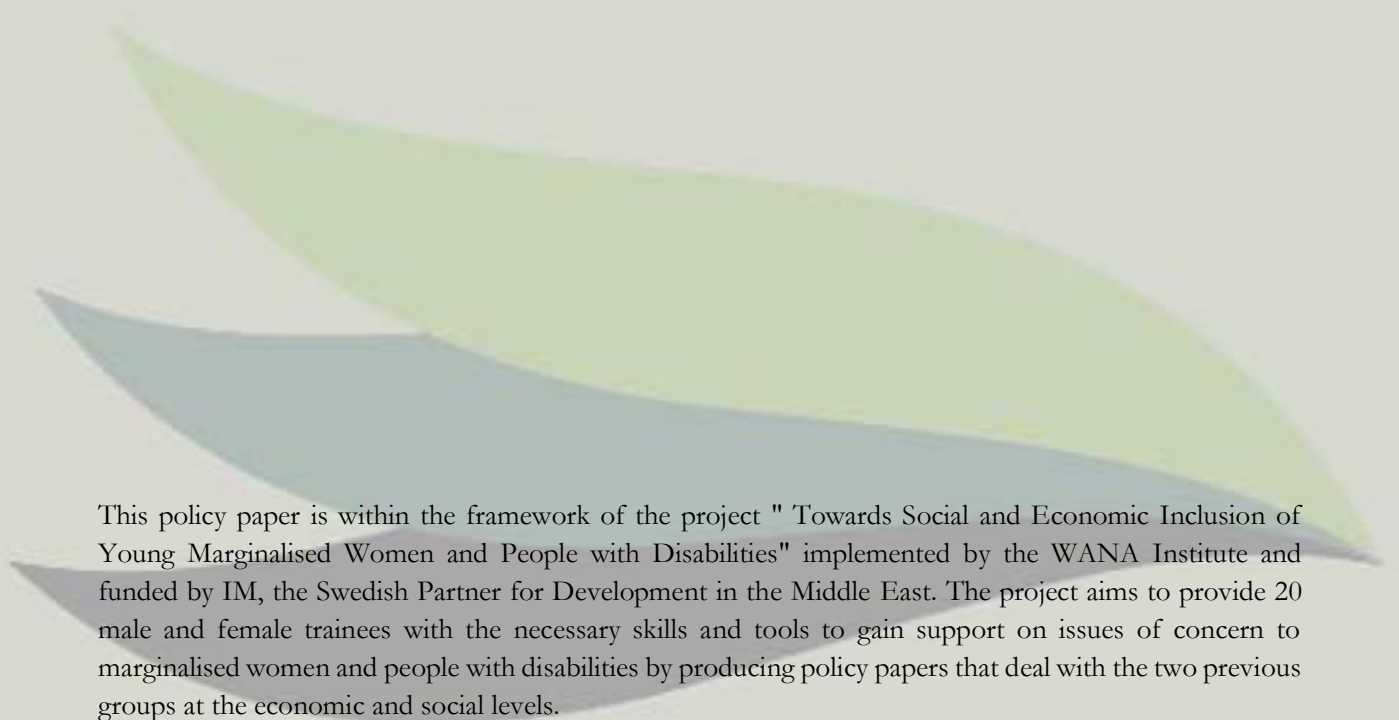


# Women Working in the Agricultural Sector within the Northern Jordan Valley District: Realities and Challenges



West Asia- North Africa Institute, October 2021



This policy paper is within the framework of the project "Towards Social and Economic Inclusion of Young Marginalised Women and People with Disabilities" implemented by the WANA Institute and funded by IM, the Swedish Partner for Development in the Middle East. The project aims to provide 20 male and female trainees with the necessary skills and tools to gain support on issues of concern to marginalised women and people with disabilities by producing policy papers that deal with the two previous groups at the economic and social levels.

The WANA Institute envisions that the research could lead to governance and policymaking recommendations on the national level for Jordan as well as on the regional and international levels.

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# 1 Executive Summary

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The agricultural sector in Jordan is considered one of the largest employment sectors for informal employment, as the percentage of females working informally in this sector reached 16%, compared to 5% for males<sup>1</sup>. According to the agricultural census of 2017, carried out by the Department of Statistics, female possession ratio reached 6% of the number of exploiting holders who own one or more agricultural possession, despite that, the number of possessions increased by 73% compared with the year 2007, and this increase reached 126% compared with 1997<sup>2</sup>.

**The paper was designed to study the reality of women's work in the agricultural sector within Tabqat Fahl municipality, including: The nature and conditions of the work; the challenges facing women and how they affect them. Thus, it aimed to provide solutions and recommendations to decision makers for improving women's situation in the agricultural sector.**

The study methodology was based on:

- Review previous studies, articles, international conventions, constitutional legislation and relevant regulations to the research topic.
- Conduct in-depth interviews with experts: a semi-structured interview with the governor of the Northern Jordan Valley (Mutasarif), and a semi-structured interview with a woman investor in the agricultural sector.
- Conduct two focus group sessions with 17 women workers in the agricultural sector, which were distributed geographically to include the following areas: Sheikh Hussein: Qlailaat, Tal Al-Arbaeen, Sheikh Muhammed, and Al-Harawiya Basileh, Al-Azmaliya, and Al-Mashari' District. All women were within the educational level below high school.

