



National Forum for Youth and Culture: Jordan Youth

**“Jordan Youth Agenda for the 2007 Elections”
4th North Forum**

1. –3. March 2007

Report

The main objective of the Fourth North Forum, organized by the National Forum for Youth and Culture in cooperation with the Civil Society Development Centre and Konrad Adenauer Foundation and held at Jordan University of Science and Technology during the period 01 – 03/03/2007, was to enhance the effective participation of the Jordanian youth as citizens, voters and candidates in the municipal and parliamentary elections. In addition the Youth Forum aimed at identifying characteristics of an ideal candidate youth would vote for, and to identify youth priorities for any candidate to represent youth interests.

This 4th Youth Forum in the North was implemented by NFYC following up on previous work, such as the 3rd forum where young Jordanians discussed the elections and political parties' laws. The 4th North Forum included training on advocacy, and ideas for media campaigns that would enhance the youth's awareness on elections and encourage them to actively participate.

- **Venue:**
Jordan University of Science and Technology

- **Partners:**
 1. Civil Society Development Center
 2. Konrad Adenauer Foundation
 3. National Forum for Youth and Culture: Jordan Youth

- **Number of Participants:** 85 young male and female of those who reside or study in the northern region of Jordan.

Results:

In the first day of the meeting; the participants were engaged in discussions with experts in the field of parliamentary and municipal elections. The discussions involved the role of parliament and municipality council members, and participating youth understood the necessary background and difference of roles to identify which of their needs and demands would be served by either municipality council members or their representative in Parliament.

In the afternoon of the first day, the participants were divided into groups in order to identify the characteristics they want in municipal and parliamentary elections candidates. They agreed on the following **shared characteristics for their ideal representatives** in both, municipalities & parliament:

- Good resumé/CV along side with a realistic electoral program
- Ability to work according to a policy that is based on research and knowledge of the people's and the country's needs
- Have a smart and wise electoral programs published
- Possess the necessary tools of democratic practices.
- Ability to communicate and interact with his/her local community
- Leadership skills.
- Adhere to principles of religion, credibility, accountability, transparency, integrity, honesty, fairness, and commitment to his/her electoral program
- Well-informed of the Jordanian constitution
- Good conscience and objecting to bribes and corruption
- Believer in equality between men and women
- Loyal to the country
- Providing services to electorate regardless of tribal, religious, or ethnic origins and backgrounds.
- Familiarity with current issues
- Concerned with achieving public welfare rather than his personal welfare
- Believe in certain principles and ideologies.
- Hold necessary means of research
- Believe in youth issues
- Have experience in voluntary work for at least five years

According to the priority voting (each participant had 3 votes) on these characteristics, youth believes that the most important feature of the right candidates is to adhere to principles of religion, credibility, accountability, transparency and being committed in their electoral program (ranking first with 43 votes). In second place came loyalty and dedication to the country with 14 votes. Finally, the youth required candidates to believe in certain principles and ideologies by 13 votes.

Moreover, the participants pointed out four characteristics specific for the **parliamentary candidates**. These were:

- Electoral program of the candidates should include youth and women issues
- Understanding their role in the parliament as legislators, monitors, and services providers, in that exact order
- Abilities and skills necessary for legislation

- Be well-educated in order to effectively interact in the House of Representatives

Similarly, the participants demanded the **candidates for the municipal elections** to have a general view of the people's concerns in their areas, and to work on providing needed services at suitable costs to ease their daily life.

On the second day of the meeting, the participating youth worked on identifying their needs and what they wish parliamentary and municipal elections candidates address in their electoral programs. Each group presented the needs they had identified and reached consensus on. Following are their results categorized according to municipal and parliamentary elections, and then in subcategories according to field:

House of Representative:

Education:

- Studying the possibility of decreasing fees at governmental universities, and standardizing private universities fees.
- Establishing a uniform and concise curriculum for primary and higher education.
- Revising educational curricula to include:
 - Focusing on ethical and psychological education
 - Enhancing awareness on citizenship and nationalism
- Focusing on educating women to empower them to raise good generations
- Increasing the financial support of scientific research institutions to encourage youth to be more involved in them
- Revising the regulations of acceptance to universities, and distributing scholarships fairly
- Expanding programs supporting poor students
- Training graduates in accordance with market needs

