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ROAD MAP: IMPROVING JOURNALISTIC COVERAGE OF ELECTIONS IN JORDAN IDENTIFYING CHALLENGES AND PROPOSING SOLUTIONS



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The document has been prepared by Albany Associates International Ltd, a UK-based company with a strong track record in delivering communications and public diplomacy strategies; advising on media and telecommunications law and policy; advising on media infrastructure development, including assisting the development of public service broadcasting, providing professional training and institutional capacity building (www.albanyassociates.com)

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1. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

From the first Arab satellite broadcasting companies established in the 1990s to the present new media revolution taking place, a lot has been attained in the field of Journalism in the MENA region. One achievement has been mobilizing Arab audiences around regional current events, electoral processes being a central concern. The UNESCO Project 'Enhancing Professional and Accurate Media on the Electoral Process in Jordan', funded by the European Union, comes into place within this momentum.

Through the involvement of media stakeholders in building capacities on elections reporting, the purpose of this initiative is to enhance the confidence and participation of civil society in the electoral process. However, all the partners involved in this project – Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism, Jordan Media Institute, Albany Associates and Community Media Network – assumed that this ambitious blueprint would not be accomplished in few months but rather through a long-term period. Fortunately, after intensive months of training, discussions, awareness and research exercises, we have the feeling that the seed was not only planted but has already started to germinate. Continuing efforts in building the capacities of the media in the coverage of elections will be needed to bring sustainability to this project and to the potential it has generated. The Road Map presented in this document is an attempt to add continuity to the Project and we hope that pertinent stakeholders give enough importance to this unique research exercise and guide tool.

Political interviewing, the nature of the electoral system, principles of investigative journalism and gender-balanced reporting have been some of the major topics tackled throughout the project's different activities. In addition, revision of case studies in election coverage from other countries was integrated in the curriculum.

As stated in UNESCO's report 'Reporting Elections Broadcast Guidelines' covering elections in a professional manner involves the journalists' duty to inform (about the political parties' programmes, the electoral system and how to exercise the vote, among others) and the duty to be balanced, impartial and accurate. But there are additional commitments from other stakeholders that should facilitate the exercise of professional journalism, such as the access to information and the regulatory guarantees for freedom of expression. A professional exercise of journalism can be achieved only if all parties involved in electoral processes are seriously committed. Public authorities and media professionals therefore should work together in order to serve the direct beneficiary of all their efforts: the society itself. We sincerely hope to have contributed to that ideal cooperation and that this will continue through future actions.

The nearly 300 trainees from Amman and from other governorates who attended the 20 workshops and the four networking and forum sessions designed within the project are the first ones to thank in these lines for their participation and commitment. In most occasions, they worked long hours to be able to attend the training workshops organized within the project. Furthermore, they successfully applied afterwards, as their pieces showed, the skills gained in the Parliamentary and Municipal elections held in January and in August 2013 respectively. Throughout these months, strong coordination efforts among the four partners involved were essential in order to implement most of the activities in a constructive manner. The Steering Committee of the Project, integrated by the partners as well by UNDP, the Independent Electoral Commission in Jordan and the EU Delegation to Jordan, was created as a tool to facilitate interaction and cooperation. My deepest appreciation goes to the members of this body who generously shared their expertise and guidance to the Project. I would also like to thank Douglas Griffin, Andrew Boyd and Anna Staevska of Albany Associates for their contributions in gathering information for and drafting this report.

Thanks to all who have contributed to this initiative, directly or indirectly.

Rut Gomez Sobrino

Project Officer

'Enhancing Professional and Accurate Media in the Electoral Process'

UNESCO Amman Office

1. http://webworld.unesco.org/download/fed/iraq/english/broadcast_guidelines_en.pdf

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Free and fair elections are the cornerstone of any open and democratic society. Legitimate elections are impossible without a media that has access to information and the ability to report on candidates and their platforms accurately and impartially, giving the public the information it needs to make its choice. It is thus of paramount importance that rules and processes governing media during elections are transparent, fair, and in line with international standards for freedom of expression. It is also critical that the media is aware of and accepts these rules and understands the bodies and processes that are charged with their enforcement. Journalists must also have the skills necessary to do their jobs.

With this in mind, UNESCO contracted Albany to design and administer a project aimed at 'Enhancing Professional and Accurate Media Reporting on the Electoral Process,' to be carried out from March to October 2013. The aim of this project is to contribute to freer and more professional, comprehensive and objective media reporting on elections in support of the democratic process in Jordan. The project has included a number of discussion forums and trainings that were attended by 63 journalists and 25 other participants, including experts and representatives of regulatory bodies, such as Jordan's Audio Visual Commission (AVC) and Jordan's Independent Election Commission (IEC).

As this project was developed, it became clear that, through project events, Albany and UNESCO would have access to the opinions and impressions of numerous journalists about the elections almost immediately after they occurred. We decided to seize upon this opportunity to learn and document what these practitioners experienced as the elections unfolded and what recommendations they have about how to improve their own profession. We thus recorded discussions at the various events, and supplemented that information with data gathered through a number of interviews and an online questionnaire.

We expressly decided not to duplicate the substantial research and reporting that has already been conducted regarding Jordanian media, media law and elections. For example, there are a number of reports and resources analysing the media landscape generally, including regular reports by IREX, Freedom House and other organisations. Other analyses provide comment and make recommendations about the legal and regulatory framework applicable to media, including the Introduction to News Media Law and Policy in Jordan

2. For IREX's Jordan Media Sustainability Index, see <http://www.irex.org/resource/jordan-media-sustainability-index-msi>. For Freedom House's reports on Jordanian media, see <http://www.freedomhouse.org/country/jordan>.

drafted by IREX, Annenberg School for Communication and Albany in 2009 and updated in 2011. More recent reports have added analysis on the 2013 elections, making recommendations on how the framework should be changed, how coverage should be improved, and how other aspects of the practice of journalism might better inform the public as they prepare to vote. This report, a joint production by UNESCO Jordan and Albany does not aim to repeat those discussions, but rather intends to add to them by highlighting the challenges faced and insights expressed by practicing journalists reporting on their country's elections.

Generally speaking, through this process, we observed the following:

- Many journalists alleged that they were denied access to information, that information was often misrepresented by authorities, and that they were subject to threats and censorship. The overwhelming majority believed journalists should be given greater protection under the law.
- Most journalists questioned did not know which bodies regulated election coverage in Jordan. Most of those who did were unaware of the regulations that applied to journalists.
- Most believed that an independent body should be charged with regulating media coverage during the elections.
- Most believed there should be a code of conduct for journalists for covering the elections and that the code should be drawn up by journalists.
- Some journalists called for an organisation to be charged with addressing journalists' claims of alleged inappropriate actions by the IEC, politicians and others during the elections.
- Many journalists alleged that certain media outlets showed favouritism toward certain candidates because they owned them or because they had paid to obtain favourable coverage.
- Many stated that IEC officials did not have adequate information and/or did not effectively relay it to the media. They complained of a lack of access to information and election officials, and a lack of cooperation by those officials.
- Most identified a media bias against women and women candidates.
- Many called for an improved programme of training for journalists on a wide variety of topics, including journalistic skills, social media and media law.
- As a result of these findings, the authors make the following recommendations:
- A working group should be formed of parliamentarians, local and international legal experts, IEC members, representatives of civil society organisations and other relevant stakeholders (including members of the media) to review the Election Law and laws applicable to the media, including relevant regulatory structures, to determine what improvements should be made.
- There should be an effort to bring together the IEC and media regulatory bodies such as the Audio Visual Commission and the Press and Publications Department to develop a plan and strategy for how the media will be regulated during elections given their respective remits. These discussions should result in a document for publication so that the media clearly understands the rules and processes that apply to them.
- The IEC Code of Conduct for Journalists and Media Representatives and

3. 2009 version: http://www.global.asc.upenn.edu/fileLibrary/PDFs/JMSPprimer_eng.pdf.