The results revealed the realities of women's agricultural work within the municipality of Tabqat Fahl, beginning with the nature of the tasks they perform and the difference in wages according to the agricultural season; absence of health and social safety, their suffering with long working hours and the two-shift system, and work injuries. This included: heat strokes and snakebites. Furthermore, the results revealed a number of challenges facing women working in the agricultural sector, which mainly focused on the following: unsafe transportation, low wages, weak social protection, work injuries, violence and harassment in the workplace, weak occupational health and safety procedures, in addition to child labour. Also, women working in agriculture receive their wages on a daily or weekly basis, which leads to a lack of job security and stability, even though they constitute the largest percentage of workers in the agricultural sector.

This paper came up with a set of proposed policies aimed at reaching solutions to the challenges facing women working in the agricultural sector, in a manner that contributes to improving

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<sup>1</sup>The Jordanian Senate examines the challenges of employment in the agricultural sector, Jordan News Agency, 06-30-2021.

<sup>2</sup> 6133 women have one or more agricultural holdings at 6% of all holders in Jordan- Tadamon.

<https://www.sigi-jordan.org/?p=4251>

working conditions and raising their participation in the economic and social life. This is manifested in the following:

- **A policy manifested in reviewing and developing legislations related to working in the agricultural sector:** It aims to create legal protection for women working in the sector through reviewing the agricultural employment system No. 19, and criminalising any abuses against them within the work environment, especially with regard to verbal violence, with the development of legislative oversight tools.
- **A policy aimed at exerting more efforts to improve the work environment for women working in the agricultural sector:** it aims to provide a safe working environment for women and empower them with tools to defend their labour rights.
- **A policy focused on organising the agricultural workers sector:** it aims to reach an organised agricultural work sector that guarantees inclusion in all privileges and rights like all other organised labour sectors; through the adoption of a unified model contract for workers in the sector that binds the employer to it, and the development of an electronic platform for the employment of agricultural workers, and working to create an organised representative entity that represents the category of women working in the agricultural sector.
- **A policy manifested in the implementation of a national or local campaign to raise awareness and increase knowledge on the rights of women working in the agricultural sector:** It aims to raise the level of awareness of working women about their rights and roles in the agricultural sector.

## 2 Introduction

The agricultural sector constitutes an important basis for economic and social development in the countryside and the Badia/desert, in addition to being one of the inputs to combating poverty and unemployment, as well as its environmental dimensions and its role in providing food to the population. The agricultural sector in Jordan is one of the important sectors, despite its low contribution to supporting the GDP, which reached 4.5%<sup>3</sup>, in addition to the low employment rate of Jordanian labour in the agricultural sector, reaching 1.7% of the total workforce<sup>4</sup>, despite it containing the highest percentage of informal local employment in comparison with other sectors<sup>5</sup>. The agricultural sector also suffers from the lack of social protections for all male and female workers.

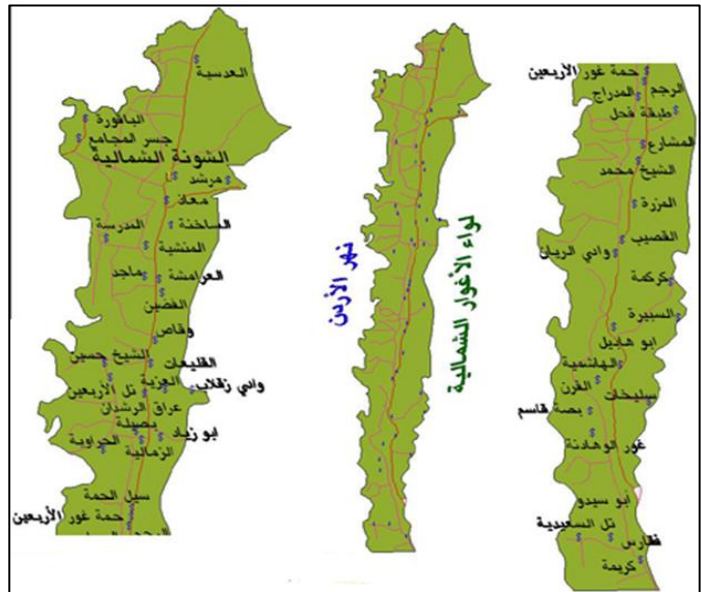


Figure No. 1 - Map of the district (Liwa'a) according to the website of the Ministry of Interior

It is worth noting that the total area of the Kingdom is 89,318 square kilometres<sup>6</sup>, and the three governorates: Mafrq, Amman and Irbid make up the largest proportion of agricultural areas; Mafrq ranks first, followed by Amman, and finally Irbid. The northern Jordan Valley accounts for 55% of the total agricultural areas in Jordan<sup>7</sup>, which confirms the importance of shedding light on this large sector and empowering women in it.

The Northern Jordan Valley, located north of Irbid Governorate, in the north of Jordan, extending from the Al-Karaimah area to Al-Adasiya in the north, and its centre in the Northern Shouneh, is characterised by a lifestyle that mixes rural and urban traits. Its population depends on government, military and agricultural jobs<sup>8</sup>. Its population is 138,480, and females make up 64,330 of it. This is equivalent to 46%, while the abundance of agricultural land and its warm climate in winter and hot in summer made it become Jordan's food basket due to the diversity of its agricultural crops and the large number of female agricultural workers<sup>9</sup>.

3 Table of the contribution of the most important economic sectors to the GDP for the first quarter of 2021, Department of Statistics. 2021.

