



# NET-MED YOUTH PROJECT

## A Qualitative Media Content Analysis

### Evaluation of the Coverage of Youth Issues in Jordanian Media with a Focus on Employment and Gender

Supported and complemented by a series of in-depth interviews with activists, editors, reporters, talk-show hosts and NGOs engaged in youth initiatives

JANUARY 2017

Designed and implemented by Sawsan Zaideh, media researcher and journalist, and Mohammad Omar, media analyst and journalist

NET-MED Youth Discussion Paper

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This discussion paper was conceived as a document to encourage debate among youth, media, specialized CSOs, academics and other concerned stakeholders. Feedback from readers about its findings is very much welcome, and can be sent to Ms. Dareen Abu Lail, NET-MED Youth National Associate Project officer in UNESCO Amman Office.

**Contacts: [d.abulail@unesco.org](mailto:d.abulail@unesco.org)**

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A Qualitative Media Content  
Analysis



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June, July and August 2016

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December 2014, January and February 2015

# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides the findings of a study that was conducted during the months of June, July, and August of 2016 in the follow-up of a previous analysis that covered the months of December 2014, January and February of 2015.

The methodology of the follow-up study was similarly based on two approaches. One: analysis of media content related to youth issues in Jordan, with special focus on unemployment and gender.

Two: the analysis of the results of 10 qualitative face-to-face interviews with youth activists and organizations, editors, reporters, and broadcast talk-show hosts.

A total of 437 items were reviewed in three leading local newspapers: Al Rai, Ad-Dustour and Al Ghad. In addition, a total of 89 news items were reviewed on three news websites: Ammon (<http://www.ammonnews.net>), Khaberni ([www.khaberni.com](http://www.khaberni.com)) and Ammannet ([ar.ammannet.net](http://ar.ammannet.net)). Four web magazines were considered: 7iber ([7iber.com](http://7iber.com)), Alhudood ([alhudood.net](http://alhudood.net)), Aramram ([www.aramram.com](http://www.aramram.com)) and Kharabeesh ([kharabeesh.com](http://kharabeesh.com)) as well as two TV channels: state-owned Jordan Television and private Ro'ya TV Channel.

Local media outlets, in general, showed a slight improvement in the coverage of issues from a youth perspective compared with the previous examination, mainly an increase in the space given to content addressing youth issues, especially in newspapers. However, there was a lack of original, in-depth material. Published items lacked balance and objectivity. Media outlets did not research or investigate issues to present original material, settling for only narrating the facts without providing any analysis.

Some local media outlets have made strides in presenting material that contribute to the economic empowerment of young people, such as TV shows or reports on entrepreneurial projects or experiences tackling how to start such projects, ways to obtain funding, how to manage projects... etc. This can be taken as a sign that media outlets have started paying more attention to finding solutions rather than simply pointing out problems.

On the other hand, many media outlets continue to deal with these issues using the same "old-fashioned" method of focusing on the problem without providing answers or solutions. They also assumed a patronising tone to address young people, particularly when dealing with unemployment from a "cultural" perspective, dwelling on young people's "refusal to take on jobs in the private sector", or in the "service sector" and bringing up "the culture of shame".

There was a consensus among interviewees on the need to enlist young people to produce media content; for they are more capable of tackling the issues that matter to them and in the

way that best appeals to their age bracket. Those interviewed also singled out official media outlets for criticism, saying they have not been hiring young people, depending instead on older journalists, including in programmes aimed at youth.

Interviewees lamented the shortage of freely available media studies that could guide media professionals to issues of concern to young people, and gauge their media consumption patterns, while also helping journalists overcome their inability to access sources of relevant information concerning youth. The quantitative survey which UNESCO is presenting with this qualitative exercise constitutes the first media survey that can be accessed for free in over six years, after the IREX freely available media surveys of 2008, 2009 and 2010.

Interviewed journalists have also decried the lack of productive communication between them and public establishments, as well as with youth civil society organizations. On the other hand, journalists are blamed for not taking the initiative to follow up on youth initiatives and activities, especially those held by private organizations in areas beyond the capital.

The weakness in communication between journalists, the public and youth civil society organizations contributes to make stereotypes and prejudgements prevail. Media professionals end up resorting to their own personal assessments or to social media to understand the views of young people or the form and method of coverage that attracts them.

Finally, the media- for the most part- appear to lack gender sensitivity. The gender-imbalance when considering people featured in media content may be related to living in a conservative society, as a high ratio of women avoid answering journalists' questions, especially on controversial matters, such as sexual education or harassment. Journalists, especially those working at radio and TV channels also complain about their inability to raise the ratio of women participating in their programmes due to societal reasons. In best case scenarios, it can be argued that, to some extent, this is because the media reflect a society; where women are underrepresented due to patriarchal control, with the majority of those in power being men. Gender balance, however, can be traced in some reports related to youth issues, such as in Al Rai's youth supplement, and this is probably due to the makeup of its editorial team.

In general, media outlets lack a specified editorial policy or guidelines on gender sensitivity, and whether their content follows a gender-sensitive approach or not is usually linked to the attitudes of editors themselves rather than a clear editorial policy.

The majority of interviewees believe that local media outlets continue to reinforce the stereotypical images of women and youth, especially in entertainment supplements or comedy shows. It has been mentioned that some material, for example, perpetuate the stereotypical image of women as housewives whose purpose is to get married and have children rather than have a career. Other stereotypes suggest that young women are only interested in fashion and clothes. The interviewees said some media outlets reinforce the stereotypical image of youth as violent people or technology and social media addicts.



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On International Youth Day, marked on August 12 as endorsed by the United Nations, the Department of Statistics (DoS) in Jordan issued a statement outlining data on the youth sector in the Kingdom in 2016.

Based on the UN definition of young people from the perspective of age, youths are those between the ages of 15 and 24. The DoS statement says that people in that age category number 1,893,796, constituting around 20% of the total population up until 2014.

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In Jordan, those between the ages of 15 and 29 are considered young people and, in some cases, the understanding of who falls within this category stretches to encompass those who are up to 34 years old. If one considers this age bracket, the DoS statistics for 2014 show that citizens between the ages of 15 and 34 account for 38.4% of Jordanians.

Whether based on the UN definition, or the one used in Jordan, Jordanians are considered a young people, as is the case for the majority of developing countries, with 85% of youth living in these countries, according to the DoS statement on the International Youth Day in August 2016.

The question this report poses—in a follow-up on the previous analysis undertaken in December 2014, January and February of 2015—is: “What has changed in the way media outlets deal with this overwhelming majority of the Jordanian people?”

A review of selected media outlets in June, July, and August of 2016 has shown positive developments in the manner that media outlets, especially newspapers, deal with youth issues, compared with the period covered by the previous report during the period December 2014 - February 2015. This improvement mainly manifested itself in the quantitative side, i.e., the number of items published on youth. This development came about due to a number of events that the Kingdom witnessed during these months, which will be discussed later.

Nevertheless, media outlets have continued to underperform in addressing youth issues, as research shows that the size of material targeting young people, or written from a youth perspective, does not match, in terms of quality and quantity, the relevance of young people in the community. It also does not match the space that newspapers and websites dedicate to other segments and issues.

Overall, the items dedicated to youth's issues and aspirations are lacking in size, originality, fact checking, and in-depth reportings. Instead, they mainly constitute short news items and, as such, these items are repeated verbatim by all media outlets, especially newspapers. Moreover, these items tend to lack balance and objectivity. Media outlets also have a long way to go in terms of achieving gender-sensitivity in their coverage, their staff, their employment policies, and in the space they dedicate to women issues within media content.

The occurrence of the fasting month of Ramadan negatively affected the quantity of items related to youth in audiovisual media outlets, such as Ro'ya TV Channel, which suspended a number of important shows, like journalist Laila Sayyid's show, “Leish La'a?” (Why not?), “Ras Bitaqiyeh” (The boss of the boss), or “Caravan”, which are all programmes dedicated to youth and employment, or are produced by young people, such as “Caravan”.

Kharabeesh network also suspended its production for a long period of time, with its programmes in Ramadan being limited to comedy shows.

The same case applied to Jordan Television, which kept only one programme dedicated to employment and youth: "Forsat Amal" (Job opportunity), hosted by specialised journalist Mukhles Sahawneh. The show seeks to promote the concept of small-sized enterprises and entrepreneurial projects, in addition to shedding light on sectors that generate job opportunities.

Conversely, Aramram website maintained its programming and even increased its shows directed at the general audience and at youth in particular such as shows focused on explaining the new Elections Law, and such as the economy-centric "Maluna" (Our money), which explains and simplifies economic terms for the public, especially youth.

A new development in the media landscape was the launch of the "University bus TV" project by A'ali Al Sama'a company, which owns Jordandays.tv. The initiative is a leading media project aimed at raising university students' political awareness by installing television screens in their buses to show short videos produced by civil society organizations on democracy, elections, citizenship, laws, and any other matters related to education at universities.

Moreover, Jordan has witnessed major media productions by the Independent Election Commission and the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs, mainly broadcast by Jordan Television, which gave special attention to broadcasting the commission's productions during the period leading up to the elections.

A number of youth initiatives have also produced videos and smartphone apps that sought to raise youth awareness, encourage them to vote, and help them understand the law. A good example is the website and app launched by "Na'eb Al-Parlaman Al-Qadem" (The coming MP) initiative, in which "young volunteers support the MP who is able to represent their voices".

Another example is Annajah Radio, which is a youth community radio established in 2013 by Hikaya Center for Civil Society Development. The center is run by a group of young entrepreneurs and civil society activists.

During the months of June, July, and August of 2016, several major events positively affected media coverage in terms of quantity and in terms of attention to youth. These events were:

1. The formation of a new government on June 1, led by Prime Minister Hani Mulki. The new Cabinet put youth and their employment as a top priority. The Prime Minister reactivated the National Employment Strategy and brought back the Ministry of Youth, which had been scrapped under the Higher Council for Youth Law for the year 2005 and was only reactivated for six months under former Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour, when it was run by Sheikh Mohammad Nouh Qudah, before it was cancelled again. Despite the legal controversy over the reactivation of the ministry that was covered by the media, and the issue of its jurisdiction, the new minister, Rami Wreikat, has been active in his field visits and efforts to enhance the ministry's role. From a media perspective, he has also paid attention to social media networks, creating an account for the ministry on Twitter and activating its Facebook page and its website.

In general, the formation of the new Cabinet has had a positive impact on the coverage of issues such as work and unemployment among youth.

2. The dissolution of the 17<sup>th</sup> Lower House on May 29 and designation of September 20 to conduct parliamentary elections for the 18<sup>th</sup> House, under the new Elections Law; which in itself was a challenge to explain to voters, and has launched, along with the elections, a string of debates and discussions.

The electoral process has also given rise to a number of youth initiatives, while the Independent Election Commission and the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs focused on youth participation in all their activities and material published through media outlets or social media networks. For instance, four cartoon films produced by the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs were monitored on YouTube. They aim to encourage people to vote and they explain the Election Law and how to vote. Another 70 video clips produced by the Independent Election Commission were monitored on YouTube. They explain the Election Law; how electoral districts are divided and how votes are calculated.

In fact, young people constitute half of the eligible voters. According to a statement by the Youth Minister, Rami Wreikat, the number of eligible voters between the ages of 17 and 35 is 1,989,760 young people, composing 48% of the total number of eligible voters (4,002,748). There were also a good number of young candidates, especially young women, which had a positive impact on the coverage and led to a slight improvement in attention to gender-sensitivity.

