

# Partnership for Poverty Alleviation: A case study of the partnership between government and national civil society organisations in Jordan

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## Abstract

Poverty is a challenging and complex social issue. Multidimensional poverty concerns more than income levels. It includes accessing basic human needs of food and nutrition, water and sanitation, basic education, and basic healthcare, among other needs. Alleviating it does not have a straightforward procedure to follow. It needs cooperation between the social actors. While governments are responsible for reducing poverty in their countries, civil society organisations (CSOs) are capable to be active partners in containing and alleviating poverty and solving social issues. Noting that Jordan's poverty rate grew between 2010 and 2018, this paper reviews the available scientific papers, reports, and official governmental documents to study the multidimensional poverty of Jordanian citizens and Syrian refugees in accessing their basic needs. Then, it interviews key informants of national philanthropic Royal and non-Royal CSOs to analyse their partnership with the government in alleviating poverty. While the income dimension is challenging for the poor in both groups, the study shows that the poverty dimensions of Syrian refugees are more complicated, as they face difficulties in accessing their basic needs. Also, the partnership is not strategic; CSOs implement poverty alleviation programmes, they are accountable, and they do their evaluation and monitoring, and their communication with the government is not effective for the partnership. Thus, the study suggests three main maintenance tools to improve the partnership. Starting by renegotiating partnership terms, establishing strategic communication and interactions networks by forming feedback cycles, and constructing common monitoring and evaluation for the different timescales.

## Introduction

Fighting poverty is central to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The importance of fighting poverty is due to the relationship between poverty and other important dimensions of life. It can hinder people from access to clean water and sanitation, sufficient nutrition and food, healthcare services, adequate housing, and education. Meeting these needs is important for humankind's survival and social participation. Thus, it is considered the world's most complex challenge, besides climate change, and the world's worst human rights problem <sup>1</sup>.

For the first time after 20 years of global poverty reduction, the poverty rate has been increasing due to the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) <sup>2</sup>. As a result of the COVID-19 impacts, the poor will be affected the most by facing the challenges in meeting their basic needs.

In reaching the SDGs, the UN emphasises the importance of having effective multi-stakeholder partnerships between social actors, i.e. government, civil society organisations (CSOs), and the private sector, which allows sharing of experiences and strategies between the partners. Where including and stepping up the involvement of non-state actors can strengthen collaboration and cooperation aimed at poverty reduction to reach the other SDGs <sup>3</sup>.

The potential that CSOs hold in societies, makes them capable to fill the gaps in developments that governments and the private sector cannot fill. As the space that CSOs work in is big, their aims, goals, and strategies are varied. However, they share some main characteristics. CSOs can be a catalyst for change, especially by linking the private sector with the low-income communities; acting as a watchdog, as they can raise public awareness regarding poverty and what can or should be done; working to serve the public, or a specific group's goals; and have multiple bottom

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<sup>1</sup> Atkinson, *Measuring Poverty around the World*.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, 'A UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19'.

<sup>3</sup> UNDP, 'Human Development Report 2020: The Next Frontier-Human Development and the Anthropocene', chap. 4.

lines that they use them to evaluate their work by including different inputs<sup>4</sup>; CSOs have the power to represent, reach out, empower, and defend vulnerable people<sup>5</sup>; CSOs can keep countries accountable in facing their commitments<sup>6</sup>; They are equipped with high potential in reducing poverty rates and supporting human rights and democratic development and work on leaving no one behind, thus, meeting the 2030 agenda.<sup>7</sup>; they share part of the regulatory role of the state, and they play an important role in shaping governments' agendas<sup>8</sup>.

It has been argued that there are differences between Jordanian CSOs in terms of their power and influence. The highest degree of influence is attributed to international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and Royal organisations<sup>9</sup>, and business and professional associations. While the least influential group includes labour associations, cooperative associations, charitable societies, and students movements<sup>10</sup>.

The poverty rate among the Jordanian population increased between 2010-2018, from 14.4 per cent to 15.7 per cent, with the existence of the poverty reduction strategy (PRS) which emphasised the roles of non-state actors in reducing poverty<sup>11</sup>. Also, in 2010, 22.5 per cent of Jordanian households were vulnerable, i.e. just above the poverty line. While the poverty among the Syrian refugees is higher. The poverty rate among the Syrian population, representing 12 per cent of the total population, was 78 per cent in 2018<sup>12</sup>. The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are expected to exert more pressure on people's jobs and income, and their ability to meet their basic needs. Thus, the number of poor people in Jordan is likely to increase.

Following the PRS, the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) 2019-2025 took a forward step in CSOs' participation. It had representatives of some national and international CSOs besides representatives from different ministries and governmental agencies in a collaborative committee before adopting the strategies<sup>13</sup>. Jordan's challenging situation can affect the ability of the poor to meet their basic needs and poverty situation in Jordan. For instance, Jordan is ranked as one of the countries with the greatest water scarcity in the world; it imports most of its food needs; it imports more than 90 per cent of its energy needs; and the politically unstable neighbouring countries cause social and economic impacts on the country<sup>14</sup>.

Therefore, this thesis studies the partnership in poverty alleviation between the government of Jordan on the one hand and national philanthropic Royal and non-Royal CSOs on the other hand. So, it is aimed to understand the situation of multidimensional poverty in Jordan, for the Jordanians and the Syrian refugees and investigate the impacts of the pandemic of COVID-19 on the access of the poor to their basic needs. In addition to understanding the situation of the partnership between the government of Jordan and the national philanthropic CSOs in poverty alleviation, Royals and non-Royals. Thus, studying the ways that the partnership can be improved to assist in bringing beneficial data to the partners in their work to alleviate poverty.