4 Growth drivers in the agricultural sector: What is required to promote self-sufficiency? Jordan Strategy Forum. 2017..

5 Mazen, Shereen and Jundi, Kenza. 2018, a mini-prospective study, Women in the agricultural sector... Hard work, hard life, Tamkeen Center for Support and Assistance.

6 Shawabkeh Shaher, Director General, Jordan in Figures 2019, Department of Statistics. (2019): 18.

7 Al-Zoubi, Qasim. 2018, Jordanian Agricultural Census 2017, Department of Statistics. (2018): 51.

8 Ministry of the Interior, Northern Jordan Valley Liwa'a accessed Sept. 13, 2021.

9 Ministry of the Interior, Northern Jordan Valley Liwa'a accessed Sept. 13, 2021.

Despite this, it is considered one of the pockets of poverty in the governorate, with a poverty rate of 36%<sup>10</sup>. The number of Jordanian women working in the agricultural and vegetable sector reached 3,368, distributed as follows: 186 in permanent work, 3163 in casual work<sup>11</sup>, and 36 girls aged 12-16 years in seasonal work, while the percentage of women working in the informal sector reached 55%. While the percentage of women working in the informal sector reached 55%, and most of them are in agricultural and vocational work<sup>12</sup>.

### 3 Key Terminology

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For the purposes of the paper, the following terminology concepts have been adopted:

- **Agricultural holding:** “It is an economic unit of agricultural production under a single administration, and it includes all existing animals and all lands used wholly or partly for agricultural production purposes, regardless of ownership or form”.<sup>13</sup>
- **Permanent agricultural worker:** “A person who regularly and continuously works in the holding during the agricultural year”.<sup>14</sup>
- **Temporary (incidental) agricultural worker:** “a worker who works irregularly and not continuously in the holding during the agricultural year. Temporary (incidental) labour is often used for short periods to accomplish limited tasks such as: harvesting and picking fruits ... and others, where his services are terminated upon completion of the task”.<sup>15</sup>
- **Seasonal work:** "Seasonal work is work that comes in certain seasons and does not continue throughout the year, but is repeated every year during the same time period, and workers are employed in these seasons only at high wages”.<sup>16</sup>
- **Tian Mama’s Business Programme:** “It is a project established by the Taiwanese government, which aims to encourage women working in the agricultural sector to establish their own small businesses, such as: opening shops or restaurants related to their farm crops, in addition to giving grants and training sessions in order to provide women working in the agricultural sector with the necessary skills and knowledge, such as: marketing or product design and others in the process of establishing their projects.

### 4 Historical Brief

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The Bedouin pastoral system and the rural agricultural system dominated the forms of economic production in the northern Jordan Valley in the period before the establishment of the Emirate of Transjordan. And soon once the region stabilised, the role of central units in defining and dividing land ownership began. At the beginning of the 1940s, the era of cultivating land with vegetables began, as it replaced the cultivation of grain, which requires more time, effort and labour.

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<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Interior, Irbid Governorate Development Program 2017-2019, accessed Sept. 13, 2021.

<sup>11</sup> See study terminology, incidental worker.

<sup>12</sup> Edibis Munir, Tadamun: Women working in informal work who are most affected by the repercussions of the Corona pandemic and do not enjoy social protection, Association of the Jordanian Women’s Solidarity Institute (2020)..

<sup>13</sup> Al-Zoubi, Qasim. 2018, Jordanian Agricultural Census 2017, Department of Statistics, (2018):30.

<sup>14</sup> Al-Zoubi, Qasim. same source.

<sup>15</sup> Al-Zoubi, Qasim. same source.

<sup>16</sup> Management Concepts - Seasonal Work, Harvard Business Review, accessed Sept, 15, 2021.

With the increase in the rate of agricultural land reclamation, many forms of its use appeared, including: the family farm, where the owner of the land and his family invest and work in their land, relying largely on women's labour, especially with the lack of employment opportunities outside the agricultural sector. The other form; Lease by quota: "An agreement between the landowner and the farmer under which the farmer and his family worked the land in exchange for a share of the production, relying heavily on the presence of women as the main factor. They were paid to work in agriculture instead of going to school, with the aim of generating additional income to support the family." Perhaps this explains the low level of education among women working in the agricultural sector since that time until this day.

The Jordan Valley District (Liwa'a) has also witnessed many developments, including the establishment of the Eastern Ghor Canal (King Abdullah Canal) for irrigation, which contributed to an increase in the proportion of agricultural land and greenhouses, accompanied by an increase in the demand for labour in agriculture. Hence, the concept of wage labour emerged, which means: "That individual's work on farms for an agreed-upon financial wage." With the increase in the number of expatriate workers and the reluctance of males from the area to work in the agricultural sector due to the low wages and their search for a job with a fixed wage; the importance of women's participation in agricultural work increases dramatically<sup>17</sup>.

## 5 Legal Framework

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International standards guarantee the economic rights of women, as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)<sup>18</sup> affirms that governments must combat all forms of discrimination against women by all appropriate means without delay. And the need for governments to ensure the presence of appropriate measures that guarantee the development and advancement of women in all fields. Article 5 of the same agreement also emphasised the need to take appropriate measures to modify social and cultural patterns, with the aim of eliminating all forms of discrimination and negative customs and practices.

