

THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN
NATIONAL POPULATION COMMISSION
GENERAL SECRETARIAT

THE UPDATED NATIONAL POPULATION STRATEGY:
CONCEPTS, FOUNDATION, AND GOALS
2000–2020

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PREFACE

The National Population Commission formulated the National Population Strategy in 1996 based on the doctrines of Islam (*al sharea al islamia*), the Constitution of Jordan, the National Charter, and the principles of democracy and human rights. The strategy further adheres to the values of Jordanian society and culture. This is an updated version of that strategy. It was written in the context of recent developments at the national and international levels as Jordan enters the third millenium, an era characterized by globalization, information technology, and revolutionary communication systems.

This document is the product of the dedicated efforts of the National Population Commission and is to be considered as a reference for planners and for policymakers and decision makers in all areas related to population.

We extend our sincere thanks and gratitude to HRH Princess Basma Bint Talal for her continuous support for the activities of the National Population Commission and its General Secretariat. We also thank the team that prepared this document and the UNFPA Country Support Team for their financial and technical assistance. The National Population Commission also offered endless contributions in this respect.

May God help us to serve our nation under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah II Ibn Al-Hussein and of the Crown Prince. May God bless them and keep them.

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INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, Jordan faced a number of population-related problems and challenges that were detrimental to the economic, social, environmental, and human development of the country. Both the population growth rate and fertility increased. There was also a rise in the dependency ratio and the unemployment rate with a subsequent increase in poverty and pressure on basic social services.

The National Population Commission (NPC), therefore, made it a priority to formulate a National Population Strategy (NPS) that could be implemented in the context of sustainable development. The strategy sought to balance population growth with economic development and environmental concerns in a manner acceptable to Islamic doctrines and in harmony with Jordanian traditions and culture.

The Cabinet of Ministers endorsed the NPS in March 1996. In 2000, a task force of national specialists revised, amended, and updated the NPS taking into account recommendations from various studies and surveys. The team incorporated information from social, health, and demographic surveys like the fertility surveys of 1998 and 1999 as well as official figures issued by relevant institutions. The revision was also inspired by recently observed and potential demographic and developmental challenges in Jordan along with international declarations and agreements approved by the government.

The updated strategy includes the concepts, foundations, and principles of the NPS and reflects the official position and direction of the political leadership. The main goals of the strategy are classified under the following four headings: reproductive health, gender equality and the empowerment of women, population and sustainable development, and support for and implementation of the NPS.

The General Secretariat of the National Population Commission (NPC/GS) is pleased to present this revised strategy as a reference to be used in the preparation of the implementation plan for the NPS in cooperation with various official and non-official institutions. It is also to be used as a guide in the preparation of development plans and other national strategies.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE NPS

The NPS 2000–2020 is based on objective investigations of the demographic and developmental challenges Jordan faces at present and will face in the future. The NPC/General Secretariat (GS), in cooperation with relevant national institutions and with its advisors, has identified three dimensions to these challenges.

Quantity: The structure, distribution, and growth of the population exert pressure on the country's natural resources and environment. They complicate efforts to meet the socioeconomic and health demands of the people. They also play a role in creating imbalances in equity, and they hamper sustainable development.

Quality: Jordan needs a comprehensive, effective strategic plan to address differences in quality of life between males and females, among rich and poor and among its

geographic regions. In order to implement the NPS successfully, disparities in basic rights and economic prospects must be addressed.

Security: Like some other Arab countries, Jordan faces environmental challenges including pollution, exhaustion of its water supply, and scarcity of food and energy. The effects of globalization, the information/technology revolution, international and regional problems, and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS are all matters of concern.

CONCEPTS AND FOUNDATION OF THE NATIONAL POPULATION STRATEGY

The population strategy is a set of government, non-governmental organization (NGO), and civil positions; goals; actions; legal and administrative measures; and interventions aimed at bringing about quantitative and qualitative changes in the size, structure, and distribution of the population. It is an umbrella under which all programs and activities that directly or indirectly affect population should be undertaken. It is based on Jordanian culture and values and on the will of the society to solve the problems and challenges facing it.

The strategy takes into consideration individual behavior and choice in the context of basic rights and the current and future needs of the population. It provides for the rational use of renewable and non-renewable natural and environmental resources and for socioeconomic development that ensures comprehensive, sustainable, equal opportunities for individuals.

