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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



**“Let Us Know” Radio Series  
Summary of Episodes and Recommendations  
April – November 2020**

Radio Al Balad produced 21 “Let Us Know” radio shows during April- November 2020 to raise awareness of labor rights and promote non-traditional vocational training. Each episode is summarized below. For episodes that included experts who proposed recommendations to support women’s economic participation, a summary of the recommendations was posted on USAID Takamol’s Facebooks page.

**[Episode 1: Basic Labor Rights under Defense Law Orders, Part 1. \(27 April 2020\)](#)**

The first episode which aired on 27 April 2020 focused on basic labor right under Defense Orders. The episode hosted Hamdi Qbeilat, a Professor of Public Law at the Islamic Scientific and Education University, who discussed Defense Orders 6 and 9 which, at the time, caused confusion for many employees and companies. The Defense Orders tackled employees who are registered with the Social Security Corporation and qualify for affiliated programs, and workers who are not registered with the SSC, and what kind of services and benefits were made available to them through national programs and emergency funds.

The episode also hosted a principal of a private school in Salt and a home-based cook. The guests discussed the impact the Coronavirus and government Defense Orders had on their businesses. Professor Qbeilat offered his opinion on what businessowners can do to help mitigate the damage of the Coronavirus outbreak and the follow-up lockdown.

**[Episode 2: Basic Labor Rights under Defense Law Orders, Part 2. \(4 May 2020\)](#)**

The second episode which aired 4 May 2020 continued the discussion on basic labor rights under the Defense Orders. Professor Qbeilat explained how the Coronavirus economic downturn will have a stronger impact on women since women are already poorer and paid less than men in normal conditions, especially women who are informal workers. Qbeilat expanded on his point by calling on all parties to provide legal assistance to and raise awareness among women about their labor rights. At the time of airing the episode, many working parents were gradually returning to work with the struggle of having nurseries closed and no place to put their children in while they are at work.

The show produced a compilation of recommendations from the first two episodes to the government to be more proactive about protecting working mothers through Flexible Work System; recommendations to employers by encouraging them to implement flexible work bylaws,

especially for working mothers, and recommendations for employees by reaching out to official communication channels to report any violation of labor rights. Here are the recommendations:

**'LET US KNOW' RECOMMENDATIONS BY EXPERTS ON PROTECTING LABOR RIGHTS**

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT**

- Activate Flexible Work Bylaw through a Defense Order to facilitate the task of working mothers in caring for their children and following-up on their work tasks.
- Nurseries to operate again, even if doing so would require issuing or amending a Defense Order. Reopening nurseries would alleviate the burden of working parents who require childcare to return to work. The Orders must ensure the enforcement of the highest levels of healthy safety and prevention of Coronavirus infections according to government health guidance within nurseries.
- Protect the various rights of female workers, such as ensuring that they do not lose paid tie off or wages if they are absent due to childcare needs. This protection can be emphasized through Defense Orders.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYEES**

In the event of any form of injustice such as suspension, deduction of salary, or the loss of any of the labor rights, file a complaint with the Ministry of Labor, through the platforms dedicate for that purpose. If labor right are not protected, resort to court.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS**

Do not require working mothers to return to the workplace and/or offer flexible work if nurseries remain closed.

### **Episode 3: Labor Rights Under the Lessening Restrictions, as the Government Allows the Majority of Businesses to Return to Semi-Regular Working Schedules. (11 May 2020)**

In episode 3, the show hosted guest speaker Hamada Abu Nijmeh, an expert in labor affairs and Head of Workers' House. Mr. Abu Nijmeh discussed labor rights in light of the reduced COVID-19 lockdown restrictions and the gradual return to work. The discussion revolved around the enforcement of the Labor Law and Social Security Law, which remained in effect, but Defense Orders issued regulations that implemented temporary changes to the provisions of the law. For example, the Defense Orders gave many employers the opportunity to lower wages up to 30%, with conditions such as the decrease has to include executive management and be with the consent of employees. Defense Orders also mandated that employers could not terminate workers' contracts because of the Coronavirus consequences. Mr. Abu Nijmeh discussed the

negative consequences of the outbreak and the lockdown on women, since women are more prone to facing discrimination and scrutiny at work. He continued to discuss how many women were forced to work less hours in order to be paid less, and additionally, many women were forced to resort to unpaid leave in order to stay with their children since nurseries remained closed at the time.