2011 version: http://www.global.asc.upenn.edu/fileLibrary/PDFs/revisedjordanprimer_eng.pdf.

4. See Independent Election Commission (IEC) of Jordan, Monitoring and Observing the Media Coverage of Jordan Parliamentary Elections (House of Representatives 17), Final Report, Dr. Bassem Al Twesi, Dr. Sakher Al Khasawneh, Dr. Nisreen Abdullah, Dr. Maram Al Frehat.

AVC's instructions to media during elections should be reviewed, revised and reconciled if necessary taking into account events during the most recent elections. This review should spell out which organisation will address violations with what sanctions, perhaps resulting in a single code applicable to media during elections. Guidelines should be developed for the codes to provide additional detail and guidance. A self-regulatory process, where the media regulates itself by naming and shaming those who fail to live up to agreed standards, could be developed to fill any gaps in regulation.

- There should be a comprehensive and sustained public information campaign about these agreed rules and process so that journalists and the public clearly understand the framework.
- A local organisation or organisations should be encouraged and resourced to act as a clearinghouse for complaints from journalists about threats, inadequate access, or other issues and challenges they face during elections.
- As with any public-facing body anywhere, public authorities involved in Jordan's electoral processes, including the IEC, should consider further developing their capacities to provide comprehensive, accurate and timely information to journalists. The development of a communications strategy with a focus on media relations can help to decrease distances between the public, the media and the public authorities during the elections cycle.
- IEC interaction with the public and media should be comprehensively reviewed and improved at all levels and around the country. Media perceptions about the nature of the IEC and the electoral process generally should be taken into consideration because they affect public trust. Clear positioning of the IEC and public authorities on certain topics such as the prevention of candidates from engaging in improper behaviour can help to change negative perceptions of the elections process.
- Finally, and perhaps most importantly, journalists should continue to receive comprehensive training on a number of topics, including journalistic skills such as covering election campaigns, understanding voter trends, use of social media and infographics, research methodologies, media law and elections-specific issues.

Specific strategies should be funded to address these recommendations, and we elaborate those at the end of this document.



UNESCO recommends more collaboration between government, civil society and journalists to improve the current Elections Law in Jordan.

3. BACKGROUND: MEDIA AND ELECTIONS IN JORDAN

3.1 2013 ELECTION

Since 2011, the turmoil of the Arab uprisings has led to the overthrow of a number of established regimes, demonstrating these societies' desire for change. Even countries that were not following this process, like Jordan, witnessed social protests claiming for further reform. Demonstrations against corruption, inflation, unemployment and fuel prices among other topics have taken place in a number of cities, including Amman, since 2011. During this period of significant transformation—with populations calling for more transparency, accountability and democratic participation—political authorities have initiated some reforms.

This is true in Jordan where His Majesty King Abdullah has proposed the gradual realisation of a parliamentary government system, the development of platform-based political parties, and the strengthening of the credibility and transparency of elections. As part of this process, amendments to the Constitution were adopted in 2011 that included the creation of the Independent Election Commission, signalling a significant departure from previous elections, which were administered by the Ministry of Interior. In 2012, a new election law increased the size of the Lower House of Parliament and introduced an element of proportional representation. The number of seats for women also increased (although the share of the total remained the same, given the increased size of the Lower House). The law also introduced some technical changes to the rules governing the conduct of elections.

The reforms were not without criticism, and some political groups felt that the changes fell short of their expectations. Critics claimed, for example, that the distribution of seats was more favourable to rural areas of the country, and that the number of seats to be elected by proportional representation was not sufficient. Based on these and other concerns about the legal and political framework, the Islamic Action Front (IAF) called for a boycott of the parliamentary election and did not participate.

3.2 MEDIA LANDSCAPE

The state-owned media comprise three daily newspapers (Al Rai, Addustour and the English-language daily The Jordan Times), the TV station Jordan TV and two radio stations. International observers describe these as mouthpieces of the state, upholding the government line, rather than functioning as truly independent public broadcasters.

The media sector was opened up to private ownership by the Audio Visual Media Law of 2002. Today, there are more than 40 licenced TV satellite channels and more than 30 privately owned radio stations.

Most of these are entertainment and ratings-driven, rather than information and public service led. Jordan's privately owned newspapers have a variety of political alignments.

Internet use in Jordan is high for the region, with users served by a burgeoning online news media as well as social media platforms. Several news blogs have grown in prominence over the past few years.

Table 1: Major Media Organisations in Jordan

Printed Press	Al Doustor	Daily Arabic Newspaper
	Al Arab Al Yawm	
	Al Sabeel	
	Al Ghad	
	Al Rai	
	Petra News Agency	
	Al Anbat	
	The Jordanian Times	English Daily Newspaper
	Ahali	Arabic Weekly Newspaper
	Al Awtan	
	Al Hadath	
	Al Majd	
	Al Wehda	
	Shihan	Arabic bi-Monthly
	Al Maghtas Magazine	English Monthly
Jordan Business		
Audio-Visual	Jordan Radio and Television Corporation	Arabic
	Factjo TV	
	Seven Stars TV	
	Mazaj FM	
	Ro'yo TV	
	Jo Sat TV	
	Nourmina TV	
	Radio Jordan	Arabic, English and French
	Radio Rotana	Arabic
	Sawt Al Ghad	
	Jordan University Radio	
	Radio Fann	Arabic and English
	Ahlan FM	English, French Italian and Turkish
	Beat FM	
	Mood FM	English
	Play 99.6	
	Al malaf.net	

News Media-Online	Yahoo! Maktoub	
	menafn.com	
	menareport.com	
	Ammoun News	
	Ain News	
	Deirtna	
	Al Bawwaba	
	Taqaddom	
	Amman Net	
	Zawya	

3.3 MEDIA FREEDOM

Jordan's Constitution guarantees freedom of opinion, expression and the press. In addition, Jordan has signed and ratified the major international human rights instruments intended to guarantee freedom of speech and press freedoms. These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Yet, international observers describe a culture where journalists and media organisations are pressured by national security agencies to practice self-censorship and avoid crossing red lines, especially over issues that could be seen as detrimental to national unity, national security or the royal family. The Committee to Protect Journalists say criticism of the monarchy remains strictly off-limits for all media.⁵ According to the CPJ: 'One journalist was detained for three weeks for writing an article that alleged misconduct in the Royal Court, and a critical blogger was stabbed by an unidentified assailant after she published an article criticizing Prince Hassan bin Talal.'