Population and development issues rank high on the political and social agendas in Jordan. The government has given population activities and programs at the national, Arab and international levels a great deal of attention for several decades. Jordan was one of six Islamic countries to endorse the Declaration of the UN Secretary General on Population on January 10, 1996. Believing that humans are the most precious national resource, Jordan participated in the population conferences in Bucharest in 1974 and in Mexico in 1984 conveying its desire and determination to balance excess population growth with sustainable development and economic growth. HM King Abdullah II Ibn Al-Hussein, through his detailed observation and personal monitoring of population-related problems—especially illiteracy, unemployment, and poverty—has continued to demonstrate this determination.

The government of Jordan established the NPC in 1973 because of its concern for population issues and their importance. It was reformulated several times in 1976, 1984, and 1988 to include additional representation from official and non-official sectors concerned with population issues. In 1995, the NPC included 21 representatives from government and non-government institutions.

HRH Princess Basma Bint Talal of the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development encouraged the government to establish a general secretariat as the executive arm of the NPC. It is now the focal point for all population activities, programs, and information in Jordan. The NPC/GS ensures that various government and non-government stakeholders cooperate and coordinate so that all levels of society can participate in planning and advocacy.

In order to address population problems and needs, the NPC/GS in cooperation with UNFPA convened the conference “Population and Basic Needs in Jordan: A Futuristic Outlook” on September 24–26, 1991. The papers and proceedings of this conference formed the basis of the NPS and of population programs in the social development, environment, and economic resource sectors.

In an effort to coordinate population matters at the regional level, Jordan hosted the Arab Population Conference on April 4–8, 1993. The conference produced “The Amman Declaration on Population and Sustainable Development in the Arab World,” a united Arab stand that was presented at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994 (ICPD Cairo-1994).

Also in 1993, the cabinet approved the National Health Program for Birth Spacing (NHPBS), a maternal/child health strategy designed to preserve the balance between society and family. The NPC/GS and the Executive Committee of the NHPBS prepared an action plan that was studied and approved by the committee in its meeting on March 3, 1995.

As mentioned previously, the Cabinet of Ministers endorsed the NPS on March 9, 1996. The strategy focused in particular on the following four areas: reproductive health including maternal/child health, family planning, birth spacing, and special needs; gender; information, education, and communication (IEC); and economic resources and the environment. The Prime Minister’s Declaration 13 of 1996 asked all concerned ministries, departments, and institutions to undertake actions necessary to implement the NPS. They were further to coordinate with the NPC/GS when preparing NPS-related programs and projects or any other population-related activities, and they were to nominate a senior liaison to coordinate follow up with the NPC/GS. Thirty-three liaison officers were nominated.

This update of the NPS includes the recommendations of the ICPD Cairo-94. Population indicators were revised according to the results of social and demographic surveys such as the Demographic Health Survey of 1997, the Jordanian Annual Fertility Surveys of 1998 and 1999, and the Employment and Unemployment Survey of 1999. The recommendations and proceedings of other international conferences were also taken into consideration. In addition to updating the strategy, the National Family Planning Strategy for Information, Education, and Communication 1997–2002 was formulated.

As mentioned previously, the NPS draws heavily on doctrines of Islam (*al sharea al islamia*), the Constitution of Jordan (*al dustoor*), and the National Charter (*al meethaq al watani*). It also relies on the principles of democracy and human rights. It conforms to the values of Jordanian society and culture and to the aspirations of the people for better lives. It aims to effect a positive change in the characteristics of the population.

The NPS is in line with development planning and is integrated with all other related national strategies. The strategy solicits the participation of all elements of society, in particular that of NGOs. It seeks to enhance maternal/child health in order to build a healthy, cohesive, robust population that contributes to the progress and welfare of the

family and of society. Each family has the right to make its own decision regarding family size and to obtain the information and means to make that decision freely and in harmony with Islam and the values of society.

