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This publication is part of a series of papers on Gender and Migration written in the framework of the CARIM project and presented at a meeting organised in Florence: “Gender and migration in Southern and Eastern Mediterranean and Sub-Sahara African countries” (18-19 October 2010).

These papers will be discussed in two meetings between Policy Makers and Experts on the same topic in winter 2011. The results of these discussions will also be published.

The entire set of papers on Gender and Migration are available at <http://www.carim.org/ql/GenderAndMigration>

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Within this framework, CARIM aims, in an academic perspective, to observe, analyse, and forecast migration in Southern & Eastern Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan Countries (hereafter Region).

CARIM is composed of a coordinating unit established at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (RSCAS) of the European University Institute (EUI, Florence), and a network of scientific correspondents based in the 17 countries observed by CARIM: Algeria, Chad, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Palestine, Senegal, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, and Turkey.

All are studied as origin, transit and immigration countries. External experts from the European Union and countries of the Region also contribute to CARIM activities.

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Abstract

This paper tackles the socio-political aspects of gender and migration in Jordan. Our concern is to figure out whether and, if so, how public debate, institutional setup and specific governmental or government-approved policies targeting migrant women are gendered, i.e., how gender policies articulate with migratory policies, how gender determines migrants' experience, in terms of, for instance, life cycle and employment. We also inquire about the purposes of such policies. Our main conclusion is that, though public debate is indeed gendered, migration policies are not. On immigration, gender does not have priority over other characteristics of the migrant in the overall policy-making process on migration. However, there exists an economic sector-selective gendering of policies targeting female migrants in Jordan. This process is rooted in the political necessity of engineering female and migrant issues to respond to Jordanian nationals' concerns. As for females' emigration and, especially, a new trend involving mainly unmarried skilled young women directed at the Arab Gulf States, it has been so far ignored in the public debate, caught between the 'open door' policy and the institutional setup of Jordan's 'blocked society'. In the Jordanian context, migration, indeed, hardly allows female empowerment let alone female immigrants in Jordan. Therefore the paper advocates a stronger involvement on the part of sending countries' in the defence of their nationals employed abroad, especially given the situation of female English domestic workers.

Résumé

Cet article traite des aspects sociopolitiques de la relation entre genre et migration en Jordanie. Nous cherchons à comprendre si et comment le débat public, le contexte institutionnel et les politiques gouvernementales (ou soutenues par le gouvernement) visant les femmes migrantes sont genrées. Comment les politiques dans le domaine du genre s'articulent-elles aux politiques migratoires ? En quoi le genre détermine-t-il l'expérience des migrants, en termes de cycle de vie, de travail et d'emploi, par exemple ? Nous nous intéressons également aux objectifs de ces politiques. La conclusion principale de ce rapport est la suivante : le débat public prend en compte la question du genre mais les politiques migratoires l'ignorent le plus souvent. Concernant l'immigration, nous montrons que le genre ne pèse pas plus que d'autres facteurs dans le processus global de conception et de mise en œuvre des politiques migratoires. Cependant, on peut repérer une sélection par le genre dans certains secteurs économiques ouverts aux travailleurs immigrés, dont l'exemple le plus emblématique est l'emploi domestique. Ce processus a pour origine la nécessité politique d'instrumentaliser les questions de la femme et de la migration en réponse aux préoccupations des citoyens jordaniens. La question de l'émigration des femmes, en particulier le récent mouvement de femmes jeunes et célibataires vers les pays du Golfe, est pour sa part absente du débat public. Celui-ci reste en effet prisonnier de la politique de la « porte ouverte » mais surtout du contexte institutionnel d'une société jordanienne « bloquée ». Le contexte jordanien n'est donc pas toujours propice à l'autonomisation (empowerment) des femmes jordaniennes mais encore moins à celle des migrantes étrangères. Notre étude appelle donc les autorités des pays d'origine des migrantes à s'investir plus fortement dans la défense des intérêts de leurs ressortissantes expatriées, et de manière urgente dans celle des domestiques asiatiques.

At the international level, gender and migration has become a topic of policy-making (for instance, ILO, n.d.; 2004; IOM, 2006; OSCE, 2009; Schrover *et al.*, 2008; UNFPA, 2006; UNRISD, 2005; UN, 1995; 2005). There is also a literature here for the Middle East, mostly stemming from international and non-governmental organisations (for example, ILO, 2004; IOM, 2004; 2008; UNDP *et al.*, 2006).

Yet, the 'gender' angle on the issue of migration usually goes hand in hand with a focus on abuse and trafficking, which became the main target of international policy-making. Abuses against migrants in the Middle East, predominantly Asian female domestic workers, are indeed a reality, also experienced by refugees of recent ongoing conflicts (Iraqis, Sudanese) in neighbouring countries. However, this convergence of interests not only underscores the agency of migrant females. It is likely to hide other characteristics of migration involving women. Indeed, the emergence of a young Arab female migratory trend, involving mainly young unmarried skilled women and directed towards the Arab Gulf States, remains, for the most part, undocumented. Also, such a bias is likely to distract attention from the many social and political stakes of receiving foreign Arab and non-Arab women in local Middle Eastern societies.

This paper tackles the socio-political aspects of gender and migration in Jordan. Our concern is to figure out whether and, if so, how public debate, institutional setup and specific governmental or government-approved policies targeting migrant women are gendered: i.e., how gender policies articulate with migratory policies, how gender determines migrants' experience, in terms, for instance, of life cycle and labour. We also inquire about the purposes of such policies. The emphasis is on refugees and labour migrants, given the lack of data on family-reunion dynamics and patterns. The report will treat immigration and emigration separately, which follow distinct policy aims.

Our main conclusion is that, although public debate is indeed gendered, migration policies are not. On immigration, gender does not take over migrants' other characteristics or categories of belonging, in the overall policy-making process on migration. However, there exists an economic-sector selective gendering of policies targeting female migrants in Jordan. This process is rooted in the political necessity of engineering female and migrant issues to respond to Jordanians' concerns. As for female emigration, it has been ignored in the public debate, caught between the 'open door' policy and the institutional setup of Jordan's 'blocked society'¹.

Measuring stocks and flows of migrants in and from Jordan: gendering the data?

Immigration

As for immigration for professional purposes, there were 55202 regular female immigrants in 2009 (MoL, 2009). However, inaccuracies and discrepancies affect the various sources available for evaluating and describing expatriate women in Jordan. Undocumented labourers as well as refugees having to join the labour market without a work permit thus significantly increase this number, but no estimates broken down by sex are available. Data on students in the Kingdom are not broken down by nationality (Jordanians / non Jordanians) and stocks of foreign nationals in the Kingdom are underestimated. The 2004 Census came up with an estimate of 160933 female foreign nationals in the Kingdom in all categories (workers employed and unemployed, students, sick persons in treatment, forced migrants, spouses and female children in the case of family immigration or family reunion).

The population census conducted in 2004 gives the following characteristics for female expatriates in Jordan, as compared to males²:

¹ The expression is borrowed from Droze-Vincent, Ph. *Moyen-Orient: pouvoirs autoritaires, sociétés bloquées*, PUF, Paris, 2004.