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<sup>4</sup> McKague, Wheeler, and Karnani, 'An Integrated Approach to Poverty Alleviation'; Anheier, 'Managing Non-Profit Organisations'.

<sup>5</sup> OECD, *Development Assistance Committee Members and Civil Society*.

<sup>6</sup> UNDP, 'Human Development Report 2020: The Next Frontier-Human Development and the Anthropocene'.

<sup>7</sup> Seitanidi, *The Politics of Partnerships*.

<sup>8</sup> Seitanidi.

<sup>9</sup> Royal organisations are established by a Royal Decree by a person from the Royal family. They are considered as non-governmental and not-for-profit organisations.

<sup>10</sup> AIUrdun AlJadid Research Center, *The Contemporary Jordanian Civil Society: Characteristics, Challenges and Tasks*.

<sup>11</sup> UNDP, 'Jordan Poverty Reduction Strategy 2013'.

<sup>12</sup> UNICEF, 'Geographic Multidimensional Vulnerability Analysis - Jordan'.

<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Social Development, 'National Social Protection Strategy 2019 - 2025'.

<sup>14</sup> Rahman et al., 'Declining Rainfall and Regional Variability Changes in Jordan'; Hochberg, 'Jordan's Energy Future'.

So, the thesis answers three research questions: What is the situation of multidimensional poverty in Jordan? How do CSOs see the partnership with the government in dealing with poverty in Jordan? What is needed to make civil society organisations' actions more effective?

## Methodology

This thesis represents a descriptive case study. It studies the situation of poverty in Jordan and the partnership between the government and national philanthropic CSOs. It uses qualitative methods to collect the required data to study the situation of poverty and the partnership between CSOs and the government.

The first research question is answered by studying the situation of multidimensional poverty in Jordan by referring to official national published reports and documents by the government of Jordan. In addition to reports and documents published by international organisations, such as the OECD, UN, including its specialised agencies, e.g., UNDP, and World Bank, and using literature and peer-reviewed articles. Each poverty dimension includes the situation of accessing the basic needs of Jordanian citizens and Syrian refugees. Besides studying the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on both groups.

The second and the third questions are answered by gathering data from documentation about CSOs and social partnerships to build first the theoretical framework. Then, by conducting interviews with representatives of Jordanian national CSOs. The data collected via the interviews are analysed through the theoretical framework of the partnership between the government and the national civil society organisations. The insights gained from Warner & Sullivan <sup>15</sup>, assist in analysing the ways of improving the partnership.

The study refers to Waddock <sup>16</sup> in its theoretical framework, as it is a general description of the partnership between the social actors. Waddock (1991) shows three types of partnerships. So, choosing the partnership type used in this thesis was based on the issue of poverty (a social problem that needs a long-term commitment between the partners), the types of partners (i.e. the characteristics of CSOs and government), and the goal of the partnership. Thus, the Systemic partnership is used, besides modifying it to fit into the characteristics of this partnership.

**Table 1.** Important factors in Systemic Partnership in the partnership between the government and CSOs, the study's theoretical framework

<b>Factors of the systemic partnership between CSOs and government</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
Goal sharing	They say they share (no) goals; the documents indicate that they have (not) the same goals
Interaction/communication	The quantity, content and quality (decision making/evaluation/accountability) of the meetings between the partners.
Governance of the partnership	The level of meetings between the partners; the intensity of the meetings; the decision-making power of the meetings.
Implementation	How much the partners are focused on the process of partnership or actual implementation.
Resource commitments	Institutional and resource commitment, e.g. time, investments and money, experience, materials, and workforce, to the shared objective of the partnership.
Evolving aims and strategies	Continuously updating partnership's objectives, and strategies.
Monitoring & evaluation	Have a monitoring and evaluation committee that gives CSOs the right to participate to change the strategies.

<sup>15</sup> *Putting Partnerships to Work.*

<sup>16</sup> 'A Typology of Social Partnership Organizations'.

Accountability

Accountability of the partners for the implemented projects.

Autonomy

Ensure CSOs' autonomy, and not be affected by the given fund.

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## Key informants: The interviewees

To answer the second question and study the partnership between the government and the CSOs, the thesis refers to key informants of national philanthropic CSOs. It starts by identifying the organisations that operate in Jordan and work on helping the poor to increase their income and improve their access to their basic needs, as defined in this research. Then contacting these CSOs inviting them to participate in this research, by conducting an interview. Since the goal was to collect qualitative data, semi-structured interviews is used, as they allow for adapting the structure of the interview to the prevailing circumstances and conditions, they provide space for the interviewees to express their experiences and ask follow-up questions to enrich the data.

### Interviews and questionnaire

The key informants of the national organisations provided information about their organisations in two steps, the first was answering a questionnaire in a Word document they received by email. This was followed by a personal semi-structured interview using the Zoom platform.

The first e-mailed questionnaire included 14 questions, mostly factual questions The representatives received before the interview in a Word format. The answers were received back by email before proceeding to conduct the interview. In case questions needing more clarification were marked to be asked at the beginning of the Zoom interview. Because of the sensitivity of the subject, the first question in the sent document asks the interviewees if they agree to include their organisation's name in the thesis. Where all the interviewed organisations confirmed to include their names.