In short, the formation of the new Cabinet shed light on the condition of young people and the reality regarding work and unemployment, while the electoral process highlighted youth and political engagement.

3. Terrorist operations that took place in Jordan—the attack on the General Intelligence Department office of Ain Al Basha District, (known as Baqaa Office due to its proximity to the Baqaa Palestinian Refugee Camp) on June 6, which was the first day of Ramadan. It was followed by an attack on the Rukban Border Centre on the northeastern border with Syria on June 21. These two incidents were preceded by a shooting in the Muwaqqar Police Training Centre in November of 2015.

These terrorist operations, as well as the danger of extremist groups, especially the so-called Islamic State group (Daesh), brought more attention to issues related to radicalization, particularly among youth.

The US State Department's criticism of the anti-extremism plan that the previous government had prepared and kept under wraps, and the publication of this plan by Al Ghad daily generated more controversy in media outlets over the plan, or over the "best ways" to protect young Jordanians from radicalisation.

The controversy centred around education and the curricula, coinciding with the release of the General Secondary Education Examination results and the process of applying to universities, which had a substantial positive effect on the quality and quantity of coverage.

4. Fourth: Also during this period, Jordan witnessed other developments, such as taekwondo player Ahmad Abu Ghaush winning the Kingdom's first Olympic gold medal, the organization of the international and Arab Youth Conference in Amman on August 8, and the notable increase in the activities of Crown Prince Hussein bin Abdullah II, who focus his actions and remarks on the youth segment.
5. Fifth: All these developments have led to the emergence of dozens—if not hundreds—of youth initiatives throughout the Kingdom's governorates in an unprecedented manner.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. MEDIA CONTENT ANALYSIS

The methodology of this 2016 follow-up study was based on two approaches, similarly to the 2014/2015 study.

One: analysis of media content related to youth issues in Jordan, with special focus on unemployment and gender.

Two: the analysis of the results of 10 qualitative face-to-face interviews with youth activists and organizations, editors, reporters, and broadcast talk-show hosts.

#### 3.1.1 Media Selection Criteria

For the purposes of quantitative monitoring, the following methodology was adopted in selecting the items:

1. Every item published in Al Rai's supplement on youth and universities, or in Ad-Dustour's youth page was selected.
2. Every item issued by a youth commission, institution, or initiative, or one that is concerned with youth issues: such as the Ministry of Youth, the We Are All Jordan Youth Commission, the Next MP initiative, the Jordanian Youth Union ... etc was monitored.
3. Every item, news story, op-ed, or opinion poll that focuses on youth or has a youth category in its headline or its body text was also selected.
4. Every written, audio, or visual item produced and presented by youth; one that is concerned with or addresses young people; or one that dedicates a segment for youth, such as "Caravan" show on Ro'ya, "Forsat Amal" (Job opportunity) on Jordan Television, or "Take'eb" (Cubed) on Farah Al Nas radio station was selected.
5. To ensure more accuracy, any item where words such as young boys or girls were mentioned was monitored.

Note: For the purposes of monitoring, the following was done:

1. a search for the .pdf version of Ad-Dustour was conducted, with each issue from June 1 to August 31, 2016 being examined.
2. The electronic version of Al Ghad was adopted, with every issue during the same period being monitored.
3. The advanced search function on Al Rai’s website was used by inputting relevant keywords. The search covered the same period mentioned above and included all the daily’s sections, rather than only the supplement on youth and universities.
4. The keywords used in Al Rai and the monitored websites were: Youth, unemployment, work, women, elections, youth centres, education, extremism, terrorism, initiatives, Ministry of Youth, Crown Prince, youth and elections, youth and work, youth and unemployment, youth and extremism, and several other keywords deemed to be related to the topic at hand.
5. Due to the fact that short items constitute the majority of what was published by newspapers and websites, the monitoring covered everything published during the three-month period in question without the selection of specific samples. This accounts for the large number of examined items.

### 3.1.2 Distribution of items selected for monitoring

#### A. Major Newspapers:

A total of 437 items were reviewed in Al Rai, Ad-Dustour and Al Ghad newspapers, classified as follows:

Type of item	Al Ghad	Al Rai	Ad-Dustour
News story	87	95	117
Op-ed	31	18	29
Report	6	26	1
Opinion poll	3	22	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>149</b>

#### B. News Websites:

A total of 89 items were reviewed on three news websites: Ammon, Khaberni, and Ammannet, classified as follows:

Type of item	Ammon	Khaberni	Ammannet
News story	46	8	1
Op-ed	11	1	4
Report	0	1	17
Opinion poll	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>22</b>

### C. Web Magazines:

1. 7iber,
2. Al Hudood
3. Aramram web TV
4. Kharabeesh.

We separated these websites from those above because they do not present themselves as news websites; rather, they are more like web “magazines”—as is the case with 7iber—or political satire magazines—as is the case with Al Hudood. On the other hand, Aramram and Kharabeesh are web TVs that are fully dependent on video production.

Therefore, these web magazines were monitored as follows:

- 7iber: Twenty items on the politics and economy section published during the covered period were examined. They included: 10 in-depth reports, the majority of which were supported by infographics and videos, and 10 op-eds.
- Al Hudood: This was added to the media sample of the first study because it is considered as the first of its kind in political satire. It is also run and edited by a team of young people, and has garnered youth attention, according to a review of its followers on social media. As such, it has come to be known as a “youth website”. A total of 18 randomly selected items published on the website in the covered period were reviewed.
- Aramram website: Four episodes of the show “Dalilok ila Al Intikhabat” (Your guide to the elections), four episodes of the programme “Maluna” (Our money), and two episodes of the show “Maram” were reviewed.
- Kharabeesh network: It was not possible to monitor any of this network’s shows due to a one-year hiatus. Its production was limited to the comedy show “Female” on Ro’ya TV Channel. But it continued producing other shows outside Jordan (in Egypt and Saudi Arabia).

### D. TV Channels:

- Jordan Television  
Six episodes of the show “Forsat Amal” (Job opportunity) were reviewed during July and August as the programme was suspended during Ramadan and the week of Fitr Feast. The monitoring sample also includes a number of public service ads on the elections broadcast by the channel and produced by the Independent Election Commission to urge youth to participate in the polls and raise their awareness of the Elections Law and how to vote.
- Ro’ya TV Channel  
Ro’ya suspended most of its programming in June and July, which coincided with Ramadan and Fitr Feast, and focused only on local comedy shows or Arab drama series. Therefore, four episodes of the show “Elections 2016” were monitored during August.

## 3.2. IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

To support and complement the findings of the quantitative monitoring and the qualitative analysis, 10 in-depth face-to-face interviews were conducted with activists in civil society initiatives and organizations concerned with youth, and with editors, reporters, and talk show hosts at the selected media outlets that are run by or employ youth under 40 years old—the targeted segment. These interviews were then analysed.



### List of interviewees

The interviewees were selected and the questions were prepared based on the findings of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the content of selected newspapers, websites, satellite channels, and radio stations. The list includes:

1. **Mohammad Zawahreh:** journalist, activist, and founder of “Shaghaf” (Passion) youth coalition.
2. **Hiba Jawhar:** journalist and director of programmes and projects at Farah Al Nas radio station, which defines itself as a youth radio.
3. **Lina Ejeilat:** journalist, cofounder and executive chief editor of 7iber website.
4. **Mohammad Omoush:** deputy executive director for youth leadership and entrepreneurship affairs at the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development.
5. **Fathi Aghawat:** journalist and Al Rai’s youth supplement correspondent in the southern governorates.
6. **Azzam Azzam:** director of programming at Yarmouk University’s Yarmouk FM radio station.
7. **Kamal Khoury:** founder of Al Hudood satirical news network.
8. **Samar Gharaibeh:** host of “Yawm Jadeed” (A New day) show on Jordan Television.
9. **Laila Sayyid:** host of shows concerned with youth and employment on Ro’ya TV Channel.
10. **Eyad Hamam:** partner and production manager at Aramram.

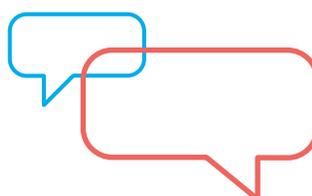
## 4. FINDINGS OF THE MEDIA CONTENT ANALYSIS

The monitoring results revealed that the space given to items targeting youth, or focused on youth in the three major newspapers has notably grown, with the number of such pieces doubling compared with the period covered by the previous report. While 208 items were monitored previously on newspapers and websites, this time, 437 items were examined in newspapers alone.

- Nevertheless, short items constituted the majority of the space dedicated for youth, as is clarified in the table. Most stories had a “protocol” quality, covering the activities of the Ministry of Youth and its minister, the activities of the Crown Prince, the statements of the King and the government, or the news about youth initiatives.
- The same items were published in more than one paper at least 70% of the time, due to the fact that the newspapers either used statements from the Royal Hashemite Court—on the Crown Prince’s activities—took items from the state news agency Petra, or published press releases received from public and private institutions by email. This method was most evident in Al Ghad and Ad-Dustour, while Al Rai’s items were more detailed and diverse because the daily utilises its own correspondents.
- The size of the material published on youth or directed at them fluctuated, or was proportional to the increase in the activities of certain organizations concerned with young people. For instance, more news and reports on this segment would be published after statements from the government on unemployment or work; after terror attacks; or as election day in the parliamentary polls neared. For example, Al Ghad published three “opinion poll” reports quoting “opinion leaders”—partisans, unionists, and educators—after the attack on the intelligence office in Baqaa. The same applied to other newspapers and websites whenever a new major event took place.
- Al Rai continued to be the most concerned with youth, or at least the only paper that dedicates an entire supplement for this segment and publishes the most items about them. It has also substantially increased the size of reports, as detailed in the table. Moreover, it made tangible advances in terms of gender balance, especially since many of the supplement’s correspondents are female. In addition, this daily was the most concerned with young people in the governorates.

- However, this does not mean that Al Rai or its youth supplement have made qualitative advances in editing the published material or ensuring objectivity. Items in the supplement continue to lack objectivity, since the daily is the only one that does not publish news on the opposition or any opinion besides the mainstream view. For example, no news story has been published on calls to boycott the elections, or on the activities of opposition movements such as Thabahtoonah (the National Campaign for Defending Students' Rights). Some of the reports also assumed a patronising tone towards young people, such as those covering the "dangers of the Internet or social media". Moreover, the daily has maintained one editorial mode that relies mainly on long, traditional text, without employing photos or infographics where necessary to convey information to the reader. This contrasts with what, for instance, websites like 7iber, Aramram, or the Independent Election Commission did, as they benefited greatly from "data journalism" in published material.
- Overall, all news stories and reports published in the newspapers and in the websites of Ammon and Khaberni seemed to be one-sided and mostly seeking to convey a certain kind of message/view: positive when it came to the government's vision regarding issues of interest to young people and aimed at "protecting them" from falling prey to radicalism or terrorism, or dwelling on the "importance of updating the curricula to "protect youth minds from extremism", instructing them on "choosing the right university major", or highlighting the "importance of participation in the elections and in the kingdom's political and partisan life". But no space was allotted for the views of the opposition, especially on the elections and the issue of education.
- On the other hand, Al Ghad remained focused on success stories by young entrepreneurs, launching a number of initiatives, such as "Qallel ribhah" (Reduce your profit), to employ youth. It also dedicated a corner for youth initiatives, which was quickly suspended and is yet to be renewed. Meanwhile, Al Rai focused on "voluntary initiatives" in its youth page, while Ad-Dustour relied on ready-made data and news items, which would not focus on a specific issue concerning young people.
- Columnists showed great attention to youth issues, compared with the previous monitored period, which may qualify as progress. Last time, only 8 op-eds were found, while this time, 94 op-eds on topics such as education, unemployment, terrorism, radicalism, political engagement, and the elections were monitored. Monitoring shows that most opinion columns target decision-makers or government organizations, telling them what to do for youth employment or their protection from extremism, or how to improve the quality of education and curriculum, etc.
- In this context, it is worth noting that a number of young columnists have surfaced, especially on Ammon, and their articles all focus on the role of the youth ministry and what is required of it. This also falls in line with the emergence of a new young generation of media professionals on relatively new outlets, such as Ro'ya TV Channel and the majority of websites and youth initiatives.
- Overall, newspapers continued to lack original material, depending mainly on ready-made news sent by public relation departments at ministries and official departments, or on statements released by private organizations instead. As such, they depended on one source of information. For example, items on the We Are All Jordan Youth Commission, the Ministry of Youth, or the activities of the Crown Prince constituted a large part of the news, which is why newspapers and websites ended up publishing more news, especially as the activities of these various parties increased with the election season, or because of terror attacks, or after the self-employment programme was launched by the government and promoted in cooperation with youth organisations such as the We Are All Jordan Youth Commission. The same case applies to the cooperation between the youth commission and the Independent Election Commission.

