

Older persons in Jordan

National Council for Family Affairs

This paper contains an overview of older persons in Jordan, which could be used – along with the available data – as a basis to move forward and serve the legal instrument to protect the rights of older persons. This paper includes:

- Definition of older persons according to the statistics of Jordan
- Overview of the Jordanian National Strategy for older persons, which is an important document because of the local and international basis for its preparation, as well as the strategic objectives that it identifies, in addition to the fact that it all aspects of the rights and welfare of older persons
- Follow up the implementation of the operational plan of the national strategy for the older persons

Introduction

The Jordanian society, like other communities, affects and is affected by the complexities and changes that have resulted in some seniors not finding someone in their family who is devoted to serve and take care of them, especially after changing family structures from an extended family to a more nuclear one. This especially so since all family members nowadays work, and because of the big move from rural to urban style of living with increased migrations from the countryside and the desert to the city. Despite these complications, older persons receive considerable attention in the Jordanian society at all levels – mainly because of the heritage, religious and cultural norms of the Jordanian society, which emphasizes the importance of older people and the importance of their presence and taking their expertise in many community issues.

Jordan succeeded in realizing many achievements that serve older persons, at all levels, and perhaps the constitutional amendments, which entered into force on 1/10/2011, specifically the 5th para of Article VI of the Constitution, which was amended in Article 1 of the 2011 Constitution, which states: (The law protects motherhood, childhood and old age and takes care of young people and people with disabilities and protects them from abuse and exploitation).

Although there are 11 licensed houses for older persons in Jordan, with an increased capacity of about 500 older persons, the actual occupancy rate does not exceed half of its capacity in most cases. Most of the older persons who live in these houses are those who need specialised care that is not available to them in their natural families or kinship, which therefore requires the provision of such care. The government covers the expenses of older persons who are unable to pay.

Older Persons in Jordan

The age 65 years and above is what the General Department of Statistics adopts in identifying older persons in their reports. Older persons represent 3.2% of the population, according to the 2011 report. When utilizing the World Health Organisation (WHO) age of 60 years and over for the older category, older persons in Jordan account for 5.2% in 2011.

Jordanian statistics reports also note lower mortality and increased life expectancy, which reached (71.6) for males and (74.4) for females in 2010, as a result of an improvement in sanitary conditions, and improved nutrition, and is an indicator of the increasing number and proportion of older persons in Jordan, which is projected to reach 7.6% in 2020 (Department of Statistics, Jordan figures, 2010).

The Higher Council of Population in Jordan produced a policy document that shows that although the proportions of older persons are expected to increase over the next four decades, Jordan will remain outside the 'community of population aging' because this proportion will remain below 10% of the total population in 2040.

Table on percentage of older persons in selected years

Jordan's National Strategy for Older Persons (2008)

This strategy is the first document which gave the issues of older persons due attention. It identified priorities to work with older persons as an active class of community that is in need of care and support to achieve sustainable human development to exploit all the opportunities and meet the challenges for the advancement of the Jordanian family as a social sponsor for its members. The strategy stems from the Arab and Islamic values and teachings of the monotheistic religions, which is keen to respect older persons, in addition to global and regional conventions, strategies and action plans, and the Madrid International Plan of Action for 2002.

The strategy exemplifies the spirit of collaborative work between relevant institutions and the National Council for Family Affairs, as it was prepared in cooperation with the ministries of social development, health, and the Greater Amman Municipality and the Nursing Council of Jordan, and the World Health Organisation and the participation of many national institutions, experts and representatives of care homes, in addition to a group of older people.

Strategy goals

1. Give issues of older persons the importance that it deserves within the policies and plans of the Jordanian state for inclusion on the agenda of national priorities
2. Improve the quality of life for older persons, enabling them to a decent life in the community
3. Enhance the confidence of older persons themselves, and their abilities to continue their contributions and their participation
4. Work on community awareness of older issues, and devote a positive outlook toward them
5. Support family ties and strengthen the bonds of communication and dialogue between generations

The strategy undertook situation analysis of the reality of older persons in Jordan, where it addressed their demographic, social and economic characteristics, and also addressed six strategic directions, which require intervention to improve the quality of life of older persons, these are:

- older persons and development
- health care for the elderly
- supportive physical environment for the elderly
- social care for the elderly
- research and scientific studies and databases
- legislation

Follow-up on the implementation of the National Plan for the National Strategy for Older Persons

The National Council for Family Affairs in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organisation, monitor the achievements of Jordanian institutions in the provision of care and protection for older persons through the follow-up process of the operational plan for the national strategy of Jordan for the older persons during the period (2009-2011). A comprehensive national report was published and its findings will assist in trouble shooting and addressing deficiencies in the services provided, as it would help decision-makers when planning for this category for the development of programs aimed to improve the standard of living of the older persons. This report will also serve as a basis for updating the Jordanian National Strategy for older persons, which is expected to take place during 2013.