

Forum Report

## Social Protection Floors Forum 2016

Prepared by:  
Jordan Labor Watch  
Phenix Center for Economic and Informatics Studies

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The Phenix Center for Economic & Informatics Studies is a non-governmental organization dedicated to independent policy research and measuring public opinions on impactful current and emerging issues in areas of economics, society, and its legislative environment in Jordan. The Center was founded in Amman, Jordan in 2003 under the registration number 142203. It works to promote a sustainable developmental paradigm in Jordan, rooted in human rights and the principles of democratic governance by focusing on reforming the labor policies, lifting of restrictions on freedom of association, and strengthening of social protection policies. The Center specializes in promoting inclusivity in development processes. It compiles databases of relevant actors and stakeholders, develops research, studies, papers and reports, conducts conferences and advocacy campaigns, and empowers several actors to take part in steering development through capacity building.

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Is a German non-profit political foundation based on the principles of social democracy. FES was founded in 1925, it promotes international cooperation, education and research in Germany and abroad. The foundation opened its office in Amman in 1986 to support and enhance efforts of civil society organizations to become accepted partners of public bodies, enhancing furthers political dialogue between decision-makers from Jordan, Iraq, Germany and the region, and strengthening the participation of youth in the political process.

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Jordan Labor Watch contributes to improving work conditions for all workers in Jordan in accordance with international labor standards. This is done through developing studies and reports covering various aspects of labor issues related to workers, uncovering violations and abuses to which workers are exposed in the work place. The program provides a comprehensive database covering various indicators related to the labor market, trade unions, labor organizations, laws and regulations, as well as governing performance. Furthermore, the program strives to present alternative policies that tackle challenges facing the Arabian and Jordanian labor market as well as conducting training programs that support upgrading skills and capabilities of advocates in the labor movement.

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## Introduction

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Since the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, social protection has been considered an established human right. It is based on the principle that all human beings are entitled to basic living standards, as well as health and safety conditions. The foundations of social protection, known as social protection floors, cover a range of aspects which, when met, address the main dangers of poverty.

Jordan's historical attempts to meet social protection floors have achieved varying degrees of success, and faced several setbacks. Notably, over the past three decades, Jordan has had to agree to a number of 'conditionality packages' and 'structural adjustment programs' attached to much-needed IMF loans, which have heavily emphasized austerity. Other obstacles have had to do with the substantial demographic shocks the country has withstood, as a result of regional instability and the ongoing refugee crisis. These setbacks, along with the resulting high levels of poverty and inequality, have magnified the importance of attaining social protection floors in Jordan in the near future.

In cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the Phenix Center for Economic and Informatics Studies organized a forum entitled "Social Protection Floors in Jordan: Challenges and Opportunities". The forum was held on November 16 2016 and attended by over 160 participants. Attendees included representatives from the government, parliament, and political parties, as well as a variety of local and international civil society organizations (CSOs). The broad diversity of attendees suggests that the various segments of Jordanian society, as well as the several sides of the political spectrum, were satisfactorily represented in the forum.

This report will recapitulate the key issues discussed in the forum in order to identify where Jordan stands on the issue of social protection floors, and to make recommendations such as may inform future efforts.

It is hoped that Jordan's recently appointed new government, as well as the newly elected parliament, will take the forum's findings into account, and commit to achieving social protection floors in Jordan through concrete and effective measures.

## Forum Overview

The forum opened with a keynote speech from the Minister of Social Development, Wajeeh Alazaizeh, who spoke on the importance of social solidarity as a pillar of Islamic communities, and on social rights as inalienable human rights. Minister Alazaizeh advised attendees to eschew their possible resentment towards contributing to social protection, as they too may one day find themselves vulnerable, and in need of assistance.