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE NATIONAL POPULATION STRATEGY

The six principles of the NPS are as follows:

1. The family is the nucleus of the society, and it should get all necessary protection, care, and support.

The Holy Quran confirms this principle: *“And Among His Signs is this, that He created for you wives from among yourselves, that you may find repose in them, and He has put between you affection and mercy. Verily, in that are indeed signs for a people who reflect.”* (Al Room: 21)

The National Charter of Jordan states: *“The family is the basis of Jordanian society. It is the natural environment in which to raise, educate, and build the character of the individual. The government with all its official and non-official institutions should provide whatever is necessary for the well being and formation of families and should assist them in performing the duties of properly educating and raising future generations.”* (National Charter, Article 3, Chapter 5, Social Field)

An official government declaration stresses the importance of protecting the family from various forms of violence and highlights the importance of implementing family-based micro-projects. *“The government agrees with what is mentioned in the King’s letter to the government concerning the enhancement of maternal and child health, as well as the protection of the family from various forms of violence.”*

2. The citizen has the right to enjoy high standards of health care including reproductive health, family planning, and treatment of STDs and AIDS. This is considered a basic human right and is fundamental to the NPS.

In the Quran God says:

“And We have enjoined on man (to be dutiful and good) to his parents. His mother bore him in weakness and hardship upon weakness and hardship, and his weaning is in two years. Give thanks to Me and to your parents. Unto Me is the final destination.” (Loqman: 14)

“And We have on man to be dutiful and kind to his parents. His mother bears him with hardship. And she brings him forth with hardship, and the bearing of him, and the weaning of him is thirty (30) months.” (Al Ahqaf: 15)

Jaber bin Abdullah RAA, said: *“We used to use withdrawal during the period of the prophet (SAAW) while the Quran was descending.”*

3. All Jordanian citizens enjoy the same rights and freedoms without any discrimination based on race, color, sex, language, religion, or political opinion.

“All Jordanians are equal by law and there is no discrimination among them as far as rights and responsibilities regardless of race, language, or religion.” (Constitution of Jordan, Article 6, para. 1)

“Individual freedom is respected.” (Constitution of Jordan, Article 7)

4. Men and women enjoy equal rights and unlimited participation in policy and decision making at all levels.

“All Jordanians, men and women, are equal by law and there is no discrimination between them regarding rights and responsibilities regardless of race, language, or religion. They exercise their constitutional rights and abide by the national interest and the ethics of national action with the objective of directing national resources, both physical and spiritual, to achieve the goals of unity and progress and to build the future.” (National Charter, Chapter 1, para. 8, Basics, Facts, and Principles)

5. A Jordanian citizen has the right to education, to employment, and to complete participation in political and social life since it is a basic and proper right guaranteed by the government and protected by law.

An official letter of the present government contained the following: “Women have a right to education, guidance, training and employment and to their empowerment to exercise their role in society since they are men’s partners in the development of society.”

“The government guarantees work and education for all within its capabilities. Also, it guarantees security and equal opportunities for all Jordanians.” (Constitution of Jordan, Article 6, para. 2)

“All citizens have the right to work, and the government is obliged to guarantee it so as to gear efforts towards the development of the Jordanian economy.” (Constitution of Jordan, Article 23, para. 1)

6. The citizen is the most important and precious resource the nation possesses; hence attention is focused on socioeconomic development.

This principle and its importance was emphasized by the HM King Abdullah II when he addressed the editors of Jordan’s principal daily newspapers on September 2, 2000 with these remarks:

Our Jordanian human being is the focus of our attention and the focus of development. Our belief in his/her potential, gifts, and ambition is unbounded. King Hussein, God bless his soul, instilled us with the belief that, “The human being is the most precious resource that we possess.” We believe in the momentum of our Jordanian human being. From this belief came the

thought, “at the pace of those who are able,” a reflection of our trust in the potential of the Jordanian human being, the source of my pride and hope.

His Majesty also stated the following: “All that we want is to improve the standard of living of our dear citizen, to provide him a decent living, comfort, and security.”

An official government letter stated: “The human being in Jordan is the most precious resource of all those we possess, and the government is responsible for his care and protection.”

GOALS OF THE NATIONAL POPULATION STRATEGY

The goals of the strategy fall into four categories: 1) reproductive health; 2) gender equality and the empowerment of women; 3) population and sustainable development; 4) support for and implementation of the NPS. The strategic objectives for 2000–2020 are to

- attain the highest level of balance among population, economic, social, and environmental resources;
- support the family and maintain its cohesiveness;
- promote the empowerment of women;
- instill the concept of gender equality;
- support and improve reproductive health including family planning in the context of reproductive freedom, parental responsibility, free choice regarding family size, birth spacing, safe motherhood and child survival;
- protect the population from environmental hazards; and
- avoid unsustainable production and consumption.