² Tab. 7-4, p. 2400 and tab. 7-8, pp. 2429-2430 (HKJ/ DoS, 2006).

		Purpose of incoming		(% of total) ³	
	Total	work	accompaniment	study	other
Females	160933	26.5	35	1.7	33
Males	231340	53.6	16	2.7	22.6

‘Other’ may refer to forced migration into the Kingdom due to the war in Iraq in 2003. Moreover, 60% of men and women had been in Jordan for less than five years.

		Not active economically				Economically active	
	Aged 15 +	House-maker (% of n.e.a.)	student	with means	disabled	(% of total)	employed (% of e. a.)
Females	109878	77	15	1.4	5.9	43	91
Males	169804	2.4	52	8.9	18.8	85	94

The two tables do not show drastic differences between female and male migrants. There are sizeable numbers of female migrants, around 40% of both the total and the population of 15 years and above. The proportion of young migrants (younger than 15 years old) is also similar in both populations (respectively one quarter and one third of the total). ‘Work’ is more frequent as a reason for men to come to the country; however it may also disguise forced migration from Iraq. Regarding migrants today, economically active men are the norm, non active ones being most often students. Economically active women are half the proportion of active men. If non active, they are most often housewives, which suggests a gendering of migration experiences. However, active migrant women may be undercounted as compared to men: the proportion of domestics and industry workers, especially, is likely to be higher as such workers are kept invisible, in the private family sphere or in closed industrial compounds.

Census data used below refer to the ‘employed economically active’ subgroup of migrant women in order to match the reference population in both sources, as the Ministry of Labour’s data focus on the characteristics of economically-active females holding work permits. According to these data, the occupation of female migrant workers is roughly in line with that found round the world: ‘Female labour migration is concentrated in a few female-dominated occupations associated with traditional gender roles. Labour market segmentation and stereotypes define the demand for women migrant workers: demand is increasing mainly for care services in less-skilled and devalued jobs such as domestic work including home cleaning and child care, and in skilled and valued occupations such as nursing, and private institutional or home health caring for the elderly and the handicapped. Women migrant workers also hold jobs as contract and hotel cleaners; waitresses; entertainers, and sex workers. Women migrant workers are also found in retail sales, and in labour intensive manufacturing, mainly in sweatshops’ (Moreno-Fontes Chammartin, 2008: 1). As can be seen in table 1, the clear majority of legal foreign women labourers are employed in the social and personal services activity sector which encompasses domestic labour and more skilled opportunities such as nursing and specialised care, as well as education⁴.

³ The total does not equal 100, as other reasons for incoming to Jordan were not taken into consideration (tourism, treatment).

⁴ However, analysis of the distribution of legal female migrant workers by job categories shows that the ‘technicians’ only compose 0.6 % of the total, while the migrants active in the ‘services’ category amount to 92% of the total. Some skilled activities in the field of personal care may be performed by people declared by their employers as ‘services’ workers, if

Table 1. Distribution of legal migrant female workers by economic activity (2004, 2009)

Source	Year	Social and personal services	Wholesale, retail trade, restaurants and hotels	Industry and transformation	Agriculture	Other activities	Total
HKJ/ DoS (2006)	2004	22916	553	18178	396	865	42908
MoL (2004)	2004	21019	375	11791	194	389	33768
MoL (2009)	2009	50457	373	3771	261	340	55202

The difference between Census and MoL data for 2004 may stem from the inclusion of some undocumented labourers in the census, which, in any case, does not transform the more general picture. The striking factor is the evolution of data between 2004 and 2009: the registration of domestics (personal services) seems to have improved⁵. Also, the proportion of manufacturing workers decreased notably between the two dates.

In terms of nationality, the majority of legal female workers was in 2004, from Sri Lanka (26% of the total), from the Philippines (10,3%) and from ‘other Asian non-Arab countries’ (60%), the last including the then-sizeable community of manufacturing workers originating from the East (Bengladeshis, Pakistanis, Chinese, Indians, as well as Filipinas and Sri Lankans). In 2009 female migrant workers came from Sri Lanka (23% of the total), from the Philippines (23,5%) and from Indonesia (48%), as personal services’ workers went into first place (MoL, 2009). This picture may not reflect the real distribution of female workers by nationality, as Filipinas, and, particularly, Sri Lankans, often stay illegally in the country. In the case of Sri Lankans this is due to a lack of protection of their interests by their government and diplomatic representation which is unsuccessful in enforcing the terms of agreements regarding salaries and work conditions. Indonesian maids, more recently introduced into Jordan, may therefore have been better monitored and registered by the authorities of both countries.

Doubt over MoL data accuracy comes from the fact that 91% (2004) to 98% (2009) of female legal migrant workers are said to be illiterate in the Ministry’s statistics. The 2004 census displays a radically different picture, with only 17.2% of illiterates among the economically active foreign female population. Most migrant women (19%) had reached elementary level and 15% held secondary education (DoS, 2006: tab. 7-9, p. 2433). MoL data also contradicts our personal and informal experience with Sri Lankan maids, among whom literacy in their mother tongue was the norm⁶.

Lastly, legal female labour immigrants to Jordan are said to be overwhelmingly unmarried (8.9% married, and 0.7% widows or divorcees in 2004 and 2009) in the Ministry of Labour data⁷. This, again, does not match at all our personal experience with Sri Lankan domestic workers in Amman⁸.

(Contd.) _____

combined with, for example, home cleaning. This illustrates the general ‘de-skilling’ often experienced by migrant women abroad (Flynn / Kofman, 2004).

⁵ A doubling of their numbers in the country is unlikely, as residence and labour fees have increased between the two dates.

⁶ Literacy in English was, indeed, rare among them and their knowledge of spoken Arabic had been acquired by ear. However, unlike many locals or other Arab migrant workers, males and females, we never came across a Sri Lankan person unable to write letters and read printed and hand-written material in one or both of Sri Lanka’s languages (Tamil or Sinhala).

⁷ The only available comparable proxy to such data in the 2004 census is the distribution of unemployed female foreign nationals by marital status. Unmarried females are 45.4% of the total (HKJ/ DoS, 2006, tab. 7-17, p. 2579).

⁸ Who were in most cases married and had children. Most common was the experience of women having left young children back in Sri Lanka for years, under the responsibility and care of family members and fathers. Salaries were sent to Sri

Such a contrast between comparable population references from the 2004 census and the Ministry of Labour's data is puzzling. As the census is based on personal declarations, foreign nationals questioned may be tempted to overstate their level of study, for example. However, the discrepancy in marital status cannot be explained in such terms. Therefore, the question here is whether an unconscious 'gendering' of the collection of data on female labourers is not progressively taking place, leading to the creation of an image of the 'ideal-type' female Asian worker as unmarried, unskilled and illiterate...