The agreement stressed the need to eliminate all forms of discrimination facing women in the field of work by ensuring the same employment opportunities, work environment, equal pay, health protection and safe working conditions. In the same context, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>19</sup> referred to states' commitment to equality between males and females in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. Article VI of the Covenant states that states should recognise the right to work and that every person should have the appropriate opportunities to earn a living through work of his/ her own choosing. In addition to providing guidance and training programmes in the fields of economic work in fair working conditions, in terms of equitable wages and working conditions that ensure safety, health, rest and

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<sup>17</sup> Bani Hammoud, Groub Mohammed Atalla. 2010, Women's work in the informal productive sector: a sociological study on a sample of women working in the agricultural sector in the northern Jordan Valley. Published Master's Thesis, Yarmouk University, Jordan.

<sup>18</sup> The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, adopted in 1979, ratified by Jordan and published in the Official Gazette in 2007).

<sup>19</sup> It was adopted by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2200 in 1966, ratified by the Jordanian government, and published in the Official Gazette in 2006.



leisure, and reasonable limitation of working hours, in a manner that guarantees a decent living for the worker and his family<sup>20</sup>.

Article 11 of the Covenant affirms the right of every person to an adequate standard of living in which he/ she provides his basic needs of food, clothing and shelter, and his right to the continuous improvement of his living conditions, and that countries must spread the principles of systems reforming and distribution of agricultural land in a manner that ensures the development of natural resources.

At the national level, the Jordanian constitution guarantees work for all citizens, and the state must orient the economy to direct and advance job opportunities, put in place legislation that guarantees the right of the worker to obtain a wage commensurate with the nature of work, determine working hours and days off, and set conditions for the work of women and juveniles. In addition to the workers being subject to health rules<sup>21</sup>.

During this year 2021, the Agricultural Workers Regulation No. 19 of 2021 was issued, to regulate agricultural work, as the agricultural workers' system in Article 3 Clause (c) guarantees the agricultural worker the right to prove his/ her rights owed by the employer by all means unless the contract is drawn up in writing, and according to Articles 4 and 5, the terms of agricultural work were specified: including working hours that have a break, overtime work and the consequent additional pay. The employer was also obligated to provide conditions of occupational health and safety within the work environment according to Article 11, and equal pay for every work of equal value away from gender discrimination according to Article 8 Clause (c).

However, the system did not include any text protecting women working in the sector from forms of verbal abuse in the workplace, and was limited to mentioning the conditions for their eligibility to obtain maternity leave according to Article 7, paragraph (c). It also did not include any text indicating irregular workers. Despite the approval of the National Strategy for Agricultural Development<sup>22</sup> and the revision of its axes, it did not include a part related to strengthening agricultural employment, solving its challenges or developing visions for proposed solutions, especially with regard to female agricultural labour.

## 6 The Reality of Women's Work in Agriculture

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The agricultural sector has become highly dependent on working females as opposed to males, who are considered the best in terms of carrying out agricultural work, and they cannot be dispensed within the agricultural production process. One of the female investors in the agricultural sector confirms this, saying: *"I prefer female workers because they need the financial income more than males, as they spend their income on themselves and their homes."* The number of working women

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20 According to the provisions of Article VII of the Covenant.

21 Jordanian Constitution, Article 23, Chapter Two.

22 National Agricultural Development Strategy 2020-2025, Ministry of Agriculture.

National Agricultural Development Strategy /[http://www.moa.gov.jo/AR/Pages/25\\_2\\_20](http://www.moa.gov.jo/AR/Pages/25_2_20)

constitutes 10,000 females in the Jordan Valley areas<sup>23</sup>, and given the importance of their presence in agricultural work, it is necessary to shed light on the challenges that this category of women faces.

One of the participants in the discussion sessions pointed out the following: *"We are forced to be satisfied because of the economic situation, the presence of children, and the difficult living conditions; we are forced to work"*. The economic transformations in general, and during the Covid-19 pandemic in particular, prompted the continuation of the significant decline in the agricultural sector during the past years. Despite this, agricultural work still provides a haven for thousands of women who are looking for work opportunities in order to advance the family by improving its monthly income.

Therefore, many women in the Northern Jordan Valley District in general and the municipality of Tabqat Fahl in particular, tend to work in the agricultural sector. They perform all tasks and roles during their work in the agricultural sector, including: picking all types of fruits, carrying boxes full of agricultural crops, and while working in citrus farms (Orchards) their role is often limited to the process of guiding the fruits: *"the process through which the picked fruits are arranged inside boxes that are sold in the markets"*, and the owners of farms prefer that women do this task as they believe that they are more meticulous than men.

With regard to work injuries and their health insurance, one of the participants said: *"Anything can happen to you at work, from the sun's rays or dizziness, I sit down and rest for a while, and some days my legs hurts and I may continue work or stop ... and I might be paid or not for that day."* The working hours and wages are determined according to the type of crop, for example: in the field of vegetables, work is carried out on a system of two -morning and evening- shifts (the duration of each shift is four hours) at a rate of five dinars for each period. As for the citrus crops, the wage calculation is different, where the female workers receive a daily wage ranging from 10 to 15 dinars with 12 hours of work per day (from six in the morning to six in the evening). As for the grapevine leaves crops, the daily wage is paid according to the quantity of production of the worker.