The questionnaire for the semi-structured was not shared with the interviewees before the interview. The questions were divided into three sections. The first concerns the organisation's work on poverty alleviation; the second their partnerships with the government and other CSOs (following the theoretical framework); and the third was for their work and their partnerships during the pandemic of COVID-19.

Each organisation was interviewed only once. All the interviews were conducted between April and May 2021. Although the questions of the interviews were written in English, the interviews were conducted in Arabic. All the questions and the answers were in Arabic. If the question was not clear, it was repeated in English before rephrasing it in Arabic.

The interviews were recorded, with the permission of the interviewees. The confidentiality of the interview and the interviewees' identities were stressed, before and after the interviews. The interviews started by introducing the interviewee to the study and its aims.

## Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents and discusses data collected from literature review and interviewing the CSOs. The first section concerns multidimensional poverty in Jordan, as defined as accessing sufficient food and nutrition, water and sanitation, basic education, and basic health care, besides having sufficient income. The second section focuses on the partnership between the government and the national philanthropic CSOs.

### Multidimensional Poverty in Jordan

In Jordan, poverty is high for the Jordanians and Syrians. Though, its characteristics are different between both groups. For example, both groups face challenges in their income, however, Syrian refugees have lower income and higher unemployment rates. Moreover, while Jordanians have access to free education and free healthcare supported by the government, accessibility of Syrian refugees is affected by changes in governmental policies and the support they receive from CSOs.

The same as the poverty rate, the unemployment rate among Jordanians increased in the last decade from 12 per cent in 2010 to 19 per cent in 2020<sup>17</sup>. For **income** levels, in 2010 the average income (per month) for Jordanians was JD 315 in the public sector, compared with JD 388 in the private sector<sup>18</sup>. While it is JD 241 for the poor. Noting that two-thirds of them are employed in the private sector, and half of them work in the informal sector and are not registered in the national social security. However, the more educated employees have a higher average income. For instance, in the public sector, it is JD 260 for employees with below secondary schooling, while it is JD 400 for Bachelor's degree holders<sup>19</sup>. While 60 per cent of Syrian refugees were unemployed in 2015, and their average income was JD 177<sup>20</sup>.

This points out the link between **education** and income, and highlights the importance of education in alleviating poverty. Statistically, poverty in Jordan is a reason for 27.6 per cent of children's dropping out of school to secure sufficient income. Two-thirds of working children's families live in extreme poverty, and about 40 per cent of them have unemployed fathers<sup>21</sup>. While access to education is free for the Syrians in Jordan, the school enrolment rate is less among the Syrians than Jordanians in all education levels, with a higher enrolment for females than males<sup>22</sup>. This is caused by safety and social issues, financial limitations, distant schools, and limited available spots in schools<sup>23</sup>.

**Food and nutrition** intake and education are also connected, as sufficient nutrition positively affects students' cognitive results. However, between period 2013-2014, 0.5 per cent of Jordanian households were suffering from food insecurity, and 5.7 per cent were considered vulnerable to food insecurity<sup>24</sup>. The highest rate of food insecurity was in Ma'an, and the lowest was in Aqaba. While the highest rate of vulnerability to food insecurity was 25.6 per cent for Umm Al-Rassas District, a subdistrict of Amman Governorate<sup>25</sup>. While food insecurity for the Syrian refugees fluctuated between 2014 and 2018. It reached 28 per cent in 2016, then reduced to 23 per cent in 2018<sup>26</sup>. In 2018, the higher numbers of insecure Syrian households were in Mafrqa, and Irbid, with rates between 84.4 to 89 per cent<sup>27</sup>.

Jordan's challenging geographic location makes it dependent on food imports. Thus, vulnerable people are the ones who are affected the most, as they are not able to get benefits from the arid lands; they need to buy their food needs, without being able to save part of their limited income by growing their needs of vegetables and fruits.

Around 98 per cent of the residents have access to **water** sources. Urban residents have access to the pumped water once a week, while it is once every 12-14 days for the rural residents, which is kept stored in water tanks on rooftops<sup>28</sup>. In 2016, 71 per cent of the rural and urban households were connected to sewage systems. This rate is planned to increase to 80 per cent by 2030. Sanitation services and infrastructure varies between districts and affects both groups' accessibility similarly. However, it is different for the in-camp refugees, who represent around 20 per cent of the Syrian refugees. Their access to water and sanitation varies and depends on each camp's infrastructure. Lastly, it is noted that districts that host Syrian refugees are the most vulnerable to WASH services<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> UNDP, 'Human Development Reports: Jordan'.

<sup>18</sup> UNDP, 'The Informal Sector in the Jordanian Economy'.

<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Social Development, 'National Social Protection Strategy 2019 - 2025'.

<sup>20</sup> Microfinanza Srl, 'Assessing the Needs of Refugees for Financial and Non-Financial Services - Jordan'.

<sup>21</sup> UNICEF, 'Jordan Country Report on Out-of-School Children'.

<sup>22</sup> UNICEF, 'Geographic Multidimensional Vulnerability Analysis - Jordan'.

<sup>23</sup> UNICEF.

<sup>24</sup> MoS, 'The State of Food Security in Jordan (2013-2014): Analytical Report'.

<sup>25</sup> MoS.

<sup>26</sup> WFP, 'Jordan - Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment, 2018'.

<sup>27</sup> WFP, 'Food Security and Vulnerability of Syrian Refugees in Jordan'.

<sup>28</sup> Ministry of Water and Irrigation, 'National Water Strategy 2016-2025'.

<sup>29</sup> UNICEF, 'Geographic Multidimensional Vulnerability Analysis - Jordan'.