Emigration: a dearth of data

Historical accounts state that some female emigration from Jordan was present in the 1950s and 1960s, as the Gulf countries started hiring Arab female teachers to develop their educational systems (Shami, 1996). However, these female professionals were from Palestine on the West Bank of the Jordan River, annexed by Jordan between 1951 and 1988. As for today, emigration from the East Bank is directed mainly towards the Gulf region (De Bel-Air, 2010), something that is also true of female migration.

However, whether female or male citizens are involved, no or only flawed data are available on Jordanian expatriates abroad. Data on emigrant stocks do not allow for the drawing of a clear picture of Jordanian migrants abroad. The 2004 census for example collected data on Jordanian emigrants from household members remaining in Jordan, and only took into account migrants who were away for less than a year, if abroad for work or to accompany others⁹. Out of the 5749 females recorded abroad, 42% were there for accompaniment purposes, 23% for study and 18% for work (HKJ/ DoS, 2006, tab. 6-4, p. 2324). Data from the Ministry of Higher Education on students abroad are not broken down by sex.

Also, Gulf receiving countries, where Jordanian workers and their family members are more numerous, do not publish data on immigrants broken down by nationality or even region of origin. Some estimates were suggested by the Jordanian Department of Statistics on emigrants in the Gulf region (see De Bel-Air, 2010), but these were not broken down by sex. Currently, labour sections of Jordanian embassies in the Gulf are dispatching a survey form to the members of their expatriate communities, which may help improve knowledge of Jordanian expatriates in this region.

Regarding professionals, data on the characteristics of Jordanian expatriates are almost inexistent, as noted above. However, previous reports showed that candidates were mostly skilled and highly skilled (De Bel-Air, 2010). The same applies to women alone. Our personal experience in the Gulf States and in the Jordanian field suggest that young Jordanian female emigrants are most often employed in the teaching and health sectors, in tourism and hotel services, in the media, in the insurance and the finance sectors, and as executive personnel in the business sector. Moreover, a new category of young female migrants may start emerging: that of the young rural, semi-skilled worker (see part 3, on emigration of QIZ workers). Also, even if no statistical data is available to confirm this impression, various personal and informal accounts from young Arab women willing to leave Jordan for the Gulf countries or already expatriated there suggest that they are most often unmarried and, in a few cases, divorced¹⁰.

Here again, questions can be raised about the absence of data concerning Jordanian expatriate women, professionals or otherwise. Is this dearth of data covering up a sensitive issue within Jordanian society?

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Lanka, most often to improve the family home, build supplementary rooms or small shops, to arrange for children's settlement, marriage, and professional establishment.

⁹ On the contrary, migrant students, people treated in hospitals abroad, members of the Jordanian contingent to the UN forces, for instance, are counted whatever their duration of stay abroad (HKJ/DoS, main results, Population and Housing Census 2004, vol. 4., 2006, p.18).

¹⁰ See also Zoepf, 2008, for a similar conclusion on the profile of Arab female migrants to the Gulf.

Gender and migration: policies in context

In view of such descriptive data on the profile of female immigrants to Jordan and Jordanian female emigrants, the question asked in this report is how this all intersects with the general governmental policies, public concern and the institutional setup in the Kingdom. The issue of female migrants actually cuts across other issues linked to women migrants, labour, for instance. Therefore, before studying policies targeting female migrants, it is necessary to examine the general policy context in Jordan, regarding gender on the one hand, and migration on the other.

Female empowerment and the elimination of gender-based discrimination is high on the agenda in Jordan, particularly through the initiatives of members of the royal family. It is also inscribed in the National Agenda 2006-2015 ('Employment opportunities for all', whose main objective is to eliminate discrimination against women both in practice and in law) and in the National Strategy for the Promotion of Women, which focuses on empowering women to join the labour force. Jordan has also signed and ratified CEDAW (Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women) in July 1992¹¹.

However, this explicit concern and voluntary policies for the empowerment of women in the labour force is not reflected in the migration policy-making process. Indeed, this process is characterised by (i) the emigration of Jordanians: by a *laissez-faire* (open door) policy and (ii) immigration to Jordan: by a general reluctance to grant migrants the rights, even minimal, they are entitled to or to enforce laws and terms of international and bi-national agreements, contracts and laws governing entry, sojourn, labour and living conditions. Moreover, Jordan has not signed either the UN's International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrants (December 1990), nor the 1975 ILO Convention on Migrant Workers¹². Some progress was recently made (inclusion of the domestic services and agricultural sectors, main employers of foreign manpower, in the Labour Law in 2009, agreement over foreign workers joining labour unions, improvement in the organisation and protection of industry and domestic services' workers (see De Bel-Air, 2009b)). Yet, migrants' issues have advanced only thanks to international voluntary involvement and pressure.

Beyond the general context of policy-making on women, on the one hand and on migration, on the other, the category of immigrant or emigrant females, intersects with many other wider or infra categories, that of females, of workers, of economic migrants/refugees, of regular or irregular sojourners, of documented or undocumented labourers, that of female workers, as well as that of the poor and vulnerable, among other combinations of labels, not to mention nationality, religion, ethnicity, age, etc. Moreover, all migrant female will move from one category to another, or fit several of them at the same time, across her migration life cycle. Lastly, more remote context factors are crucial to understanding the creation of policies on female migrants, such as the general economic policy in the Kingdom, as well as institutional setup. Therefore, policy-making schemes targeting migrant women in Jordan intersect with wider policy-making schemes, targeting the structure of the economy in the Kingdom, women, labourers, migrants (legal and irregular), the poor and vulnerable, etc.

Gender and immigration

In order to illustrate this interpenetration of policies targeting migrant females, three categories of migrants will be studied here: refugees, manufacturing workers and the domestic workers. Of course, we understand that such categories inaccurately label migrants and are extremely porous, especially in the case of 'refugees'.

¹¹ 'with reservations on articles chiefly concerning women's nationality and housing rights' cf. <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=174>

¹² Jordan ratified ICERD (International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination) in 1965.

The refugees

Entering Jordan

In the case of forced migration, as in any other case, the entry of women alone or accompanied by children is not an issue. Standard immigration law applying for temporary visitors for each nationality governs the entry and settlement of forced migrants, for men and women alike. Restrictions to these standard measures, such as in the case of migrants from Iraq from 2006 onwards, actually target men more than women¹³.

The situation of migrants: rights and living conditions

In Jordan, only Palestinian refugee women are covered by long-term gender-specific support policies.