1. Reproductive Health

The ICPD Cairo-94 Plan of Action defines reproductive health as follows:

“A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes. Reproductive health therefore implies that people are able to have satisfying sex lives and that they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so. Implicit in this last condition are the rights of men and women to be informed and to have access to safe, effective, affordable, acceptable methods of family planning of their choice, as well as to other methods of their choice for regulation of fertility which are not against the law, and the right of access to appropriate health-care services that will enable women to go safely through pregnancy and childbirth and provide couples with the best chance of having a healthy infant.”

Accordingly, the reproductive health goals of the NPS are as follows:

- A. To effect a drop in the maternal mortality rate to 30 per 100,000 live births in 2015 and to 27 by 2020.
 - Reduce risks associated with closely spaced, early, and late births.

- Improve safe motherhood services.
 - Expand and concentrate the primary health care network including postpartum services.
- B. To decrease the infant mortality rate to 20 per 1000 by 2015 and beyond that by 2020.
- Protect against high-risk pregnancies.
 - Encourage and implement the program outlined in the national breastfeeding policy.
 - Expand health education and make more efficient use of existing services to communicate health information more effectively.
 - Continue with the existing program of childhood immunizations against known diseases.
- C: To achieve a total fertility rate of 2.9 by 2010, 2.5 by 2015, and lower than that by 2020.
- Increase the contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR).
 - Improve method efficiency and family planning services.
- D. To increase the CPR in general and for modern methods in particular.
- Support free choice of family size and birth spacing.
 - Provide high quality family planning services at all levels.
 - Remove barriers to practicing family planning.
 - Improve counseling and IEC.
 - Increase male participation in FP programs.
 - Encourage exclusive breastfeeding to promote birth spacing.

2. Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Gender equality in all aspects of life contributes significantly to sustainable development, the goal of all developing countries. In order to empower women to play their roles in society, the Constitution of Jordan underlines this principle regardless of race, language, or religion. This is in the context of Islamic doctrines that emphasize gender equality without discrimination. The National Charter highlights the equal participation of men and women in the development of the economy and of society. It stresses the rights of all citizens to work and to participate in union activities across all economic sectors and to attain social equity. It also highlights the right of children to obtain the best possible care and protection.

In conformity with these principles of human rights and equality, the government has ratified 15 agreements during the last four decades in accordance with Islamic doctrines and Jordanian law. Among them are the International Human Rights Declaration, the International Agreement for the Elimination of Racism, the Agreement to Eliminate all Kinds of Discrimination against Women, the Civil and Political Rights Declaration, the Children's Rights Agreement, and the Agreement on Nationality of Married Women.

The goals of the NPS with respect to gender and empowerment are as follows:

- A. To achieve gender equality in civil, social, economic, political, and legislative rights and responsibilities.
 - Ensure equal job opportunities for women in various aspects of the labor market.
 - Ensure access to education to enable women to keep pace with changing economic conditions and new technologies.
 - Undertake policies that make the work and family responsibilities of women and men compatible.
 - Enhance equity with respect to sharing social and family responsibilities.
 - Enact laws and regulations as permitted by Islamic doctrines to enable women to tap economic resources on an equal footing, including ownership of and command over land, economic resources, and loans.
- B. To empower women to achieve their potential and guarantee their contribution to sustainable development, policymaking, production, labor, income generating activities, education, health, science and technology, and population awareness.
 - Encourage men to be responsible for their reproductive behavior, their families, and their educational roles.
 - Include gender in the teaching of social values to children.

3. Population and Sustainable Development

The interrelationship between population, economic growth, and sustainable development is well established. Also, it is widely understood that it is imperative to include population dimensions in development strategies and in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of projects dealing with population and development. Because all decisions on reproduction and population affect the quality of human life, the NPS has set out to achieve the following:

- A. To rationalize population growth so that the annual growth rate is consistent with sustainable development and is in line with the realization of the goals of the NPS.
- B. To effectively train people with special needs.
 - Provide them appropriate education, care and employment.
 - Implement programs that address the causes of special needs cases.
 - Protect them from STDs and HIV/AIDS.
 - Eliminate discrimination against them.
- C. To significantly enhance the health, welfare, and potential of all children, adolescents, and youth.
 - Meet their needs taking into consideration their creativity and support within the family and society.
 - Educate them about reproductive health according to the special characteristics of each group.