The lack of access to the previous two needs negatively affects the poor's **health**. In Jordan, about two-thirds of the Jordanians are medically insured in 2017. When taking non-Jordanians into account, the percentage reaches 45 per cent for the same year. While in-camp Syrians receive medical care for free, provided by the UNHCR with support from MoH, out-of-camp refugees are required to pay the same amount as non-insured Jordanians<sup>30</sup>. While more than half of the Syrian refugees' households have a member with non-communicable diseases, the treatment costs, besides associated costs (e.g. transportation), were the major barriers for Syrian patients not seeking to receive medical care<sup>31</sup>.

About 90 per cent of Jordanians live within 4 kilometres distance of their primary healthcare centres, this includes the poor and the wealthy citizens<sup>32</sup>. This assists people with access to their basic needs of healthcare.

### COVID-19 Panedamic and Poverty

The pandemic affects the **income** of households of both groups. The average monthly income for Jordanians had fallen to JD 215 in March 2020. It was worse for Syrian refugees, who lost their job permanently at a higher rate than Jordanians<sup>33</sup>. By June 2020, 40 per cent of the Syrian reported that they had more than JD 100 debts per capita, and around 90 per cent of them had to use negative emergency coping mechanisms<sup>34 35</sup>.

It impacts accessing **education** of Syrian refugees are harsher, and the rate of reduction of their participation in online schooling is reduced by 20 per cent compared with in-class<sup>36</sup>. As more than half of the vulnerable households in Jordan were not connected to online studying platforms, the pandemic is expected to push more students out of schools in Jordan to support the income of their families. The lack of internet connection and the needed devices to attend distance learning affected the poor children by facing challenges joining the classes<sup>37</sup>.

Also, it adds pressure on vulnerable people in Jordan, mainly as **food** prices increase. This is caused because of interruptions in some basic agricultural imports (e.g., legumes, wheat, corn, and rice). Since Jordan is highly dependent on these imports, this makes Jordan's food supply volatile to market instability<sup>38</sup>. In December 2020, the percentage of Jordanian food insecurity was 3 per cent, and 53 per cent were vulnerable to food insecurity<sup>39</sup>. Where rural areas are the most vulnerable. While, 25.7 per cent of Syrian refugees are food insecure, and 67 per cent are vulnerable to food insecurity.

While it does not seem to affect accessing **water and sanitation**, around 38 per cent of Jordanian households, expressed their concerns about access to clean water<sup>40</sup>.

The national vaccination strategies against COVID-19 included Syrians and Jordanians<sup>41</sup>. About 70 per cent of Jordanians faced difficulty in accessing **healthcare**, nevertheless Syrian refugees, as a result of the policies taken by the government to contain its spread<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> Dator, Abunab, and Dao-Ayen, 'Health Challenges and Access to Health Care among Syrian Refugees in Jordan'.

<sup>31</sup> Dator, Abunab, and Dao-Ayen.

<sup>32</sup> Ministry of Social Development, 'National Social Protection Strategy 2019 - 2025'.

<sup>33</sup> ILO, 'Impact of COVID-19 on Workers in Jordan: A Rapid Assessment'.

<sup>34</sup> Examples of negative coping mechanisms are reducing food intake, and reducing expenditure on health and education, among other negative actions that affect their basic needs.

<sup>35</sup> World Bank Group, UNHCR, and Joint Data Center of Forced Displacement, *Compounding Misfortunes*.

<sup>36</sup> UN Volunteers, 'Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 on Vulnerable Children in Jordan | UNV'.

<sup>37</sup> World Bank Group, UNHCR, and Joint Data Center of Forced Displacement, *Compounding Misfortunes*; DESA, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020*.

<sup>38</sup> WFP, 'Jordan Food Security Update: Implications of COVID-19 (July-August 2020)'.

<sup>39</sup> WFP, 'WFP Jordan: Country Brief'.

<sup>40</sup> UNDP, 'COVID-19 Impact on Households in Jordan: A Rapid Assessment'.

<sup>41</sup> UNHCR, 'Refugees in Jordan Face Escalating Challenges as Syria Conflict Marks 10-Year Anniversary'.

<sup>42</sup> UNDP, 'In Jordan, Survey Finds Most Struggle to Meet Basic Needs and Access Health Care under Lockdown'.

The previous points show the interlinkages between the poverty dimensions. The lack of access to one dimension can distort the process of eliminating the difficulties in accessing other dimensions. For example, improving access to basic health should be accompanied by monetary support, which was one of the barriers for Syrians not receiving health care. The relatively high costs accompanied with accessing the basic needs make accessing these needs more difficult for the poor. For example, when the Syrian poor can not afford to receive medical care because of the costs of transportation. Thus, it is not always sufficient to provide the poor with free, or low-cost, access to their needs. It needs to offer solutions such as free transportation for the poor that could help them to fulfil their needs. This can be done by having partnerships between the private sector, CBOs, national CSOs, or INGOs, depending on their experiences and their resources.

It can be seen that it is needed to support the poor's income, since accessing basic needs requires their payments. It affects children's access to education, for example. Where poor households might encourage their children to work to increase the household's income and they cannot afford to send their children to schools, while they and their children remain stuck in the informal sector and low-income poverty. This is called the poverty trap. It is a challenge, as poverty inversely affects human capital. This is caused as poor households tend to invest less in human capital, while education can help in pushing people out of poverty<sup>43</sup>. While a higher level of education can lead to earning higher incomes in life, in the long term<sup>44</sup>.