UNRWA¹⁴ set up in 1982 a programme called ‘Special Hardship Cases’, under which a supply of food rations is granted by the Agency to poor and needy families. The eligibility criteria for this programme is the absence of a man aged 18 to 60 years within the family (household), or his inability to join the labour market, in case of imprisonment or disability for example. Refugee households with female heads, which fall within category ‘W’ of the programme, are therefore eligible for special protection (Latte-Abdallah, 2004). Here, the category of female refugee intersects with that of the female head of household, meaning they are potentially poor and vulnerable. However, the assumption that vulnerability is inherent to refugee households with female heads is now questioned by UNRWA, which has started revisiting its criteria for granting special assistance under the SHC scheme¹⁵

As for other refugees, whether or not registered by UNHCR, they fall under any protection scheme (if such a scheme exists) granted to various migrant categories as defined by the host country. Iraqi refugee women for example are undeniably at risk, as women bound to suffer gender-based violence from alien men, as immigrants/refugees in an alien country, as (in most cases) irregular sojourners and income seekers and, too often, as targets of intra-familial domestic violence due to intense stress and mounting social and economic problems within the household. The IOM report on the psychosocial needs of Iraqi migrants in Lebanon and Jordan therefore stated that: ‘[g]ender sensitivity in conceiving psychosocial programs is of paramount importance in this case’ (IOM, 2008: 14). UN, international and non-governmental agencies are starting to implement and expand gender-based violence programming, with a particular focus on the Iraqi communities. UNHCR has been commissioned (over EC’s humanitarian assistance funds) for intervention, to identify and assist Iraqi women and children at risk of prostitution, gender-based violence and child labour. In July 2008 the EC also adopted a new assistance programme (€1.5 million) under the Instrument for Stability to support and protect vulnerable Iraqi women and female-headed households and victims of human trafficking. The main objective of the programme is to raise awareness among vulnerable Iraqi groups of the risks and consequences of trafficking in persons and sexual exploitation. Under the programme long-term assistance is to be provided to vulnerable groups through vocational training and economic empowerment activities (E.C., 2008: 16).

However, Jordanian governmental and non-governmental institutions do not acknowledge, in their policies, the vulnerability of migrant females. Iraqi refugee women, for instance, are not officially targeted for assistance. Indeed, more generally, the Jordanian Government remains reluctant to allow

¹³ After the November 9, 2005 suicide bombings which killed 60 persons in Amman, Iraqi men between 18 and 35 years of age were barred from entering the country (De Bel-Air, 2009b: 5).

¹⁴ The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict, UNRWA was established by United Nations General Assembly resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949 to carry out direct relief and works programmes for registered Palestine refugees in the Middle East.

¹⁵ <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/8FE092DF2EAE743852573E70060E387>

assistance programmes exclusively for Iraqis, which would implicitly acknowledge the existence of a refugee category within the population. Therefore, the government has to pre-approve assistance projects for Iraqi refugees and make sure that these serve poor Jordanian communities as well¹⁶. (De Bel-Air, 2009b: 7-8). Some (private or international) actions focus on needy refugees, while organisations operating under the umbrella of Jordanian governmental institutions focus on vulnerable women, regardless of their nationality. Some grassroots and semi-public NGOs and associations in Jordan provide in-kind assistance for needy families which include Iraqi female-headed households, medical services including reproductive health services (Jordanian Red Crescent, Noor-al-Hussein Foundation, Caritas, Care...). The government of Jordan recently restructured its Ministry of Health, which included the establishment of a 'violence against women' unit. National protocols on reproductive health are being developed, which are said to include guidance on care for rape victims. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has launched a two-year program in Jordan that will train local aid workers to respond to violence against women, predominantly Iraqi refugees. The program, which is supported by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), has also helped a local aid organization, the Jordan River Foundation, establish a case management centre in the east of Amman, home to many deprived Iraqi refugees. Iraqi and Jordanian women will receive counselling and referrals to specialized medical, legal and psychosocial service providers. The Jordan River Foundation will also expand its counselling and helpline services. The IRC launched the program with an intensive training course for workers from the Jordan River Foundation. They will later be transferred to the Jordanian Ministry of Social Development and Family Protection, which works to combat violence against women on a national level. Noor Al-Hussein Foundation's Institute for Family and Health and the Jordanian Women's Union have also developed programmes to address gender-based violence, which is not explicitly directed at Iraqi, refugees or migrants, for the reasons stated above. JWU provides services to women in Jordan and to their children and families regardless of their nationality, with a special focus on the victims of sexual and gender-based violence. JWU staff at Community Centres across Jordan include social workers, psychologists, lawyers, and teachers. Protection, family mediation and social, psychological and legal counselling is provided by the Union which also runs a shelter and a hotline¹⁷.

To conclude, experience of Iraqi refugee women in Jordan is gendered, in the sense that violence carried out against them in Iraq, as women, or as wives or relatives of a man threatened or killed in civil strife there pushes them to emigrate. In Jordan, they are vulnerable as women, and as breadwinners, if they head the household or if the adult men in the family are threatened with deportation. Lastly, their being women paradoxically protects them, as unofficial police practices mean that women are less likely to be deported than men¹⁸. However, public debates also gender the issue of female refugees, yet differently: many claims are made regarding the threat these women supposedly pose to social stability in the Kingdom. Accusations of widespread prostitution by Iraqi women are frequent¹⁹.

¹⁶ 'Some non-governmental organizations reported that the Ministry of Social Development made the approval and registration processes difficult', United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants. *World Refugee Survey 2008 - Jordan*, 19 June 2008. <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/485f50dcc.html>.

¹⁷ <http://www.iraqirefugeestories.org/takeaction.html>

¹⁸ Personal communication from Iraqi refugees in Jordan.

¹⁹ Prostitution did exist in certain public areas (international hotels) or specialized entertainment places; yet not as systematically as claimed by Jordanians. A difference of behavior in public between conservative Jordanians and other Arabs or foreigners is quickly assimilated to immodest and unlawful attitude.

Women migrants in the manufacturing sector: the QIZ workers

The process of migration

Migrants in the manufacturing sector, mainly Asian women, are employed in the Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZs)²⁰. They are directly recruited by the owners or managers of companies operating in QIZs and Jordan does not intervene. Their conditions of entry, sojourn and labour are thus the ones applying to migrants in this economic sector, which is covered by the Labour Law²¹. In 2009, 75% of QIZ workers were migrants, of which women went to make up 52% (HKJ/ DoS, 2009: tab. 33, p. 105).

The situation of migrants: rights and living conditions

Disrespect of the Labour Law provisions by QIZ factory managers and, in many cases, human rights abuses towards the foreign labourers have frequently been reported²². However, such abuses characterize migrant and non-migrant workers, male and female alike, even though non-migrants can break their contract and walk out of the job. On the contrary, migrants, males and females, are tied to their sponsor.

As a reaction to the US-based National Labour Committee report issued in May 2006, documenting serious abuses of foreign workers' rights in Jordan's QIZs²³, as well as to pressing requests by labour unions, the Kingdom carried out an array of measures aiming at bringing world-class labour administration and compliance systems to Jordan, under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Labour unions, the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions (GFJTU) and the Textile workers' union²⁴, especially, appeared as major stakeholders in enforcing migrant workers' rights.