- D. To increase support for the aged.
- Improve their living conditions to enable them to work and live in a proper and just manner.
 - Give them access to health care so they can lead productive lives.
 - Eliminate all the violence and discrimination they face.
- E. To reach a balanced population distribution that promotes sustainable development.
- Regulate migration to urban areas.
 - Promote the sustainable development of the environment.
 - Decentralize administrative systems and centers.
 - Regulate the internal migration of nomadic Bedouin.
- F. Reduce the illiteracy rate among women.
- Increase the number of Ministry of Education illiteracy centers in affected areas.
 - Revitalize existing centers by providing qualified staff and better teaching aids.
 - Consolidate the efforts of NGOs implementing programs targeting female illiteracy.
 - Activate the role of the media (TV and radio) in highlighting illiteracy and its negative effects on the family and society.
 - Introduce incentives to attend literacy classes.
 - Implement the compulsory education system, impose penalties on parents who do not conform, and conduct awareness programs in this regard.
 - Introduce illiteracy programs in development projects.
- G. Improve primary education.
- Teach computer use and information technology.
 - Develop learning methods.
 - Maintain the existing teacher/pupil ratio.
 - Reduce school dropout rates especially among females.
 - Alleviate overcrowding in schools.
 - Involve the private sector in primary education.
- H. Improve employment opportunities and reduce unemployment and the level of poverty, especially among females.
- Encouraging investment in labor-intensive projects.
 - Increase the employment rate of Jordanians and gradually reduce the number of foreign workers.
 - Sustain a balanced level of employment especially in the southern areas of the country.
 - Improve the working conditions for women and eliminate discrimination with respect to type of work, wages, and training opportunities.
 - Introduce quality control measures in technical and vocational training at all levels.
 - Expand social security to cover all categories of workers.
 - Raise the average wages of all occupations relative to the cost of living.
 - Identify a source of income for the unemployed.

- Enact legislation favorable to labor, investment, social security, education, and vocational training.
- I. Meet the housing demands of the population and improve living conditions.
- Develop physical and social infrastructure, especially in poor areas, to ensure general safety and a minimum level of services.
 - Eliminate unplanned housing (slums).
 - Make small allotments of land available to lower income groups.
 - Encourage the private housing sector to supply houses to suit lower income groups.
 - Reduce crowding. Density should not to exceed 2.5 person/room in all houses in the coming two decades.
 - Encourage the building of rental properties and improve real estate trading.
 - Increase allotments in categories (d) and (e) that target popular housing.
 - Make long-term financing accessible to all income groups.
 - Relax loan requirements for families with lower incomes.
- J. Enforce the sustainable management of economic resources and of the environment by preparing and implementing economic and administrative measures.
- Prevent the deterioration of the environment.
 - Manage water and energy resources and food production in an integrated, economically efficient manner.
 - Control the quality of food.
 - Rationalize water and food consumption.
 - Improve the efficiency of energy use.
 - Protect the air and water from pollution and dispose of solid waste safely.
 - Protect the land and sustain biological diversity.
 - Include demographic indicators in environmental management and evaluation.

4. Support for and Implementation of the National Population Strategy

Attainment of the goals of the NPS is intrinsically linked to cooperation with the legal, technical, information and education sectors; with official and non-official stakeholders; and with planning, monitoring, and evaluating the relationship among population, development, and the environment. In this regard, the NPS seeks to do the following:

- A. Support and extend the role and the responsibilities of the NPC and the NPC/GS.
- Strengthen functional and technical links with governmental and non-governmental institutions centrally, sectorally, and locally.
- B. Enhance national capabilities to conduct comprehensive programs to collect, analyze, disseminate, and use population and development data.
- Establish quantitative and qualitative indicators to monitor demographic trends.
 - Study the relationships among demographic, economic, social, health, and environmental conditions.
 - Follow up on the success of the NPS.

- C. Initiate and sustain the participation of official and civil institutions in the preparation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the NPS.
- D. Encourage and intensify scientific advocacy for population policies.
 - Increase levels of awareness, education, and commitment at all levels of society.
 - Convince relevant planners, policymakers, and other decision makers to act in favor of sustainable development.
 - Include demographic issues in central, regional, and local development plans to achieve universally responsible behavior in the area of population.
 - Increase a couple's ability to exercise their basic rights responsibly and freely.