Employees of the informal sector, and irregular work, are not registered in social security. In Jordan, the percentage of informal workers increased from 20 per cent in 2010 to 24 per cent in 2016, and irregular work increased from 1 per cent to 8 per cent<sup>45</sup>. Noting that the poor are more employed than business owners, and mostly in the private sector, on the one hand, being employed helps them to secure their income with less risks of income fluctuations. On the other hand, working in the private sector might increase their possibility to accept the informal work conditions. In such cases, the government should be present and active to take serious steps to prevent informal employment, which would bring broad positive outcomes, including alleviating poverty by ensuring that the poor are covered by the national social safety coverage. This can be done through its regulations and policies, besides cooperating with non-state actors to increase awareness and ensure the serious implementation of these policies.

The main sources of aid for Jordanians are different from the Syrians and other non-Jordanians. The Jordanian government prioritises Jordanian citizens. While the Syrians seek support from other organisations to help them in tackling their poverty. To be specific, Jordanians are supported by governmental aid from the Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Health, the Royal Court, and Zakat Fund. While the non-Jordanians mainly receive aid from the UNRWA, WFP, and UNHCR. While both receive aid from religious organisations, and individuals<sup>46</sup>. A small percentage of the vulnerable and poor households receive assistance in food and cash from national organisations<sup>47</sup>. Thus, CSOs can help the poor in areas that the government does not, or can not support. Therefore, national CSOs can help the poor access their needs, and assist the government in alleviating poverty.

While it is needed to secure income for the poor, and employment is one of its methods, Syrians need to have a work permit to be able to work in Jordan. Where applying for the work permit requires following a specific procedure, and paying specific fees by the employer, and by the employee. However, it seems that the government took positive steps to help the Syrians, and reduce their poverty as a result. Where the Ministry of Labour facilitate applying the work permit

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<sup>43</sup> World Bank, *Poverty Reduction and Growth*.

<sup>44</sup> World Bank.

<sup>45</sup> Ministry of Social Development, 'National Social Protection Strategy 2019 - 2025'.

<sup>46</sup> UNICEF, 'Geographic Multidimensional Vulnerability Analysis - Jordan'.

<sup>47</sup> WFP, 'Jordan Annual Country Report 2018: Country Strategic Plan 2018 - 2019'.

requirements for the Syrians and reduced the application fees which led to an increase in the number of applications <sup>48</sup>.

## The Partnership between the national CSOs and the Government

This section presents and discusses the collected data from interviewing representatives of the four national CSOs, besides their answers to the questions they had received before the interviews. The two Royal CSOs are Dar Abu Abdullah (DAA), and Jordan River Foundation (JRF), and the two non-Royal are Future Pioneers for Empowering Communities (FPEC), and Mateen World Organisation (MWO).

The CSOs have different characteristics. In terms of budget, JRF has the largest annual budget (USD 14.1 million); DAA's budget is (USD 6.7 million); FPEC is (USD 2.0 million); MWO is (USD 1.0 million). For the law they work under, DAA is registered under the Associations Law (AL); FPEC and MWO under the Non-profit Companies Law (NPL); while JRF did not provide an answer. All CSOs target the most vulnerable individuals and households. However, since they have different approaches to alleviating poverty, they share similarities and differences in their targeted groups and projects. For instance, JRF and FPEC focus on women and children; MWO mainly targets the Syrian refugees, as they face more challenging access to education. Moreover, CSOs programmes and focus areas have part of these differences, DAA, JRF, and FPEC work on community and individuals' socio-economic empowerment; JRF works also on child safety and family protection and adopts a social enterprise programme; FPEC's additional programmes cover water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) projects, climate change adaptation, renewable energy, waste management, and human rights of marginalised groups; MWO improves access to education for marginalised children, provides psychological support for children, support reducing families' vulnerability, support raising awareness on marginalised children's rights, and WASH projects.

### CSOs, the AL, and NPL

Both laws require following specific procedures when receiving a fund, but the NPL has less limitations as it has less restrictions on the CSOs, compared to the AL. As the AL is administrated by the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) and NPL by Ministry of Trade (MoT), it seems that the regulations of each ministry affect the operations of CSOs. For instance, MWO described working with MoT as more convenient than with MoSD when receiving funds. Also, DAA described the AL as "the one-size fits all, [that] does not classify the NGOs, based on the nature of the work nor the volume of the portfolio".

### The criteria for selecting CSOs' target groups

The CSOs have different ways of selecting their targeted groups. They depend on their database, which gained over time. Besides, the data they receive from the different CBOs and partner CSOs. The donors' and governmental policy requirements can determine the groups of concern. However, donors' requirements can determine the groups' age, gender, or nationality, for example. While governmental regulation can limit the nationality of the beneficiaries of each project. Anyways, CSOs do the screening of beneficiaries to ensure their eligibility, as per project's requirements. In this process, they consider the household's income, the existence of debts, employment per household, house ownership (i.e. rented or owned), the number of children and their school enrollment, the number of disabled family members, and the number of family members with chronic diseases.

### The government in poverty alleviation, and as a partner

CSOs see the government holding a critical role in alleviating poverty and faces a great challenge, given the limited resources of Jordan. They believe that they have the capacity and experience that the government lacks. Which is more efficient to work on the ground and reduce the poverty of specific groups, as they see.

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<sup>48</sup> ILO, 'Work Permits and Employment of Syrian Refugees in Jordan: Towards Formalising the Work of Syrian Refugees'.