The industrial plants situated within QIZs are the primary target of the three-stage national strategy²⁵, which includes a multilingual hotline service for handling workers' complaints, developing an industry code of conduct to ensure employer compliance, evaluating and improving inspections and closing factories in the event of any serious violation of the law. Recommendations on amendments to the Jordanian Labour Law of 1996 were made, for adoption by the 2008 Parliament, to cover wages, sexual harassment and assault, forced labour, freedom of association for guest workers, maternity benefits, and employment contracts. ILO's Better Work Jordan Project (BWJP) was launched in February 2008. MoL also created a new monitoring system called the Golden List, which grants advantages to private companies showing best practices in terms of wages, working conditions and

²⁰ These export-processing zones set up in Jordan in the aftermath of the peace process with Israel are an incubator of the development of export-led, labour intensive industrial plants, mainly in the sector of textile and garments. Its declared aim is to serve as a tool of regional integration with Israel, as well as to attract and channel Foreign Direct Investments to the country. Within the Free Trade Agreement signed between the US and Jordan in September 2001, QIZs offer duty- and quota-free access to the United States market for products manufactured by 'qualifying' enterprises located in those enclaves, which must meet certain criteria regarding foreign participation to qualify under the program. Out of a minimum 35% of its value added, 11,7% has to be of Jordanian origin, 7-8% of Israeli origin, the remainder necessary to reach 35% can be from the US, Jordan, Israel, the West Bank or the Gaza Strip. US and Israeli companies, as well as Arab, south Asian and Far East investors, are involved in the remaining 65%.

²¹ Jordanian Labour law n°8 of 1996 governs QIZs and more generally the industrial sector.

²² Ranging from frequent overtime, bad housing and working conditions, to default on payments, physical abuse, etc. (See De Bel-Air/ Dergarabedian, 2006).

²³ Charles Kernaghan. *U.S.-Jordan Free Trade Agreement Descends into Human Trafficking & Involuntary Servitude*, New York: National Labour Committee, May 25th, 2006.

²⁴ The Jordanian branch of the General Trade Union of Workers in Textile Garment and Clothing Industries (GTUWTGCI)

²⁵ Presented in the MoL's document *Labour Administration and Compliance in Jordan: A Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration*, on which description of measures presented thereafter is based.

abiding by labour and residency laws for guest workers. The MoL also joined efforts with the ILO on the issue of forced labour and trafficking in Jordan. A Pilot Programme was launched focussing on the QIZs and a study was finalised in September 2007 to identify Jordanian legislation related to forced labour and trafficking²⁶.

The Cabinet on May 13th 2009 finally approved a new draft version of the Labour Law. Among other provisions, it allowed foreign labourers to join trade unions. However, unions in QIZs had already been dealing with women's complaints before, migrant as well as locals, as is shown in the example of the Women's Committee of the Irbid textile union. Claims reported to the union were: 'training about rights as well as [...] problems specific to women. They would like more respect in the workplace, as certain supervisors treat them with disrespect, using vulgar language. Some of them are also confronted with sexual harassment'²⁷. Here, again, there is a distinction not only between females and men, but also between migrants and non-migrants. A migrant female clearly suffers abuses of a nature not experienced by migrant men or non-migrant females. However, the improvement in labour conditions in the industrial sector are not directed specifically at this population.

The domestic workers

The process of migration

Live-in domestic workers are always females. This may be more a question of social norms than the law, which does not gender the job²⁸. Some men perform domestic tasks, but typically for foreign families and not as legally enrolled live-in helps.

Domestic workers can be recruited to work in Jordan via agencies, or with the help of friends or family members organising employment from the targeted country. Coming into Jordan through a recruitment agency is more likely, paradoxically, to entice abuses against the migrant. Since 2003 all recruitment agencies have to be licensed from the Jordanian Ministry of Labour, though many intermediates in the country of origin as well as the country of arrival play a role in increasing the fees and expenditure related to the immigration process. Moreover, as agencies often withhold the worker's passport or side with the employer against the employee in cases of conflict. Lastly, using a recruitment agency implies that the worker will be employed as a live-in maid.

On the other hand, resorting to friends or relatives already abroad usually allows more security and help from peers. Friends or relatives offer the services of potential migrants using their networks of relations in the receiving country. Also, employers use the networks of foreign maids they know to 'order' their own, without resorting to an agency. The employer thus feels that the newcomer in his household is not a random stranger and can be checked up upon and influenced by her friends or relatives who benefit from the success of the transaction²⁹. Domestic workers in such cases enter with a tourist visa and overstay it, or the procedure of entry visa, residency and labour permit is completed by the local sponsor/employer. Workers entering the country outside the agency networks can better negotiate their employment conditions. They also sometimes manage to live by themselves if they wish to, benefitting from the assistance of other older migrants, thus avoiding the physical locking in of live-in maids. However, at times of crackdowns on illegal workers by the Jordanian police, holding

²⁶ For a detailed account of the measures taken until mid- 2008, see: De Bel-Air, 2009a.

²⁷ ITUC. "Migrant workers in the Middle East", *Union View*, n°7, December 2007, Brussels: ITUC, p. 11.

²⁸ It refers to 'the worker' (al-'amel), not to 'al-'amela')

<http://www.mol.gov.jo/Portals/0/Regulations/2090%20وطهااتها%20%20بالمنازل%20%20العاملين%20%20نظام.pdf>

²⁹ The intermediation of a friend or fellow maid usually costs the newcomer 100 US\$. Personal communications throughout 2000-2006.

a valid residency and work permits does not spare them from prison until they can get in touch with their sponsors.

Another way to come to Jordan is to resort to a local sponsor, Jordanian or foreign, who sponsors the worker but neither employs her, nor pays the entry, residency and labour fees. This illegal procedure is usually resorted to by workers who have overstayed their visas or who could not find an employer ahead of their departure from their native country. It often ends up with the worker staying or falling into illegality; as such sponsors typically pocket the money without completing administrative procedures.

The situation of migrants: rights and living conditions

In general, female live-in home cleaners and nannies are more vulnerable than their male counterparts (cooks, drivers) who are also part of the category of domestic workers, for their gender allows them to be employed within the intimacy of private family homes and, at the same time, makes it socially legitimate to entrench their movements outside the employers' house. The social alienation of most live-in female domestics, as well as the sponsorship system tying the foreign worker to her local guarantor, and the subsequent lack of external control over live-in maids living and employment conditions is thus facilitates all sorts of abuses.

The pleas of domestic workers do not spark much public interest among Jordanian citizens and local public debate is rare on this issue. However, faced with international concern over the frequency of such abuses, Jordan's Labour Ministry, in cooperation with UNIFEM, endorsed in 2003 a Memorandum of Understanding committing Jordan to incorporate foreign domestic workers (predominantly female) within the realm of the Labour Law. They also endorsed the 'Special Working Contract for Non-Jordanian Domestic Workers', a new standard work contract guarantying every migrant worker rights to life insurance, medical care, rest days, and repatriation upon the expiration of the contract. However, one of the articles explicitly limits the domestic's freedom of movement even on her rest day³⁰. Limitations to and control over the recruiting agencies' registration patterns and practices towards workers were also implemented. In 2006, the 'Booklet for Migrant Women Workers in Jordan', providing information on Jordan's Labour Law, living conditions in Jordan etc., was prepared by UNIFEM and the Ministry of Labor and distributed in embassies, licensed recruitment agencies and among employers. The Kingdom later amended its Labour Law to include domestic workers in 2008 and issued the associated implementing regulations in 2009³¹. Memoranda of Understanding were also signed recently between Jordan and labour exporting countries³². However, 'enforcement [of the law] remains a big concern'³³.

