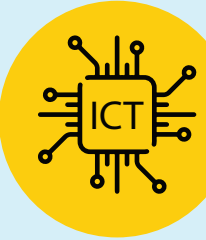


# Destination WEE in ICT in Jordan

The “Employment-oriented MSME promotion” project has committed to support sustainable system change towards Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE) in Jordan’s Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector – highlighting partner-orientation, results-orientation, and sustainability as guiding principles of our work. We believe integrating various perspectives, expertise, and resources – be it within GIZ, the broader development community, the public and private sector, or across intervention levels from macro to meso and micro – is the key to meaningful change.



## The ICT sector has the potential to overcome the paradox of highly educated but hardly employed women

More than 50% of ICT graduates and 32.6% of the workforce in the sector are women. In comparison to other sectors, ICT is a socially accepted sector for women, and it provides more opportunities for remote and flexible work. Thus, the ICT sector may inspire other sectors and push the women economic participation rate in Jordan also more broadly.



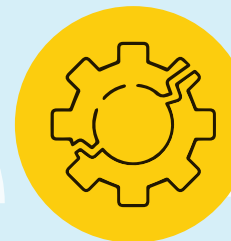
## Women empowerment is a conversation amongst women institutions but hardly reaching the private sector

The ICT sector was listed as a priority sector in the EMV. However, the Engendered Strategy has no specific initiatives for women empowerment in the sector, but rather most of the initiatives are sector agnostic. MoDEE and the ICT sector association of Jordan (Int@j) as key ICT institutions did some individual work on women empowerment. However, those activities were ad hoc and scattered, without alignment with national strategies and without a joint approach to translating national strategies to the sector.



## Jordan is amongst three countries with lowest women economic participation rates globally!

The MENA paradox is particularly evident in Jordan: Women are highly educated but hardly employed. In 2022, 56% of all university graduates in Jordan were women, and more females than males are enrolled in secondary and tertiary education; however, the unemployment rate of women in Jordan stood at 31.7% in 2022. As per the Global Gender Gap Report 2023, Jordan ranks 144th out of 146 countries regarding women’s labor force participation. This is due to different factors such as a lack of childcare facilities, limited mobility especially in rural areas, limited family friendly working conditions, and traditional social norms.



## However: A lack of cooperation and integration undermines individual strategies and stakeholders’ efforts in Jordan

The Government of Jordan has mandated the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) to work on women empowerment strategies. Most ministries do not have a systematic approach to integrating gender equality in their strategies or have dedicated strategies in that regard. The Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship (MoDEE) has had a WEE unit – however without any staff or activity.

In 2022, the government announced the National Economic Modernization Vision (EMV), with gender aspects essentially absent. An Engendered Strategy was only added subsequently as a separate document but received little attention due to its lack of integration in the overall EMV.



# Unleashing the power of an integrated approach



## Equipping the motherboard: Setting structures for change

In line with JNCW's role in implementing the national gender mainstreaming strategy, the MSME project strengthened JNCW's capacities to engage more on the topic of economic in addition to political empowerment. The project supported JNCW to work with MoDEE on establishing a women empowerment unit at the ministry. A gender audit helped to determine the adequate set-up of the unit within the ministry. Targeted capacity development for relevant MoDEE staff both within the unit and beyond ensures they can effectively support women's digital and entrepreneurial skills with policies and initiatives designed to bridge the gender gap in the ICT sector.

At the same time, the MSME project supported the institutionalization of WEE at Int@j through the establishment of the WEE unit "SHETECHS". SHETECHS' main goal is to increase the number of women working in the ICT sector – especially in technical careers – and support them to assume leadership positions. To secure sustainability of the unit, the project worked with the Int@j team on a business plan for SHETECHS. Actively including the CEO and board members in the design of the unit secured awareness for the importance of WEE, buy-in, and commitment across the organisation.



## Connecting electrical circuits: Reinforcing linkages for joint action

With MSME project support and in cooperation with MoDEE and SHETECHS, JNCW facilitated a series of Public-Private Dialogues (PPDs) on opportunities and challenges for women in the ICT sector. As a result of the PPDs, the three partners jointly developed and now implement a WEE action plan for the sector aligned with the National Strategy for Women and the Engendered Strategy of the EMV. MoDEE owns the plan and reports on it to an inter-ministerial committee on women empowerment to secure integration in national efforts, potentially also inspiring further sectors.

The PPD is now established as a regular exchange format on WEE topics in the ICT sector, ensuring women's representation in the development of gender-responsive measures.

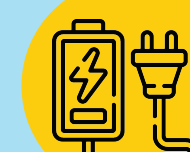


### Examples of WEE action plan activities include:

- Awareness sessions for 200 female university students on opportunities for graduates in the ICT sector.
- Awareness sessions on family friendly regulations in the Jordanian labor law targeting MSMEs from the ICT sector.
- Study about women entrepreneurship in the ICT sector.