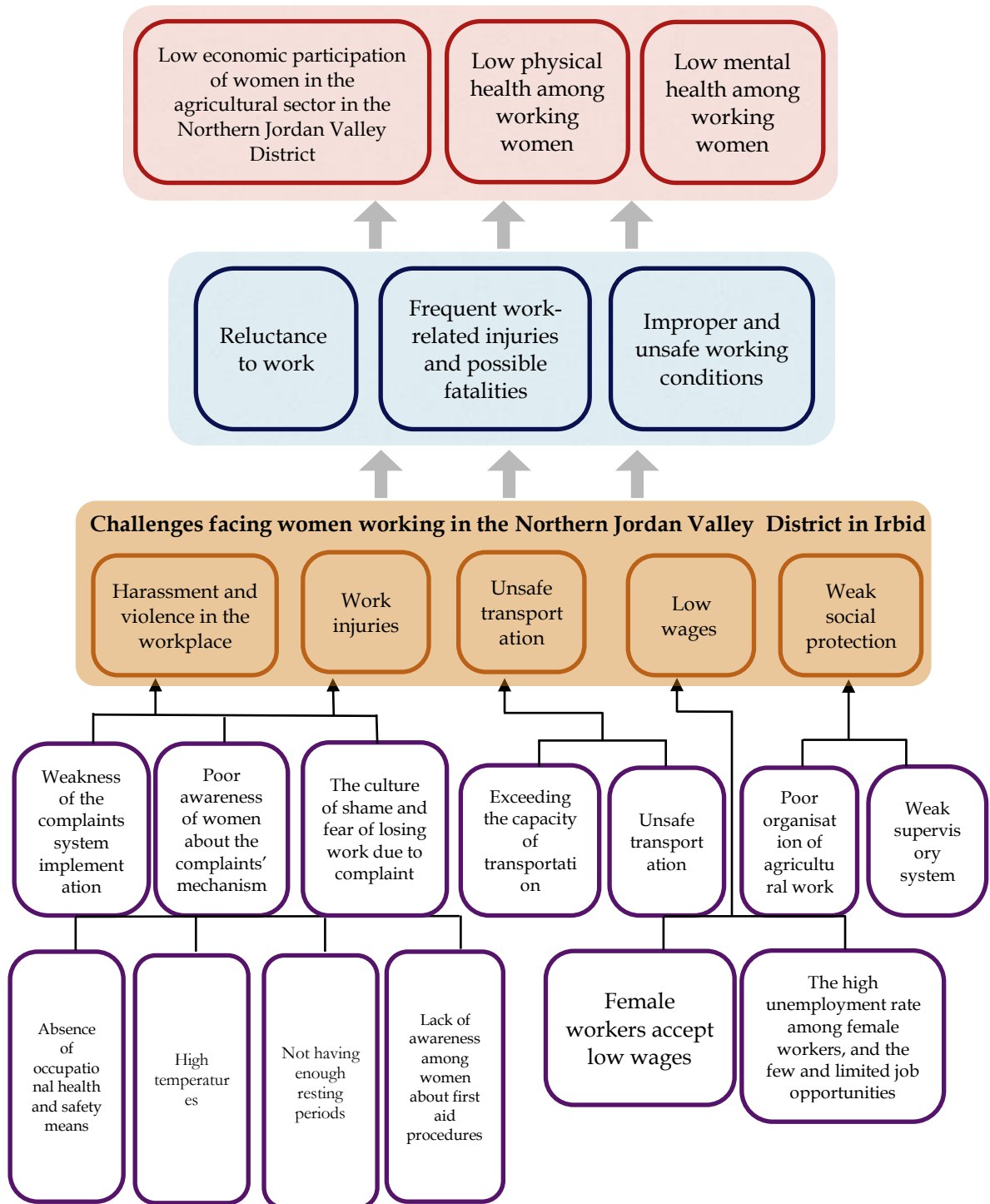
One of the participants added, referring to the difficulty of the work: *"They suffer from some diseases, including backpain and disc and pain in the feet. The work is tiring in the Jordan Valley, especially because of the weather."* The nature of work for women working in the agricultural sector is characterised by multiple risks that threaten their health and working lives, including: arduous agricultural work tasks, long working hours, lack of consideration for physical differences between women and men, high temperature during working hours, and lack of occupational health and safety equipment, which make them more vulnerable to risks and injuries on the job. Moreover, the type of agreement to work overlaps in the topic of challenges whose relationship will be discussed in the following page:

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23 Mazen, Shereen Mazen and Jundi, Kenza. 2017, A mini prospective study, Women in the agricultural sector... Hard work, hard life", Tamkeen Center for Support and Assistance.

## 7 Discussion of Challenges

### 7.1 Problems Tree <sup>24</sup>



<sup>24</sup> A methodology to identify the problem, its causes and effects, where the trunk is the main problem, and the roots represent the causes of the main problem, while the branches represent its effects. <https://sswm.info/ar/taxonomy/term/2647/problem-tree-analysis>

## 7.2 Discussing Challenges

After analysing the information during the desk research process and analysing the data collected through interviews with the concerned entities and the two focus groups with women working in the agricultural sector from Al-Mashari' and Sheikh Hussein area in the northern Jordan Valley, the paper was able to identify the five most serious challenges that negatively affect the physical and psychological health of women in the long run, and which affects their social and economic participation. The challenges were as follows:

### **First: Unsafe transportation**

This challenge relates to the lack of security in the means of transport used by working women, as the means of transport used is the minibus or pick-up that is provided by the employer. The number of passengers ranges from 5 to 30 workers, which may exceed the carrying capacity, thus leading to an increased possibility of injuries while arriving at the workplace.