On its scale for international press freedom, Reporters Without Borders ranks Jordan a lowly 134 out of the 179 countries on its list. According to RWB's World Report, 'the kingdom's journalists still live in fear of being imprisoned. More than one hundred clauses in national legislation... still allow journalists to be put behind bars.' Fines for defamation, offences against religion and publishing stories likely to stoke up ethnic and racial tension have been rising. According to RWB, 'these fines can go as high as \$40,000.'⁶ RWB assert the threat of imprisonment for journalists has created a climate of fear that has given rise to self-censorship: 'journalists and their editors display a tendency to caution in their comments and avoid any investigative reporting that could compromise political figures.' And, the Centre for Defending Freedom of Journalists (CDFJ) claims harassment of reporters has increased over the past two years.

3.4 MEDIA REGULATION

A number of bodies in Jordan have their hand in regulating the media. These include the Audio Visual Commission (AVC), Press and Publications Department (PPD) and Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC). The Independent Election Commission (IEC) is charged with conducting and overseeing elections. Drawing on Albany's experience since 2006 working on

5. <http://www.cpj.org/2012/02/in-jordan-blogger-stabbed-after-criticizing-the-ro.php>

media legislation in Jordan, the following observations and recommendations are made for each body.

3.4.1 AUDIO VISUAL COMMISSION

Over 10 years ago, with the issuance of Interim Law 71 of 2002 for Audio Visual Media (the 'AV Law'), some functions related to broadcasting were transferred from the cabinet to the newly created Audio Visual Commission (AVC). Specifically, the AV Law gave the AVC limited authority to regulate broadcasting, as well as a role in recommending licences to be issued by the Council of Ministers. The AV Law states, at least nominally, that the AVC should enjoy 'financial and administrative independen[ce].'⁶ AVC bylaws also give it responsibility for hearing and deciding complaints of the public about broadcasters, as well as dispute between licencees.

While the establishment of a separate body to regulate broadcasting is a positive step toward creating an enabling environment for a more independent media, the AVC is not sufficiently independent from government in law or practice to prevent political interference. For example, AVC management is appointed by the government directly, answers to government representatives on certain key decisions, and is not funded independently. Notably, broadcast licences are ultimately approved by the Council of Ministers, which can veto an application without explanation. For these reasons, the AVC's involvement in the regulation of media during elections may be found to be suspect.

The AVC has issued instructions applicable to audio-visual content at all times. More recently, in 2010, it issued special instructions effective only during campaign periods. The language of these instructions is very broad, but not problematic in and of itself. It is vague, however, and would benefit from more detailed explanatory guidelines, particularly regarding enforcement and sanctions and how they relate to the IEC guidelines (which are discussed below).

3.4.2 PRESS AND PUBLICATIONS DEPARTMENT

The Press and Publications Department (PPD) is responsible for licencing and regulating printed press in Jordan. Under the Press and Publications Law that guides its work, all print media outlets must register and obtain a licence from the PPD, and it may ban any publications distributed in the country. This is contrary to international standards for regulating print media. Unlike broadcast media (which uses the scarce national public resource of radio frequency spectrum, and thus its use may be subject to licencing), print media should not be subject to licencing requirements. Content should be subject only to self-regulatory mechanisms. Furthermore, the PPD's appointment processes and procedures are not sufficiently independent from government and thus encourage political manipulation.

6. <http://en.rsfs.org/report-jordan,155.html>

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3.4.3 TELECOMMUNICATIONS REGULATORY COMMISSION

The Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) was established under the law in 1995. The primary functions of the TRC are to issue telecommunications licences, to regulate telecommunications and information technology services, and to manage the use of the radio frequency spectrum (including for broadcasting). The TRC also is charged with stimulating competition in the telecommunications and information technology sectors, encouraging self-regulation by the industry, and proposing draft laws dealing with the telecommunications and information technology sectors for presentation to the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology. Its remit thus extends somewhat to broadcasting and the Internet.

3.4.4 INDEPENDENT ELECTION COMMISSION

Jordan's Independent Election Commission (IEC) was created under the Electoral Law of 2012. The IEC is an autonomous legal entity that is financially and administratively independent. The Commission is tasked with the supervision and administration of all phases of parliamentary elections as well as other elections called for by the government. The IEC shall take all necessary measures to administer free, fair and transparent elections based on the principles of justice, equality of opportunity, and the rule of law.

The Election Law of 2012 under which the IEC operates provides that 'official media outlets shall deal with all candidates fairly and equally during the election publicity period' (Article 22.A). The IEC issued a brief 'Code of Conduct for Journalists and Media Representatives' addressing a few ethical standards, providing for basic rights, and establishing a revocable accreditation process. The language of the code generally comports with international best practice, though journalists would benefit from more detailed guidelines on some ethical standards, particularly regarding enforcement and sanctions and how they relate to the AVC instructions discussed above.

3.4.5 JURISDICTIONAL OVERLAP AND ONLINE MEDIA

The overlap among these institutions, their lack of independence on certain issues, and their willingness to restrict the media in certain cases, is best demonstrated by recent actions against online media. In September 2012,

the Press and Publication Law (which guides the work of the PPD) sought to extend the regulations applying to the print media to the online media, by requiring them to be registered and licenced. The measure was met with protest and defiance and was temporarily suspended. Then, in June 2013, the TRC instructed Jordan's Internet service providers to block access to the 291 unlicenced news sites. According to Wefightcensorship.org, 'the decision came two weeks after the International Press Institute held its annual world congress in Amman from 19 to 21 May, during which Jordanian Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour praised the role played by the media and claimed that the protection of freedoms, including media freedom, was one of the priorities of his government's on going reforms.'⁷

7. <https://www.wefightcensorship.org/censored/local-news-sites-blockedhtml.html>

4. PROJECT AND RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 PARTNERS: UNESCO AND ALBANY

It is against this backdrop that this research and report has been conducted. It has been commissioned by UNESCO, the lead agency for the United Nations on freedom of expression issues. Jordan joined UNESCO in 1950, and the organisation has been active in the country since, supporting the Jordanian government, community-based organisations, and NGOs in building capacity for science, education, culture and communications.⁸

This work follows from research and practical experience gained by Albany management in Jordan during its work with IREX and the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania from 2006 to 2011 on a project funded by USAID. There, Albany provided comprehensive advice on Jordan's legal and regulatory framework applicable to the media, with the goal of creating an enabling environment for free and independent media in the country.

That comprehensive five-year project involved a number of periodic broad assessments of press, audio-visual and other laws, as well as direct advice to the Jordanian government, institutions, and media on reform. Albany management and consultants worked closely with representatives of government, regulatory bodies and media to implement recommendations made in those assessments including regarding legislation, regulatory practices, codes of conduct and elections issues. Partners included UNESCO, the AVC, the TRC, the Higher Media Council (a now defunct government body involved in media development and regulation), CDFJ, Jordan Media Institute, JRTV, Yarmouk and other universities, media representatives and industry stakeholders.

In 2011, Albany built on those assessments by drafting a paper on Jordan's media development needs against UNESCO's Media Development Indicators. In 2012, Albany management provided advice and input to the Jordanian government on specific media law, policy, and regulatory issues as part of another USAID project.