- The monitoring showed that the serious attention given by official parties (the King, the Crown Prince, the Queen, the government, the Independent Election Commission, the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs, the We Are All Jordan Youth Commission, and the ministries of youth, education, and Islamic affairs) to youth during the covered period had a positive impact on the size of material related to this segment, which explains the “quantitative leap” in news in comparison with the previously monitored period.
- The monitoring of Al Hudood Network website, the first satirical news website in Jordan, showed a boldness in criticism of numerous government policies and activities, in addition to criticism of “political Islam” and some of its figures. The website also criticised social norms related to religion or being erroneously tied to religion. Therefore, it has gained a substantial number of followers, based on the number of comments and “likes” that the network’s Facebook page receives. The page has around 49,000 followers.
- However, the website is yet to engage young people at a level similar to that of the Kharabeesh network’s websites or material, which are also based on satire. This is likely due to the fact that Al Hudood depends on written text and lacks video content or images and sketches, and does not utilise modern media technology.
- Moreover, the texts tend to be quite long and written in heavy-handed classical Arabic, which could take away from the satirical content of the material. This may be a reason why the website has not attracted a larger audience. It needs more variety in form and more creativity in substance to attract a wider segment of youth.
- The website also focuses on Arab and international affairs, with its items leaning more towards regional and global issues rather than local issues.
- But Al Hudood still counts as an advanced experience by young Jordanians as it can be seen as a more serious attempt to create satirical media than that of the shows offered by Kharabeesh and Ro’ya in terms of content. The website is clearly biased towards women’s rights, as its social news sections features dozens of items that mock the way women are perceived as inferior, the stereotypical image of women, or any other issues facing females, such as sexual harassment, or being forced to wear the hijab or dress in a certain way.
- A review of the show “Forsat Amal” (Job opportunity) on Jordan Television (six episodes: June 1, July 13, July 27, July 16, August 2, August 13) in 2016, which is the only programme related to jobs and employment and is hosted by Mukhles Sahawneh, has shown the following:
  1. First, the show, as others on Jordan Television or Ro’ya, went on hiatus during the month of Ramadan, during which media outlets tend to focus on entertainment shows (drama and comedy series) and health, cooking or religion-related programmes, as was the case with Jordan Television.
  2. Second, the show maintains a traditional style based on conducting interviews and shooting on location, and the interviews tend to be long, which could bore the viewer. This could account for the low number of viewers on YouTube, averaging 113 to 439 views—a substantially low number compared with the views that programmes by Aramram, for example, receive.
  3. Third, the programme acquaints viewers with job opportunities in Jordan and how to apply for them, or explains how to start a small business by showcasing different experiences. Therefore, the show offers solutions rather than simply talking in general about work and unemployment.
  4. Fourth, the programme is highly gender-balanced, as all the monitored episodes featured the experiences of women who have started small enterprises or succeeded in finding job opportunities.



## 5. FINDINGS OF THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

The in-depth, face-to-face interviews conducted with 10 people (editors, owners of media outlets, civil society organization activists, producers and hosts of youth-oriented shows, and reporters) focused on the main findings reached by analysing the quantitative monitoring:

1. What are the most important issues for youth in Jordan?
2. How does the local media deal with these issues; and is there a youth media or media dedicated to youth?
3. How can the media address or cover these issues from a youth perspective; or how can a youth media be created to engage this segment with media outlets?
4. Is the coverage seasonal, i.e. occasional and random without proper studies, with the media following the direction of official parties by increasing or decreasing its coverage based on the degree of official attention paid to youth?
5. Is there a lack of communication with public and private organizations concerned with youth?
6. Does the coverage vary according to geographical dimensions?
7. Is there a lack of gender-sensitivity, why?
8. Does the coverage perpetuate the stereotypical images of youth and women?

### 5.1. What are the issues that interest young people in Jordan, how do the local media deal with these matters from a youth perspective, and is there a youth media or youth-oriented media?

- The interviewees all agreed that all of the issues that matter to the community are of interest to the youth, especially since this segment is identified within the Jordanian societal context as constituting the largest part of the Kingdom's population. However,

they said that unemployment, jobs, and economic empowerment topped young people's concerns, followed by political engagement and education. All also believed that the local media give ample space to these issues, which represent a problem for the state and society; however, media outlets are still lacking in terms of addressing them from a youth perspective in terms of method of coverage, youth involvement in the produced material, or young people's participation as professionals at media outlets.

- Some local media outlets have made strides in presenting material that contributes to the economic empowerment of young people, such as TV shows or reports on entrepreneurial projects or experiences tackling how to start such projects, ways to obtain funding, how to manage projects... etc. They offer solutions instead of repeatedly focusing only on the problem. This shows that media outlets have started paying attention to their role in finding solutions rather than simply pointing out the problem.
- Nevertheless, this is not the full picture of the way work and unemployment among youth is covered. Many media outlets continue to deal with this issue using the same "old-fashioned" method of focusing on the problem without providing answers or solutions. They may also assume a patronising tone to address young people, particularly when dealing with unemployment from a "cultural" perspective, dwelling on young people's "refusal to take on jobs in the private sector, or in the service sector", and bringing up "the culture of shame".
- Although media outlets focus on all the problems plaguing society, such as unemployment, they are yet to address them from a youth perspective, i.e. taking an angle that is closer to young people when telling the news story or presenting the programme, and being creative enough in the coverage to attract youth.
- The interviewees agreed on the need to enlist young people to produce media content, for they are more capable of tackling the issues that matter to them and in the best way that appeals to their age bracket. Those interviewed also singled out official media outlets for criticism, saying they have not been hiring young people, depending instead on older journalists, including in programmes aimed at youth.

## 5.2. Improvement in youth-oriented coverage

Local media outlets, in general, showed improvement in covering youth issues from a youth perspective during the monitoring period compared with the previous examination. This improvement was manifested in increase in the size of material addressing youth issues, especially in newspapers.

- The increase was mainly in ready-made items; there was a lack of original, in-depth material. The published items were not balanced and lacked objectivity, and there were shortcomings in fact-checking.
- Entertainment continues to dominate published or broadcast material, especially on commercial radio stations.
- Media outlets did not put efforts into researching and investigating issues to present original material, settling for only narrating the facts without providing any analysis.

### 5.3. Seasonal coverage of youth issues, insufficient information, and limitations in media outlets' communication with public and private establishments concerned with youth:

- Media outlets' coverage of youth issues tends to be seasonal rather than being based on an established editorial policy. For example, coverage increased substantially after the Royal Letter of Designation to the government, after the executive government plan to tackle unemployment was released, after "terrorist" operations, and before and after parliamentary elections.
- On the other hand, the size of youth-oriented material shrank considerably—especially at audiovisual outlets like Jordan Television, Ro'ya TV Channel, and Kharabeesh network—during Ramadan. Their programming focused on drama and comedy series, in addition to religious shows.
- In Jordan there is a shortage of studies that could guide media professionals to the issues that concern young people and how to handle them. There is also a lack of studies and polls that gauge the degree of young people's interest in media outlets and how much they follow them.
- Another issue that emerged from the interviews is the inability to access sources of information. Journalists decry the lack of productive communication between them and public establishments and civil society organizations concerned with youth. On the other hand, journalists are blamed for not taking the initiative to follow up on youth initiatives and activities, especially those implemented by private organizations in areas beyond the capital. This shortcoming pushes these organizations to provide their own coverage. Such a matter calls for building the capacities of young activists and officials to better communicate with the media.
- The weakness in communication between journalists and public and civil society organizations dealing with youth, contributes to make stereotypes and prejudgements prevail. Media professionals end up resorting to their own personal assessments or to social media to understand the views of young people or the form and method of coverage that attracts them.

### 5.4. Geographic disparity in coverage:

- A disparity based on locale is present in media coverage of youth issues or matters from a youth perspective based on locale. Major cities, especially Amman, continue to gain the best coverage, due to the following reasons:
  - The majority of media outlets are based in Amman.
  - The shortage in journalists or media professionals in the governorates due to lack of training or absence of media colleges.
  - Media coverage of the governorates tends to be stereotypical, highlighting specific issues that are either unrelated to youth or are not viewed from a youth perspective. Agriculture, for example, is seen as the main issue from a youth perspective in the Jordan Valley, as is tourism in Wadi Musa and Petra, and extremism and lack of security in Maan. This coverage has produced a stereotypical image of the governorates. The coverage also tends to take on a generic nationalistic tone (addressing the issues' effects on Jordan as a whole). This typical coverage of the governorates has obscured other pertinent issues, such as poverty, unemployment, and gender from a local youth perspective.

## 5.5. Shortcomings in media coverage from a gender-sensitive perspective:

- The media, for the most part, are not gender-sensitive when covering various topics, with women's presence in special reports and reports based on opinion polls being severely lower than men's.
- This imbalance may be related to outside influence, such as living in a conservative society, as a high ratio of women avoid answering journalists' questions, especially on controversial matters, such as sexual education or molestation.
- Journalists, especially those working at radio and TV channels, also complain of their inability to raise the ratio of women participating in their programmes due to societal reasons.
- In best case scenarios, it could be argued that the above shortcomings are to some extent due to the fact that the media reflect society, where women are underrepresented due to patriarchal control, with the majority of those in power being men.
- In certain cases, gender balance is observed in media coverage, especially if the topic at hand involves women or if a woman has produced the material.
- Gender balance is also present in some reports related to youth issues, such as in Al Rai's youth supplement, and this is due to the makeup of its editorial team.
- In general, media outlets lack a specified editorial policy or guide on gender sensitivity, and whether their content follows a gender-sensitive approach or not is usually linked to the attitudes of editors themselves rather than a clear editorial policy.

## 5.6. Perpetuating the stereotypical images of women and youth:

- The majority of interviewees believe that local media outlets continue to reinforce the stereotypical images of women and youth, especially in entertainment supplements or comedy shows. It has been mentioned that some material, for example, perpetuates the stereotypical image of women as housewives whose purpose is to get married and have children rather than have a career. Other stereotypes suggest that young women are only interested in fashion and clothes. The interviewees said some media outlets reinforce the stereotypical image of youth as violent people or technology and social media addicts.
- On the other hand, some media outlets, such as Aramram website, seek to break this mould by dealing with issues through items that portray women and youth in a more balanced and fair manner.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Facilitating further networking between media outlets and the youth voluntary initiatives that were launched during the monitored period. The media items that those behind such initiatives produced have constituted one of the most important phenomena on the local media scene. This also showed—to a certain degree—that several youth segments have turned away from following local media outlets and resorted to creating their own media activity, utilising the potential offered by social media networks to express themselves and their problems. Local media outlets have shown an interest in these initiatives by publishing their usually “ready-made” news or by interviewing their founders. However, the majority of media outlets did not fully seize the potential contributions that these initiatives represent content-wise. Therefore, further networking between media outlets and such initiatives could contribute to enriching the media content geared towards youth.

