due process of law. This measure was criticised for its adversarial impact on people’s sense of social injustice and discrimination as it is seen to be applied “selectively,” while those impacted by this measure are unable to challenge it or maintain stability in their jobs or education.²⁵

Ultimately, the three aforementioned factors suggest that the strict state security policies in place can limit people’s access to education and employment opportunities. Security harassment, a delayed issuance of a ‘No Criminal Conduct’ certificate, or a ‘selective’ detention by an Administrative Officer are all cases in point. These are added to the structural and cultural limits that were discussed earlier.

²⁰ Verification Focus Group Discussion, Tafileh, 29 November, 2018.

²¹ Verification Focus Group Discussion, Tafileh, 29 November, 2018; Workshop participants, Tafileh, 15 – 16 July, 2018; and a number of interviewees.

²² Samah Baibars, Al-Ghad Newspaper (in Arabic), October 2017, accessed via: <https://alghad.com/%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D8%AF%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%88%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%82/> and Darar Al-Shboul, Khaberni (in Arabic), August 2013, accessed via: <https://www.khaberni.com/news/106453>

²³ See the website of the Ministry of Interior for more information on the specific roles and responsibilities of the Administrative Officers: <http://moi.gov.jo/Pages/viewpage.aspx?pageID=181>

²⁴ Male interviewee from the Local Security Council in Tafileh, interviewed by the WANA team in Tafileh, 18 July, 2018.

²⁵ Focus Group Discussion participants, Tafileh, 17 July, 2018.

The Trusted Actor

This raises an important question: who is the most trusted and capable actor to address these gaps and ensure human security in local communities? The answer highlights an interesting imbalance between three main actors in Tafileh: the government, the local CBOs, and international donors.

Tafileh lacks a longstanding experience with international donors or non-governmental agencies. Therefore, the social contract that has long governed questions of local social, political, and economic development has always placed the **government** at the centre of the equation. This contract does not seem to have evolved in Tafileh over the past years. This is explained by both the immense anger directed at the government as well as the high expectations from it.

Despite all criticism against the government of Tafileh, it was still most often cited as the actor that is expected to strengthen human security programming most. It is also the sole actor capable of mitigating the negative impact of state-centric security policies. By the same token, the absence of any real and strong private sector in Tafileh has contributed to this imbalance for it further cemented the centrality of the government, making it more difficult for the other two actors to make strides in designing and delivering education and employment programmes. Ironically, this creates a paradox whereby the government is simultaneously one of the least *trusted* actors, yet has the most *expectations* to meet. Its capability was not discussed by the participants.

The local CBOs were not only moderately trusted, but also considered only moderately capable. The lack of trust here is attributed to the absence of strong and inclusive human security programmes. International donors were seen as even *less trusted* than the government, but simultaneously as the *most capable* actors. Part of this mistrust is a spill-over from the lack of trust in the local CBOs, which international donors usually work with in Tafileh.

How Do Residents of Tafileh Understand Human Security?

Based on the discussion above, the most crucial question becomes that of how the residents of Tafileh define human security and how they perceive the relation between human security and state security policies. This can inform key actors on how to invest in human security as the larger umbrella for efforts aimed at preventing violent extremism in local communities.

In 1994, the concept of human security gained widespread acceptance. A UN Human Development Report was released, outlining seven key pillars of human security: economic, food, health, environmental, personal physical, communal, and personal political.²⁶ First and foremost, the concept of human security came as a more effective response to changing conflict and security dynamics worldwide; from pressing concerns on climate change to increased threats of transitional violent extremism and radicalisation. As such, human security goes beyond the traditional state-

²⁶ United Nations Development Program. 1994. "Human Development Report 1994", pp. 24-33, accessed via: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/255/hdr_1994_en_complete_nostats.pdf

centric security response by placing the individual, as opposed to the nation-state or any other group, as the key unit of analysis and concern.

Local communities in Jordan, as became evident during this study, do not understand the concept of human security as defined above. Tafileh was no exception: no clear and comprehensive definition of human security was provided. Rather, participants seemed to touch on various individual elements of human security. However, when these individual insights are combined, an overall read of the data suggests that human security was understood in Tafileh at two levels: conceptual and practical.

Conceptually, human security was understood in the abstract realm of **human rights and freedoms**, including the freedom from fear,²⁷ freedom of expression,²⁸ and political freedoms.²⁹ Participants partially relied on religious/Islamic conceptualisations of the term ‘security,’ in particular on the Quranic verse “Let them worship the Lord of this House, who has fed them, [saving them] from hunger and made them safe [saving them] from fear.”³⁰

Reference to this verse was made repeatedly across the different research activities in Tafileh and elsewhere in Jordan.³¹ Perhaps the repetitive reference to this verse, which aligns with a central UN and human security premise to ensure freedom from fear and want,³² signals a potential ground that can be used to localise and operationalise the concept in Jordan. In other words, bringing it closer to the local community by drawing a link to an already commonly-understood and consistent conceptualisation of human security.

Practically, human security was understood in relation to concrete basic needs and services. These include transportation, water, electricity, food, schooling, and more.³³ Whilst those who understand human security in the practical dimension of needs and services fell short of defining human security as a concept, they nonetheless were able to clearly articulate their human *insecurities*. These include poverty, unemployment, limited healthcare access, and unreliable transportation, and were seen as a disservice to reaching an effective state of human security. Notably, at both levels, human security was conceptualised by its **absence**.