The forum was then divided into three panel discussions. The first panel discussion concerned social protection floors in Jordan, as well as potential implementation strategies. Mr. Mohammed Al-Tarawneh, from the Social Security Corporation, spoke first, discussing the state of the social security system in Jordan, and detailing the main types of social security benefits, such as unemployment, retirement, maternity leave, disability and widower's benefits. Mr. Al-Tarawneh was followed by Mr. Abu Dames, member of the Governmental Coordination Team for Human Rights, and legal advisor to the Minister of Health. His contribution consisted in a detailed account of the history of healthcare in Jordan. Mr. Dames noted that Jordan has had a long history of providing public health services, starting with the first healthcare legislation in 1923, and the first healthcare department during the fifties, which has been in line with the very

evolution of modern healthcare. Also on the subject of public healthcare, Mr. Abu Dames also noted that Jordan was proud of its commitment to provide healthcare to all those in need, up to and including refugees. Mr. Abdallah Smairat, assistant to the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Social Development, then spoke at length on the topic of providing social protection services, explaining how the Ministry based its provision of social protection amenities on the principle of social inclusion. Lastly, Mr. Mohammad Megdadi, from the National Council for Family Affairs, spoke on the topic of accreditation standards and quality control, as well as on the need to make ministerial budgets more transparent and accountable.

The forum's second discussion panel was dedicated to social protection floors as human rights, as well as international standards. Dr. Ursula Kulke, from the International Labour Organization, presented the ILO's findings regarding poverty and employment in Jordan. Senator Sawsan Majali followed, discussing the effects of population characteristics and demographics on the achievement of social protection floors, and how demographic changes can be seen as opportunities for development. Lastly, Mr. Ahmad Awad spoke on the subject of social protection floors as human rights.

The third discussion panel was the liveliest, with comments spanning the breadth of Jordan's political perspectives. Critiques of current practices and potential solutions were discussed, with innovative ideas coming from both the panelists and the attendees. The panel was moderated by Jordan Times journalist Khetam Malkwai, and benefited from the contributions of MP Khaled Ramadan, Secretary-General of the Urdun Aqwa party Rula Hroub, and Jamil Nimri, of the Jordanian Social Democratic Party, as panelists.

The ILO's recommendation concerning national social protection floors recognizes social security as a human right and takes it as a prerequisite for socioeconomic development and progress, highlighting the role of social security in reducing poverty and inequality, and in promoting formal employment. The ILO regards social security as an investment in people, as well as in the promotion of a healthy and stable economy. These points were consistent with the overall tone of the forum.

According to the forum key speakers and attendees, despite being one of the most advanced Arab countries, and an example of stability and development in the region, Jordan has achieved unsatisfactory levels. Participants identified three main challenges:

1. The current legislation, which is

outdated and insufficient;

2. The failure of consecutive governments to effectively implement legislation and fulfill their commitments to citizens as outlined in the constitution; and

3. A lack of government accountability, owing to low levels of community engagement and civic participation.

## Key Themes

The issues discussed in the course of the Forum on Social Protections Floors in Jordan can be divided into three main themes, as follows:

1. Areas of consensus:

- Social protection floors should be reframed and perceived as inalienable human rights.

- Jordan as a society needs to shift from the simple discussion of social protection floors to the implementation of concrete, practical steps for their achievement.

- Expenditure on social protection floors should be considered an important investment.

2. Challenges to achieving social protection floors in Jordan:

- The high levels of unemployment in Jordan.

- The high levels of informal

employment in Jordan.

- The outdated and ineffective legislation currently in place regarding these issues.
- A pervasive lack of stakeholder accountability.

3. Ongoing concerns :

- The declining quality of public services in Jordan, especially in health and education.
- Social security schemes in Jordan have limited coverage.
- The national pensions and social security systems offer different benefits.

## Areas of Consensus:

### Social Protection Floors as Human Rights

The most frequently recurring theme of the forum was the need to reframe social protection floors from a human rights-based perspective. There was broad consensus among CSO representatives, politicians, and government officials on this matter.

Such reframing is encouraged for the following reasons:

1. If social protection floors are enshrined as inviolable human rights, governments will be limited in their ability to do away with or neglect them, or to cut or outright eliminate financing during periods of

greater hardship.

2. If citizens believe that they are entitled to social protection floors, they will be more likely to demand these protections from their political representatives than if they perceive them to be a luxury.

3. As states are obliged by international commitments to recognize human rights, conceiving social protection floors as a fundamental human right will put pressure on governments to take action towards meeting these standards.