The episode produced recommendations that focused on labor rights and how to enforce them in light of the Defense Orders. Here are the recommendations:

## 'LET US KNOW' RECOMMENDATIONS BY EXPERTS ON PROTECTING LABOR RIGHTS

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT

- The state is to provide salaries from its funds, such as the maternity fund, in the case that nurseries do not reopen and some workers are unable to work remotely or return to the work environments because of childcare, and that stems from the state's responsibility in caring for children.
- Review and amend labor legislation such as Labor Law and Flexible Work Bylaw to ensure protection of various rights such as wages, promotion, and training.
- Issuance of guidelines by the Ministry of Labor, including the basic rules governing private sector work within clear legal frameworks that protect rights and prevent violations given the current circumstances.
- Strengthen the Ministry of Labor's oversight tools for inspecting and monitoring private sector entities.
- Raise the awareness of workers through the Ministry of Labor and the Social Security Corporation regarding their various labor rights, such as wages and non-termination of services.
- Amend Defense Orders 6 and 9 in light of changes to work conditions, to ensure that pay cuts or termination of services are stopped.
- Continue to reduce social security deductions to ease the burdens on employers and employees.
- Expedite the development of a viable proposal to include informal workers under the umbrella of social security as soon as possible without depriving them of benefitting from the National Aid Fund.
- Reopen nurseries, taking into account safety and health standards, and the prevention of viruses, in order to improve the chances of mothers returning to work.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

- Adopt impartial criteria in the distribution of tasks related to work based on objective grounds, without excluding women from these tasks due to their sex.
- Employers should not assign tasks to employees that require more than the specified daily working hours, especially when resorting to a flexible work.
- Review and amend companies' internal bylaws to provide better protection for workers.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYEES

Workers can file a complaint through the [hemayeh.jo](https://hemayeh.jo) Platform website which the government has created alongside hotlines to report any violations of labor rights guaranteed by Labor Law and Defense Orders

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Raise the awareness of workers about their labor rights, how to negotiate with employers, the mechanism for submitting complaints, and any developments related to Defense Orders that affect work environments, conditions, and relationships to employers.

#### **Episode 4: Flexible Work in Light of the Coronavirus Outbreak and its Aftermath. (18 May 2020)**

The 4<sup>th</sup> episode of the “Let US Know” show focused on the concept of flexible work, its implementation during the Coronavirus, and its possible implementation in the aftermath of the outbreak. The show hosted Ms. Noor Al Imam, a lawyer and an activist and a member of the Arab Women’s Legal Network (AWLN). Al Imam discussed the various forms of flexible work systems available to workers. Al Imam emphasized on the importance of flexible work systems to working parents, especially mothers, which children younger than 10 years old whom they cannot be sent to school or nurseries because of the lockdown. Most parents had no alternatives during the lockdown to schools and nurseries while they remained closed. Flexible work systems take many forms including having workers work remotely, especially if their work does not require them to be physically present in the work establishment. Another form of flexible work system is having employees work their total required number of hours within fewer days.

The show produced a number of recommendations for the government, employees, and employers that will help relevant stakeholders weather the impact of the Coronavirus. Here are the recommendations:



## 'LET US KNOW' RECOMMENDATIONS BY EXPERTS ON PROTECTING LABOR RIGHTS

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT

- Review and amend the Defense Order No.6 related to working 8 hours/day and the flexible work system. Without amendment of the Defense Order No.6, employers may apply the flexible work system in a way that makes more employees be considered part-time because according to Labor Law, any work under 8 hours/day constitutes part-time work. Therefore, the government should emphasize that an employee who fulfills their duties according to an agreed upon flexible work system should receive full-time wages if they perform the same value of work, even if they do not complete 8 hours/day. Therefore, the government should emphasize that an employee who fulfills their duties according to an agreed upon flexible work system should not have their pay reduced if they perform the same value of work, even if they do not complete 8 hours/day.
- Amend the Flexible Work Regulation so that part-time flexible work maintains the level of work required for an employee be registered with Social Security. According to Article 4 of the Social Security Law, all employees who work 16 days or more a month must be registered with Social Security.
- Ensure and emphasize that there should be no erosion of labor rights in light of employers implementing flexible work systems, in accordance to the Article 9 of the Flexible Work Regulation.
- Bolster government's oversight tools, such as the inspection and monitoring of the private sector, to ensure that there are no violations of labor rights when implementing the flexible work system.
- Raise awareness of business owners and employees by the Ministry of Labor, the Social Security Corporation, and the civil society organizations about the Flexible Work Regulation, its different forms, implementation, and procedures.
- Produce a guide for business owners and employees about the best practices for applying the five forms of flexible work that are laid out in the Flexible Work Regulation, and what types of situations and occupations each form is most appropriate for.
- Hold workshops by the Directorates of the Ministry of Labor to raise awareness on flexible work systems and its advantages.
- Recognize private sector establishments who implement the Flexible Work Regulations in ways that increases women's involvement in workplace and prevents against the departure of women employees. The Ministry of Labor's should include the names of these employers in the Mol's top employers' list and provide incentive benefits for employers that apply best practices for supporting women employees.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