The government's laws can affect the CSOs' work. For example, as a response to the long-time Syrian crisis, the government's objective is to ensure including Jordanian beneficiaries for each project with Syrian refugees. Since CSOs (nationals and international) and the government changed their interventions in responding to this situation from implementing emergency interventions to development and empowerment programmes, CSOs see this law can help reduce poverty for both groups and promote social inclusion.

The organisations described the partnership with the government as good, and excellent. However, there were some criticisms of the government. All of the organisations mentioned the long time and efforts needed for the governmental paperwork, decision-making process, and follow-ups, which have negative effects on their work. As philanthropic CSOs have to get approvals from the government before starting the project or transferring a foreign fund to their accounts, this step takes time for receiving approval.

Other critiques are mentioned in the interviews that affect the national CSOs' work, directly or indirectly. Firstly, for governmental support, the amount of money and the number of households the government supports are insufficient. This also should be combined with a holistic approach to reducing unemployment. Secondly, some organisations have better communications and facilitations from the government, including the INGOs. This should not be the case when aiming to solve a complex issue, such as alleviating poverty. Thirdly, there is a bureaucracy on the government side that CSOs sometimes have to deal with; there is a lack in having an efficient governmental system, that is, the decision-makers, managers, and people in charge of the government might affect the flow of projects implementation; sometimes there is a lack of transparency and trust. Fourth, for its strategies and policies, while there are many strategies, there is a weakness in the implementation; high taxes and fees affect society, especially the private sector, which has to face an increase in running and production costs, and this reduces the competitiveness of the national product and affect poverty reduction as a result.

## CSOs Partnership with the Government: Analysis and discussion

To understand the partnership, this section starts by summarising and analysing the CSOs' answers about their partnership with the government by referring to the theoretical framework.

**Goals sharing:** The CSOs, Royals, and non-Royals, have similar goals as the government.

**Interactions and communications:** They are mainly project-based. CSOs describe their partnership as active. They contact the government to get approvals, ask for data, submit evaluation reports, and when access to projects' locations requires permission. Organisations need to initiate communications with the government. The quantity and quality of communications depend on organisations' work, and the project's weight, which determines the frequency of communication.

**Governance of the partnership:** The level of representation from the two sides depends on the goals of meetings and communications. The CSOs are satisfied by both sides' representation. The level of governance depends on the government's representation, e.g. minister, directorate, or governorate, which can determine the power of decision-making, and facilitate, or hinder, the implementation of meetings' agenda.

**Implementation:** The CSOs are the implementers of the partnership's projects. The government's role is to approve the projects and to ensure the organisations follow the procedures set by the government, e.g. the targeted beneficiaries.

**Resources commitment:** The organisations believe that they play a complementary role to the government since their experiences, strategies, and mechanisms of implementing the projects are different. The CSOs commit their resources of time, workforce, and the received funds to implement their projects. The government permits organisations to access projects' locations and shares their database with the organisations (e.g. reports, studies, and data of other CSOs and CBOs). While there is satisfaction with this share of resources, the time of receiving approvals consumes time, which might threaten the organisations' work.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** The organisations monitor and evaluate their strategies and projects. Then, they report to the government and the donors, periodically. The government does not participate in this process. Even though the government receives the reports, it does not seem that it performs evaluations for the outcomes.

**Evolving aims and strategies:** Similarly, organisations decide to evolve their strategies in alleviating poverty. The government does not take part in it. While some CSOs (i.e. JRF, MWO) share their studies, proposed ideas, and recommendations with the government, it is not clear to them the extent the government considers these suggestions. Moreover, when the government updates the areas of concern for CSOs' work, it issues new laws that all CSOs have to follow.

**Accountability:** Since the projects are implemented by the national CSOs, CSOs are accountable. Even when they partner with other local organisations and CBOs, they hold accountability in front of the government and the donors.

**Autonomy:** Organisation's autonomy is not affected by the partnership with the government or the donor. They do not face actions that might affect the organisational decision-making.

The national CSOs are satisfied to be implementors and accountable for the partnership's projects. By referring to the points above, and the theoretical framework, it is noticed that it is not a strategic partnership. Thus, the partnership needed to be improved on the following points:

1. **The governance of the partnership** needs to be improved, i.e. the process of decision-making. Since the partnership faces challenges with who represents the government, the unclear and unstrategic governance structure in the partnership might affect the CSOs' work on their projects, and poverty alleviation as a result.
2. **Resources commitment** needs to be clearly identified to facilitate CSOs' work. The national CSOs commit their resources, while when they need facilitation from the government, they face challenges in the processes they follow.
3. **The interactions and communications** require improvements. The communications between both sides are project-based. They do not have continuous and strategic communications in their partnership.
4. **Evaluations and evolvments of partnership** strategies require the engagement of the government. National CSOs evaluate and evolve their strategies in the absence of the government. Since the long-term benefits for society are at the core of the systemic partnership, and poverty is complex and needs long-term commitments, this obliges to have common and periodic evaluations.

Improving the partnership: The three maintenance tools

The partnership between the CSOs and the government is already built since they have common objectives and visions. The CSOs hold the roles of implementors and accountable. Most of the partnership's utilised resources are participated by the CSOs. While the government's participation is not sufficient to facilitate the work of the national CSOs. Thus, to strengthen the partnership in the 1-4 points above, the study refers to the three maintenance tools of Warner & Sullivan<sup>49</sup>. The three tools to maintain a strategic partnership between the government of Jordan and the national CSOs are: renegotiating the partnership terms, agreeing on the communication and interactions, and having common and periodic monitoring and evaluations.