4.2 ENHANCING PROFESSIONAL AND ACCURATE MEDIA REPORTING ON THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

This report is an integral part of Albany's UNESCO-funded project for 'Enhancing Professional and Accurate Media Reporting on the Electoral Process,' carried out from March to October 2013. The aim of that project, and thus this report,

8. For more information see <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/amman/about-this-office/>.

is to contribute to freer and more professional, comprehensive and objective media reporting on elections in support of the democratic process in Jordan. The specific development objectives in furtherance of that aim are to:

- Empower and develop the capacities of media professionals to provide comprehensive election coverage to international best standards. These are to include effective reporting on gender issues and minority groups within the context of elections.
- Identify any shortfall in election-related training among Jordanian journalists, and to recommend a strategy for overcoming that shortfall.
- Identify and implement a strategy on how to support the practice of journalism during elections, through voluntary mechanisms such as a code of conduct and professional guidelines and through legal obligations. This is to include recommendations to bring Jordanian media law and guidelines in line with international best practice.



Participants at one of the UNESCO-sponsored training events for ‘Enhancing Professional and Accurate Media Reporting in the Electoral Process’ project.

4.3 METHODOLOGY

Albany obtained its findings in this report using quantitative and qualitative indicators. The networking sessions and seminars provided spaces to have in-depth conversations with journalists about their experiences covering elections, which contribute to the qualitative data throughout this report. The participants at each training event (see chart below) submitted an application form explaining why they wanted to participate in election coverage training in order to be selected to attend the training. The goal was to invite journalists from as many governorates across Jordan as possible.

The quantitative research was gleaned from an online survey sent out to Jordanian journalists working across the media in a range of locations and holding a variety of positions reflecting different levels of seniority. The survey was distributed through social media and online channels, including emails to participants at Project events and contacts of UNESCO. All respondents were

promised anonymity as participants in the survey. The survey is found in the Annex at the end of this document. (see image 1)

Qualitative research also included desk research, conversations with stakeholders, interviews, and responses gathered at networking events and workshops organised by Albany and funded through this Project.

Table 2: Events under ‘Enhancing Professional and Accurate Media Reporting on the Election Process’

Event	Date	Objectives	Attendee Profiles
Discussion Forum on Media Coverage of Elections, Amman	10-11 March 2013	Networking event to introduce the UNESCO project and learn from participants about challenges faced during recent elections and how the project can address those issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Journalists from state-run and independent media outlets operating throughout Jordan Officials from Communications and Outreach Dept of the IEC Academics from Jordanian universities with journalism programmes Media lawyers Representatives from Jordanian NGOs and CSOs Total of 17 participants
Discussion Forum on Media Coverage of Elections, Irbid	12 March 2013	Networking event with same objectives as above with a focus on issues faced during the elections by journalists in the more rural provinces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily print journalists from newspapers partially owned by the government Representatives from Petra State News Agency and Jordan State Television Two journalists from Irbid's local state-run radio Two members of IEC Total of 13 participants
Enhancing Media Reporting on Elections Journalist Training Workshop 1, Amman	12-15 May 2013	To train senior reporters, editors and media managers on planning electoral coverage in line with IEC procedures, media laws, international best practices, including a special focus on gender and social issues within the context of elections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Journalists from Amman and the North Total of 26 participants
Enhancing Media Reporting on Elections Journalist Training Workshop 2, Amman	26-29 May 2013	Training event targeted at journalists from the provinces of Karak, Zarqa, Irbid, Ajloun and Tefailah. NB: objectives changed upon realising the needs of participants were more basic than training event above, though original objectives were the same.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most participants work for state-run Petra News Agency. Others were local correspondents for leading newspapers Total of 18 participants

Challenges of the Media Community in Elections Coverage – Presentation of the Preliminary Road Map, Amman	30 June 2013	Seminar to present and discuss findings of the project events and questionnaire. Focus on regulation and press freedom, gender issues and role of the media during elections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants included representatives from Amman, Irbid, Karak, Zarqa and Tafieleh Total of 14 participants
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The key findings from the various forums and training events are summarised below and form the basis for the recommendations at the end of this report.



4.4 PARTICIPANTS

The views of Jordanian journalists were solicited at a series of networking events in Amman and Irbid in March and June 2013, and during two training workshops for national and provincial journalists in Amman in May, while their experiences of covering the national elections were still fresh. They came from a variety of backgrounds: television, radio, and printed press, both from Amman and outside the capital in the governorates. The Project sought to include as many women as possible. These participants' impressions were supplemented by responses to an online questionnaire and other interviews conducted with stakeholders. nts and workshops organised by Albany and funded through this Project.

These claims are necessarily subjective and have not been fact-checked, but they are useful to give an indication of the experience of election coverage from the journalists' point of view. In order to encourage them to speak freely, their views were solicited with the guarantee of anonymity.

9. Of the 88 participants at the events outlined in Table 1, 63 were journalists and 25 represented other relevant professions (ie IEC employees, media lawyers, etc). In addition, 52 individuals responded to the online questionnaire, which also contributed to the findings.

In total, 88 individuals participated across all events and contributed to the findings in this report.⁹



4.5 SOCIAL MEDIA

To increase the profile and publicity of the project, social media was an important tool used to disseminate information about events and relevant news items in real time. Examples of digital outreach used for the project included a Facebook page that has over 200 likes, a Flickr page for photos from events, six videos and a Twitter hashtag, #EMCOEjordan, that was used in 87 tweets between 11 March and 30 June 2013.

Fig. 1: Map of Jordanian governorates. Research took place at seminars and training events in Irbid and Amman with participants representing Ajlun, Amman, Irbid, Al Karak, Az Zarqa and At Tafilah. Image by Jarke via Wikimedia.



5. FINDINGS: VIEWS OF JORDANIAN JOURNALISTS ON MEDIA COVERAGE DURING ELECTIONS

Here the findings section is divided into five sections: Election Law and IEC; Media Professionalism and Code of Conduct; Women in the Media; Voter Education; and Biased Reporting and Intimidation of Journalists.

5.1 JORDAN'S ELECTION LAW AND THE IEC

A majority of participants at the first Amman networking event voiced that the Election Law as it relates to the media is flawed. Several said it had been drafted and adopted in haste only a few months before Election Day, and was loosely worded regarding media election coverage.

While most journalists knew about the existence of the IEC, some were ignorant about such details such as dates for voter registration, how to raise objections and final voter lists. Among survey respondents, 58% were not aware of laws or regulations related to media coverage of elections in Jordan.

The IEC considered the state-run media to have abided by the Election Law. But, journalists argued that the Election Law failed to specify which rules applied to state-run media and which also applied to privately owned, independent media outlets. As a result, the independent media outlets, specifically TV channels, argued that the law did not apply to them.

The 24-hour period of silence required by law before the start of the voting was not respected by the independent and private media outlets. They continued to run campaigning and advertising. But, as there is no penalty for this, some journalists argued there was no deterrent to prevent it.

There was criticism that three of the winning parliamentary candidates owned and ran TV channels, which they used to further their political campaigning. Journalists raised the question of how this could be regulated.

Many participants argued that users of social media had not abided by the Election Law, and the immediacy and dispersive element of social media contributed negatively to the electoral process. Some announced exit polls as final results, without waiting for the official result from the IEC, as the law requires. Some journalists argued there should be more effective regulation of on-line media.