- Holding training sessions with civil society organizations to increase and enhance the media content they produce, which would serve to support the abovementioned voluntary initiatives. Further support can enable them to develop their own independent online media platforms.
- Supporting the launch of media projects and media-focused institutions established and run by young people—of the likes 7iber, Aramram, Kharabeesh, Al Hudood network, and Ro’ya TV Channel. These constitute examples of media outlets that started out as youth media initiatives in Amman, and support can be offered to other group or individual youth initiatives to launch similar projects in other governorates.
- Training media professionals and young citizen journalists or members of youth initiatives on the skills to produce media items specialised in youth issues, taking into consideration a gender-sensitive perspective.
- Working to create a network of journalists and various media outlets on the one hand, and the youth initiatives that have lately come to the fore—especially in the governorates and developing areas—on the other to build on the progress achieved in the media coverage of youth initiatives.
- Supporting the establishment of an interactive website that functions as a comprehensive guide to young people on how to establish media projects, obtain funding, administer the enterprise, conduct an economic feasibility study, calculate costs and taxes, etc.

- Organizing workshops for the editors of dailies' local news, youth, and entertainment sections, and for the presenters and producers of shows on employment and youth in local radio stations and TV channels, in order to ensure that the improvement in attention to youth issues becomes more permanent. Such training courses could conclude with the drafting of a guide on covering youth and gender issues.
- Putting in place capacity building programmes for journalists covering youth issues or those interested in them to hone their journalistic skills and enable them to produce new, quality content that can attract young people. These skills must include those related to content development in terms of angle (from a youth perspective), human interest, creative writing, and how to design and produce data journalism. Training should also entail building journalists' capacities in terms of the format of the material produced—using multimedia, audiovisual elements, info-graphics, maps, hyperlinks, images, and videos. It is also important that these programmes target young journalists—men and women—from all governorates.
- Preparing training programmes for journalists to build their capacities to produce new content on issues related to unemployment among women and young people, and to add human interest to these stories. New multimedia content can be disseminated intensively through several media outlets or social media networks, especially Facebook. This content can also be produced in a variety of ways, such as videos depicting human interest stories, audio interviews with decision makers, and specific details outlined in infographics. These items can be used as examples of quality material that encourages media outlets and journalists to produce similar items for their audiences.
- As part of the capacity building programmes, workshops can be organized to raise the awareness and enrich the knowledge of young journalists on youth issues, unemployment, gender sensitivity, and the importance of diversity in community, in media content, and within media establishments. Experts on human rights and economics, and specialised media professionals can be hosted at these workshops, which would target journalists who cover youth issues or are interested in them. These workshops would also help connect journalists with activists from civil society organizations, and with officials concerned with youth, enabling them to network and enhance communication between them.
- Putting in place capacity building programmes at media outlets specialised in youth issues or targeting young people, such as university and community radios, or community websites. These programmes could include means to build the capacities of young citizen journalists which, in turn, could increase their contribution to covering their concerns and issues.
- Enhancing media monitoring programmes and monitoring special coverage of youth and gender. This will help reinforce professional standards and ethics and reduce wrong practices, which could include perpetuating stereotypes, lack of objectivity or balance, and mixing up media and commercial pieces.
- Holding workshops that bring young journalists, social media activists, and the editors and owners of traditional media outlets together with pollsters and researchers—such as experts on content analysis for instance—to discuss innovative studies on youth issues, especially unemployment and gender.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The study's findings indicate that media coverage of youth issues, especially unemployment, has markedly increased—mainly in quantity— as compared with the period covered by a previous analysis (December 2014, January and February 2015). This increase is primarily due to the official attention paid to these issues by the Royal Hashemite Court and the government. Moreover, the holding of parliamentary elections and the occurrence of terror attacks during the surveyed period also brought more attention to young people.

This “quantitative leap” in content was mostly evident in the increase in the number of news items covering official activities targeting youths. The majority of the coverage entailed republishing items from the official news agency (Petra) or official statements. As such, media coverage remains lacking in original, in-depth, and creative material.

Since young people constitute the majority of the Jordanian community, all matters of concern to society are of their concern as well. However, issues related to unemployment, work, and economic empowerment top the list of Jordanian youth's concerns. These are followed by political engagement and education. Even though local media outlets are dedicating more space and airtime to these issues, this content remains limited in terms of scope, since they have failed to address such issues from a youth perspective, be it through the style of coverage or by involving young people as media professionals or contributors to the produced material.

Moreover, the reports produced by the media are not gender-sensitive in the manner in which they broach their subjects. Women's presence is considerably lower than that of men, particularly in special reports and material based on opinion surveys.

In addition, issues concerning young women—such as sexual harassment in the workplace, and early marriage—are either absent or addressed seasonally by media outlets. In the case of early marriage, the topic is often tackled within the context of the Syrian refugee issue. This failure to engage properly on issues facing young women could be partly related to a lack of specificity in the work of local community organizations concerned with women, since they tend to focus on women's issues taken as a whole.

The lack of gender balance, when considering persons featured in media content, is due to a number of reasons, foremost of which is working in a conservative society. In this context, most women tend to avoid answering reporters' questions, especially on controversial issues such as sex education or sexual harassment.

A second reason is the low number of women in leading positions at media outlets.

In some cases, gender balance has been observed in certain media coverage, particularly if the subject in question has to do with women, or if a woman had produced the material.

In general, however, media outlets have no editorial policies or guidelines on gender. Therefore, instances of gender-sensitivity in the way in which topics are addressed and gender balance among people featured in media tend to be due to the individual efforts of editors instead of the existence of a clear editorial policy.

Moreover, local media outlets contribute to the perpetuation of stereotypes about women and youth, especially in entertainment supplements or comedy programmes. The study has cited examples of media material reinforcing the stereotypical image of women as housekeepers rather than encouraging them to work outside the home. Other reports limit women's purpose to marriage and childbirth, while some show that young women are solely interested in fashion and clothes.

Some media outlets also perpetuate stereotypes about youth, when portraying them as having a supposed "tendency" towards violence, or an "addiction" to social media sites and mobile phones.

On the other hand, media outlets such as Aramram and 7iber are attempting to counter these stereotypes by dealing with the issues in question through a more balanced and fair depiction of women and youth in their stories.

In a more positive aspect, local media outlets have achieved progress in presenting material that promotes the economic empowerment of young people, such as television programmes or reports that shed light on entrepreneurial projects and experiences, or how to start a business, obtain funding, and manage projects, etc. Some media outlets have also given more attention to their role in presenting solutions to current problems, rather than simply highlighting the problem over and over again.

However, this progress does not apply to the bigger picture in terms of media coverage of work and unemployment among young people. Many media outlets continue to deal with these issues through the dated style of focusing on the problem without offering answers or solutions. They also sometimes adopt a heavy-handed, patronising tone when addressing youth, especially when taking on the cultural aspects of work and unemployment. They tend to show that "young people reject work in the private sector or in the services sector", and blame "the culture of shame". Moreover, in general media outlets continue to offer seasonal coverage, increasing attention on one issue in sudden, short-lived bursts to follow the lead of official channels.

Also during the covered period of the study, many youth initiatives benefited from social media channels and other new media means to gain the attention of traditional media. They also offered quality media items that traditional outlets could have benefited from.

This period was also marked by the surfacing of several young opinion writers, who found a forum for their articles in some news websites, which raised the number of opinion pieces that addressed youth issues.

In conclusion, throughout the surveyed period, local media's response to economic and political developments, highlighted the role of youth or the issues facing them. In addition, new youth media initiatives were launched, showing that young people have grown more aware of the key role there is for them to play in this field. These initiatives have also show that young people have quality experiences and capacities in new media that—if properly seized—will help enhance the performance of the local media sector in terms of quality and quantity.

# ANNEX I

## Full Details of In-Depth Interviews with Relevant Figures

JUNE, JULY AND AUGUST 2016

An overview of opinions on the main topics related to the representation of youth in the media and coverage of their issues in Jordan.

## 1. What are the issues that concern youth in Jordan and how do the local media address them from a youth perspective? Is there a youth media? And do the media pay enough attention to youth issues?

The interviewees agreed that the Jordanian media give great attention to issues that matter to society, including young people, such as unemployment, education, higher education, violence, extremism, and others. However, media outlets are yet to find a way or form to tackle these issues from a youth perspective, in addition to giving young people the opportunity to produce journalistic material and taking them into consideration when preparing the content.

Following are some of the interviewees' answers:

**Mohammad Zawahreh** says *media outlets have—in general—developed a more specialised approach, be it on youth issues, women, the environment, or other matters.*

*Moreover, in the post-Arab Spring phase, media outlets became more interested in youth issues. Prior to that, youth issues were confined to specific sections, then supplements, which later developed into websites that employ text and audiovisual material, and were founded by young people who had mastered media technology and social media channels. This—in turn—reflected on media content, and the sector developed to address various issues from a youth perspective, offering specialised programmes on youth issues and giving young people their own media pulpits. For example, we now have young chief editors and talk show hosts.*

**Zawahreh** adds: *Media outlets tend to focus on covering youth issues to keep up with the competition, as all seek to grab the attention of young people, who make up the majority of the population.*

*Young people, within the social context in Jordan are those between the ages of 18 and 40, thus constituting the greater part of the population, and their ratio is on the rise. As a result, the majority of the issues facing society are youth-related, such as unemployment, higher education, violence, refugees, laws, civil society, or sexually transmitted diseases. Therefore, youth issues cannot be limited to a certain scope.*

*The major issues concerning young people in terms of importance and impact are employment, the social security net, higher education, and laws.*

**Lina Ejeilat**, the chief editor and founder of 7iber

*"Generally speaking, there is no such thing as youth media or youth issues in the media, because young people make up around 70% of the population; therefore, the majority of issues facing the community affect this segment. Foremost of these issues are unemployment, recruitment, the economic situation, civil and personal status laws, and the quality of education, since young people finish their education, start searching for jobs, and then seek marriage."*

**Mohammad Omoush**, deputy executive director for youth leadership and entrepreneurship at the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development says:

*The priority youth issues in Jordan have to do with the desire for a decent living, job security, political stability, and having a family. The definition of a decent life varies from one young person to another; one sees it in a job opportunity, while another might see it in the election of a Parliament with a political and social programme that would lead to social and job security. It is erroneous to suggest that youth are lost, marginalised, and uninterested in political life, and the proof is the youth initiatives and coalitions formed in the governorates, unaffiliated with any political party or group, which have decided to monitor the elections or support a candidate or a list. The spread of such initiatives is an outcome of the general post-Arab Spring climate and the support given to civil society organizations; and the media have played a major role in bolstering these enterprises.*

*Over the past five years, TV and radio channels paid great attention to youth issues out of two trajectories. The first is responding to Royal calls for investing in young people, who are seen as the cornerstone of citizenship and the country's greatest capital amidst the crises engulfing the region. The second is these channels' desire to attract the largest number of viewers by broadcasting material geared towards them, but what young people's priorities and interests may be, and how they differ from one area to another and from one generation to another remains a point of contention.*