When comparing Tafileh’s definition to that of other governorates, a similar conceptual/practical divide of human security was maintained — albeit to varying degrees. In Karak, the term was understood at a more conceptual level, for instance, with political maturity and human dignity incorporated in the conceptualisation of the term.³⁴ While basic needs were still mentioned in

²⁷ Workshops’ participant, Tafileh, 15 - 16 July, 2018.

²⁸ Female interviewee from the Tafileh Local/Decentralisation Council, interviewed in Tafileh, 17 July, 2018.

²⁹ Male interviewee from the Tafileh Local/Decentralisation Council, interviewed in Tafileh, 18 July, 2018.

³⁰ The Holy Quran, 106:3 and 106:4

³¹ Mafraq, Karak and East Amman.

³² OHCHR, *Towards freedom from fear and want: Human rights in the post-2015 agenda*, Thematic Think Piece (2012), accessed via: http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Think%20Pieces/9_human_rights.pdf

³³ Workshop Participants, Tafileh, 15th - 16th of July 2018; Male and Female Interviewees interviewed on the 17th and 18th of July, 2018; as well as the FGD participants.

³⁴ Workshops’ participants, Karak, 16- 18 August, 2018.

Karak,³⁵ no emphasis was placed on how basic needs have to be a **prerequisite** for human security, as was the case in Tafileh.

In comparison to the broader literature on human security, Tafileh's definition of the term shares, implicitly and explicitly, three key elements with the basic agreed-upon definition.³⁶ It clearly places the individual citizen at the centre of concern; it touches, although lightly, on the seven key pillars of human security and sees them as part of the larger state of security an individual longs for; and it advances the notion of protection of marginalised individuals as part and parcel of human security. The third element manifests itself best via the frequent reference made to people with disabilities or to those with special needs.³⁷

Recommendations

The participants' difficulty in formulating specific and clear recommendations was notable. Most interviewees provided generic recommendations that were not directed to specific actors, nor exclusive to gaps in education and employment. Furthermore, no specific recommendations addressed the raised state security concerns, which is reflective of the culture of intimidation governing the conversation around state security policies. Below are the key policy recommendations put forward by the participants.

- Building greater public-private partnerships to encourage investment and “lower the governmental burden as a first step towards restructuring [public] institutions.”³⁸ This should not be done by the government alone, it must take place at the national level, and treat creating more jobs at the local level as a foremost priority.³⁹
- Yet this cannot be done without **matching the outcomes of education with the needs of the market**, which is a clear education and employment gap across Jordan. A suggestion was made that an electronic platform (website or a mobile application) offering more guidance and establishing further clarity on the needs of the market along with the subjects offered is a good first step in rectifying this mismatch.
- Amending the educational curriculum and legislations to incorporate vocational learning modules and raise awareness of cultural values.⁴⁰ Key to these modules must be building the culture of active citizenship and belonging. This recommendation was directed at the Ministry of Education, with high school/university students as the proposed target. It was suggested that media outlets and channels should play a supportive role. And more studies should focus on examining and announcing the saturated fields of study (university majors).⁴¹ The proposed timeframe for this recommendation was 1-3 years.

³⁵ Focus Group Discussion participants, Karak, 17 September, 2018.

³⁶ United Nations Development Program. 1994. “Human Development Report 1994”, pp. 24-33, accessed via: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/255/hdr_1994_en_complete_nostats.pdf

³⁷ Focus Group Discussion participant, Tafileh, 17 July, 2018.

³⁸ Workshops' participant, Tafileh, 15 - 16 July, 2018.

³⁹ Verification Focus Group Discussion, Tafileh, 29 November, 2018.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

- Reforming legal measures of issuing the No Criminal Certificates. For example, those who served their sentences many years ago and were not convicted of any other crimes afterwards should not be denied this certificate.⁴² This recommendation was directed at the Jordanian Parliament, Directorate of Public Security, along with a supportive role from the Community Police Centre to help reintegrate former convicts into society.⁴³
- Improving legislations governing women’s work and participation by “engaging women in legislation” sessions [the process of legislating new laws], and by having the different parliamentary committees work on amending legislations related to women’s employment, equal pay, and safe work environments for women.⁴⁴ At 14 per cent, women’s economic participation in Jordan is one of the lowest in the world.⁴⁵ This recommendation was directed at the Jordanian Government and Parliament, with a designated advocacy role for non-governmental and civil society actors.⁴⁶
- A final suggestion was made that donors should be more open to working on education and employment programmes with individual residents as well, instead of exclusively with organisations, often *only* with the more established organisations.⁴⁷ This was seen as the best way to achieve inclusivity.

⁴² Verification Focus Group Discussion, Tafileh, 29 November, 2018.

⁴³ Verification Focus Group Discussion, Tafileh, 29 November, 2018.

⁴⁴ Workshops’ participants, Tafileh, 15-16 July, 2018.

⁴⁵ World Bank Data: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?year_high_desc=false

⁴⁶ Verification Focus Group Discussion, Tafileh, 29 November, 2018.

⁴⁷ Female interviewee from a local CBO, interviewed in Tafileh, 17 July, 2018.



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