#### *A. Renegotiating the partnership's terms*

For alleviating poverty, there should be a clear and effective partnership between the government and the national CSOs, to be based on identifying powerful and clear roles of partners<sup>50</sup>. When governments work to keep the participatory consultation with the public, more costs would be added as more time, expertise, and financial capital are needed<sup>51</sup>. However, the direct long-term

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<sup>49</sup> *Putting Partnerships to Work*.

<sup>50</sup> Koliba, 'Civil Society Organisation Accountability within Governance Networks'.

<sup>51</sup> Kirton and Hajnal, 'Introduction, Observations, and Conclusions'.

benefits to society are greater than the short-term costs, as the systemic partnership emphasises on.

As the partners are interdependent, and the partners' favourable views of the partnership might not be similar, understanding other partners' views help in strengthening the partnership<sup>52</sup>. Recognising partners' views can ensure successful partnerships to the level that exceeds participation's costs. This allows for redefining these views between the partners.

Renegotiating the partnership terms would allow addressing the first two points of the partnership's improvements, the governance of the partnership and the resources commitment. Currently, national CSOs have to follow a long process when asking the government to share its resources and receive approvals and implement their projects and share their resources to benefit the poor and bring social benefits. Thus, this step is necessary to allow identifying the resources that both partners can share more conveniently. As well as eliminating what hinders their work, such as when CSOs request accessibility permissions, and databases of CBOs. Also, it can assist in determining the roles that CSOs can perform, besides their current roles as implementers of poverty alleviation projects, as the experience they gained over time, and their knowledge of people on the ground, allow them to use these inputs in enhancing partnership's strategies.

Improving the partnership between national CSOs and the government will bring a win-win deal for all (national CSOs, government, society, and the poor). Thus, once the government and CSOs show their willingness to jointly discuss the ways to improve the partnership's terms, they can decide the ways of eliminating the excess time that the national CSOs face in their work. Renegotiating the partnership would pave the way to discuss the following two steps of partnership maintenance, and ensure the building of a strategic partnership.

However, the point is whether the government will be willing to engage national CSOs in the decision-making and to allow the strengthening of their work. Taking into consideration that the working environment of CSOs in Jordan is still *evolving*<sup>53</sup>. Besides the criticisms that AL faced, since it limits CSOs' work, keeps them under the surveillance of the government, and does not distinguish between the different types and capacities of the CSOs. For example, the AL states that CSOs should not aim to achieve religious or political goals<sup>54</sup>. While this sentence is unclear, and it is not explained or defined, this might give the government the power to define its meaning, depending on the responsible governmental officer and the case they face. The government needs to accredit the capacity of CSOs in driving change and being important actors in society. The first step of maintaining the partnership would not be done until the government acknowledge the potential of CSOs in general, and in alleviating poverty specifically, and gives them the trust to participate freely and democratically in the country and include the different voices during the decision-making.

### *B. Communications and interactions in the partnership*

The partnership requires regular planning and communication between the partners. The more interactions and communications between the partners, the more likely they have successful outcomes. It can solve the issues jointly between the partners before they grow into unmanageable proportions<sup>55</sup>. However, it is not easy to have a harmonised and coordinated partnership. Thus, improving the quality of interactions and communications between the government and the national CSOs can ensure the continuity of quality communications about the issues faced by any of them.

In this partnership, there is a lack of communication in the phases of planning and implementation. CSOs plan to conduct their work and implement their defined strategies. The role of the government is seen when CSOs ask for approval to initiate the project. The government checks whether and how the CSOs follow the governmental laws. The checking process and the

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<sup>52</sup> Waddock, 'A Typology of Social Partnership Organizations'.

<sup>53</sup> USAID, *2013 CSO Sustainability Index for the Middle East and North Africa*.

<sup>54</sup> USAID.

<sup>55</sup> Warner and Sullivan, *Putting Partnerships to Work*.

outcomes thereof are often more dependent on the governmental person involved than on the official procedures. Thus, this step addresses the third issue, above, that the partnership faces.

The communication with the government starts when the organisations apply to get approval to receive funds to implement a new project, to ensure legal on the right-track work. This needs the CSOs to have a detailed plan for the projects, and the sources of the fund. After that, the interactions between both sides depend on who represents the government. So, there are two problems with the issue of communications. First, the communications are periodic but not continuous over time. Second, the quality of communications depends on the side that represents the government. Thus, improving communications should address the issue of the lack of strategic communications, which the two points lay underneath, that might hinder the national CSOs to implement their projects smoothly.

Strategic communication with the government means establishing continuous feedback channels to eliminate any action that might inhibit the partnership. This means that the partnership will be always open for updates and improvements. For this goal, partners should establish two types of feedback cycles, a long-term feedback cycle, and a short-term feedback cycle. Both cycles allow continuous adjustments of the communication on different timescales<sup>56</sup>. This should be accompanied by formulating a communication strategy that is built on structures, and processes of communication. Where *communication structure* requires the existence of organisational elements, such as communication teams, hierarchies and reporting lines, and resources. While *communication processes* are the sequences of human actions that depend on these elements<sup>57</sup>. In this partnership, the task is to work simultaneously on the two points, while giving the processes on the governmental side more attention, where the weakness is, as the structure is already built, as seen.

Adapting strategic communication between the government and the national CSOs should be paralleled with transparent communications, as the increased transparency to the public can increase public trust<sup>58</sup>. While the lack of transparency of the government was pointed out in the interviews, this can be addressed and solved in this step.