Culture:

- Reconsidering the law of publications and monitoring
- Establishing a basis for the freedom of press
- Supporting and empowering the youth parliament to contribute in the process of decision making
- Establishing a specialized committee to adopt youth initiatives
- Increasing the number of youth centers and their fair distribution to all parts of the country

- Opening cultural centers for children
- Preserving the Arabic language and culture from external cultures
- Enhancing environmental awareness
- Exchanging expertise with other countries in the field of environment protection

Economy:

- Studying the reality of the tax burden on the citizens of the country
- Reconsidering the process of privatization
- Modifying the law of investments to achieve equality between foreign and local investors
- Issuing strict laws to prohibit owning or selling land to non-Jordanians
- Devising national economic strategies with no intervention from the World Bank and the IMF
- Empowering and supporting the agricultural sector to become a main pillar in the national economy
- Studying the salary system in Jordan, and improving it in a way suitable for its citizens
- Increasing the budget for the tourism sector
- Lowering the age of retirement to help reduction of unemployment
- Allowing youth to participate in economic conferences
- Reducing the prices of petroleum products

Health:

- Expanding the umbrella of medical insurance to cover as many people as possible, especially those with limited or low income
- Increasing the attention towards disabled patients and those with special needs

Politics:

- Enhancing political participation of all factions of the society
- Enhancing the Jordan's relations with Arab and foreign countries
- Specifying a quota in the parliament for those with special needs
- Considering policies with regional, national and Arab perspectives
- Establishing a constitutional court
- Working on release of Jordanian prisoners of war in foreign countries
- Establishing a foundation that is dedicated to ensure the rights of prisoners in correctional facilities in Jordan
- Launching project of developing the regions

- Increasing the quota of women in the parliament to reach 30%.

General:

- Considering an objective strategy to organize urban expansion
- Combating corruption
- Legislating strict laws regarding traffic violations (reducing accidents)
- Legislating laws to monitor and audit public servants' actions to ensure a good performance based on the principles of transparency and accountability
- Imposing a strict legal monitoring system on using exhaust filters in vehicles and factories
- Enhancing the role of professional associations
- Establishing a union for handicraft workers
- Devising a law to protect the rights of workers in the private and public sectors
- Modifying the law of pilgrimage admissions
- Modifying the law to prevent honor crimes
- Controlling desertification and putting to work the royal vision: "towards a green Jordan"

Municipality Councils:

Education:

- Holding illiteracy workshops
- Establishing and supporting public libraries
- Holding training and awareness workshops, in addition to social, educational, cultural and health events
- Improving schools facilities
- Increasing the number of information technology centers
- Establishing training and qualifying vocational centers

Services:

- Improving the infrastructure
- Building gardens and parks to increase the area of green lands, and improve the scenery
- Sound implementation of laws and regulations
- Building popular markets
- Monitoring violations in the area
- Simplifying the procedures for acquiring licenses and permits
- Organizing public transportation system
- Preserving animal resources and manage their places of gathering

- Taking care of youth centers and encouraging voluntary work
- Monitoring environment, health and education
- Sponsoring pilgrimage trips for those who can not afford them
- Social, political and economical development
- Controlling rodents, insects and pests
- Supporting and providing aid to farmers

Economy:

- Attracting investors to their areas
- Promoting and preserving tourist and public sites
- Adopting and supporting small businesses
- Encouraging local investments in order to achieve self-sufficiency of the country
- Establishing an association to support and raise funds for poor families
- Decreasing land property tax
- Fair compensation for property confiscation

Health:

- Raising health awareness through seminars on free open medical days
- Providing comprehensive health centers
- Following up on complex health issues

Social:

- Elimination of begging
- Encouraging women to obtain jobs, and eliminating the shame culture
- Looking after people with special needs
- Forming an advisory youth council from the age of 18 to 32
- Sponsoring and supporting youth centers, and forming sport teams
- Sponsoring and supporting women associations

Each participant voted on four needs that he/she saw as the two most important to ask for from a parliamentary candidate (2 votes) and a municipal candidate (2 votes). Studying the possibility of decreasing fees to governmental universities, and standardizing fees at private universities came in first place with 23 votes. Training graduates in accordance with market needs and modifying the law of honor killings both shared second place with 11 votes. Moreover, reducing the prices of petroleum products and fighting corruption came in third place with 9

votes each. Finally, reconsidering the salary system in Jordan, and improving the living standards of citizens got 8 votes.