4. The slow development of social protection floors is unacceptable. By reframing social protection floors as human rights, governments are encouraged to be timelier in meeting these standards, rather than stretching their efforts over time.

The high numbers of disadvantaged people in Jordan, as a result of unemployment and refugee influxes, indicate that the need for minimum standards of social protection in Jordan is both great and urgent. It is also worth noting that prior attempts by the Jordanian government to scale back social protections resulted in large-scale protests, because citizens felt that they were not enjoying their rights. One final insight from an audience member worth pointing out was that Jordanian society



should aim to move beyond the provision of aid to the disadvantaged and towards a broad effort by the state to ensure all human rights are met.

### Implementation over Theory

As mentioned above, a recurring theme throughout the forum was the slow pace of progress in achieving social protection floors. Many attendees expressed their frustration with this stagnation, pointing out that the community was eager for efforts to be directed towards strategy development rather than the conduction of further theoretical studies and discussions on the subject. Officials, CSO representatives, and opposition politicians collectively echoed the frustrations of attendees with regards to government inactivity and the slow pace of progress. In line with this, Minister of Social Development Mr. Wajeeh Alazaizeh stated that it was time for Jordan to begin developing concrete plans, strategies and legislation, as opposed to insisting on abstract theorizations of the issues at hand.

Forum attendees also raised questions regarding the government's intentions when examining social protection floors. Several participants expressed their concern that, in limiting itself to merely discussing the issue, the government

could exempt itself from having to make any tangible financial or political commitments.

### Investment not Expenditure

Expert panelists, politicians, government representatives and forum attendees were likewise in agreement on the adoption of a notion of social protection floors as an investment rather than an expense.

Experts identified the following key long-term benefits of investing in social security:

1. A robust social security system is what enables countries to withstand financial and political shocks.
2. Social protection floors enable economic growth to translate into greater care for the population and an increase in the quality of life.
3. Investing in general healthcare spending reduces future spending in emergency healthcare and creates a more productive workforce.
4. Investing in early childhood education and nutrition for young children is the most cost-effective method of raising living standards over time.
5. Investing in education creates a skilled and more productive work force, and reduces the risk of radicalization.
6. Increases in social protections floors create a robust economy and

therefore benefit all citizens, not just the disadvantaged.

7. Investing in social protection and creating strong supporting institutions allows countries to benefit from anticipated demographic shifts.

Dr. Ursula Kulke of the ILO noted that, due to the belief that economic growth alone was not enough to increase quality of life, for which it needed to be partnered with social protection systems, German citizens were still required to contribute towards social security during the period of extreme poverty following World War II. While this expense was difficult for many to sustain, it is now indisputably considered a wise investment.

## Challenges

### High Unemployment

One of the main obstacles to achieving social protection floors in Jordan are the country's high unemployment rates. Unemployment in Jordan is a multifaceted and complex issue. However, forum attendees were confident that steps could be taken to address the issue.

Politicians, CSO representatives and other participants all pointed to a lack of harmony between education and training, on the one hand, and available

jobs and labor market demand, on the other, as one of the main causes of structural unemployment in the Kingdom. The ILO's Dr. Ursula Kulke suggested that this structural unemployment could be addressed by providing students with information on the labor market prior to tertiary education. Both Dr. Kulke and Senator Majali advocated for encouraging and providing vocational training in technical industries. Senator Majali also discussed the need for workplaces to provide suitable environments in order to attract and take advantage of the skilled workers available. Specifically, Dr. Kulke mentioned the need to provide working men and women with living wages, flexible hours and work arrangements – e.g., working from home –, and to promote female-friendly workplaces. Dr. Kulke also suggested that the length of unemployment benefits should be extended, though it should be also tied to training and retraining in specific sectors, and accompanied by active job-seeking.

Jordan is also experiencing cyclical unemployment as a result of economic weakness and the ensuing decrease in labor demand. Panelists suggested that this could be addressed through some form of legislation aimed at encouraging would encourage investment in job-generating sectors. Several attendees agreed that the government should make use of investment policies to drive

job creation.