### **Second: Low wages**

Although Regulation No. 19 of 2021 (Agricultural Workers Regulation of 2021) guarantees labour rights in the agricultural sector in terms of minimum wages<sup>25</sup>, leave<sup>26</sup>, and others in accordance with the Labour Law, yet the wages that female workers receive are less than that. Working women receive 1.25 dinars per hour of work. (It may be less than that, depending on how the wage is calculated or the type of the crop) and they do not receive the additional wage if they work during official holidays or holidays. Poverty, unemployment, and the lack of and limited job opportunities within the district are factors that force them to accept low wages as well as difficult working conditions.

### **Third: Weak social protection**

Although there is a permanent and regular demand for workers in agricultural labour, the employment contract in the agricultural sector is still not written, as the work is agreed upon orally, either through direct communication, or through an intermediary responsible for the working women. Therefore, workers in the agricultural sector are not covered by social security, and if workers are injured in the workplace, the employer or any other party does not bear the costs of treatment, in fact the workers themselves pay for their own treatment.

Neither incentives nor any of the accrued leaves mentioned in the Agricultural Workers Regulation of 2021 and the Labour Law are provided, including: annual leave, paid sick leave and maternity leave, and a woman working in the agricultural sector does not receive any material compensation in the event of being injured while working. Because women working in the agricultural sector are not subject to social security, they lose many labour rights and allowances, including: unemployment allowance as a result of work injuries, annual and sick leave allowance, and maternity leave.

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<sup>25</sup> Regulation No. 19 of 2021 (Agricultural Workers Regulation of 2021), Article 8.

<sup>26</sup> Regulation No. 19 of 2021 (Agricultural Workers Regulation of 2021), Article 7.

#### **Fourth: Work injuries**

*"We told the employer: Help her, He said: Where do I get a car from? I rang the Civil Defence, even though the Civil Defence is in an area far from us ... if we leave her she could die .. unable to help on time, she died!"*<sup>27</sup> This was mentioned by one of the participants in the focus group session. As stated in the analysis, there are multiple injuries in the workplace, which are: (1) sunstroke as a result of long working hours, high temperatures, and arduous work tasks, (2) injuries due to transportation while arriving at work or returning from work because of overloading, (3) exposure to snakebites, (4) suffocation from staying in greenhouses for long periods of time and high temperatures.

In addition to the above, if any worker sustains an injury while on the job, she is often not immediately treated and taken to the nearest hospital because of the employer's reluctance or indifference. Because of the lack of occupational health and safety equipment in the workplace, and if available, none of the workers can deal with emergency situations appropriately due to their weak skills in first aid and the lack of a special mechanism for dealing with the aforementioned injuries. Also, the geographical distance of some areas from health centres is a significant obstacle in the event of an injury and the need for working women to be treated.

#### **Fifth: Harassment and violence in the workplace**

In addition to the previously mentioned challenges relating to improper working conditions and an unsafe work environment, women working in the agricultural sector are exposed to harassment and violence, whether physical or verbal. Among such cases, women are subject to verbal and physical harassment while using transportation, and working women may be subject to verbal violence from the employer under the pretext of not completing the work, being slow or negligence in completing the work. They may also be exploited to accomplish as much work as possible at the expense of their physical and psychological health.

### **7.3 The Impact of Challenges on Women Working in the Agricultural Sector**

Based on the previous challenges, and according to the field work results, a set of negative effects ensue from the challenges facing women working in the agricultural sector, which are as follows:

#### **On the Social Side:**

- A high rate of family disintegration as a result of the permanent preoccupation of the working mother in the agricultural sector, and the length of the work period, especially when she works for two shifts during the same day.
- Low level of social participation due to irregular working hours.
- Introversion and negative thinking as a result of working in a difficult and bad environment.
- Absence of social protection means, which should include health insurance, social security and old-age pension.

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<sup>27</sup> A female participant in the focus group session.

### **On the Health Side:**

- Low level of mental health among women working in the agricultural sector; this is due to the increase in psychological pressure in the event that she is the sole breadwinner of the family.
- Reluctance to work because of a serious bodily injury or fear of bodily injury that would limit their continuation of work in the agricultural sector.
- Low level of childcare; because they did not receive the necessary care from their mothers working in the agricultural sector.

### **On the Economic Side:**

- Lack of job stability; due to lack of any guarantees for any labour rights of women working in the agricultural sector.
- Low level of economic participation of women working in the agricultural sector in the formal labour sector.
- Low turnout of women working in the agricultural sector for opening small projects of their own, as a result of their fear of restrictions that may be exercised on them by the entities donating the loans.

## **7.4 Taiwanese Experience in Integrating Women into Agricultural Work**

Taiwan is located in eastern Asia and is one of the developed countries in it, with a total area of 316,193, nearly less than half the area of Jordan, 70% of its terrain is mountains, and its population is 23.5 million people (more than twice the population of Jordan), and the total GDP is \$668.5 billion. Taiwan ranked 36th in the list of countries with the highest GDP per capita in 2020, while Jordan ranked 111th in 2019.<sup>28</sup>

Agricultural production constitutes 1.65% of Taiwan's total GDP, which is equivalent to USD 11 billion in 2020<sup>29</sup>. This percentage is for the traditional agricultural sector only, as the output for other sectors related to the agricultural sector is not calculated, and if we include the added value created in the agricultural sector and related sectors, we reach a contribution rate of 11.21% of Taiwan's total GDP in 2012<sup>30</sup>.