Regarding youth needs directed to municipality councils, forming a youth advisory council from the age of 18 to 32 got the highest number of votes (15 votes). In second place taking care of youth centers and encouraging voluntary work with 7 votes. Furthermore, decreasing land property tax, attracting investors to Jordan, supporting women associations, and taking care of people with special needs all shared third place with equal votes (5 votes). In fourth place came organizing the transportation system, monitoring environment, health and education, improving the infrastructure, promoting and preserving tourist and public sights, encouraging women to obtain jobs, and eliminating the culture of shame with 4 votes each.

The afternoon of the second day included training on advocacy. This training was given by Mahmoud Hishmeh who introduced the concept of advocacy to the participants, and its importance in achieving their goals. Then he talked about some traditional ways of gaining advocacy, however, he indicated that the process of advocacy is a result of hard work and creativity. He stressed all elements and factors of the surrounding environment had to be studied thoroughly when working on advocacy. That can be achieved by producing the so-called "Power Map" which helps identifying those opposing your goal, and then trying to gain their support.

The third day of the forum included designing youth initiatives that encourage youth to participate in the parliamentary and municipal elections, in addition to gaining advocacy towards youth issues and their needs, these initiatives were:

Group 1: "Prove your presence by voting"

Vision:

- Encouraging youth to encounter political participation in the parliament.

General objectives:

Productive participation in the election process

1. Voting for a parliamentary candidate objectively
2. Avoiding tribalism as much as possible.
3. Emphasizing on the concept of democracy.

Objectives:

1. Promoting marches using leaflets and SMSs that include the objectives of the march, the place, and the time
2. Designing shirts, slogans, and posters
3. Setting up all the necessary arrangements along side with the intended agencies:
 - Obtaining all the necessary permits
 - Presence of media and journalism coverage

Activities:

1. Gathering the youth in the parliament headquarters
2. 110 youth must act a role play of being parliament members, while wearing shirts with the wanted characteristics of a parliament member printed on them
3. Preparing leaflets and posters and posting them in the parliament court
4. Every member must present their electoral program under the parliament dome
5. After this session, the youth parliament members undergo a procedure of questions and answers lead by journalists about their needs and opinions
6. A march for those with special needs, wearing shirts that say "our vote makes us able to move"

Group 2: "In Jordan, your vote makes a difference"

Objectives:

1. Raising awareness of the highest number possible of youth to encourage them participate in the election process
2. Putting the national and public benefits in the first place
3. Emphasizing on freedom of speech for youth.

Mechanism:

1. Establishing a forum on the internet
2. Enhancing the policy of open days
3. Raising awareness
4. Sending SMSs
5. Organizing a silent and expressive march
6. Distributing leaflets and publications
7. Equipping the group with skills of communication and advocacy
Gaining support and advocacy of journalists
8. Choosing the suitable times
9. Signing a document by the highest number possible of people
10. Distributing uniforms and logos aiming towards activating the work of the group

Group: 3

Objectives:

1. The voice of candidates must reach as many people as possible, and they must be persuaded with his/her electoral program
2. Benefiting and servicing as many people as possible.

Mechanism:

1. Free medical day that includes people with special needs
2. A charitable bazaar to be held in orphans associations, and people with special needs center
3. Covering all areas to identify any present problems, including poor families
4. Cultural meeting (TV program)
5. Providing a bus for professional volunteer workers
6. Linking between candidates and voters
7. Producing school-bags with the name of candidate on them
8. Conducting a survey to identify the needs of the public

Group 4: "Our word is the country"

Mechanism

1. Organizing the electoral campaign by the youth
2. Enhancing the role of internet in the electoral campaign
3. Candidate must visit people with special needs in their houses in order to encourage them to vote.
4. Candidate and the youth of the campaign must visit residents of the different areas to tell them about their role in the elections process.
5. Forming committees that consist of residents of the different areas to link between residents and candidates
6. Gathering data about the needs and concerns of the voters
7. Designing publications and posters that have attractive titles to encourage the people to vote
8. Informing the residents of a certain area about other electoral programs