Participants also recognized that many Jordanians are unwilling to work in certain sectors due to low wage levels. This could be addressed by stemming the inflow of foreign workers, who have largely contributed to the decrease in wage levels. This would boost competition as well as wages, and would foreseeably encourage Jordanians to engage in traditionally unpopular occupations. Alternatively, as one attendee pointed out, unmet labor demand in such sectors as construction, agriculture, and tourism might be more efficiently met through the employment of refugees rather than guest workers. While the employment of guest workers is politically advantageous, it is often not the best choice, from an economic standpoint. Such a strategy would allow Jordan to make an asset of the refugee influx, rather than an expense.

## Large Informal Sector

According to Mr. Mohammed Al-Tarawneh, of the Social Security Corporation, 26-27% of workers earn some form of income, without being covered by social security. Mr. Al-Tarawneh claims that the main barriers to social security coverage among these workers are linked to informal employment, along with the oversupply of workers which

has negatively impacted on wages and benefits. Since Jordan's social security is linked to official payments made to the government by employers, those who work in the informal sector, or whose employers refuse to make social security payments, are unable to secure coverage. In addition to panelists, who seemed to agree that informal employment constituted the main barrier to accessing to social protection, other participants also voiced their concerns regarding the limitations imposed by informal employment on social security coverage.

Potential solutions include the creation of incentives for employers to abide by social security payments, imposing penalties on employers who fail to do so, allowing workers to register with the social security scheme without having to go through their employers, and progressively formalizing the informal sector – although this solution presents numerous challenges and can only be achieved in the long term. Dr. Kulke of the ILO made the additional recommendation that social security should be funded through a progressive tax system on individuals and corporations in order to ensure that the burden wouldn't be disproportionately borne by the most disadvantaged. She further suggested that these revenues be directed solely at the strengthening of the social security system rather than

assimilated into the general government budget.

## Outdated Legislation

In his keynote speech, Minister Alazaizeh stated that one of the most important steps in achieving social protection floors in Jordan was the creation of effective legal mechanisms. He further acknowledged that the current legislation pertaining to social protection floors in Jordan was fragmented, incomplete, and lacking in implementation and enforcement mechanisms. The majority of government officials, politicians, and CSO representatives shared these views. Many, including members of parliament, believed that this situation was a consequence of a legislative system that lacked accountability and suffered from systematic inefficiency. This will be discussed in detail below.

Several panelists made recommendations regarding potential legislative improvements. Mr. Mohammed Al-Tarawneh, from the Social Security Corporation (SSC), indicated that the current SSC format could be improved through increased harmonization between social security programs, as a way of promoting their efficiency, which would then allow the SSC to expand its capacity and better meet the needs of all

vulnerable groups. Concerns regarding the lack of unification and enforcement mechanisms in social protection legislation were echoed across the floor. The lack of legislative mechanisms aimed at systematizing policies and protocols, and increasing professionalism, was also said to be a barrier to achieving social protection floors in Jordan.

Many CSO representatives and MPs expressed concerns regarding the effectiveness of the measures that have so far been adopted by the government. Several panelists attributed the failure of current legislation to slim budgets which are inconsistent with the scope of the problem. Mr. Omar Razzaz, Chair of the Jordan Strategy Forum, pointed out inconsistencies in government policies, such as the promotion of small industries and handicrafts as a means of addressing unemployment and poverty, despite the fact that such industries do not provide social protection.

## Pervasive Lack of Accountability among Stakeholders

A recurring view among government representatives, experts and political panelists was that all citizens in Jordan should accept responsibility for achieving social protection floors. This was expressed in a number of ways:

- Individual citizens are responsible for playing an active role in democracy, and pressure their representatives in Parliament to fight for these rights, holding them to account if they fail to do so. Several senators and politicians noted that it was very difficult to create social protection legislation when citizens do not actively advocate for it.
- In turn, the Parliament is responsible for holding the Senate to account in implementing or failing to implement such measures.
- Subsequently, the government and ministries are responsible for ensuring appropriate and effective spending.
- Corporations and employers may assume responsibility for achieving social protection floors by contributing to their employees' social security payments, providing suitable wages, abiding by social protection legislation, and refraining from tax evasion.
- Individuals can also assume responsibility for achieving social protection floors by acknowledging the benefits of bulkier social security payments and increases in the age of retirement, in line with life expectancy.