Taiwan faces a major challenge in its lack of agricultural space compared to its huge population. This prompted the government to search for new methods that contribute to raising revenues for the agricultural sector and improving the quality of life for farmers. So, it took the initiative to work on a number of projects aimed at supporting the growth of the agricultural sector and enhancing the role of women working in it, which are manifested in:

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28 "GDP - Gross Domestic Product," [countryeconomy.com](https://countryeconomy.com), Accessed Oct 09, 2021, <https://countryeconomy.com/gdp>.

29 Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, "National Statistics: GDP of year 2020," Executive Yuan, R.O.C (Taiwan).

30 Agriculture Board of Taiwan Executive Yuan. 2012, Importance of Agriculture and Related Sectors in Taiwan's Macroeconomics..

### **First: Holding training and educational sessions for women**

The Council of Agriculture, Executive Yuan, Taiwan, which is the largest executive body in Taiwan, has since the early 1950s been interested in female agricultural workers. Where it took the initiative to hold training and educational sessions that meet the needs of working women and contribute to agricultural and social development. These sessions included the following topics: food safety and health, methods of pest control within the work environment, child care, and beautifying the home environment. The training sessions also focused on the skills of incidental or secondary work, such as: work in the areas of home care, food and beverage services, and the entertainment sector. Also, it did not neglect the aspect of self-development, preventive medicine, elderly care, and ways to enhance women's role in the agricultural sector. Where 4,669 sessions were held, as 122,424 trainees working in the agricultural sector participated during the five decades period until 2008<sup>31</sup>.

### **Second: Small projects – Tian Mama's Business Programme**

The Council of Agriculture initiated the creation of the "Tian Mama's Business" programme in 2003, which was aimed at enhancing the role of women in the agricultural sector and raising the level of their economic and social participation<sup>32</sup>. This was done by providing training sessions and offering grants to women seeking to open small businesses. The training sessions tackled management, marketing and other skills with the aim of transforming the traditional agricultural sector into a sector interconnected with other sectors, such as: food and beverage services and the tourism sector. Working women work on designing a project for their farm or their crop from the farm, and establishing restaurants (or different shops such as: a beverage shop or bakery, according to the type of crop of the farm or village). This made their menus more distinct than the regular restaurants, and made the village itself have a more touristic value, as the role of women in the agricultural sector is not limited to agricultural work to produce the crop, but also to provide food, drink and tourism services, thus achieving additional value for their work and raising their income from agricultural work. Moreover, the success of the project contributes to supporting the village in tourism and creating new job opportunities to help the local community.

For example, Tenzi Village in Taichung City, where 9 groups of women were formed who prepare rural food, and others who process agricultural products, to provide this experience with financial returns of 206,000 US dollars in 2010. It also provided job opportunities for the city's residents amounting to 83 jobs as regular work and 56 jobs as temporary work. Other research in this field indicated that the "Tian Mama's Business" programme helps women establish their businesses in a more orderly and regular manner than traditional agricultural work.

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31 Agriculture Board of Taiwan Executive Yuan. 2007, Results of Implementation of Rural Housekeeping Strengthening Works.

32 Tsing, Yuhui. 2016, Administrative Status Study of the Farm Mothers Project: Training Sessions for Women in the Agricultural Sector, Research Bulletin of KDARES, 16(3) 49-50.

### **Third: Industrial transformation**

After Taiwan's accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the policies of protecting and supporting the agricultural sector were abolished and the taxation of importing agricultural products from abroad was abolished. Therefore, there was a need to make the Taiwanese agricultural sector more competitive under the impact of joining the WTO, and the government sought to link the agricultural sector with other sectors in order to increase the services available in the sector, including delivery, entertainment, marketing, cultural experience, and other modern services. Thus, a number of tourist farms were established with the aim of attracting tourists, in an effort to enhance the farm's role in the Taiwanese economy and provide new tourist destinations for citizens.

As for some farms that do not have much potential in the tourism sector, some of them resort to technology, such as methods called “Breeding Techniques”, which are: “Technology that contributes to improving the methods of raising living organisms, including artificial insemination, embryo transfer, in vitro fertilisation and cell nucleus transfer. This is done in order to provide new types of crops with an advantage and additional value as well as greater value than the ordinary crop.” For example: watermelon was produced without seeds, and the sweetness level of some fruits (mango and pineapple) was raised in order to make Taiwan's agricultural sector more competitive internationally.

## **8 Options and Alternatives**

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Based on the above, and with the aim of organising agricultural work in the northern Jordan Valley through improving the working conditions of women in the agricultural sector, and based on the results of analysing information and data from its secondary and primary sources, and in light of the Taiwanese experience in integrating women into agricultural work, the research team suggested a number of policies, which are:

### **First: A general policy for reviewing and developing legislation related to work in the agricultural sector**

*Objective: To create social and legal protection for women working in the agricultural sector.*

#### The Programme:

- Reviewing and developing the Agricultural Employment Regulation No. 19 of 2021 to ensure alleviating the challenges faced by women working in the agricultural sector.
- That the Agricultural Employment Regulation No. 19 of 2021 criminalises any violations on women working in the agricultural sector.
- Developing legislations related to agricultural work to ensure the expansion of the social protection circle provided to women working in the sector and to ensure their inclusion in health and social security insurance.



- Coordination and cooperation between the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Agriculture in developing legislative oversight tools to ensure the provision of occupational and public health means for women working in the agricultural sector.

Policy advantages and opportunities:

- Contribute to limiting widespread violations of the rights of women working in the agricultural sector and achieving public and private deterrence to anyone who may violate these rights.
- Achieve legal protection for women working in the agricultural sector.
- Contribute to strengthening the control tools on agricultural labour.