*Over the past stage, the Jordanian media took on the issue of political engagement as one of the rights of this segment that has been long disregarded by social traditions. Media outlets also tackled issues such as empowering youth economically by focusing on the loan programmes offered by the government to serve local communities, and combat poverty and unemployment. No issue can be said to be disregarded by the local press due to the multiplicity and variety of media outlets. Matters absent from satellite channels may be tackled by radio stations, newspapers, or news websites. However, more space must be given to "preventive media" to guard youth against threats such as drugs, electronic crimes, and all types of ideological invasion, although young people themselves can play the biggest role in resolving these issues.*

*The Jordanian press has taken serious steps to guide young people towards vocational training and avoiding "stagnant majors". Media outlets have also encouraged youth to join recruitment programmes offered by the private sector and to benefit from microfinance schemes for small-sized enterprises.*

**Samar Gharaibeh**, host of "Yawm Jadid" (A New Day) on Jordan Television, says:  
*Youth issues (concerning the 15-35 age bracket) revolve around what society is offering young people, especially in relation to unemployment and education. They are also concerned with what youth are offering the community in terms of cultural, scientific, artistic, literary and voluntary achievements. These are the matters that we try to highlight on "Yawm Jadid".*

**Fathi Aghawat**, Al Rai's youth supplement correspondent in the southern region, says:  
*The foremost issue facing young people in the southern governorates is marginalisation. They feel that they are second-class citizens compared to their peers in the capital or the central region, especially when it comes to job opportunities, unemployment, poverty, health and education services, and others. After completing their education, they are unable to find job opportunities, and if they do, they are either in the public sector or the army. There are no companies or a larger private sector that can absorb the growing number of graduates, and there are no effective civil society organizations in the governorates. For instance, the We Are All Jordan Youth Commission and the Higher Council for Youth have not had actual roles in the governorates as was originally planned.*

## 2. Do the media tackle the issues that concern young people from a youth perspective? What are the shortcomings in the coverage geared towards youth, and what is required to improve media coverage from a youth perspective?

**Lina Ejeilat** says: *The problem is that the media do not address these issues from the perspective of their impact on young people. There is the same problem in the way media outlets deal with all issues. For example, the press writes about a certain matter without speaking to those involved, alienating them and disregarding their voices. The media can be more representative of young people when they become present in media outlets at all levels, including the editorial decision-making level. The presence of youth at the heart of the media process will end the patronising rhetoric often targeting them.*

Ejeilat ascribes the success of entertainment and satirical programmes and media outlets in gaining a wide youth audience to the fact that *they did not come from traditional media outlets; rather, from initiatives launched by young people working on their own through YouTube, without having to answer to an institution's policies or regulations imposed on them. Commenting on the disparity between the size of the audience of satirical, entertaining media led by young people, such as Kharabeesh, and the size of followers of other youth-led outlets that adopt a more serious tone, such as 7iber, she says that the latter attract a "qualitative audience" that expands gradually and includes people between the ages of 25 and 40, the same age bracket to which the website's team and contributors belong.*

She believes that *the variety in platforms used by the media is not enough to attract a young audience, stressing that visual communication is very important, constituting a science in and of itself. For instance, the forms, lines, and colours employed can represent the audience. She argues that news websites in general have not fully utilised the platform they are using, implementing the mindset of traditional media, instead, in running online outlets.*

**Samar Gharaibeh** says: *In the Jordanian media, we have examples of dealing with youth in a serious and sophisticated manner, not just through entertainment and satire. However, entertainment and satire can be used to present serious topics in order to reach out to young people and others. The media can use the language and tools that youth understand—information technology, their favourite idols, and entertainment.*

*The media succeed in addressing young people when they involve them in their vision, instead of employing patronising tones and condescension to teach them how to act and whom to belong to.*

**Hiba Jawhar**, director of programmes at Farah Al Nas radio station, says: *To attract young people to our programmes, which feature a variety of topics, we produce short shows no longer than 15 minutes or radio messages. We do not broadcast hour-long talk shows.*

**Eyad Hamam**, head of editing at Aramram network, says: *The video element attracts an audience. If we compare Aramram pages featuring videos with text-only pages, we can see that the ones with the videos attract more hits. Moreover, political topics are the most popular compared to other issues, but the presentation method plays a bigger role in attracting an audience rather than the selected topic, unless the issue at hand is a hot topic at the moment.*

**Mohammad Zawahreh** says: *The most important element of a youth media is that they entail having young people as part of the media process. For example, when the press tackles an environmental issue and it requires interviewing an expert, that expert can be a young man or a geology student;*

thus, the point of view of a specialist and a young man is presented. This way, youths are engaged in the issue and given space to express their opinion on a variety of matters. There should be a quota for young people in media items to ensure that their voice is always represented.

**Kamal Khoury** believes that employing a certain style in writing can attract young people, saying: *We write in a manner that catches the attention of youths, starting with the topics we select, the way sentences are formed and arranged, the number of jokes in the article, the selected picture, and the headline. We put ourselves in the shoes of the young reader, imagine his/her point of view on the topic at hand, and then write the article based on that.*

**Mohammad Omoush** says *youth media are not only those targeting young people, but also those which are produced by youths on all topics.*

Aghawat notes

*"in some local radio stations run by universities, which are supposed to express the voice of students, young people and their causes are barely represented, as older people who are close acquaintances of the station's director or the university's president tend to dominate its shows, speaking on behalf of youths instead."*

### 3. Geographic disparity in coverage

A geographic disparity in coverage is discernible, despite the improvement shown in media outlets' coverage of youth issues, at least in terms of quantity, and although the news stories—which constituted the majority of items—covered all the Kingdom's governorates (on account of the activities held by the sources of the news). Some media outlets almost entirely focus on Amman or the most populated governorates, such as Irbid and Zarqa:

**Fathi Aghawat** says *Al Rai gives attention to pertinent issues in the governorates, including youth matters. He does not sense a marginalisation or any limitations on conveying the issues facing young people in the south in his paper. However, he calls for increasing the daily's support for correspondents in the governorates, particularly through the transportation allowance and the equipment required to cover youth issues in remote areas and villages.*

**Mohammad Omoush** says: *We might hear from some young people in the governorates that they are marginalised by the media, or marginalised in other respects. However, they are simply repeating what they hear. It is partially correct, because there is a form of marginalisation taking place, but it is that of remote areas rather than centres of governorates.*

**Mohammad Zawahreh** says *there is a gap in the coverage of the capital and the governorates. Young people in the governorates are still unrepresented in media outlets, because the press is not doing enough to cover the main issues in these areas to begin with, let alone covering a specific segment of the community there. The media are centred in the capital, and when they are in the governorates, they only cover general issues concerning Jordan as a whole rather than tackling the real issues that youth deal with.*

**Eyad Hamam** cites figures showing that Aramram’s audience is varied in terms of geographic location, with 60% being in Amman and 40% in the governorates, including 15% in Irbid and Zarqa in terms of population density. But he adds *that no particular effort is exerted to cater this variety, stressing that the focus is on issues that matter to young people everywhere in Jordan.*

**Samar Gharaibeh** says that *the media might cover youth issues in the governorates by hosting young people from governorates as a way to show that all areas are represented, but not with the actual intention to address these matters and offer solutions. Focus is instead on young people in the capital and major cities, because they are more easily accessible, especially if the outlet in question is a TV channel or requires videos and cameramen. There are instances where young people come a long way from the governorates just to be on a show for half-an-hour.*

#### 4. Gender sensitivity in covering youth issues

Although media outlets have made some progress in seeking gender sensitivity, they are still far from achieving actual gender balance, be that in their employment of young women or in the content of their published material.

**Samar Gharaibeh** says *issues related to young women are more marginalised in the media than those concerning young men. Young women do not take up as much space in the media as their male counterparts because of the conservative values of society.*

**Kamal Khoury** says *women are less engaged in writing for Al Hudood, although the website frequently tackles issues concerning them.*

**Fathi Aghawat** believes that *women are represented in media content, but more attention towards them is required due to their marginalisation in society. He stresses that he makes it a point to have at least one or two young women as sources in his reports, adding that he might postpone turning in his story to ensure women are represented in it. The difficulty of interviewing young women varies based on the social sensitivity of the topics covered, he adds, citing issues related to sex, divorce, or moral depravity, where he resorts to using pseudonyms to refer to sources.*

Commenting on the correspondents of Al Rai, Aghawat explains that *there is a balance between men and women, adding that there are two female correspondents in Karak, while for the youth supplement, there are two male correspondents and six females. However, women journalists face limitations imposed by society, such as being unable to work late hours.*

**Azzam Azzam** says *the gender balance in coverage of youth issues is currently tipped in favour of women, simply due to the size of support offered by international organizations to youth matters that concern women. Overall, in their vision and presentation of these issues, Jordanian media outlets have broken the mould by reaching all segments in cities, villages, and refugee camps through the utilisation of advanced and relatively affordable communication technology.*

**Eyad Hamam** says:

*"We often try to create a gender balance in Aramram’s audience, but—unfortunately—men continue to make up the higher ratio (60% men versus 40% women). The disparity rises when it comes to comments and discussions (80% men vs. 20% women), and this reflects the reality of society."*

## 5. Reinforcing the stereotypical image of youth and women

Is there a general perception or stereotypical image in Jordan that depicts youth as more interested in comedy, satire, sports and light entertainment programmes regardless of content? Are they seen as tending to avoid serious media and even the content covering issues that concern them such as unemployment and education? Is this the prevalent stereotype of young people and women, and do the media perpetuate this image or is it the other way around?

**Lina Ejeilat** says *there are plenty of stereotypical images of youths, especially women, in the media. They are present in reality but the media tend to exaggerate them. One of the most provocative stereotypes connected to young people is the fear of technology, such as in content focused on “youth and the dangers of the internet and social media outlets”. In other topics, such as encouraging young people to become more politically engaged and the threats against youths, stereotypes abound in the patronising, condescending and—sometimes—cheap and distasteful rhetoric.*

Commenting on the phenomenon of “preachy media”, which focuses on addressing young people directly, she says *even some youths use the media to deliver an all-important message, seeing themselves as better than their peers and more capable of leading public opinion and steering young people through the media.*

*The stereotypical image of young women specifically appears in the media in the supplements dedicated to women, she adds, questioning the point of having these supplements to begin with. They mostly include “light stories”, covering lifestyle, family, and appearance. Ejeilat also notes stereotypes in the personas of female talk show hosts, especially in some radio stations in terms of appearance, speech, and light topics covered. Conversely, very few female media professionals take on economic or political issues or write as columnists in newspapers, and few women can be found as experts or academics in media items, although they are present in reality, but we need to seek them out and offer them the space to express their opinions.*

**Eyad Hamam** says *there is a stereotypical image of young people in the Jordanian media, created by lazy journalists who repeat the same old phrases and clichés connected to stereotypes.*

**Mohammad Omoush:** *Some may say that young people gravitate towards entertainment programmes, but what proof do they have? There are no studies that lend credence to this hypothesis. Young people do not necessarily prefer entertainment and political satire to serious political programmes. What matters is to have young people produce these shows. Youths might be in need of entertainment, but that does not mean it is the only way to tackle all issues.*

*Some may say that the stars of morning talk shows have been made famous by the people because they offer what the audience wants, but this is not true. People follow these shows because they are the only available option, but if we offered audiences another better option they would not choose these shows.*