Also among participants there was a lack of clarity about which body is responsible for determining whether media violations of election coverage have taken place. One academic pointed out that journalists considered to have violated the Election Law face sanction by no less than three separate bodies, including the AVC. Participants were unclear about the role of the AVC. Some argued that the AVC code of ethics is flawed and in need of revision.

'For government officials, the most important thing was to build the image of the elections and to prove they had a high rate of participation,' said one participant. 'It happened to me that the governor provided with a far higher rate of participation than the IEC officials did, showing that they did not have consistent figures.'

Participants in the consultation criticised the short time in which the IEC was established and the lack of information about its role. Several journalists mentioned that the IEC did not provide information about the electoral process and they proposed to have focal points of the IEC in the governorates. This was particularly underlined at the networking session organized in Irbid (March 2013) where some of the consulted said that they did not have access to or contact with representatives of the IEC.

In addition, it was asserted that the IEC did not have a common approach to media and that the journalists were in some cases prevented from taking photos. 'I was told that journalists were not allowed to enter a polling station,' said one participant. 'Later, we were admitted. Some officials did not know the rules.'



Finally, participants commented on the lack of understanding and awareness about the duties of the journalists during the electoral process and on a supposed interaction with the IEC.

**Quotes
excerpted from
the discussions**

'The IEC said there was a high turnout, but this was wrong. I saw a weak turnout.'

'Officials had different sets of instructions. I was prevented from taking photographs.'

'I was told that journalists were not allowed to go inside the polling station. Later on we were admitted. The officials did not know the rules.'

'For the officials, the most important thing is to project a good image, to prove they have a high rate of participation. The governor told me of a far higher rate of participation than the officials. These were not accurate figures.'

'The IEC was just a decoration. It was run by the governor, his assistant and his troops. There was no reference point for the media. The official's phone was turned off.'

'The international observers set the standards for their response against local elections, rather than international best standards. They were full of praise for the standard of the elections, but this was unjustified.'

'Officials had been given no instructions on how to deal with the media. Journalists were prohibited from entering the election stations, because local decisions were being made on how to deal with media.'

5.2 MEDIA PROFESSIONALISM AND CODE OF CONDUCT

Opinions differed over the need for a code of conduct to regulate the behaviour of the media in general, and during elections in particular. Some believed that a code of conduct existed, but it was widely overlooked, while others were not aware of any such code.

A question was raised as to how a journalist could be defined in Jordan, and whether that definition should be extended to cover bloggers. Users of social media were active in covering the election process. Should these be regarded as citizen journalists, and if so, should they be regulated in the same way as journalists who are members of the syndicate or who are employed by recognised media outlets? Should they undergo journalism training?

Quotes
excerpted
from the
discussions

Trainer Yahia Shukkeir said 70% of Jordanian journalists who were asked whether it was important to have a code of ethics said they did not know, while 60% were unaware of the existence of any such code.

A reporter for Al-Arab Al-Yawm in Karak, stressed the need for a code of ethics for journalists who cover the elections and asserted that the code should be written by journalists themselves. Most responses to the questionnaire said there should be a code of conduct for journalists for covering the elections and that journalists should draw up the code. The majority of respondents also said there should be an independent body to regulate media coverage during the elections and that those regulations should be binding on all forms of media, state-owned and independent media alike.

At each of the forums and training sessions for journalists and in many responses to the questionnaire, it has become apparent that there is an urgent need for continued journalist training and support in Jordan. In particular, respondents consistently identified a need for training in investigative journalism and professional ethics and media law, especially related to elections.



Related to investigative reporting, the problem of ‘political money’ or money for votes came up frequently. Journalists said this abuse figured prominently in the previous elections, but there was little understanding of how the problem should be covered by the media and exposed.

Social media training is also needed and desired. At the provincial level, few were actively engaged in social media. Some said they had never heard of Twitter.

As for training in professional ethics and the media law, many of the trainees demonstrated a complete lack of knowledge of media law. Most of the journalists present had not heard of a code of conduct for the media other than the regular style guides followed by the various media outlets. This lack of knowledge was even more apparent among provincial journalists. Many of these trainees said they had not known or been aware of the legal frameworks concerning election coverage or the international agreements to which Jordan was a signatory. Most trainees did not know that they could not be compelled to reveal their sources. Some, especially the younger ones, said they had not been given any legal training.

Training on legal issues resonated with participants, as there was positive feedback from the training they already received on this topic. One participant said, ‘I wasn’t aware of many things that were presented today, I did not know that I had certain rights and now I feel more protected as a journalist.’ Another mentioned: ‘We gained so much from this workshop: the protection of journalists and sources, in particular investigative journalism and independence and neutrality in covering elections.’



5.3 WOMEN IN THE MEDIA

Participants believed that women candidates and voters had been marginalised in the media. Some considered this to be a reflection of the way the role of women was marginalised in Jordanian society. There are currently 18 women in parliament out of a total of 150 members.

It was the unanimous view of the participants from Irbid that although more women voters were registered than men, women voters, as well as women candidates, were neglected in media coverage. It is worth noting that no women candidates won seats in Irbid.

Many participants would like to see a greater attempt to inform new young female voters on the practicalities of how to vote and the reasons they should consider voting. One female participant said she would have liked to see special workshops for young women who are voting for the first time.

As was the case in Amman, journalists in Irbid blamed problems with the media on journalists' lack of experience generally, the novelty of covering elections, and the lack of training on how to do so.

Quotes excerpted from the discussions	<p>'All the young men were gathering round the women's polling stations and were harassing them. Many people turned back.'</p> <p>.....</p> <p>'Some clergymen instructed voters not to vote for women.'</p>
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Gender expert Sawsan Al-Tawil stated that women's issues were still not highlighted properly in media, especially on TV. She called for the issues of gender and politics to be raised throughout the year to encourage greater participation by women in Jordanian political life and the elections.

A majority of participants noted a strong media bias in favour of men. One participant said, however:

Quotes excerpted from the discussions	<p>'There is a wide mention of men in the media, but lately the role of women became covered in the media as well, as there is a partnership between women and men.'</p>
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Most questionnaire respondents believed there was a bias against women in the media and specifically women candidates.

5.4 VOTER EDUCATION

There was consensus that the date of the elections was announced at a late stage, leaving the media inadequate time to prepare for professional and accurate coverage.

A journalist from Ajloun said the media played an active role in persuading people to vote through seminars and direct communication with the youth. It was reported that election irregularities had taken place due to a lack of voter education and appropriate sanctions. These included voting more than once, keeping possession of someone else's election card, and bribing or promising bribes.

5.5 BIASED REPORTING AND INTIMIDATION OF JOURNALISTS

Most attendees agreed the independent and social media covered the elections better than the state-owned media, as the former had more freedom to report on reality. Journalists gave examples of reporters who were paid to write articles about candidates, but without acknowledging they had been paid to do so.

It was argued that there should be a clear separation between election news and paid-for advertising on behalf of candidates.

EU observers described the main challenges to the media as official obstruction, self-censorship and political advertising—particularly the compromising effect on media coverage of accepting paid advertising by candidates.

Head of the Audio Visual Commission, Dr. Amjad Al Qadi, said all the candidates who owned a TV satellite channel or presented a TV show had won in the elections.