- Amend company internal bylaws to ensure that the nature and tasks of each position is defined and in agreement with the flexible work system, in accordance to the instructions of the Flexible Work Regulations of 2018.
- Highlight the importance of implementing flexible work systems for certain types of employees, including primary caregivers in families and people with disabilities, in order to ensure that their labor rights are protected, and they can continue their work without interruption.
- Implement the five forms of the flexible work system and focus on the tasks achieved instead of the number of hours work is performed, as required by the Labor Law.
- Ensure that the labor rights of employees are maintained and not violated when implementing the flexible work system.
- Adopt performance-based achievement standards for evaluating the tasks employees accomplish when working under any the five forms of the flexible work system.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYEES

- Employees should reconsider their productivity by the number of tasks achieved throughout the day, not by the numbers of hours worked.
- Hold discussion panels with the labor unions and syndicates to inform them about flexible work and incorporate flexible work conditions within collective negotiations (articles in treaties, collective bargaining, collective contracts, etc.)

### Episode 5: Forms of Social Protection for Male and Female Workers within Work Environments (1 June 2020).

The 5<sup>th</sup> episode hosted Mr. Ahmad Awad, an expert in labor rights and Director of the Phenix Center for Economic and Informatics Studies. Mr. Awad elaborated on the definition of social protection and its forms, specifically social security and its importance. According to Mr. Awad's notes, Jordan's social protection forms include seven out of the nine social protection forms recognized globally. The remaining two forms that are not included are healthcare protection, which affords citizens with healthcare options that are affordable. Mr. Awad noted that this provision exists within the Jordanian Social Security Law, but it is not activated. The other social protection form is protection against unemployment. Mr. Awad noted that 34% of Jordanians are not protected by social security. Additionally, many Jordanians cannot afford opting for the voluntary registration option because of its high cost in comparison to the average of salaries in Jordan; the percentage of voluntary registration with Social Security Corporation in Jordan is 17.5%.

The episode produced multiple recommendations for the government including lowering the percentage of voluntary registration with the Social Security Corporation, review of Defense Orders that regulate employers' layoff of workers, especially those in the informal sector, and the restructure of social security protection systems to include all citizen not only workers.

**[Episode 6: Labor Rights of Workers in the Private Education Sector in Light of Changes to and Latest Introductions to the Defense Orders \(8 June 2020\).](#)**

The 6<sup>th</sup> episode built upon the topic from episode five; the episode discussed the labor rights of workers in the private education sector, many of whom are considered informal. The show hosted Mohammad Khasawneh, an experienced lawyer, to discuss the implications of the Coronavirus on the private education sector, which has been one of the most affected sectors under the lockdown. Many private schools claimed that during the Coronavirus outbreak and the follow-up lockdown, they could not collect any fees from parents since their children were not attending schools, henceforth many schools could not pay their workers any salaries or benefits. Mr. Khasawneh encouraged workers in the private education sector to contact lawyers in case they were exposed to labor rights violations. However, an audience member who called the show pointed out many problems within the sector that have impacted private school employees long before the pandemic and the lockdown, including the fact that many private school workers are on an annual contract basis, which means that many schools escape the obligation of having to automatically renew the contracts for their employees.

Additionally, many private schools pay workers below the minimum wage or opt their workers out of social protection forms such as healthcare and/or social security. The episode produced a number of recommendations that focused on encouraging workers in the private education sector to contact lawyers or file a complaint with the Ministry of Labor in case they were exposed to labor rights violations. Additionally, the episode produced recommendations to the government that focused on having the government review Defense Order No.7 in order to protect workers from having their labor rights eroded. Here are the recommendations:

## 'LET US KNOW' RECOMMENDATIONS BY EXPERTS ON PROTECTING LABOR RIGHTS

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT

- The Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Education should draft and review work contracts for the private education sector to ensure that labor rights for workers are not being eroded by employers, especially for limited-term contracts.
- The government should review Defense Orders with the aim of protecting the educational system in order to ensure that the rights of all parties are protected, including the labor rights of teachers, supporting employers, and ensuring that students are given the best quality of education under these circumstances.
- Review Article 7 of Defense Order No.6 in order to prevent the erosion of labor rights.
- Raise awareness among workers and employers in the private education sector about Defense Orders as they relate to labor rights, and workers' and employers' responsibilities related to the Labor Law and Social Security Law.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

- Do not exploit or abuse Defense Orders in a way that violates the labor rights of employees, especially employees within categories that are not covered by Defense Orders. The special circumstances laid out by the Defense Orders should not be expanded or circumvented.
- Employers should abide by the Labor Law, Social Security Law, and other related articles that provide protections for workers in the private education sector.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYEES

- File complaints to the official authorities, such as the Ministry of Labor and/or Social Security Corporation, in case any labor rights are violated. These complaints are handled with strict confidentiality.
- Resort to the law if no formal actions are taken after a labor rights violation complaint is filed.