Each stakeholder's responsibility in achieving social protection floors will be more easily assumed as these floors come to be perceived by the general public as rights, and as citizens and corporations

become accustomed to the idea of social security payments and begin to see returns on their investments.

Several speakers proposed the idea that, as citizens and business struggle to communicate with the government and come to feel disenfranchised, CSOs, which typically garner more respect from the government and hold more influence (particularly, larger and international NGOs), should take the lead in holding the government and politicians to account. It was noted that CSOs also hold a considerable amount of respect among the public, which enables them to act as facilitators and intermediaries. Furthermore, many CSOs have access to the resources required to conduct policy analysis, investigate proposed budgets and spending reports, and assess the effectiveness of spending. A greater role for CSOs would also decrease the burden on parliamentarians, who indicated that they were limited in their ability to influence legislation and the Senate, partly due to their limited resources. Attendees also recommended that CSOs and unions strengthen their collaboration with employers and the government in achieving social protection floors.

Several panelists observed that, due to the inability of ordinary citizens to organize and lobby collectively, costs often came to be borne by the general

population alone, rather than being shared by corporations and the elite, who were able to effectively lobby the government. Director of the Phenix Center Mr. Ahmad Awad noted that this resulted in large losses of potential revenue. He framed the issue as stemming from a lack of enforcement, transparency and democratic participation and argued that the reformation of institutions to encourage democratic participation and accountability would shift the balance of power away from the top and result in legislation that is beneficial for the majority.

This lack of transparency and accountability regarding government budget allocations, ministry spending, and goal attainment was also identified by CSO representatives and attendees as a key obstacle to achieving social protection floors. It is hoped that increased transparency in government spending and the achievement of better results may lead to increased accountability for shortcomings. Accountability may come in the form of popular feedback and organizational reframing, such as in the cases of MPs not being reelected or government employees being discharged from their roles.

On this note, panelists discussed the notion of shared responsibility in achieving social protection floors, noting that it should not

be perceived as the role of politicians and CSOs alone. Individual citizens need to be prepared to commit time and effort to lobbying their political representatives, voting for politicians based on the soundness of their proposals, and keeping in mind that sacrifices may be required of each and all in promoting the public good. In the course of discussions, the general public was urged to accept that limited resources mean that hard decisions and tradeoffs often need to be made, such as raising the retirement age, in order to broaden the reach of social security. Dr. Ursula Kulke recommended removing early retirement payments and raising the overall retirement age as this would increase social security revenues, reduce expenses, and allow for greater potential returns from the SSC investment fund.

Mr. Mohammad Megdadi, Deputy Secretary-General of the National Counsel for Family Affairs, advanced another solution to this perceived lack of oversight. His proposal consisted in an initial reconfiguration of the public budget to focus on target groups across all ministries – e.g., a budget for children. Subsequently, studies should be conducted on the effectiveness of spending, with particular consideration given to the quality of services, as opposed to an approach based solely on quantitative indicators. Mr. Omar Razzaz,

Chair of the Jordan Strategy Forum, also expressed his desire for greater institutional accountability, and warned that, in light of its current levels of debt, Jordan is not in a position to spend indiscriminately. Mr. Razzaz envisages a future where each ministry has a set budget and targets, to which the employment of government officials is tied.

## Concerns

### Limited Coverage

While government insiders, and others, agreed on most aspects pertaining to social protection floors, there were disagreements as to whether or not the number of individuals without health insurance was acceptable.

Moderator Amal Abu-Jiries, of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, noted that in spite of the vertical and horizontal expansion of Jordan's social protection system, many individuals still fell outside the field of coverage. According to government statistics, approximately 74% of the workforce has access to health insurance, while 26% do not. This figure was disputed by CSO representatives and forum attendees who believed the percentage to be 30% or higher. Apart from government representatives, most attendees expressed great concerns

regarding the ability of the uninsured to obtain medical care. Conversely, government representatives appeared to be confident that everyone in Jordan had access to healthcare regardless of insurance.