Policy implementation challenges:

- The period required for coordination between the institutions concerned with agricultural work - the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Agriculture - for developing and reviewing the new Agricultural Employment Regulation No. 19 of 2021.
- The difficulty of including all workers in the agricultural sector in social protection programmes; because of the small sizes of agricultural projects sometimes and the low level of their revenues.
- The difficulty of effectively implementing legal and social protection in remote areas; due to weak control over agricultural establishments, and low economic levels.
- Increasing the burden on employers in bearing health and social insurance expenses and adhering to the minimum wages.

**Second: A policy to exert more efforts to improve the work environment for women working in the agricultural sector**

*Objective: To create a safe work environment that takes into account the rights of women working in the agricultural sector.*

Programmes:

- Strengthening the partnership with the land transport sector, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Farmers Union in order to expand the ability of all agricultural areas to provide safe means of transportation in accordance with specifications and in proportion to the needs of women working in the agricultural sector.
- Create a partnership between the Ministry of Labour and the Directorate of Civil Defence aimed at adopting a special system in each agricultural facility, according to which first aid equipment is provided, and qualified persons are trained to perform first aid within the work environment.
- Coordinate between the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Agriculture in order to develop a complaint system and a mechanism for reporting violations that women face in the work environment, in a manner that ensures the confidentiality and privacy of female workers.

- The Ministry of Labour to adopt the development of awareness programmes for women working in the agricultural sector, which focus on the importance of a safe work environment and their labour rights and how to claim them.

*Policy advantages and opportunities:*

- Increasing the appropriateness of the work environment and the degree of safety for women working in the agricultural sector.
- Reducing the risk and severity of injuries during working hours.
- Facilitating the access of working women to workplaces and increasing the safety of transportation.

*Policy implementation challenges:*

- The financial cost needed to improve the means of transportation and communications.
- The difficulty of applying land transport in all areas of the northern Jordan Valley because of the poor infrastructure and the fact that agricultural locations are far from the central places in the area.
- The financial cost needed to set up the medical system in each agricultural site.

**Third: A policy to increase the opportunities for organising the agriculture workers' sector**

*Objective: To reach an organised agricultural sector that guarantees inclusion in all privileges and rights, like all other organised work sectors.*

*Programmes:*

- Create a partnership between the Ministry of Agriculture, the Directorate of Electronic Transformation and Information Technology and the Labour Office in order to develop an electronic platform that contains all information and data related to the agricultural sector and its workers.
- The Ministry of Labour's approval of a standardised employment contract form for workers in the agricultural sector, obligating the employer to implement it.
- Establishing specialised control and inspection units to supervise the agricultural sector.
- Work on creating an institutional entity (a union, an association...etc) that includes in its membership women working in the agricultural sector in order to defend their rights and interests.
- Work to develop an incentives and privileges system for agricultural entities/ establishments that apply decent work standards for women in the agricultural sector.

*Policy advantages and opportunities:*

- Contributing to limiting the widespread violations of the rights of women working in the agricultural sector.

- Raising the level of organising agricultural work in a manner that helps raise the productivity of work in the agricultural sector.
- Ensuring labour legal rights for male and female workers in the agricultural sector.
- Data and information related to the agricultural sector help in providing the concerned and competent authorities with information about the situation and development of the sector, and the accurate monitoring of the needs of the sector and its workers, as well as facilitating the work of the regulatory authorities to monitor labour violations more quickly and accurately.

*Policy implementation challenges:*

- The timeframe required to organise the agricultural sector, including projects, employers and workers, within a database so that the related information is accurate and comprehensive.
- Reluctance of some employers to abide by the standard contract system.
- Weak infrastructure to create an institutional entity in the northern Jordan Valley.

**Fourth: A policy for conducting awareness and educational campaigns on the rights of women working in the agricultural sector.**

*Objective: To raise awareness among women working in the agricultural sector about their labour rights.*

*Programmes:*

- Working on the production of guides and booklets on the rights of women working in the agricultural sector.
- Working on preparing visual, audio or print media programs whose main objective is to raise the awareness of working women of their rights in agricultural work.
- Holding awareness sessions directed at employers and workers to ensure familiarisation with the duties and responsibilities of employers towards the women working for them.

*Policy advantages and opportunities:*

- Raising the awareness of women working in the agricultural sector about their rights and improving their ability to claim their rights.
- Educating women working in agricultural work about the importance of their roles in the agricultural sector and their contribution to the economy.

*Policy implementation challenges:*

- Difficulty in predicting and evaluating the outputs and effectiveness of awareness programmes.
- The inability to cover all segments of female workers in the northern Jordan Valley area.

The paper aims to improve the reality of women working in the agricultural sector. Therefore, the research team relied on the standard scale represented in the analysis of the advantages, opportunities and challenges in applying each policy separately with regard to achieving the goal, and therefore the paper adopted:

1. A policy to exert more efforts to improve the work environment for women working in the agricultural sector.
2. A policy for conducting awareness and educational campaigns on the rights of women working in the agricultural sector.

If the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Labour, the Public Security Directorate and the Farmers Union unite their efforts to improve the situation of women working in the agricultural sector and work on organising it, then improving the conditions of women in general will be reflected noticeably on the economic and social levels, and will contribute to achieving the goals of sustainable development, specifically SDG 1 on poverty eradication, SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 9 on decent work and economic growth, SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities, SDG 15 on life on land, and finally SDG 17 on creating partnerships to achieve goals.



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