### Episode 7: How Small Enterprises and Startups, especially those Led and Owned by Women, Can Overcome Challenges and Ensure Survival and Success (15 June 2020).

The seventh episode focused on the effect of the lockdown on businesses, especially small business and startups. The show hosted Mr. Nidal Al Bitar, an expert in information technology, and institutional performance development in Jordan and the region. The guest expert shared that many small businesses need to adapt to quick and sound solutions to survive and potentially thrive in the midst of the lockdown and the always-changing Defense Orders.

The episode resulted in recommendations which focused on urging the government to alleviate the pressures faced by small businesses and start-ups, including lowering tax rates and encouraging banks and other lenders to delay or be flexible with debt payouts by these businesses. Other recommendations focused on the needs for small businesses and start-ups to adapt to measures swiftly to ensure that they can survive and endure the consequences of the lockdown. Here are the recommendations:

## **'LET US KNOW' RECOMMENDATIONS BY EXPERTS ON PROTECTING LABOR RIGHTS**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DECISIONMAKERS AND FUNDERS**

- The government, large private corporations, and other institutions should develop mechanisms that provide actual and effective support for small business owners and start-ups, especially those led or owned by women.
- Develop an electronic directory that helps small businesses grow and survive. The directory should contain information on the types of businesses it hosts, available services and products, and their geographic location and areas of services. The directory will function as a mapping tool and a guide for various actors within the market to help each other and develop a successful environment in which everyone can flourish.
- Develop programs that help build capacities and skills for maintaining and growing market share, and how to strategize and plan for current and future market conditions.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR START-UPS AND SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS**

- Use various technical tools that help businesses compete and stay active in the market, such as electronic marketing and electronic payments methods like e-wallets which make transactions a smoother and easier process.
- Use various social media outlets, especially Facebook since it is the most used social media outlet in Jordan, to build an electronic storefront and promote products and services.
- Increase knowledge of competitive skills. Business owners should invest in learning more about essential market concepts such marketing, business-model design, improving rates of return on investments, and other skills that will make their business more adaptive and able to sustain highly unstable market conditions.
- Create an environment of conscious creativity and innovation by reviewing business mechanisms, production processes, and quality of products and services so that they take into consideration the current circumstances and market needs in a way that provides added value to customers.
- Cautiously evaluate when taking out a loan so that the loan is invested in product development and marketing plans, and not used to cover expenses like rent. The probability of defaulting on loans used to pay ongoing business expenses is high.

### **Episode 8: Decent Work and its role in Promoting Women's Economic Participation (22 June 2020).**

Episode eight focused on the concept of the decent work and its impact on women's presence in the workforce. The show hosted Khaled Hijab, the Executive Director of Tech Tribes. Mr. Hijab shared his opinions on the challenges that face the economy which has faced difficulties in creating new jobs. Mr. Hijab noted that the unemployment rate in Jordan for women is higher than that for men, and the Coronavirus outbreak may exacerbate this pattern due to many fundamental issues within the economy including the market economy's inability to create adequate jobs that are up-to-date with the market needs, or with the current requirements of certain jobs that demand more modern set of skills. Additionally, Hijab commented on the need for the region, and the country specifically, to catch up to the digital revolution that is taking the world by a storm or else many people will be left out of a job. Individuals must catch up with the latest and most advanced technologies and digital breakthroughs by developing skills needed within the market. On a policy level, GoJ should advance the creation of an environment that will be inviting for many local,



regional, and global markets. Furthermore, Hijab noted, there needs to be a change in society's perceptions about the presence of women in the economy, as well as youth and other segments of the society that are usually overlooked.

Hijab made several recommendations to encourage people, especially the youth, to adapt to skills that are needed within the job market, availing investment opportunities for women entrepreneurs that face many challenges in acquiring investments that will make their businesses, and for the government to update its programs and policies that coincide with the 21<sup>st</sup> century mentality and technology. Here are the recommendations:

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**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT AND DECISIONMAKERS**

- Develop economic policies that focus on engaging youth, especially young women, in the job market and entrepreneurship.
- Focus on creating opportunities in data science, computing, digital management as well as other skills that are needed in the business environment today and in the future.
- Develop the job market, in coordination with the private sector and business incubators, based on a continuous analysis of local and global market needs. Guide start-ups and small business owners to create businesses that respond local market needs.
- Adapt entrepreneurial ideas that include businesses that operate from homes within the economy and create a platform through which small business owners can connect to the entrepreneurship market.
- Review laws and policies to empower marginalized groups in entrepreneurial environments, ease the process of entering the market for women and people with disabilities, and adopt approaches to support start-ups and small businesses compete in the market.
- Adapt inclusive mechanisms and ease the procedures for entering markets in a way that creates equal opportunities and prevents gender discrimination, especially gender wage discrimination.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUTH AND START-UPS AND SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS**

- Focus on developing skills that are needed in the job market today like critical thinking, analytical thinking, using technology, employing data, and sharpening soft skills that include cooperation, delegation, teamwork, and the ability handle pressure.
- Focus on career paths that are future-forward and adaptive to volatile workplace environments, especially those that focus on fields that are expected to flourish in the future.
- Found start-ups and small businesses that correspond with local needs, rather than following global trends.