Despite their apparent lack of concern over healthcare access, government officials were in favor of expanding the health insurance program. Mohammed Al Tarawneh, from the Social Security Corporation, indicated that he would like to see increased collaboration between the different social security providers and an expansion of the services. He stated that the government was currently on the inclusion of workers currently not covered by social security. Meanwhile, Dr. Radwan Abu Dames, Legal Advisor to the Minister of Health, was concerned over the inefficiency and lack of monitoring in the patronage system, and hoped to expand the Healthcare Card to this group. He cited the free patronage system as one of the main obstacles to expanding Healthcare Card enrollments.

### Recommendations from the floor included:

- Increased study of the patronage system to identify the true level of need.
- Reconsidering the upfront payments required for enrollment in the Healthcare Card scheme. While the sum

is nominal, many disadvantaged people may see it as an unnecessary expense and therefore do not apply for the system. Healthcare only becomes perceived as a need when it is urgent.

- Provide Healthcare Cards to the unemployed and to workers in the informal sector.
- Address inequalities between the different health insurance schemes (private, military, civil, and social security). It is likely that combining these schemes would lead to economies of scale; however, with the current perceived inequalities between the systems, this is unlikely to be achieved.
- Enforce the payment of social security by employers through legislation. While the government cannot provide a quick fix to the economy as a whole, it could enforce minimum employment standards.

## Decline in the Quality of Public Services

A number of community members attending the forum expressed concerns that the public healthcare and education systems were declining in quality. While several politicians shared these concerns, government officials disputed the claims.

Some attendees raised specific concerns regarding recent abuses identified in

the elderly care sector. A government representative responded that a comprehensive review of the abuse indicated that it was not a result of government failures, or representative of a decline in quality, as the abuse was limited to individual cases and occurred in private institutions.

Mr. Abdallah Smairat, Deputy Secretary-General to the Ministry Of Social Development, acknowledged that there were still obstacles and shortcomings in both the public and private sectors in the provision of care for the disabled and elderly, but that there was currently a bill before parliament designed to remedy the shortcomings of the current legislation through such measures as the implementation of increased penalties for institutions providing substandard care. Mr. Mohammad Megdadi, Deputy Secretary-General to the National Council for Family Affairs, also advocated for the establishment of set procedures aimed at ensuring quality practices and environments. He noted that this had successfully been done in the elderly care sector and could be expanded to include other sectors. He also advocated for a two-tier system, where minimum standards are required and target standards become compulsory overtime. This would apply to both the public and private sectors.



One panelist, Mr. Jamil Nimri, of the Jordanian Social Democratic Party, expressed concerns regarding conflicts of interest in the setting of health standards.

Several attendees remarked upon a perceived disparity between public and private providers of social services, which posed obstacles to the full coverage of social security schemes. The lower levels of inclusion in turn limit the potential revenue of social security investment and hamper economies of scale.

Mr. Mohammed Al Tarawneh, from the Social Security Corporation, claimed to be overall satisfied with the healthcare system, especially in comparison with other countries, noting that the system's quality was reflected in the system's 14 million visits, which include high numbers of health tourists.

### **Where does Jordan stand in regards to the ILO's Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202)?**

According to the ILO's recommendations, countries should develop and implement social security expansion strategies based on national dialogue and participation. These strategies should initially focus on implementing social protection floors as the central tenets of social security schemes. Secondly, countries should seek

to increase the levels of social protection in line with their economic capabilities. To this extent, countries should develop comprehensive social security schemes and systems consistent with national policy objectives and preexisting public policies.

While Jordan has begun implementing some measures towards the achievement of social protection floors, these measures have not been sufficiently comprehensive and do not reflect the country's economic capabilities. The issue of social protection floors in Jordan seems to betray dynamics of political influence rather than social discourse.