Especially targeting women migrant labourers, the Ethical Conduct and Good Practices of Overseas Employment Service Providers, directed at all kinds of employment of female migrants, was adopted in November 2005 at United Nations Development Fund for Women's (UNIFEM) Regional Consultation of Overseas Employment Service Providers on Good Practices to Protect Women Migrant Workers in Bangkok, Thailand. National associations from Jordan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal, the Philippines and Sri Lanka agreed on the principles of protecting female migrant workers, particularly in low-skilled jobs. The Code of Conduct contains

³⁰ 'The Second Party (the worker) shall be given one rest day weekly provided that the Second Party shall not leave the residence without the permission of the Employer' in Article 8, under Terms and Conditions.

³¹ See the text of the nizam on:
<http://www.mol.gov.jo/Portals/0/Regulations/2090%20وطهاهاها%20%20بالمنازل%20%20العاملين%20%20نظام.pdf>

³² For the texts of the 2006 MoU between Jordan and Sri Lanka and the 2009 MoU between Jordan and Indonesia, see respectively <http://www.carim.org/public/legaltexts/JordLegSriMOU.pdf> and http://www.carim.org/public/legaltexts/LE3JOR320_825_AR.pdf.

³³ Human Rights Watch. *Slow Reform: Protection of Migrant Domestic Workers in Asia and the Middle East*, April 2010.

seven basic principles, ten regional actions of priority, and for each of the countries, a number of issues aimed at improving the situation of female migrant workers.

However, passing laws does not necessarily imply that they will be effectively implemented. Also, another problem is the utter vulnerability of foreign maids to their employers, encompassed in the social contract linking the Gulf and Jordanian societies to their leaders, as described convincingly by Rima Sabban and Knut Bergem. According to the sociologist Rima Sabban writing on the United Arab Emirates, the ‘increasing dominance of domestic house workers is part of an unspoken bargain between the state and the emerging civil society, by which the state provides a leisure life in exchange for complete political control’ (Sabban, 2004: 90). Moreover, this social ‘bargain’ especially targets local women, in the sense that it provides this largely unemployed pool of women³⁴ a quasi-professional status: in order to train the unskilled domestics, ‘the female employer [...] has to assume the position, not only as an employer, but also something akin to a household ‘manager’’, even if such a ‘convergence of interests between state authorities and middle class employers [...] results in a system that is extremely harsh for the domestic workers’ (Bergem, 2006: 72-73). Here, laws, policies and regulations governing the employment of female domestic workers are not explicitly gendered; on the other hand, the social contract and local customs leading to the import of massive numbers of live-in maids is gendered.

Setting up policies: focussing on gender, on migrants, on abuse or on labour conditions?

To sum up, it can be said that Jordan neither promotes gender-sensitive immigration policies, nor facilitates or hampers the immigration process for women, as compared to that for men. The migration process is not characterized by discrimination against women migrants, so much as it is characterized by bad practices against migrants in general. Indeed, the red line that the regime must not cross is to grant non-nationals with protection or empowerment schemes considered by the citizens to belong to themselves.

In general, the fate of migrant women is mainly addressed through rights-based initiatives targeting migrants as a whole, gender being a cross-cutting theme among other issues, as is witnessed for example in the non sector-specific DFID-ILO’ LMPP³⁵ Project which aims to ‘increase member-state capacities to develop policies or programmes focused on the protection of migrant workers’. The emphasis of the project was on the promotion of a rights-based approach to labour migration, with gender among its cross-cutting themes. Among the specific country-level outcomes defined for 2008-2009 was ‘improved national protection programmes for migrant workers focused on women and other vulnerable migrant workers in line with the ILO’s rights based approach’ (ILO, n.d.). Only a few policies and *ad hoc* actions related to migrants include some elements of sensitivity to gender issues or target specific categories of female migrants. This happens under international pressure and within the framework of international, bi- or multilateral agreements.

More generally, what is notable is the emphasis put on abuses and trafficking in such internationally-driven policies run by Jordan.

The potential vulnerability to all kinds of gender-based abuses inherent to being an undocumented refugee and, to some extent, a migrant woman is clear, as the disruption of social and family ties in extreme cases lead to social alienation and psychological distress. Subsequent economic deprivation may also force the migrant into trafficking networks. Such an issue is not overlooked by Jordanian authorities and local NGO activists. However, addressing it openly would imply that (i) the presence of migrant workers and refugees, mostly irregular, would have to be officially acknowledged; and (ii)

³⁴ The activity rate of Jordanian females is only 14% in 2006 (DoS, 2006).

³⁵ Effective Action for Labour Migration Policies and Practice run by the UK Department for International Development and the International Labour Organisation.

the introduction of uncontrolled relief institutions and socio-political agendas might be imposed on Jordan's policy-making schemes by non-Jordanian and non government-supported actors.

At the same time, this vulnerability is not systematic and female migrants can be seen in terms other than trafficking and abuse, as claimed by authors taking stance against the 'victim' perspective on female migrants (Moors, 2003). Indeed, '[s]uch a one-dimensional approach runs the risk of negating the agency of female migrants and may even result in attempts at regulation that may further restrict their field of possibilities rather than strengthen their position' (Moors/ De Regt, 2008: 151). Lack of acknowledgment and domestic action, internationally-supported campaigns measures targeting the poor and vulnerable, labelling of migrant workers as 'non-agents': what is the rationale behind Jordanian policy-making addressing female migrants?

Regarding refugees, and sticking to the example of Iraqi refugees in Jordan, a previous report (De Bel-Air, 2009b) proposed some explanations for the public reluctance to address the vulnerability of refugees as a whole. Shedding light on the increasing poverty of Iraqis in Jordan, first, puts this group in competition with the Jordanian poor for aid. Second, it becomes increasingly difficult for the government to defend its open-door policy to Iraqis and, later on, their accommodation as mostly illegal and poor immigrants, which makes them appear an economic burden.³⁶ Also, as international concern for poor Iraqis was growing, the services to Iraqi refugees was 'instrumentalized' by Jordan's authorities and its scope of coverage was extended to also benefit Jordan's deprived citizens, in terms of education, health and poverty alleviation schemes. Similarly, the focus on the gender issue within the migration process and migrant communities by international and Western non-governmental organisations seems to serve as a vehicle for addressing gender-based discrimination and violence within Jordanian society as whole, thus pushing forward social 'modernisation' and female empowerment, advocated by the current regime. Here, we see clearly how the category of Iraqi female refugee migrants intersects with several other categories, most prominently refugees, the poor, and women, which explains why it is disregarded by the Jordanian authorities and, later, the selective gendering of policies targeting poverty.