**Recommendations for Private Sector, Business Incubators, and Accelerators**

- Adopt an inclusive perspective that ensures that effective and meaningful participation of women in the market, and do not discriminate against women seeking entrepreneurial opportunities.
- Give entrepreneurial ideas a chance and develop skills of start-ups and small business owners in way that ensures they can compete and survive in the labor market.

### [Episode 9: Decent Work Conditions: Aspirations and Reality. \(13 July 2020\)](#)

The ninth episode aired on 13 July 2020 and focused on the importance of decent work and the conditions for work environments to qualify as having decent work conditions. The episode hosted Mr. Riyad Al-Subuh, a human rights consultant, who clarified that the misunderstood term “decent work conditions” means creating job opportunities under convenient and healthy conditions,

adding that creating such jobs is not the sole responsibility of the employer but is rather a matter of the state's policies and practices as well. Mr. Al-Subuh explained the benefits of decent work and discussed the flaws in the Jordanian Labor Law in providing decent work conditions.

The episode produced recommendations related to public policies and legislations ranging from encouraging the government and relevant stakeholders to adapt decent conditions within workplace environments to ensure that employees, especially women, are safe and comfortable in their workplace establishment. Additionally, the episode included recommendations related to raising awareness among working women about decent work conditions and what that entails, and how they can enhance their work-life balance, especially for working mothers. Here are the recommendations:

## 'LET US KNOW' RECOMMENDATIONS BY EXPERTS ON PROTECTING LABOR RIGHTS

### RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO PUBLIC POLICIES AND LEGISLATIONS

- The government and businessowners should adopt the concept of decent work which ensures that job opportunities include social security coverage and health insurance benefits, working hours and wages are adequately proportional, equal pay for the same work, providing training opportunities, and taking into consideration the social conditions of workers, whether male or female, and the impact of these roles on the duties and responsibilities of these workers including but not limited to providing safe workplace environment, adequate transportation means, and nurseries for working mothers and fathers.
- Review the Labor Law and other legislation to ensure that unions are given independence and space to advocate for their unions' rights and the provision of decent work conditions
- Issue and/or amend legislation to ensure regulating and including all workers, whether in the formal or informal sectors (including the agricultural sector), with legal protections and decent work conditions
- Regulate the conditions and standards of workplaces, protect the rights of workers, and integrate women in non-traditional sectors by improving the quality of work conditions in these sectors.

### RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO RAISING AWARENESS

- Raise awareness among female workers about decent work conditions and its role in improving job opportunities and workforce participation, which will enhance the living conditions of these women and their families.
- Raise awareness among decisionmakers and businessowners about decent work and its positive impact on ensuring that skillful workers stay in the job, and that workers are motivated and productive, in addition to attracting new skilled workers.
- Raise awareness among decisionmakers about providing job opportunities that guarantee decent work conditions, means a lower unemployment rate and less need for assistance programs.
- Raise awareness among workers about legal options for ensuring their labor rights are not violated, either by filing complaints with the Ministry of Labor or courts specialized in labor-related cases.
- Raise awareness among the public about the role of the Labor Law and Social Security Law in protecting labor rights, and how to benefit from the laws in case of labor rights violations.

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### Episode 10: Women in Non-traditional Occupations and the Challenges they Face/ Success Stories. (20 July 2020)

The tenth episode aired on 20 July 2020 and focused on the challenges that women face when choosing unconventional career paths. The episode hosted Mrs. Khawla Al-Sheikh, who is a plumber. Khawla told the story of how she got into plumbing, even though this occupation was not available for females, and how she now has her own academy for women to learn non-traditional professions. She has also urged women to learn and excel at any profession they choose, and not to be held back by what the society dictates.

The first call the show received was from Ms. Aicha Amayreh, a certified plumber and house painter, who talked about how this occupation provided a good source of income for her household and the challenges she faced in this line of work. Mrs. Al-Sheikh added that in recent years, she has noticed that there is more demand for women to learn this occupation as it is becoming socially more acceptable.