Senior reporter for Alghad, Jehad Mansi, argued that political money, especially for advertising, had a huge impact on the way the media had covered the elections. He said that, despite the widespread fraud in the 2007 elections, six years later the media was still failing to highlight the issue. He added that the local media was still playing only a minor role in covering the electoral process—a pattern that remained unchanged since the 1989 elections. He believes there is a pressing need for more in-depth journalism in this field.

Trainees working for the Petra News Agency (which is state owned) said that they had found it easy to access information and praised the cooperation of the IEC. Others said they had been prohibited from entering the polling stations on election day. It was generally found that personal relationships with members of the IEC staff were the easiest means for journalists to obtain information.

One participant said some journalists openly supported specific lists of candidates over others. Important quotes from journalists' experiences during the election follow:

- 'Many of my articles on the election were not published, because they were against the editorial line of the newspaper, which was supposed to be independent. When I wrote about fraud, my article was banned. The paper was supposed to be independent but the government was interfering.'
- 'Our role was as observers. The problem for us was that the president of our organisation was a candidate on the national list. It meant that our reports might be a little biased and not impartial. It became impossible for us to be observers, because we were part of the election.'
- 'If you talk about political money you can be attacked. One colleague was attacked and his camera was broken. The reporter was beaten because he was considered to be doing harm. Those in charge of security were ineffective.'
- 'Harassment prevailed in many centres. How are we to protect journalists, to prevent them being beaten, to safeguard their rights?'
- 'You may be subjected to beatings and involuntary detention when you cover the election. You should have numbers on you to call for your protection. As a journalist you need to be aware of the entities that you can call on to help you if you need it. I saw a French journalist calling in every 30 minutes to say she was still safe.'
- 'I saw one person voting more than once, but the liaison officer banned me when I started to look into it. He said my card was fake and banned all journalists from going into the polling centre for a couple of hours. They promised to solve the problem but they didn't do it.'

87.5% of questionnaire responses believed journalists should be given greater protection under the law.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research and findings described above, the authors recommend the following:

- [A working group should be formed](#) of parliamentarians, local and international legal experts, IEC members, representatives of civil society organisations and other relevant stakeholders (including members of the media) to review the media components of the Election Law to determine what improvements should be made in light of the most recent elections. The IEC report by Dr Bassem Al Twisi and others would serve as an excellent basis for discussion, as it already contains substantial data and analysis and addresses such key issues as the role and appropriateness of paid political advertising, campaign finance and ownership, and control of media by political actors.
- [Other elements of the legal framework should also be considered](#), such as:
 - Ways to improve the independence of relevant regulatory bodies, including the way the AVC is appointed and increased independence in the way the AVC awards licenses to broadcasters.
 - The possibility of leaving printed press and internet regulation to self-regulatory mechanisms, such as independent press councils administered with input of the printed press.
 - Increased legal protections for journalists, such as increased protection of the confidentiality of sources and defenses found elsewhere including where journalists have acted in good faith.
 - Decriminalisation of speech and journalistic activities, including requiring that defamation is addressed by awarding civil monetary damages to injured parties rather than through criminal penalties.
- There are already numerous bodies regulating the media (e.g., Audio Visual Commission, Press and Publications Department and relevant ministries) and regulating elections in Jordan (i.e., IEC), each with its own specific remit. As such, there is likely no need to create a new body specifically for regulating media during elections. Rather, there should be an effort to bring together the IEC and media regulatory bodies such as the Audio Visual Commission and the Press and Publications Department to [develop a plan and strategy for how the media will be regulated](#) collectively during elections given their respective remits. During this process, they should address how any areas of jurisdictional overlap will be resolved and should set out procedures for their collective regulatory activities. These discussions should result in a document for publication so that the media clearly understands the rules and processes that apply to them.

- [The IEC Code of Conduct for Journalists and Media Representatives and AVC instructions to media during elections should be reviewed](#) and revised if necessary taking into account events during the most recent elections. Any other codes of conduct to which media will be held accountable should be identified. The IEC, AVC and any other codes should be reconciled, spelling out which organisation will address violations with what sanctions, perhaps resulting in a single code applicable to media during elections. The reviews of these codes should be through a collaborative process, involving input of the media, soliciting participation and comments from around the country. A self-regulatory process, where the media regulates itself by naming and shaming those who fail to live up to agreed standards, could be developed to fill any gaps in regulation.
- [There should be a comprehensive and sustained public information campaign](#) about these agreed rules and process so that journalists and the public clearly understand the framework. This campaign—which should follow a comprehensive strategy and plan developed by experts—could include consultation events, programming for radio and television, websites and social media campaigns, and printed material. The campaign would work best if adequately funded.
- [A local organisation or organisations should be encouraged and resourced to act as a clearinghouse](#) for complaints from journalists about threats, inadequate access, or other issues and challenges they face during elections. A telephone hotline and/or internet-based complaints system could be developed and publicised. With funding, this could be started as a pilot project during elections, and then be established as a permanent service that could assist journalists on an on going basis. This service could eventually be self-sustaining, operating on contributions by media organisations themselves.
- [Capacity building of public authorities involved in the electoral process](#), including the IEC, in fields such as media relations, strategic communications, outreach and visibility or social media would be positively perceived by the media community and would help to shorten distances and to build bridges of understanding between bodies such as the IEC and journalists. Interaction of the media with the public authorities involved in the electoral process can be enhanced through a variety of methods such as:
 - Facilitation of accurate and clear information to the media by IEC and volunteers (brochures, webpages, manuals, etc).
 - Workshops and interactive fora to engage public authorities and media in the electoral process.
 - Increased numbers of IEC focal points in the governorates and cities outside Amman.
- Media perceptions about the IEC and other public authorities would be more positive if the positioning of the IEC would be clearer regarding issues such as improper behaviour of candidates, lack of independent coverage of elections or inappropriate political campaigning.
- Finally, and perhaps most importantly, investment in capacity building programmes for the media community should continue in order to improve professional and accurate coverage of elections. According to participants

- in Project events, this approach should include a particular focus on:
- Investigative journalism practices, including concerning political candidates and parties, voter fraud, campaign finance and other areas where improprieties can occur during campaign periods.
 - Media law, codes of conduct and administrative and judicial processes that may apply to their work.
 - Technical coverage of elections, involving voter trends, community voices and concerns, programmes of the political parties.
 - Social and other new media including use of infographics.
 - Instruction on gender-balanced reporting so that reporting does not contribute to prejudices currently embedded in their society. Extra effort should be made to ensure participation by women across training events, both as trainers and as trainees.

As most of the partners of this Project have mentioned, future training activities should focus on engaging participants from cities and provinces outside Amman. The approach to be implemented would depend upon the experience and academic level of the prospective trainees. Training of trainers approaches, for instance, should be considered to increase impact. It is also recommended to involve young generations of 'citizen journalists' who in many cases represent the future journalists in the country.

7. THE WAY FORWARD: ROAD MAP AND PROPOSED STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVED ELECTIONS REPORTING



Based on the research, findings and recommendations described above, the authors propose the following strategies and approaches be implemented in Jordan in order to continue supporting improved media coverage of elections.