Regarding manufacturing labour, we have seen that efforts have been made to improve the conditions of workers, after some foreign organisations reported the abuses made to foreign, overwhelmingly female workers in those plants. Here again, the aim behind improving working conditions in plants is to benefit locals. As a matter of facts, the official governmental policy is 'to improve the terms and conditions in the sectors which are avoided by Jordanians, in order to encourage them to work in these sectors (better salaries, comprehensive protection and social security, improvement in work environment)' (HKJ/ MoL, 2009: 30). International attention is drawn towards the 'victims' (female migrant workers), while international advocacy gives more leeway for action to the Jordanian government (private investors would quickly delocalise, in case of isolated governmental measures). Therefore, internationally-driven schemes for improving conditions for the bulk of workers in manufacturing plants (female migrants) ultimately serve as incentives for local workers to enrol in this sector, thus sustaining the national policy of the 'Jordanisation' of manpower.

As for domestic workers, the question is more sensitive, considering the role of maids in the Jordanian social contract (which also explains why agencies for migrant domestic workers is almost totally ignored), and the fact that Jordan does not yet promote the replacement of foreign maids by

³⁶ Acknowledging the existence of poverty in some sectors of the population stigmatizes the regime for political marginalization of the communities labeled as poor; but it also, at the same time, and this is admittedly paradoxical, designates those communities as potential benefactors, thus placing them within the network of patronage. See De Bel-Air, 2009b and De Bel-Air, F. "Defining and measuring poverty, making up society. Around the use of the Human development concept and index in Jordan", forthcoming in: Al Hussein, J./ Williamson, W. (eds). *The Management of Poverty in Jordan. From Measurement to Alleviation*, Beirut: IFPO.

locals³⁷. This is probably the reason why the situation of female domestic workers does not spark a real public debate among nationals in the Kingdom. However, Jordan is very careful to appear to respect international human-rights standards. Passing laws, and keeping leniency about their implementation, satisfies both the citizens and international agencies.

To conclude, it must be also said that illegal female labourers are sizeable in the three categories studied. Keeping leniency in policy implementation also touches on illegal migration (De Bel-Air, 2008a). It thus makes illegal female labourers a variable of adjustment in the economy, as well as in the social contract, all the more reason then that women are less visible in the public sphere, as irregular refugees, in QIZs compounds and in private homes.

Gender and emigration

In Jordan, as noted above, civil laws and government policies grant women and men equal rights with respect to their entitlement to health care, education, political participation, and employment. There are no legal restrictions either, on the right of Jordanian women to enjoy their income and assets independently³⁸. However, female access to equal empowerment and opportunities is hampered by social norms even if some demographic evolution is underway, which clashes with the patriarchal cultural norms and customs, and male domination of the public sphere. This evolution might explain recent trend in females' emigration.

The emigration process

Administratively speaking, Jordanian law gives every citizen the right to travel freely within the country and abroad. Moreover, the Provisional Passport Law n° 5 of 2003³⁹ currently applied does not require women to seek permission from their male guardians (or husbands) in order to renew or obtain a passport.

As for migration, especially to the Gulf region where the job market still needs workers, accounts state that it mainly relies on word of mouth from friends or relatives established abroad, recruiting agencies collecting CVs or hiring specific professionals, through specialised websites, newspapers or online advertisements. In some cases, secondments from the Jordanian public sector can take place (from the Health and Education ministries for instance). Also, 'some Gulf-based employers now say they tailor recruitment procedures for young women with Arab family values in mind. They may hire groups of women from a particular town or region, for example, so the women can support one another once in the Gulf' (Zoepf, 2008). Although we have not personally come across illustration of such a statement in Jordan, the tailoring of recruitment procedures to suit so-called social conservatism and 'Arab Muslim values' is indeed a phenomenon in the Arab world, which helps (very slowly) to streamline women towards skilled and semi-skilled economic activities, previously performed by Asian workers, such as the manufacturing sector (see *supra* on the Qualifying Industrial Zones in Jordan).

Why do women migrate from Jordan?

Inasmuch emigration is commonly accepted in public opinion when necessary for earning money, the, as yet unquantified emigration of unmarried females is not the object of public debate in Jordan. Yet, one

³⁷ In contrast with Saudi Arabia, where 30 nationals started working as (non live-in) domestics mid-August 2009, following a *fatwa* requested by the Saudi Minister of Labour.

³⁸ Gender-based discrimination is patent, though, in some articles of the Penal Code, in the Family Law and the Personal Status Law, for instance.

³⁹ Unlike the previous law n° 2 of 1969.

factor raises heated debates in the country: namely the emergence of female celibacy. This factor seems to us one major explanation for the onset of female migration, outside the realm of family reunion.

a “blocked society” facing up to changing demographic behaviours

Increase in female celibacy and relations between sexes and generations

Normatively early and universal marriage are linked to the reproduction in the family, the smallest and most essential social unit, and are patterns of gender/age segregation sustaining its stability⁴⁰, as well as engineering renewed patterns of social distinction through raising bride prices. However, delay in marriage, and even the likely emergence of a sizeable rate of female celibacy can be observed in Jordan as in other Arab countries. The average female age at marriage was 27 for Jordan in 2005⁴¹. An indicator of the probable emergence of celibacy is the proportion of unmarried women in the 35-39 age group⁴²: from negligible levels in the late 1970s (less than 3%), it stood at 13,7% in 2004, which may signify a progressive questioning of the social norms of reproduction on the part of women (De Bel-Air, 2008c).

Education, labour and social integration of women

The generation born in the late 1960s also inaugurated progressive gender equality in education; the rate of enrolment in education for the 5-29 age group is presently 96 females for 100 males in 2004. Enrolment rates at the university level (from BA to PhD, i.e. generations 1975 to 1985) were even stronger for women than for men (102 women to 100 men) at this date⁴³ (census data).

However, levels of economic participation for women remain low, even if they have increased slightly in 25 years.

Female rates of economic participation in Jordan by age group, 1979 and 2005.

	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39
1979*	15,7	13,5	8,7	5,2
2005**	18	19,4		

Sources: *national census (1979); **Employment and Unemployment Survey, 2005.

UNDP’s 2005 Arab Development Report states that ‘Arab society does not acknowledge the true extent of women’s participation in social and economic activities and in the production of the components of human well being, and it does not reward them adequately for such participation. Since most women work without pay for their families, their contributions are not recognised as economic activity. This historical prejudice is reflected in the undervaluing of women’s contributions to different types of human activity in general and to economic activity in particular’ (UNDP, 2006: 6). Indeed,

⁴⁰ Fargues, Ph. “Changing Hierarchies of Gender and Generation in the Arab World”, in Obermeyer, C. (ed.). *Family, Gender and Population in the Middle-East- Policies in Context*, Cairo: The American University of Cairo Press, 1995, pp. 179-198.

⁴¹ Department of Statistics (DoS). 2006.

⁴² Generations 1965-70 seem to be inaugurating this important change in nuptiality patterns. Also, as entering union becomes increasingly difficult with time (considering, for instance, that families commonly set as a priority the birth of several children to a couple), a sizeable portion of those unmarried women may remain single. Data are taken from the 1979 and 2004 Jordanian censuses.