The show also received a call from Ms. Ahlam Atiyat who works in car maintenance. She talked about how she and her business partner were taken advantage of by male mechanics due to their lack of knowledge in the field. However, she considers that in the past 4 years, they have been able to change women's perceptions towards learning and being part of this field.

### Episode 11: Vocational Training and its Role in Increasing Women's Economic Participation. (27 July 2020)

The eleventh episode aired on 27 July 2020 and focused on the vocational programs available for women within the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC). The episode hosted Ms. Amani Al-Samarat, who is the project manager of the Female Participation Enhancement Project. She shared current statistics of female trainees in the VTC and emphasized the VTC's plan to increase female participation in vocational training, including through the Female Participation Project which develops training programs for females. She also discussed the challenges faced by women training and working in unconventional fields.

This episode also hosted Walaa Shehadeh, a graduate from a vocational institute in Tafilah, who specializes in maintenance of mobile devices and is an owner of a cell phone maintenance shop. Ms. Shehadeh talked about her career journey, and challenging society's perception towards women working in unconventional professions, urging women to seize the opportunities that are presented to them.



The episode produced several recommendations that aim to increase awareness within the general public about the importance of vocational training and the various field it encompasses, and recommendations related to improving vocational training by deepening the collaboration between stakeholders to enhance the workplace environment for women and develop better programs that are up to date with the current needs of the labor market. Here are the recommendations:

## ‘LET US KNOW’ RECOMMENDATIONS BY EXPERTS ON PROTECTING LABOR RIGHTS

Recommendations Related to Raising Awareness	Recommendations Related to Improving Vocational Training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise awareness within local communities about the importance of vocational training and its various forms, and how vocational training programs can benefit participants, especially women.</li> <li>Implement programs that teach vocational trainees how to respond to labor rights violations.</li> <li>Raise awareness to eliminate gender stereotype and structural barriers that may hinder women from participating in vocational training programs.</li> <li>Continue to provide counseling services to women regarding pursuing nontraditional careers paths and participating in training that coincides with market needs.</li> <li>Develop career counseling programs for students prior to choosing educational streams during the secondary education stage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deepen the collaboration between stakeholders to improve the environment of vocational training for women.</li> <li>Deepen the partnership between vocational training programs and the private sector in developing programs' curricula that is up to date with market needs, and skills and techniques.</li> <li>Develop studies on vocational training and how it can be improved and share the results with relevant stakeholders.</li> <li>Monitor and analyze students' interests, especially female students, during school years prior to choosing between academic or vocational streams during secondary education phase.</li> <li>Develop a strategy or a mechanism that determines market needs with relevant stakeholders on local, national, and regional levels.</li> <li>Continue efforts in maintaining quality control of vocational training programs and services.</li> </ul>





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### **Episode 12: Economic Empowerment of People/Women with Disabilities. (10 August 2020)**

The twelfth episode aired on 10 August 2020 and focused on the economic empowerment of persons with disabilities, and women with disabilities in particular. The episode hosted Ms. Lara Yaseen, who is a legal expert at the Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Ms. Yaseen defined the term ‘persons with disabilities’ (PWD), adding that in Jordan, the percentage of PWDs above the age of 5 reached 11.2% in 2015. She also drew on the limitations that PWDs and specifically women face, encouraging them to know their rights and to fight for them, as the absence of accommodation in any workplace is considered discriminatory by law. Lastly, she talked about a draft law that the Ministry of Labor, in coordination with the Council, is



working on pertaining to the employment of PWDs, which should be put into effect before the end of this year.

### **Episode 13: Vocational Education as a Pathway to Achieving Women's Economic Empowerment. (17 August 2020)**

The thirteenth episode aired on 17 August 2020 and focused on vocational education as a pathway to achieving women's economic empowerment. This episode hosted Dr. Muhammad Al-Sha'ar who is the Director of Vocational Education and Production at the Ministry of Education. He explained that the Ministry of Education provides vocational education starting from the 10<sup>th</sup> grade and described the courses offered to female and male students. He pointed out that people are not aware of the importance of vocational training, as it is perceived as an option for the academically under-achieving students, and how this changed when vocational training students could enroll in universities. Al Sha'ar shared suggestions on how to change perceptions about vocational training and added the needs to address the lack of accessibility within vocational training programs, and shared success stories of women who opted for vocational training.

### **Episode 14: Including Informal Workers, Especially Women, Under Social Security. (24 August 2020)**

The 14<sup>th</sup> episode aired on 24 August 2020 and focused on the inclusion of all workers in the social security system, especially women in the informal sector. This episode hosted Mr. Ahmad Awad, who is the founder and Director of the Phenix Center for Economic and Informatics Studies. Mr. Awad defined what is the informal sector, adding that those in Jordan who were not covered by the social security system were supported through the National Aid Fund during COVID-19 crisis, with informal labor constituting around 48% of workforce in Jordan in 2019. He then pointed out the reasons behind the size of the informal labor in Jordan, according to a study done by the Phenix Center. He also noted that women make a significant part of certain informal sectors, pointing out that the high cost of subscriptions with the Social Security Corporation (SSC) is behind businesses and employees refraining from enrolment. This episode also hosted Shaman Al-Majali, the Spokesperson for the SSC, who confirmed several measures that the SSC is adopting to encourage people to enroll. Mr. Awad then called for reforming the SSC system and suggested ways to encourage people to enrol in the SCC.