*The media create stereotypes about young people and perpetuate others already prevalent. For example, the press exaggerates the phenomenon of drug dealing or terrorism in one governorate or the other by connecting it and its youth with this phenomenon, focusing on this issue and disregarding other matters in the governorate and any positive aspects.*

*A stereotypical image of any segment appears the minute it is classified into groups. For instance, the stereotyping of women and their issues begins when a media outlet is dedicated to them, and so is the case with young people. The two segments are not minorities, but categorising them in groups reinforces the concept of vulnerable minorities.*

**Mohammad Zawahreh:** *There is a stereotypical image of women in the media in general, specifically in commercials, where a woman is depicted only as a consumer of cosmetics and other such merchandise. This is also the case in sections dedicated to women on news websites and in newspapers, where the topics are limited to horoscopes and motherhood. The media also lack female professionals who are well versed in politics.*

**Hiba Jawhar** says *there is a stereotypical image of women created by society. The media might convey this image, but they do not produce new ones. The situation of women in the media is better than it was before; there are now female media professionals with an audience, and there are major media institutions run by women. This helps break the mould.*

**Kamal Khoury** says *the mainstream media do not represent young people. Instead, they debase them and depict them as only interested in sports, fashion and entertainment, disregarding their issues, especially young women. Jordanian media outlets, in general, tend to depend on patronising rhetoric when addressing young people.*

**Samar Gharaibeh** says *there is a stereotypical image of youth in the media, such as their belief in the “culture of shame” when it comes to work, and that they can be easily manipulated or swayed into doing drugs and becoming delinquents. These are all one-sided clichés employed frequently. The media do not reflect the actual reality, nor do they give attention to the unfair conditions of the labour market with its low wages and employers’ disregard of employees’ rights.*

## 6. Youth voluntary initiatives and relations with the media

During the period covered by this report, dozens of voluntary youth initiatives were launched around the governorates, covering various sectors. They included initiatives focused on politics through the elections; voluntary drives in the environmental or charity fields; initiatives related to universities and education; or those focused on books, reading, and cultural discussions. A great number of these initiatives generated their own media buzz by producing material and posting it on social media, especially Facebook.

Mainstream media outlets—especially newspapers, Jordan Television, and Ro’ya TV Channel—gave attention to these initiatives by publishing their news. This was one of the reasons for the rise in the number of news items on young people. They also conducted interviews with the founders of these initiatives, as was the case of morning talk shows on Jordan Television and Ro’ya TV Channel.

However, the press did not fully seize the media-worthy contributions of these initiatives. Had that happened, it would have added more diversity to the media content and increased the size of material geared towards youth. But it has become obvious that a number of media professionals working in mainstream outlets and others are not fully aware of the size and diversity of these initiatives, which—in turn—has affected the relationship between such initiatives and the press.

**Mohammad Zawahreh** says *that official media outlets have lately opened up to all segments, in a bid to rise to the level of private media, which represent young people of all ideological stripes.*

**Ejeilat** believes *there are new initiatives, noting that their coverage by the media encourages the emergence of others. Many of these initiatives are encouraged by the government, but the issue lies in the quality of the initiatives that gain media attention, as they tend to be community-based*

*voluntary charities, working for example to distribute charity parcels and clean streets, which is important, but what is the added value of repeatedly covering them in the media while failing to mention ideological and political initiatives that contribute to raising youth awareness?*

**Samar Gharaibeh** says there are very distinguished youth initiatives, such a science club that teaches science at schools in underprivileged areas and contacts scientists abroad, in addition to many others. On the other hand, there are other university students who do not think outside the box and—when interviewed—end up taking their time thanking the university president or the dean of a certain faculty.

Gharaibeh continues:

*"The number of shallow initiatives is on the rise, such as an initiative to collect plastic cups from the street or collect blankets. These are not achievements that merit media coverage, because they can be found in the most primitive urban community without organized efforts. Such initiatives are only aimed at forming associations or organizations to attract the attention of the government."*

## ANNEX II

### Findings of In-depth Interviews

DECEMBER 2014, JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 2015

Opinions gathered through the ten qualitative one-on-one interviews undertaken a part of the research (with activists and NGOs involved in initiatives concerning youth, media organizations' owners, editors, reporters, and program producers) allowed researchers to distil a series of key conclusions in regards to

1. an attempt to define what could be understood as "youth media" and "youth issues";
2. the inadequate coverage from a youth's perspective that prevails in the Jordanian media landscape;
3. the occasional nature of such coverage, journalists' insufficient access to information concerning youth and weak communication with official and civil society institutions working with youth;
4. geographic disparity in coverage of youth issues and content reflecting youth's point of view;
5. shortcomings in media coverage in terms of following a gender-sensitive approach;
6. the promotion of a stereotypical image of youth and women.

## 1. Definition of "youth media" and "youth issues"

- Defining youth issues is based on how various societal issues are covered by media; the angles of stories or programs' discussions are relevant to the youth, the creative and interactive presentation of media content that is attractive to a young audience.
- Interviewees agreed that it is important to rely on young people in creating media content. Young people, in their opinion, are more able to deal with issues that concern them and present them in a way that is appealing to their age group. In connection to this, a number of interviewees were of the opinion that official media outlets tend to still be more dependent on older journalists, particularly in leading positions.

## 2. Inadequate coverage from a youth's perspective

Jordanian media, in general, shows limitations in terms of inadequate coverage of youth-focused issues and in representing young people's point of views. Limitations in this regard take the following forms:

- Shortage of materials addressing youth issues, especially in print.
- Reliance on ready-made news and lack of original content, as well as of comprehensive reports, credible information, balance, and even objectivity.
- The dominance of entertainment material, especially at commercial radio stations.
- Media shed light on problems like poverty, unemployment and violence, but do not contribute to solving problems.
- Media outlets do not address issues through a genuine investigative coverage; they just report on events, but do not go further into analysis.

### 3. Occasional coverage of youth issues, limited access to related information and weak communication between media, officials and CSOs concerned with youth

- Media coverage of youth issues is driven by current events and developments, rather than by editorial board policies related to young targeted audiences. For example, current events and developments like ISIS' impact on Jordan drive the need to shed light and create debate on extremist ideology among young people.
- In Jordan, there is a lack of studies and resources that could encourage reporters to cover issues that interest young people and guide them on how to adequately address them. Moreover, there is also a gap in terms of research and public opinion polls measuring to which extent young people follow different media outlets, programmes, etc.
- Journalists have limited access to information related to youth issues. In relation to this aspect, they also complain because of the weak communication between media and the official and civil institutions engaged with youth. In turn, journalists were criticised for sometimes lacking enough initiative to explore stories focused on the work of organizations specialised in youth, particularly those in remote areas, mostly relying on these organizations themselves handing them such stories. This highlights the relevance of building capacities, among young advocates and public officials working on youth issues, to communicate with the media effectively.
- Consequently, given this disconnect between media and institutions/CSOs working with youth, there are certain general assumptions and stereotypes about youth among journalists, who also tend to rely on their own judgments or on the impressions they gather from social media to figure out what young people are interested in and ways to cover these topics in an "attractive" way."

### 4. Geographic disparity in media coverage

There is a disparity across governorates in terms of media coverage of youth issues or from youth's point of view, where such coverage is wider in main cities, especially the capital Amman. This seems to be due to the following:

- Media outlets are concentrated in Amman.
- Some governorates have limited numbers of journalists due the absence of journalism schools there.
- Media coverage regarding some governorates tends to focus on certain commonplaces themes only, not directly related to youth. For instance, agriculture issues are the common topics in the media coverage of the Jordan Valley, extremism and security issues in Maan, tourism in Wadi Musa and Jerash, etc. Such issues have become stereotypes related to governorates and they are only covered in media from a national perspective; i.e. a perspective that affects Jordan as a whole. Focus on these stereotypical issues by media is at the expense of other diverse issues which different governorates suffer from, such as poverty, unemployment and gender issues from the perspective of local young people.

## 5. Limitations of media's coverage of youth issues from a gender-sensitive perspective

- The media does not generally appear to follow a gender-sensitive approach when they cover stories. The presence of young women in these stories is much lower than the presence of young men, particularly in specialised reports and material that survey the citizens' opinions.
- Shortcomings in media, from a gender perspective, can partly be linked back to external social factors like living in a conservative society, which makes it hard for reporters to ensure gender balance given that a large percentage of young women would avoid answering their questions, especially if the topics were controversial ones like sex education and sexual harassment.
- Similarly, radio and TV journalists complain about their inability to increase the percentage of young women's participation in their shows. Due to societal reasons, these women cannot appear in the media, especially if the journalist is a young man.
- In most cases, the media convey a picture of society in which women have a lower presence than men, because society itself is male-dominated and the majority of officials and experts are men.
- In some cases, there is gender balance in media coverage, if the topics raised are related to young women directly, if the programmes or vox-pops in question target young women, and if the reporter or producer are female journalists.
- Some media products related to young people, such as Al Rai's youth supplement, also reflect a gender-balance in terms of the constitution of their staff.
- Media outlets generally lack policies or guidelines related to promoting gender-equality. If there is gender-balance among their staff, it is linked to their managers' personal attitudes rather than institutionalised policies.

## 6. Stereotypical portrayal of young women, young men, and youth in general

- Interviewees expressed their opinions on some media outlets to be promoting stereotypes about young men and women, especially entertainment or comedy shows. It was mentioned that there are media products that for example reinforce the stereotype of woman's place to stay at home (rather than joining the labour market), or the image that women are eager to get married and have children, or that young women only care about fashion-related issues. Interviewees also pointed out to stereotypes regarding young men (e.g., associating young men with violence) and youth in general, for instance focused on the image of young people being addicted to the Internet, social media and mobile phones.
- On the other hand, examples were also given of some media outlets, like Aramram, which try to address issues in a contextual and smooth manner that helps avoid the reinforcement of stereotypes.

## Interview relevant excerpts: illustrating opinions gathered on key dimensions related to media's representation of youth and coverage of youth issues in Jordan

### 1. Is there media specialised in youth or "youth media"?

In Jordan, several media outlets, TV and radio programs, print and online pages, are run by young journalists. Some of them are dedicated to covering youth issues. But is there "special" media for young people? And if so, how distinct is its content in comparison with material targeting the rest of the age groups in society?

In general the interviewees questioned the concept of "youth media".

They argued that the main problems facing society, like unemployment, university education, violence, extremism and the like, are issues that concern all ages: thus in some sense seeing no benefit from dedicating specialised pages or supplements to youth issues. Nevertheless, they agreed that the "difference/value" lies in how the topics are handled; the angles of the stories or the discussions featured in programmes; the creative, attractive and interactive presentation of media content; and the involvement of young people in the production of programmes and stories addressing the issues of relevance to them.