7.1 CONDUCT A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DISCUSSION ON THE COMMUNICATIONS/MEDIA COMPONENTS OF THE ELECTION LAW AND CODES OF ETHICS APPLICABLE TO MEDIA DURING ELECTIONS

As mentioned above, it is recommended that a group of experts from different backgrounds—media, civil society, government and IEC—is formed so that a revision of the communications/media component of the Election Law and codes of ethics applicable to media during elections can be undertaken. A series of workshops could focus on brainstorming ideas for reform.

As part of this process, a team of legal experts should be hired to conduct a legal review of the existing regulatory instruments covering the media during elections periods. The IEC Code of Conduct for Journalists and Media Representatives and Audio Visual Commission's instructions to media during elections should be reviewed and revised. Any other codes of conduct to which media will be held accountable should be identified. Attention should be paid to protecting journalists from censorship, political pressure, harassment and attempts at bribery. Rules addressing how candidates who use the media they own during elections should be discussed. These activities should be linked to and coordinated with other initiatives to discuss reforms to the regulatory framework for elections, so as to avoid overlap

- **Stakeholders:** Parliamentarians, local and international legal experts, IEC members, representatives of civil society organisations, bodies regulating the media, journalists, media owners and other relevant stakeholders .

- **Format:** A series workshops should be held over a period of at least six months to a year, with time for reflection, consultation and drafting in between each workshop. The initial sessions would aim at discussing specific changes in the law and codes and delegate responsibilities for drafting specific recommendations. Groups of experts would be identified to implement these changes, and drafts produced would be discussed at later meetings. It is important that the process is transparent and stakeholders' opinion is sought at all stages of the process.. The review of codes of ethics should be conducted through a collaborative process, where the team of consultants works closely with the regulatory bodies covering media and elections. Input and comments should be solicited from media around the country. This will allow for a common purpose in the establishment of minimum acceptable standards by which all journalists can abide by.
- **Experts:** The presence of international and regional experts during these events is important to make sure international best practices are followed. It will be important to involve international experts who are familiar with Jordanian law and politics, understand editorial decision-making and standards, and have specific expertise in media law and regulation.
- **Outcome:** This project should result in a document with specific recommendations on the Elections Law for presentation to parliament, as well as recommendations on codes of ethics. A framework code of ethics handbook should be produced and widely disseminated.

7.2 ENHANCE CONSISTENCY OF CRITERIA REGULATING MEDIA COVERAGE DURING ELECTIONS

There are already numerous bodies regulating the media and regulating elections in Jordan, each with its own specific remit. An effort should be made to bring together all these institutions responsible for regulating the media and the elections in Jordan at a meeting assessing areas of overlap in responsibilities and alternatively areas that are neglected or insufficiently covered by the system.

- **Stakeholders:** IEC, Audio Visual Commission , Press and Publications Department and relevant ministries.
- **Format:** A series of meetings held over a period of at least six months to a year bringing stakeholders together to develop a plan and strategy for how the media will be regulated collectively during elections given their respective remits. It is important that the principles of transparency are followed and stakeholders' opinion is sought at all stages of the process.
- **Experts:** Legal experts who have first hand experience not only with the local regulatory system but also with international best practice and models should facilitate the meeting.
- **Outcome:** The outcome of the meeting should result in a document for publication that is disseminated in both print and electronic versions to

journalists across the country. The objective of this document is to make sure that the media clearly understands the rules and processes that apply to them.

7.3 IMPROVED ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PARTICULARLY DURING ELECTIONS

- As a result of the changes in the legal system covering media in the election period, it is recommended that a comprehensive and sustained public information campaign take place, preferably with and by the IEC. The objective of this campaign would be to inform the public about existing rules and processes including those for the IEC so that journalists and the public clearly understand the legal framework applicable to them. The campaign will aim at improving self-awareness of citizens and journalists about the benefits and obligations coming from the changes in the regulatory framework and increase their knowledge about regulatory system and institutions covering elections.
- **Stakeholders:** Journalists, public and key representatives of regulatory bodies. The target of the campaign would be the general public, with a focus on youth and women.
- **Format:** The campaign should follow a comprehensive strategy and plan developed by experts including consultation events, programming for radio and television, websites and social media campaigns, and printed material. Workshops for journalists should be conducted across the country to improve their knowledge of the regulatory framework and the institutions involved. Other workshops involving young women who are voting for the first time are suggested, as well as female journalists. The campaign would also promote the hotline described below and institutions involved in the process. The total length of the project would be one year, focusing on the campaign for six months. Additional campaigns should be run before each election period to reinforce the message. Certain elements of the campaign should remain sustainable, such as websites and social media updates to allow constant interaction with the public and other stakeholders.
- **Experts:** Legal experts, especially in media and campaign law; communications experts; producers to create content; experts on gender issues.
- **Outcome:** The outcome of this campaign is a better-informed public and journalist class who understand the requirements of media professionals during elections under the law. The public and journalists will have the ability and access to call the hotline, and will understand the significance of calling in to report violations of the law by election officials or other journalists. Therefore, the journalists would be more accountable to the public and to each other.

7.4 FOSTER CAPACITY BUILDING APPROACHES FOR LOCAL ORGANISATIONS IN ADDRESSING CHALLENGES TO JOURNALISTS

A local organisation(s) should be developed, encouraged and resourced to act as a clearinghouse for complaints from journalists about threats, inadequate access, or other issues and challenges they face during elections. A telephone hotline and/or internet-based complaints system could be developed and publicised. The organisation can either be established from the ground up or an existing organisation that deals with similar issues.

Stakeholders: Journalists, IEC officials, civil society organisation leaders, the Jordanian regulatory bodies.

Format: Capacity building for local organisation(s) in developing a hotline and training staff on dealing with questions of technical and legal nature. Recruiting and engaging professionals with legal background that can provide professional advice and assist with enquiries. Links between the organisation and the stakeholders should be established to ensure that timely advice and services are provided. The organisation should, however, remain independent and self-sustaining (to allow permanent service in times outside the elections periods) for example by introducing a contribution system of the media organisations themselves.

Experts: Full-time local legal experts preferably with experience in media law and access to information issues. International trainers can support the capacity building process.

Outcome: Multiple organisations will have the capacity to receive and respond to issues and challenges faced by journalists during elections in a timely and effective manner. Through contributions from media outlets, the organisation will be financially sustainable and a permanent resource to journalists even outside of election periods. As a result, there will be fewer violations against journalists if the clearinghouse model acts aggressively against offenders.

7.5 SUPPORT CAPACITY BUILDING ON PUBLIC AND MEDIA RELATIONS OF INSTITUTIONS INVOLVED IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS, SUCH AS THE IEC

- **Stakeholders:** IEC officials and any government officials with public roles during elections.
- **Format:** A series of training courses before the elections involving practical sessions on strategic communications, public information, media relations and outreach and visibility techniques could be conducted. It is advised that these sessions use a blend of international and local expertise to achieve best results, implemented through existing support. The training sessions should aim at covering latest proven methods in personal branding to instil self-confidence and build up trust and confidence with the press core, and social media best practices. Topics that could be covered during the training could include personal presence, writing for results, social media skills, and getting ready for with the Jordanian and international

press. Each component would consist of an initial tutorial on best practices, followed by a set of practical, skills-building exercises, and ending with a semi-finished product, whether a broadcast clip for the website, a press release from a recent initiative, or a Twitter campaign to raise awareness and reach out to constituents. At the end of the course, each attendee would be equipped with a set of core messages, a press plan, and a press strategy to immediately set up interviews.