The episode produced several recommendations for the government that will aid more people to register with the SSC and become part of the formal economy. Those recommendations included amending laws such as the Companies Law of 1997 to include conditions that required companies to include its employees under the SSC as part of their registration renewal and creating tools

and mechanisms to fully implement the Labor Law including inspection of work sites, putting stricter measures on businessowners who violate the Labor Law. Here are the recommendations:

## 'LET US KNOW' RECOMMENDATIONS BY EXPERTS ON PROTECTING LABOR RIGHTS

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT

- Review economic policies related to investment in order to provide incentives for investments that will create significant job opportunities with decent work conditions.
- Review labor policies that focus on creating an investment-friendly environment that is not at the expense of decent work conditions and labor standards. The review should emphasize the importance of balancing an investor-friendly environment that also guarantees decent work conditions.
- Accelerate the implementation of the Towards a National Framework for a Transition to Formal Economy in Jordan which was issued in 2014 and developed in cooperation with the International Labor Organization.
- Expedite issuing a special statute for workers in agriculture in accordance to the Labor Law to guarantee all labor rights for workers within this sector.
- Reduce social security contribution rates while maintaining all benefits, in order to encourage employers not avoid registering their workers with the Social Security Corporation.
- Develop an alternative mechanism for voluntary contributions with the Social Security Corporation so that self-employed individuals and freelancers are not burdened with high contribution levels.
- Create a special fund financed by the annual government budget to pay part of the contributions of individuals who voluntarily subscribe to Social Security Corporation and cannot pay the full amount.
- Amend Companies Law No.22 of 1997 to include conditions that require companies that are renewing their registration certificates to submit documentation that demonstrates all their employees are included with the Social Security Corporation.
- Amend the Professional Licenses Law of 1999 to include a provision that requires businesses who are renewing professional licenses to submit documentation that demonstrates all their employees are included within the Social Security Corporation.
- Create tools and mechanisms for fully implementing the Labor Law by updating the techniques and methods used for inspecting work sites. Put stricter penalties in place for business owners who violate the Labor Law and other labor rights related legislations. On the other hand, provide incentives for establishments and businessowners who follow labor legislation.

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### [Episode 15: Mechanisms of Registering Women in Vocational Training Programs at Vocational Institutes. \(28 September 2020\)](#)

The fifteenth episode which aired on 28 September 2020, focused on the mechanisms for registering women in vocational training programs at vocational institutes. This episode hosted Amer Al-Salti, the Director of Admission and Registration at the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC), who talked about the vocational training programs that are available for women at the Corporation, pointing out that most of the programs in general target both males and females. He explained that registration is available via the VTC's website through simple steps.

### **Episode 16: Vocational Counseling in Vocational Training. (5 October 2020)**

The episode focused on how to improve the role of vocational counseling in increasing women's involvement in vocational training. The guest speakers were Etizaz Shneikat, Director of Ain Al-basha Vocational Institute, Lama Klodia, a student at Ain Al-basha Vocational Institute who specialized in baking sweets and pastries, and another student, Samar Kharbatly, who is a hairdresser for women.

In the episode, Shneikat clarified the role of career counseling and how counseling can increase enrolment and success in vocational training programs. She presented what counseling services are offered to support school students and their families and to change negative perceptions of vocational training. The episode shed light on the obstacles and challenges that the VTC faces in guiding students towards vocational training programs, as well as the career counseling content that is provided to students during vocational training which helps them build their capabilities and skills. The episode concluded by presenting recommendations for strengthening vocational counseling services and increasing efforts with relevant partners to erode the negative perceptions of vocational training, especially as an option for women.

### **Episode 17: VTC's Employment Opportunities for Women. (12 October 2020)**

The episode covered employment opportunities available for women who graduate from the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC). The guest speakers were Ms. Eman Wreikat, the Director of Employment at VTC, Mr. Ahmed Nafisa, the Managing Director and Director of Human Resources at a confectionery manufacturing company that employs VTC graduates, and Ms. Hanan Al-Khatib, a VTC graduate who started her own restaurant serving healthy meals in Jabal Al-Hussein, Amman.