We present below some selected interview sections:

**Lina Ejeilat**, cofounder and chief editor of 7iber website, said: *"I don't like a strict classification like 'I want to make a supplement for young people' or: 'We want to cover the issue of 'youth and technology' or 'the youth and something' because it will be provocative. Actually, I don't like a categorisation based on age, but certainly there is a different audience for each media outlet and media item. University students or teens or graduates about to enter the job market differ from middle-aged people who have kids and years of experience or are even retired."*

**Yusur Hassan**, Manager of Tamkeen Centre affiliated with King Abdullah II Fund for Excellence, stated: *"I see that young people are part of society and there is no distinct youth issue. I am against classifications like 'youth radio' or 'women's magazine'... etc., as well as establishing a quota. After all, all issues in society reflect on each other. Poverty, violence and unemployment are not issues that concern only young people. The youth are concerned with all issues."*

**Hussein Sarayrah**, who produces and presents youth programmes at Sawt Al Karak station, and who is also a correspondent and editor for Khaberni and a monitor of social media, shared the following opinion: *"I see that everything serves young people if media present the youth's cause professionally and objectively."*

**Mohammad Nabil**, producer of TV programs on Aramaram, said: *"Everything can be categorised as a youth issue."*

**Wael Attily**, cofounder and chief editor of Kharabeesh, pointed out: *"There is no youth media or media specialised in the youth, for even the political issues are of interest to the youth. We can say that there are topics that affect young people's future, but we cannot say that young people care for a set of limited issues and causes."*

**Bilal Khasawneh**, producer and presenter of programmes for Yarmouk University's radio station Yarmouk FM, stated: *"Problems facing people affect the entire society, so when I speak about unemployment, then I am speaking about parents and the whole community, not just young people; the same goes for the issues of shunning marriage, etc."*

**Mahmoud Qaralleh**, director of the youth department at Al Rai daily and editor of the page "Shabab" (the youth), explained: *"The idea behind youth supplements and youth media is to create young journalists, not only to cover issues related to young people. We followed the example of some Arab dailies do, like the Lebanese "An-Nahar" daily. In each issue of the supplement, we cover a local issue from the youth's perspective; that is to say a young man reports it."*

Most of interviewees agreed that it is important to rely on young people in creating media content. Young people, in their opinion, are more able to deal with issues that concern them and respond to the expectations of their age group. There was also criticism, among them, in regards to official media outlets that do not hire youth and still more strongly tend to rely on older people to undertake journalistic work, including material addressing young people.

**Khasawneh:** *"If we look at media outlets in Jordan, we will see that most employees are not young; on the contrary, they would be close to the retirement age. When a 50-year-old talks about an issue addressing people in their 20s, communication would not be easy."*

**Attily:** *"It all depends on who directs the media. In private media, most of the people who work and manage it are young, but in state media it is not the same. In private media, Kharabeesh team and Ro'ya TV, everyone from technicians to presenters are young. The private sector allows young people to have a role, and even works to attract them, unlike the case in state media."*

## 2. Inadequate media coverage from a youth's perspective

Respondents almost all agree that media do not adequately cover youth-focused matters nor represent young people's points of view. Limitations take the following forms:

- Shortage in materials addressing the issues that are either focused on youth or of particular concern to them, especially in newspapers
- Reliance on ready-made news and lack of original content, comprehensive reports that address relevant issues in-depth, credible information, balance, and even objectivity
- Entertainment-focused content prevails, especially in commercial radio stations

The following testimonies elaborate on the ideas summarized above:

**Samia Kurdiyeh**, a reporter at Farah Al Nas radio station and presenter of Tak'eeb said: *"Local media fall short of addressing young people's concerns. There are two approaches: the first addresses the youth and is interested in their issues, like that of Farah Al Nas radio. Followers of the second approach pretend to be dedicated to young people, while their content is shallow and does not tackle the subject deeply; or they act based on their own agenda on the pretext that "the public wants this"*.

**Hassan:** *“Some journalists do not look for stories of success of their own accord and do not check one unless published in another media outlet. There is laziness on the part of reporters who fail to hunt for stories, although one of our missions is to reach out to remote places that do not get covered by the media. Ironically, these reporters would do well if they are assigned a story, but they would not take the initiative themselves to find it.*

*“The other problem is that the media focus on youth activities rather than issues. Reporters just cover the events involving young people. Actually, although the media are driven by national interests to focus on young people, they carry out the mission with no genuine feeling of responsibility. The bigger problem is that the media do not realise how important their role is in building a youth culture; one does not feel they are keen enough on producing serious materials,” Hassan added.*

**Ejeilat:** *“I cannot think of a story on youth, not even on our Tiber, which seems covered well enough. The missing part is that the issues are covered in a shallow way. When we hear about an initiative or project that is positive and created by young people, and we want to address it in a deep, balanced and objective way, we immediately feel an urge to encourage reporting the good things and ignoring the negative side of the story, and that is a problem.”*

**Haniyeh Dmour**, presenter of youth program “Ahlan Shabab” at Public radio station Amen FM, said: *“The media do not address issues from a youth’s point of view enough, even if presenters are young... that does not mean the content addresses youth issues correctly. Through my show and work I noticed the activity of organizations for the youth seeks to boost young people’s skills, which is not covered by the media, which indicates a weakness in this regard too. I see that young people working in the media do not give it all in their shows.”*

**Mohammad Nabil**, who develops programmes in Aramram, said: *“The media have covered important matters like unemployment and public transportation but in an unfocused manner... very few stories and no depth or details. I do not think they actually reach young people. The coverage is well-prepared, for sure, but it does not use a language that resonates well with young people or arouses their interest.”*

**Mahmoud Huwayyan**, presenter of the TV program “Al Malaf” (The File) on JTV, said: *“I can’t think of a youth issue that is covered adequately, as many media outlets care about superficial things. For example, poverty, unemployment, late marriage, the increase in the rate of women who do not get married and housing are all issues that the local media have not gone deep enough into and in regards to which their content was not satisfying. Myself included: I myself have not fathomed deeply enough as I wanted in my show: Malaf.”*

**Attily:** *“I believe that the media do not attach importance to the economic future of young people, with their insufficient coverage of issues like employment and education. Here I speak about economic security for the youth, which reflects in their mentality and way of thinking, since it is healthy for a young man to feel productive and developing. In fact, the media have played an opposite role. We, as young people, suffer from society’s negative attitude, lack of appreciation and too much negative criticism. Unfortunately, the media feed this kind of negativity and make the youth feel unable to achieve economic security, instead of directing them on the path of development and achievement through teaching the ways of starting their own businesses.*

*“Local media always cover crimes and problems and ignore the achievements of successful young people. If young men do not feel financially and psychologically able, they turn to violence.... In recent years, the media have contributed significantly to the increasing negativity among young people. Again, this prompts us to ask: ‘What are the actual interests of the media? It seems that media outlets care only about news of the government.*

*“The media can influence the priorities of young people. They can, for example, shift young people’s interests from employment to national political issues. Moreover, the media can turn the attention of the youth from meaningful TV shows to Turkish soap dramas, and they can also divert people’s attention from the real issues that may appeal to them”.*

**Hassan:** *“Although local media shed light on problems like poverty, unemployment and violence all the time, they do not contribute to solving these problems. Moreover, media outlets do not engage with issues through genuine coverage; they just tell the events like a story, no more.*

*“The media do not attach any importance to significant issues that help create awareness; they do not even play a role in protecting young people from extremist ideologies. The media have to be a tool, for those who work in the field, to raise awareness among youth.”*

**Kurdiyeh:** *“The media have not sufficiently covered the issues of unemployment, saturated university majors, and violence on campus. The coverage usually takes the form of reporting events as they happened.... Moreover, the coverage is usually shallow as it does not address the actual reasons behind university violence, but oversimplifies the root causes.*

*“The media need to keep track of issues related to terrorism and extremism in society. These issues should not be covered haphazardly or be addressed only at the moment when the related events happen. The media should follow up on them with deeper insight.”*

### 3. Occasional and random coverage of youth issues, limited access to information related to these, and weak communication with officials and civil institutions concerned with the youth

Most of the opinions gathered through the interviews agreed that Jordanian media, especially newspapers and websites, and official media outlets in particular, follow a “seasonal” approach. Media tend to focus on an issue only when there is a development. For instance, the murder of pilot Muath Kasasbeh drove the media to shed light on extremist ideology among young people. However, the media attention to extremism goes down when there is no dramatic events like the pilot’s murder, although the threat of extremism is still there.

Most interviewees are of the view that in Jordan there is a lack of studies and resources that both drive reporters to cover issues that interest young people and guide them in regards to ways of adequately addressing them. Moreover, there are insufficient research and public opinion polls focusing on young people’s media consumption. Consequently, there exist general assumptions and stereotypes about the youth, and reporters rely on their own judgments or on the impressions they gather from social media to figure out what young people are interested in and how to cover those topics in a way that is appealing to young people.

Reporters complain about the limited, or at times even absent, information sources regarding youth issues. They also find that communication between the media and the official and civil

institutions concerned with the youth is weak. On the other hand, journalists were criticised for covering the work of youth-focus organizations not at their own initiative, but only if they were handed the related stories by those organizations.

We present here some excerpts reflecting these opinions in more detail:

**Ejeilat:** *“An important thing is that there is so much ‘laziness’ on the part of journalists, added to the shortage in sources. There are many media institutions that publish materials related to organizations concerned with the youth in the same as they receive them. This depends on the organization itself, whether it has an active public relations unit that communicates well with the media and produces interesting data too. These organizations receive better coverage by the media – simply because the material is made available without too much editing hassle.”*

**Dmour:** *“Civil society organizations run after the media and not the other way round. For example, we see these organizations working to promote themselves through press materials, such as brochures.”*

From civil society’s perspective, **Hassan**, who is the Manager of Tamkeen Centre, said: *“The media do not refuse our requests to cover a story, and we are usually asked what is new. However, journalists do not explore success stories out of their own accord, unless we provide them with those, especially the ones outside Amman. So it starts with us reporting the stories of success to the media, then media outlets publish them one after another. It is a bit shocking that they do not look for stories in remote areas by themselves.*

*“Personal relationships between journalists and workers in institutions concerned with the youth influence coverage, and the situation differs from an organization to another, naturally. That is why we try to help boost, among young people, abilities to communicate with the media. Young people’s keenness towards the media is “seasonal”, as it depends on the general interest in addressing a certain issue that concerns the youth,”* Hassan added.

**Qaralleh:** *“Institutions involved in work pertaining youth issues are not very cooperative with media outlets, so we find a lot of them holding events without tipping the media. We, as journalists, cannot reach all the institutions and look for what they have on the drawing board. They work in isolation from the media, doing the minimum just to satisfy their superiors.”*

**Kurdiyeh:** *“There is no easy contact with these institutions; for example, we find it hard to ask for any information or host guests from the Higher Council of Youth or the Higher Council for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities, so usually we take the information from the Internet.”*

**Khasawneh:** *“Currently we depend on the Internet as our primary source of information. I used to depend on published material on websites or Internet forums, or any website that seemed to be tackling the subject I wanted to talk about.”*

#### 4. Disparities in coverage, from a “geographic” perspective

Most interviewees agree there is a disparity in media coverage of youth issues from one area to another. Coverage is stronger in main cities, especially the capital Amman, since media outlets are concentrated there, and given the absence of journalism schools in certain governorates. Further, coverage regarding certain governorates tends to focus on commonplace themes only.