The ILO specifically outlines the following measures:

“When formulating and implementing national social security extension strategies, Members should:

(a) Set objectives reflecting national priorities;

(b) Identify gaps in, and barriers to, protection;

(c) seek to close gaps in protection through appropriate and effectively coordinated schemes, whether contributory or non-contributory, or both, including through the extension of existing contributory

schemes to all concerned persons with contributory capacity;

(d) Complement social security with active labor market policies, including vocational training or other measures, as appropriate;

(e) Specify financial requirements and resources as well as the time frame and sequencing for the progressive achievement of the objectives; and

(f) Raise awareness about their social protection floors and their extension strategies, and undertake information programs, including through social dialogue."

Based on the comments of forum attendees, outlined above, it does not appear that Jordan has adequately heeded these recommendations.

The ILO's recommendations also specify that social security extension strategies should apply to persons both in the formal and informal economy, and support the growth of formal employment and the reduction of informality. From the above analysis, it is clear that this is one of Jordan's most significant shortcomings.

In the ILO's Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202) a number of recommendations were

made regarding the monitoring of social protection floors. Based on observations made in the course of the forum, it appears that Jordan is also failing to meet these recommendations. No national strategies or defined strategies for monitoring the progress of social protection floors have been identified. Likewise, no mechanisms for conducting consultation between the government and employers have established. It also appears that the government does not conduct regular national consultations on policies and progress regarding the horizontal and vertical expansion of social security as per the ILO's recommendations. The ILO also recommended that countries compile, analyze, and publish social security data regularly. The failure to adequately meet this recommendation was one of the key concerns raised by participants, who noted that the current lack of transparency resulted in a failure to hold decision makers to account. Another failure noted by forum attendees was the government's lack of clear standards, definitions, and methods as recommended by the ILO. The failure to set clear parameters also appears to have contributed to the lack of accountability in Jordan.

## Recommendations

1. That the citizens of Jordan should consider social protection to be an inalienable right. In this regard:

- Social protection should be framed as an investment rather than a cost. This reduces future health and unemployment spending and increases economic productivity and stability.
- Politicians and corporations should view social protections as non-negotiable.

2. That all stakeholders take responsibility for ensuring increased action and accountability in achieving social protection floors. This may be achieved through:

- Educating citizens in critical thinking and civic participation.
- Creating platforms for citizens to engage with the government.
- Placing public pressure on corporations and government to contribute to social protection.
- Providing parliamentarians with increased impartial resources, in order to allow for more informed decisions to be made regarding policy and budget spending.
- Demanding that public spending be transparent and accountable, specifically through establishing quantifiable targets.

It is anticipated that, when citizens hold

parliament to account, parliament will be empowered to hold the government to account. Thus legislation will be better tailored to the needs of the public.

3. That outdated legislation be replaced and that steps be taken to ensure that new legislation is effectively implemented.

4. That the government should make difficult financial decisions, in line with achieving social protection floors in the long term, as opposed to making politically easy decisions. These may include:

- Raising Jordan's retirement age and reconsidering early retirement provisions. Despite increasing health levels and life expectancies, Jordan's retirement age has remained low. Shifting retirement ages upwards would increase income, increase revenues from investment, and decrease expenditure.
- Refraining from imposing further taxes on everyday goods and services and instead implementing progressive taxation, targeting corporations and individuals with high incomes, and combatting tax evasion.

5. Transform employment in Jordan and the government's approach to employment.

- Focus investment on sectors that create jobs as opposed to mere profit.
- Focus on formalizing the informal

sector in order to ensure more individuals have access to the foundations of social protection, social security, and minimum wages.

- Ensure that workplaces offer conditions sufficient to meet the needs of employees. This can be done through meeting minimum wage requirements for both genders, providing child care, accounting for transportation costs, offering flexible work hours, and allowing employees to work from home.

6. That the government address the employment gap through the following measures:

- Create an extended unemployment benefit that is reliant upon individuals actively participating in training and job searching.
- Providing information to the public on occupational outlooks, assisting with career planning, and directing the young or unemployed to train in sectors where jobs are available.

7. That refugee influxes be regarded as an asset rather than a cost, by opening up fields of employment where the demand for workers is not currently met by Jordanians, e.g., construction, agriculture, and hospitality.