In the episode, Wreikat talked about VTC's partnerships with the private sector, which spans all stages of training including post-graduation employment and beyond. She also discussed how VTC identifies labor market needs and adapt programs and training content, accordingly, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic. The episode featured a couple of callers who shared their experiences, talking about VTC's programs and partnerships. Wreikat concluded by proposing several recommendations, namely the importance of supporting and encouraging private sector companies to employ VTC graduates.

### **Episode 18: Vocational Training in Jordan's Central Region. (19 October 2020)**

The episode addressed the vocational training opportunities in Jordan's central region. The guest speakers were Engineer Raed Hammad, Director of Vocational Training in the central region of Jordan, Aya, a student in the medical administration program from the city of As-Salt, and Maha Issa, a student in the ceramics program.

In the episode, Hammad gave an overview of the number of centers in the central governorates, including those dedicated to girls. He discussed the vocational subjects that are taught at these centers, noting that the VTC is continuously updating and expanding its programs to be more appealing to women. He also talked about the challenges facing VTC's women graduates, especially the lack of job opportunities, pointing out the need for creating more jobs by the private sector.

### **Episode 19: Vocational Training in Jordan's Northern and Southern Regions. (26 October 2020)**

The episode covered vocational training opportunities that are available for women in the northern and southern regions of the Kingdom. The guest speakers were Eng. Ahmed El-Shatnawi, Director of Vocational Training in the northern region of Jordan, Eng. Ghalib Adenat, Director of Vocational Training in the southern region, Abeer Al-Sharayri, former student at the Vocational Institute for Women in Irbid, and Nahid Al-Oeirat, a former student from the southern region/Tafilah governorate.

In this episode, El-Shatnawi said that all northern governorates have Vocational Institutes that meet vocational training needs and demands for men and women. Additionally, Adenat mentioned that the percentage of female students in VTC centers in the south was higher than male students but now women are only 42% of students in 2020. He added that the percentage of female students in the north centers range between 35% to more than 40% in most specializations. El-Shatnawi shared a success story about women who enrolled in plumbing programs. The guests' recommendations for increasing women's enrollment in the VTC programs and their employment opportunities included having a funded entity to help graduates start their own businesses, and the importance of pursuing training in specializations that have a demand in the labor market.

### **Episode 20: Distance learning During the Coronavirus Pandemic. (2 November 2020)**

This episode was developed in collaboration with the Arab Network for Civic Education (ANHRE). The episode discussed rethinking the concept of education and the future of education in light of shifting to distance learning during the Coronavirus pandemic. The guest speaker was Kamal Al-Mashreqi, a lawyer and expert in educational affairs and member of the Jordanian Coalition for Education for All.

In this episode, the speaker discussed the important strides Jordan made in education in general, as well as some of the challenges the education sector faces during the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, the speaker discussed distance learning tools to ensure the continuity of education exacerbates inequalities therein, where many teachers, especially in the private sector, who are employed on temporary contracts have been affected by the closure of schools, especially female teachers. The speaker also discussed the importance of in-person education, and the need for cooperation between the school administration and parents to ensure that the education process is inclusive of not only students, but parents and other relevant stakeholders.

### **Episode 21: The Quality and Outputs of Education in Light of the Coronavirus Pandemic. (9 November 2020)**

This episode was developed in collaboration with ANHRE. The episode addressed the concept of rethinking education and drawing the future after shifting to distance learning in light of the Coronavirus pandemic. The guest speakers were Hasan Khazaleh, the director of Afaq Center for Development and Training, and Enas Daoud Banat, project coordinator at Anwar Al-Khair Association.

The episode tackled the effects of the spreading of the virus on community participation, as a large part of the learning process has become dependent on self-learning, and this requires joint responsibility and collaborative efforts. Afterwards, Khazaleh emphasized the importance of participation of everyone in drawing up education policies and decisions, including the



participation of teachers, civil society organizations, parent councils, educational development councils, and community leaders. He noted that civil society organizations have experience they can share with the Ministry of Education on how to update education policies, including updating learning tools to be more interactive by using online and offline tools. The episode also covered how learning methods can be adapted to ensure the principles of equal opportunities, equality, and justice within a joint framework of actions.

This episode also hosted two young women; Bushra, a hairdresser for women, and Samar, a baker specialized in sweets and pastries. They gave feedback on the online registration process confirming that it is easy and accessible. Bushra also pointed out that nursery available at the training institute further encouraged her to enroll. Mr. As-Salti added that the fees per semester are only 30 JOD for all specializations and are available for everyone between the ages of 16 and 35, with 10 out of 35 institutes dedicated for women. He also explained that all graduates receive a certificate that they can use when applying for jobs, and that the VTC has employment units that connect the graduates with the private sector. Lastly, Mr. As-Salti's final recommendations focused on the importance of optimizing work environments to further encourage women to join the labor market within different vocations.