Below we include some statements supporting this analysis:

**Huwayyan:** *“The location, whether close or far from Amman, affects coverage. Interests differ between urban residents, who look for luxury, and dwellers of remote villages, refugee camps, or the Badia. Although the media have reached out to remote governorates, developmental discrepancies lead to difference in coverage, which is not the media’s fault but rather the government’s.”*

**Dmour:** *“There are certainly disparities in the quantity and quality of media coverage and its impact. However, community radio stations have worked on enhancing local cultures and boosting decentralisation by contacting decision-makers. But successes in governorates are not close to decision-makers like the ones in Amman. When we look at the south and find no journalism college, how will young people there learn journalistic skills?”*

**Ejeilat:** *“It is not true that all governorates receive good media coverage. The coverage in governorates follows monotonous patterns and the news about them all are condensed in two pages, while the rest of the newspaper is dedicated to cover national economic and political issues, in addition to Middle East and World news.*

*“If we talk about centralisation and decentralisation, for example, we won’t find dailies but only websites tracking news in the south. It is good the Internet made that possible, but the coverage is stereotypical. For example, in the Jordan Valley the news would be about flies in certain seasons or a crisis in the tomato production, and so on.”*

**Attily:** *“There are disparities, depending on the media outlet. If we are talking about radio, then the coverage is good since there are stations in the governorates. But print and broadcast media focus mostly on young people from Amman. Where media ownership is concerned, private or state-owned, we feel the latter covers issues more widely because they have more viewers across the Kingdom, but privately owned media are only in Amman. Still, privately owned media have special experiences of coverage in governorates but not as influential as in Amman. Nevertheless, this could change if the focus shifts to campus affairs in governorates like Irbid, where the youths have amazing untapped potential.”*

**Hassan:** *“Irbid, Amman and Zarqa have the biggest share of coverage, and the more we head to the south the less coverage there is; the same goes for remote villages far from city centres.”*

## 5. Media coverage from a gender-sensitive perspective

Most interviewees agree that the media do not take gender balance into consideration when they cover stories. The presence of young women in media content is much lower than that of young men, especially in specialised reports and material that survey the opinions of citizens. Some interviewees believe that this imbalance can be related to the wider social context and culture, rather than journalists’ attitudes/approach.

For example, some of the interviewees explained that factors like living in a conservative society make it hard to ensure gender balance in stories, since a great percentage of young women avoid answering their questions, especially in the case of controversial topics like sex education and sexual harassment. Reporters, especially the ones who work in radio and TV stations, also complain about their inability to increase the percentage of young women’s participation in their shows given that for social reasons they cannot appear in the media. For example, a radio station in Amman cannot host young women from Karak or Tafileh, while this

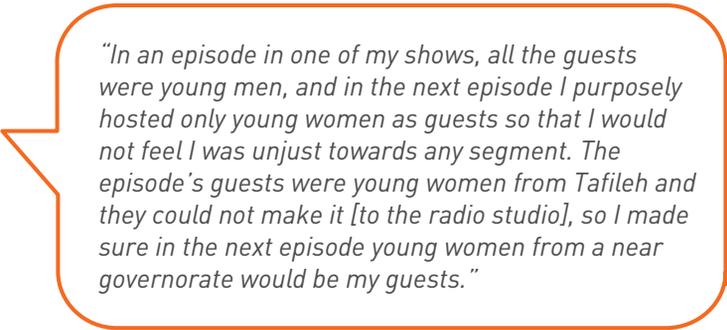
does not apply to the case of males. A number of testimonies thus linked the generally lower presence of women than men to a society which itself is male-dominated.

However, interviewees also presented a number of positive examples illustrating a gender-sensitive approach, including in terms of coverage of topics of concern to young women, presence of young women in vox-pops, and young female journalists having the role of reporters or producers. It was mentioned that some media products related to young people, also reflect gender-balance in terms of the constitution of their staff. Nevertheless, it was explained that this type of cases are rather connected to the personal attitude of the respective media manager, since for the most part media outlets in Jordan do not have in place policies or guidelines related to promoting gender-equality.

These issues are addressed in detail in the interview sections featured below:

**Dmour:** *“I seek to have a balance between the voices of young men and women. In fact, I evaluate the reporter’s performance on the basis of this balance. So if a survey has, for example, 12 young men with few or no females, my judgment is that the reporter is incompetent.”*

**Kurdiyeh:** *“I feel there is indeed consideration for gender. In interviews there are voices of young men and women and I even feel sometimes women are more vocal than men; the same applies to radio stations. However, it depends at the end of the day on who the media outlet decides to meet. As for interactive shows that allow audience calls, the gender diversity relies on the audience itself, whether women wish to call or not; so it is beyond the media outlet’s control.”*



*“In an episode in one of my shows, all the guests were young men, and in the next episode I purposely hosted only young women as guests so that I would not feel I was unjust towards any segment. The episode’s guests were young women from Tafleeh and they could not make it [to the radio studio], so I made sure in the next episode young women from a near governorate would be my guests.”*

**Ejeilat:** *“Let’s be realistic about expectations from us and where we fail; in reality, young women out in the streets are less than men and I am talking here about Amman. So in pro-rata terms, the male presence is much larger and at the same time we need a double effort to convince a young woman to go on record. This is what we do at 7iber; we have to take the opinion of one young woman and spend a lot of effort just trying to convince her to appear on the video to show there is balance, which we cannot actually achieve. The problem is bigger than that: It is not about whether media should be blamed alone or not. We do not want to fall in the trap of needing only one woman to appear symbolically in the story. I find it easier to talk to males than females, especially in opinion surveys and some other issues.”*

*“However, we at 7iber have lately found stories about women, and to be honest, we have done a tremendous effort to reach out to these women, and it was a pleasure that we succeeded. However, I have to acknowledge that we have the time luxury, so we take the time we need to work on a story, or to wait till we find the right case to write about. I realise that if I worked at a daily newspaper and wanted to publish a similar story with such a huge load of work, I wouldn’t be able to maintain the gender balance”.*

**Sarayrah:** *“A reporter finds it challenging that his/her story should feature men and women equally, and I speak about my work as a correspondent in the South. It is hard for me to ask the ladies on the street when working on an opinion survey, a report or whatsoever. The reason is that women are in a strict social situation, and caution is called for when talking to them, especially if you are a young man.”*

*“Usually, the problem is not the media, but the society that produces the issues which the media would pick up. For example if a reporter wanted to cover a symposium discussing an issue, his interviews will be divided between the panelists and the guests. Because the society is male-dominated, the majority of officials and experts, naturally, will be men. In most cases, the media convey the picture of the society, and this picture shows that women have less presence than men.”*

**Huwayyan:** *“I do not compare the percentage of women to men because I do not actually care. There are social restrictions to bringing young women to studios when they come from remote places, and so men are usually slightly more than women.”*

**Attily:** *“We are not to blame for the larger number of males appearing on Kharabeesh’s videos. We try to engage young women but it just does not happen. I personally think that a woman who stands in front of the camera to present a case is a super woman and a fighter because people on social media are so aggressive towards women. It happened that some of the young women who participated in our shows quit after their very first video because of the rough comments that prompted their families to pressure them to quit. However, the women who are still working with us discuss very important and sensitive issues.”*

**Khasawneh** pointed out to examples in which a gender balance is achieved in media, but he linked this to the topic raised: *“The balance depends on the topic; if we talk about reproductive health, for example, then we are directly addressing women so we send women to vox-pops; as for birth control, both genders take part, so we try to strike the balance.”*

**Qaralleh:** *“We do not discriminate between men and women, the youth supplement that later turned into a daily page shows that young people are equal regardless of gender, and this is also evident in interviews and other press materials that we publish. Most of Al Rai staff in the youth department are young women who have enough experience in the field, and their ages vary between mid 20s and 50s (seven young women and four young men). We prefer that our young women do the vox-pops in the streets because if the reporter was a man, it is unlikely they will get answers; and that is just part of the social cautions we exercise due to restrictions imposed by the culture of our society.”*

*“Generally, the rest of the media outlets fail to maintain this balance; we rarely see interviews with women about certain topics, and I see that Jordan TV is the only channel that addresses the issues of young people on air. Nevertheless, we find in its weekly show about young men and employment, for example that the programme’s team heads for factories with zero presence of young women except when it is a tailoring workshop.”*

**Hassan:** *“I feel that it is the person who does the work who influences the balance; there is no rule in the media that there should be a balance between both genders, this is just a personal attitude, rather than institutionalised rules.”*

**Nabil:** *“Of course there is no balance. The issue that there should be a balance between both genders is highly connected with the society’s redlines; even now there are women who believe their opinion is affiliated with the opinion of the men [around them] so they refuse to give their own views one way or another.”*

## 6. Stereotypes about young women, young men and youth in general

Most interviewees were of the view that, in spite of the progress achieved by media outlets in addressing women rights -- especially 7iber, Aramram, Ro'ya TV, Radio Al Balad, Radio Farah Al Nas, other community radio stations, and Al Ghad newspaper-- some local media outlets still promote stereotypes about young men and women, and that this particularly applied to "entertainment" or comedy shows.

Below we include a number of selected statements through which interviewees addressed these issues.

Ejeilat said in response to the question whether media outlets promote stereotypes about young men and women: *"Yes, to be honest. It is noticed that we see and hear the media going on and on about the youth and their addiction to social media, mobile phones and the Internet. It is as if we were stopped at the era of the beginning of the Internet 15 years ago. I wonder how these things still look strange to some. I understand that sometimes we have to be critical of certain things that affect our life but the subject has become a cliché with no angles left to revive it. There are other stereotypical images about young people preoccupied with silly issues or who do not care to take up more valuable things to busy themselves with. Society even enhances stereotypes about itself. For example, we are people who do not read. The media enhances this stereotype. I am not over-generalising here, and definitely, there are exceptions.*

*"As for women, I see there is an improvement; I know I am talking about generalities, but for example, Al Ghad newspaper has good stuff and Amman Net and Radio Al Balad as well. Their way of dealing with youth, women and other issues is more advanced, but these are exceptions.*

*"On the other hand, let's look at newspapers (lifestyle) supplements like Alrai's 'Abwab' [doors] or Alghad's 'Hayatuna' [our life], one will find a good quantity of 'deadly' stereotypical images about women, especially on social issues."*

**Kurdiyeh:** *"The media so far could not break the stereotypical images about women, and until now, when the media cover an issue about women, for example, a woman's face has to be blurred in pictures or does not even appear. In addition, we find that the media promote stereotypes like that a woman should stay at home and not be involved in the labour market.*

*"This stereotypical coverage varies from one media outlet to another. For example, there are radio stations like Hayat FM, an Islamic station that promotes, in some of its shows, the idea that a woman should stay at home and not work. I find this in religious stations with a clear religious agenda. However, some radio stations in other governorates have broken this barrier and been able to attract women to participate in some shows hosted by volunteers, like Ma'an Radio and the Voice of the South. Still the idea, that a woman should not go out to practice her job as a reporter or a sound engineer, or sit alone with a man in a studio, is still embraced by media institutions in general."*

**Hassan** explained: *“There are differences between each media outlet so we cannot generalise.” In this sense, he appreciated the work of Ro’ya TV towards breaking stereotypes, while also sharing his opinion that there is much room for improving Jordan TV’s programming in this respect.. In turn, he added that “News websites try to break the stereotypical images more than print media, and I find no difference between governmental or private outlets in this regard.”*

**Dmour:** *“Some media outlets promote stereotypical images about women, especially in comedy shows. I think the media resorts to comedy to promote and entrench these stereotypes and entertain the audience by focusing on set social patterns. Some comedians describe women in such terms like ‘cannot do; does not know, unable to... etc’. Others focus on women’s physical appearance, overlooking the fact that some women have become influential leaders; let alone TV series that offend women, and I prefer not to cite examples.”*

**Qaralleh:** *“Most of the time, societal restrictions prevent the media from breaking the stereotypical images.”*

**Attily** said: *“We [the media] give ‘canned’ ideas to people, and try to limit young women to fashion issues for example, the same way we associate young men with violence.”*

**Huwayyan:** *“The media are still unable to break stereotypical images, which is an annoying fact as far as I am concerned.”*

**Nabil:** *“Yes, some media outlets still promote stereotypical images; for example, the image of women aspiring to get married and have children has been there for 30 years. We have been trying at Aramram to steer away from the practice of ‘deliberately imposing of ideas or images’ preferring to address them in a contextual manner, which helps us avoid stereotyping. So we do not try to drive out stereotypical images entrenched in society.”*







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