- **Experts:** Media, PR and journalism experts, most likely international experts with deep understanding of the Middle East and Jordanian context, working with and through existing mechanisms that support the IEC.
- **Outcome:** Such training would improve the IEC's interaction with the public and media. After the training sessions, all IEC staff and election volunteers should understand and possess a written copy of clear, universal guidelines to follow during elections. The guidelines would also be available to journalists. IEC staff would also know the internal processes to follow in order to learn about changes or challenges in the guidelines. This would allow the IEC to become a more approachable and transparent organisation. A potential outcome would be creating satellite offices for the IEC outside of Amman that could act as information points for journalists and citizens during election periods.

Special attention could be given to train women engaged in the political process in Jordan. Training could focus on empowering women parliamentarians and women preparing to enter the political life and ensuring that their campaign is executed well and with confidence.

7.6 FOSTER CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMMES FOR THE MEDIA COMMUNITY IN JORDAN

Journalists should continue to receive training not only in basic skills but also in covering election campaigns, use of social media and infographics, research methodologies and media law.

- **Stakeholders:** Journalists throughout Jordan and Jordan's citizens who consume news.
- **Format:** The training sessions in this project (Enhancing Professional and Accurate Media Reporting on the Electoral Process) were successful in that they brought in journalists from provinces outside of Amman where resources are fewer. Therefore, future training courses would focus on participants from around the country, taking into account differences in education and experience. Topics would include international standards and best practices and visits to international conferences and workshops, as well as networking among media outlets and regulators in neighbouring countries. Training would also be offered to popular bloggers and citizen journalists who might not have a degree or profession in journalist but who clearly impact the news agenda in Jordan. There would be an emphasis on "training the trainers" in each course in order to increase effect and empower local journalists to share their knowledge with colleagues who couldn't attend.

- **Experts:** International media experts, preferably with a strong background in the region.
- **Outcomes:** Journalists will have better social media and digital skills to apply to a changing media landscape. Journalists in the provinces beyond Amman would gain skills and knowledge beyond the typical offerings they have now, expanding the potential for improved media coverage of elections through the country.

8. ABOUT UNESCO AND ALBANY

8.1 ABOUT UNESCO

UNESCO Amman is a multi-purpose office that works to support the Government, community-based organizations, and NGOs, in building capacity for Science, Education, Culture and Communications.

Education: UNESCO Amman strives to promote education in Jordan as a fundamental right while aiming to provide access to quality education for all. It focuses on assuring the quality of primary, secondary and higher education in Jordan by integrating literacy, technical vocational training, ASPnet, HIV/AIDS, inclusive education and human rights themes into the national curriculum. Its strong link with the Jordanian Ministry of Education, government agencies and NGOs facilitates UNESCO's success in project implementation.

Culture: UNESCO Amman assists the Department of Antiquities in the continued protection of its three World Heritage sites, and in the preparation of nomination files for new inscriptions. It has a long history of supporting the protection of Petra, beginning with a site management plan in 1994 and continuing to the present. Furthermore, UNESCO assists government partners, NGOs, universities and other stakeholders, in improving the management of museums and cultural objects in Jordan and supports the safeguarding of Jordan's intangible heritage. The Cultural Space of the Bedu in Petra and Wadi Rum was inscribed on the Representative of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (it was originally proclaimed in 2005) and UNESCO provides support to safeguarding of this heritage.

Communications: UNESCO Amman assists Jordan's media sector in establishing a free and independent media and empowering journalists through access to information and knowledge. Projects focus on strengthening the media's investigative skills, providing training to limit self-censorship, and providing an environment that promotes freedom of expression. The annual celebration of World Press Freedom Day is a demonstration of all of these activities and is seen by UNESCO's governmental partners as an indispensable empowerment tool.

8.2 ABOUT ALBANY

Albany is a UK-based private limited company, established in 2004. It specialises in providing creative and innovative assistance in transitional communications environments. Albany has a strong track record in consulting on broadcasting and telecommunications regulatory frameworks; advising on media and communications infrastructure development, including assisting with elections, elections commissions, and independent regulatory agencies; planning and delivering communications and public diplomacy strategies; and providing technical professional training and institutional capacity-building in support of telecommunications and media companies.

Albany has specialist and in-depth knowledge of working in the Middle East – in particular Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon and UAE. Albany’s worldwide client base includes UNESCO, the United Nations, UNDP, the UK Government’s Department for International Development (DFID) and Stabilisation Unit, the governments and ministries of Iraq, Lebanon, Kosovo and Sierra Leone, US State Department, US Department of Defence and regulatory bodies around the world.

In addition to this project with UNESCO, Albany was recently contracted by UNESCO Iraq to provide capacity building and support to the Communications and Media Commission of Iraq (CMC) and the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC). This work followed other elections project conducted for UNESCO Iraq, the US Department of State and other donors.

ANNEX

QUESTIONNAIRE TO JORDANIAN MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES ON MEDIA COVERAGE OF ELECTIONS

SECTION 1 - TELL US ABOUT YOU

Q.1 Name:

Q.2 Email:

Q.3 Gender:

Female

Male

Q.4 Age group:

18-25

26-33

34-41

41<

Q.5 Place and type of work

Q.6 Work location

Aqaba

Karak

Ma'an

Ghor

Amman

Irbid

Zarqa

Ajlun

Q.7 Have you previously covered elections?

Yes

No

SECTION 2 – HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE CURRENT REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT FOR MEDIA IN JORDAN?

Q.8 Are you aware of the existence of an independent body that regulates media coverage of elections? If yes, please provide some examples.

Yes No

Q.9 In your opinion, do you think there is a need for an independent body to regulate the media coverage of elections?

- Yes for all media
- Yes but only for traditional media excluding online publications
- No
- Other (please specify)

Q.10 Do you know of any laws or regulations or voluntary codes of conduct to regulate media coverage of the elections in Jordan? If yes, please provide some examples of laws or codes of conduct that you know about it.

Yes No

Q.11 In your opinion, is there a need for an independent body to regulate the media coverage of elections in Jordan?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- Other (please specify)

Q.12 If you answered yes to the above question, what is the entity that should develop the code of conduct? Please choose all that apply. Other (please specify).

- Media institutions and journalists
- A journalists' union
- An independent body
- Citizens
- I don't know
- Other (please specify)

SECTION 3 – YOUR OPINION AS A JOURNALIST IN THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN 2013

Q.13 The work environment during the media coverage of elections was free and fair. To what extent do you agree to this sentence? Please answer from 1-5 where 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree. Circle your answer below.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree
1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

Can you explain further?

Q.14 Journalists who are working to expose irregularities must have greater protection under the law. To what extent do you agree with the sentence above? Please answer from 1-5 where 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree. Circle your answer below.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree
1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

Can you explain your answer? If you believe they should be protected, what type of protection would you recommend?

SECTION 4 – OPEN QUESTIONS

Q.15 What are the challenges and problems faced by your colleagues during election coverage?

Q.16 In your opinion, what are the best mechanisms and methods to improve the work of journalists in covering elections?

Q.17 During the last elections, did you notice a difference in the way media represented women in comparison to men?