### *C. Monitoring and evaluation to evolve the partnership*

Periodic monitoring and evaluation reports are important to track the progress of commitments and objectives of the partnership and to allow taking corrective or preventive actions<sup>59</sup>. Thus, the partners should agree on a specific evaluation methodology for the partnership, and determine the inputs that should be considered in the evaluation.

The current poverty alleviation strategies are being monitored, evaluated, and evolved by CSOs. National CSOs perform these processes frequently, in the absence of the government, while it demands periodic reports from CSOs. It does not seem that the government reflects on these reports to evaluate or evolve its strategies, for example.

It is a prerequisite to have established communications and interactions between the partners to reach common monitoring and evaluations. Butterfoss<sup>60</sup> shows a three-level evaluation methodology. The first level concerns the short-term outcomes and measures the functions, processes and infrastructures. The second level concerns the short- to medium-term outcomes, and evaluates programmes and interventions. The third level, the long-term evaluation of outcomes, measures social change outcomes.

These levels are close to the two feedback cycles from the previous point. This emphasizes the connectivity between the maintenance tools. For this partnership, without working seriously on the

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<sup>56</sup> Adolphsen, *Communication Strategies of Governments and NGOs*.

<sup>57</sup> Adolphsen.

<sup>58</sup> Fairbanks, Plowman, and Rawlins, 'Transparency in Government Communication'.

<sup>59</sup> OECD, *Making Development Co-Operation More Effective*.

<sup>60</sup> *Coalitions and Partnerships in Community Health*.

first two levels, it would be challenging to reach an agreement on evaluating the outcomes of the partnership for alleviating poverty among Jordanians and Syrian refugees.

Unlike the previous management steps of maintaining the partnership, the step requires including more inputs from the partners. In other words, since each organisation works on specific areas of poverty alleviation, has different targeted groups, follows specific criteria for selecting its beneficiaries, has various ways of implementing the strategies, and, as a result, their evaluations will not be similar. So, this means that partners need to agree on their inputs for measuring the partnership's outcomes. Where CSOs' data, combined, can bring measurable and comparable outcomes, nationwide.

As shown, the three maintenance tools are linked and need a commitment from all partners. That is, to maintain the already built partnership between the government and the CSOs, both sides should be willing to meet to reinforce the partnership, by renegotiating the terms, then agree on the communications and interactions and feedback cycles, which would allow the monitoring and evaluation of the partnership and establish a three-level of evaluations.

What the CSOs see that should be improved in the government's work can be addressed by following these maintenance tools. It keeps the government informed about the CSOs' views and challenges that directly or indirectly affect the partnership and the outcomes of poverty alleviation.

#### Royal and non-Royal: CSOs in the partnership

There is a similarity between the two types of CSOs, Royals and non-Royals. Both do not have a strategic partnership with the government. However, there are differences between them. The first difference is the higher budget the Royal CSOs have compared with the national non-Royal CSOs. Second, as was mentioned in the interview by JRF, “[the work] is easier for us as a Royal organisation”. Similarly, DAA gave two examples that they could rent from the government some facilities they needed for a symbolic price. Also, FPEC said that “in general, Royal organisations might have higher accessibility and facilitation than the Royal organisations.” The reason could be that with a larger budget and capacity come more influence and legitimacy, and the more they can invest for bigger economic projects, which makes them again more visible <sup>61</sup>. Also, since their founder is from the Royals, this may encourage the government to trust them and give them more facilitation.

#### CSOs, Partnerships, and COVID-19

CSOs stated that their work has not been much affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, apart from adjusting their work and services to technical solutions. Though, there are some challenges in contacting the beneficiaries and accessing projects' locations. In addition, national CSOs saw an opportunity to invest their resources into the newly raised needs, as funding opportunities could be affected as a result of changing the areas of interest of the international donors. For instance, DAA mentioned that they could make use of the current demand for facemasks, so, they produced and sold them to support the poor. Thus, they could help to secure incomes for poor families and help people who cannot afford to buy masks. Lastly, some CSOs see that their partnership with the government is strengthened, while others see that it did not change.

## Conclusion

In Jordan, many of the Jordanian poor are usually supported by the governments in their financial support and their basic needs. Though it is not enough, and here the role of national CSOs is present and fills this gap. While Syrian refugees are dependent on the support they receive from national and international CSOs, in addition to the regulations of the government, which can determine their ability to access basic needs, e.g. public schooling and healthcare centres. With the lack of governmental support, the Syrian population have a more difficult situation.

The connection between the poverty dimensions brings attention to consider the assistance programmes from a holistic view, by combining accessibility to the needs together in studying poverty. In the presence of the different strategies of CSOs and governments in alleviating poverty,

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<sup>61</sup> UNDP, 'An Overview of International NGOs in Development Cooperation'.

strategic partnerships can form a base to share experiences, data, and strategies between partners, not only with the government but also with CSOs, national and international. So, enforcing alleviating poverty programmes. To succeed in building strategic partnerships, partners need to keep their communication channels open for feedback. Continuous and strategic communications allow for strengthening the partnership against challenges by maintaining the flow of evaluation and monitoring measures.

Driving social changes is impeded in the work of CSOs, since they have various goals to achieve. In this thesis, alleviating poverty is the goal of the interviewed organisations, which can be achieved by helping the poor access their basic needs, while not forgetting the crucial role of the government in unifying the efforts to alleviate poverty, in its policies, regulations, and keeping the space of CSOs to work. Analysing the partnership and referring to the tools to maintain it can help in bringing partners together to form a strategic partnership, and strengthen it.

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