⁴³ This figures cover up, however, the fact that boys emigrate abroad to study, and girls only more rarely.

female activity is underestimated in Arab statistics; yet, after correction its levels in the region still remain below the world's average (55%)⁴⁴

Migration as a sign of empowerment, or reaction to social stigma?

'Delayed marriage tends to be construed as evidence of the empowerment of Arab women. The two reasons cited above – rising educational levels and entry into the labour force – argue in favour of that interpretation, in that for many young women, their unattached years are a time for acquiring skills or material assets, and for self fulfilment. But empowerment is not absolute, as single women remain under the authority of their father or legal guardian'⁴⁵. Thus, migration can be seen as playing the role of achieving independence from the family. However, young Arab unmarried women more often encounter social alienation than empowerment⁴⁶. Moreover, this alienation combines with frustrating difficulties in adding value to their educational qualifications on the labour market. This combination of factors is the main reason cited by young Jordanian women who are willing to emigrate⁴⁷. Yet, this move, in most cases, is not perceived as a liberation, but rather as a personal and economic necessity. Therefore, return from emigration to Jordan and family life is often a painful experience reflecting the girls' alienation, as confirmed by Zoepf (2008).

Economic liberalization: leading to a “migration hump” for women?

The structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), as well as, more recently, free trade agreements⁴⁸, also had specific outcomes on women, 'as dramatic cuts in social spending increased responsibilities in the provision of welfare and health care in the domestic sphere. At the same time, increased dependency on monetary incomes forced a larger number of women to seek paid employment. [However,], SAP inspired cuts in the provision of education and training meant that the work available was invariably at the low-skill, low-pay end of the spectrum, and that economic opportunities were reduced' (Flynn/Kofman, 2004: 67).

Moreover, according to Sassen (1988), the movement of industrial capital to peripheral locations in search of cheap labour produces new dislocations in the receiving societies. Local manpower suddenly is exposed to different, mainly western, cultural practices. Also, as jobs in these economic sectors are usually of short duration, these young workers are, thus, quickly left unemployed, with a combination of aspirations and qualifications acquired during their period in employment.

QIZs offer an illustration of just this process. One of the aims of the QIZ' initiative was to attract and channel Foreign Direct Investments towards poverty-stricken rural areas, in order to provide job opportunities for local unskilled workers and, especially for women. Villagers and refugee camps dwellers, therefore, joined the staff of these plants, side by side with the expatriate workers⁴⁹. As stated in a survey on Jordanian QIZs, 'The manufacturing industries tried indeed to accommodate the needs of women in order to attract them to the job opportunities in the QIZ. They offer a conservative and respectable work environment which complies with the social, cultural and religious limitations of women in this society'. Such a setup making work attractive for the new female labourers, rural

⁴⁴ Fargues, Ph. "Women in Arab countries: challenging the patriarchal system?", *Population & Societies*, n° 387, INED, February 2003.

⁴⁵ Fargues, 2003, op. cit.

⁴⁶ Which is limited to a minority of Westernized families, who accept their daughters' independent life projects away from social reproduction norms (see De Bel-Air, 2008c).

⁴⁷ Personal communications, Amman, 2006-2007.

⁴⁸ Jordan joined the WTO in 2000 and signed free trade agreements with its Arab neighbours in 1998 (ratified in 2005), with the EU (ratified in 2002) and with the US in 2001.

⁴⁹ see De Bel-Air / Dergarabedian, 2006.

villagers and camp dwellers, ‘their new role as breadwinners has certainly given space for women to become decision-maker, house-keeper, and a main player at home as well. [...] Women working at the QIZ appreciate the mobility and exposure. Some women have moved from a rural life to looking for work outside the country’⁵⁰.

Therefore, to a certain extent, recent female emigration from the rural and deprived parts of Jordan can be seen as a liberalisation-led ‘migration hump’. Yet, only the future can tell if most Jordanian female citizens will benefit from migration in terms of empowerment, as this issue rests on a combination of personal, micro-social and structural-institutional factors, for migrant women as well as for men.

Conclusion: some recommendations

Whether because of the entry of rural women onto the labour market, or from the impossibility for urban educated girls to value their assets on the national labour market, female emigration is a crucial phenomenon in understanding social change in Arab societies today, changes these that are bound to threaten patriarchal norms. Therefore, quantifying this phenomenon would be of utmost interest for policy makers in the region.

On immigration to Jordan, recommendations regarding political instruments likely to help in the implementation of non-discriminatory migration policies have, first, to focus on the implementation of existing laws and instruments. Indeed, the Jordanisation of manpower, which tops the policy agenda in the Kingdom, can only benefit from such a voluntary approach.

Yet, the issue is to allow migration, as much as possible, to empower women. Surely, ‘rights do not emerge when governments acknowledge them, but rather when people start claiming for them and implement them’ (Piper, 2006??). However, this paper documents how a country’s institutional context can embed female migrants in precariousness. A first response to that pressing issue is the involvement of countries of origin in the protection their female nationals in the country of arrival, through embassies for instance, or non governmental bodies not partaking in the channelling of expatriate workers’ remittances. Implementation of bilateral agreements’ regarding salaries, work conditions and social benefits should be looked after, which would require a registration of migrants in their embassies upon arrival. But most importantly, the empowerment of women as rightful citizens starts at home. Local conditions which channel women towards unskilled, unfulfilling and sometimes not lucrative jobs abroad have to be taken into consideration by countries of origin. Generalisation of abuses in such jobs has to be addressed more strongly by the sending countries, and advocated as unacceptable by citizens. In line with the abundant literature on the matter, this paper acknowledged the specific difficulties encountered by most Asian female domestic workers, who cannot benefit from union protection. In retaliation for generalised abuses towards their expatriates employed in domestic services, the Philippines attempted to stop the migration of female domestics to Jordan and the Gulf countries in 2009. However, a stream of workers kept entering these countries illegally for lack of better options. Considering the sustained demand for foreign labour in Arab countries and Jordan in particular, labour exporting countries actually have a window of opportunity to act upon the empowerment of their workers, in order to upgrade their status in the international labour market.

⁵⁰ Interview of Jordanian researcher Oroub El-Abed who provides an example of the migration process of a young rural QIZ employee: ‘Naimeh, for instance, worked at a traditional farm before working at the factory. During nine months, she divided her time between day-work at the QIZ and training as a hairdresser in the evenings. With the new skills she began to investigate job opportunities in the Gulf, where salaries are much higher than in Jordan. When I interviewed her, Naimeh was expecting to hear from a beauty salon in the UAE, she had recently turned down an offer to work in Saudia Arabia, for a salary of 500JDs. She said: ‘I don’t have to go and stay in a remote village and live alone. I can leave and get a better job and a better life.’” Biemann, U. “The Refugee-Industrial Complex: the QIZ in Jordan. An interview with Oroub el-Abed”, *ArteEast Quarterly*, December 1st, 2009. www.arteeast.org/pages/artenews/extra-territoriality/252/

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