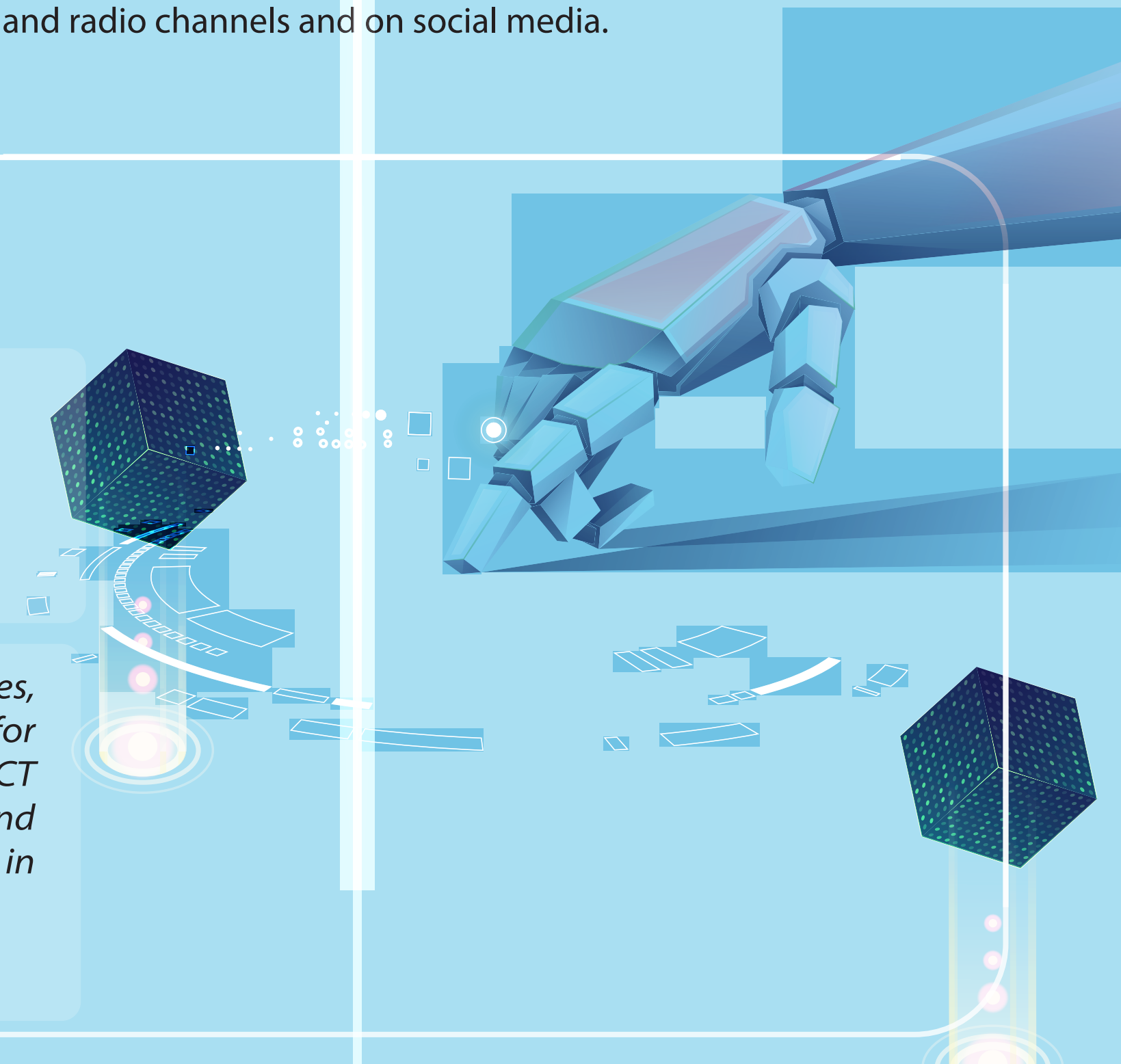
*"The partnership between SHETECHS and government entities, especially MoDEE's WEE unit holds substantial promise for advancing gender equality and empowering women in the ICT sector. By working together, we create a more inclusive and supportive environment and improve opportunities for women in technology and entrepreneurship."*

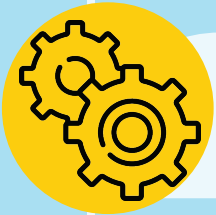
*Ms. Zain Asfour – Head of SHETECHS unit at Int@j*



## Charging the system: Bolstering awareness as basis for action

To complement the efforts, the MSME project worked with JNCW to conduct a [national media campaign](#) encouraging businesses to provide better opportunities for women in the ICT sector by showcasing women's contributions and addressing stereotypes, thus contributing to gender-transformative change. The campaign reached 12,000 individuals through TV and radio public service announcements that were screened on four national TV and radio channels and on social media.





### Feeding the system: Sustainable service provision for long-term change on business level

Building on the experience of the predecessor project “EconoWin” in providing GDM services to large enterprises in the MENA region and on the “Gender Equality Mainstreaming for Business Growth Framework” created by Canadian NGO MEDA, the MSME project developed an approach for GDM service provision to SMEs in Jordan.

*Gender Diversity Management (GDM) is the voluntary positive managerial practices promoting equal economic integration and retention of women and men (with a special focus on women) in the enterprise as business managers / owners and employees.*

Accordingly, the MSME project capacitated two local Business Service Providers (BSPs) and relevant private sector associations (including Int@j) on GDM and on service delivery models. The project encouraged the partnership between the BSPs and the associations to promote and deliver the services to the SMEs and subsidized the service fee for SMEs participating in the pilot initiative. While the associations mobilized the SMEs to use the service, the BSPs were responsible for service delivery and documentation



### GDM services include 3 elements:

- Assessment of the business' key strengths and needs from GDM perspective
- Development of a GDM action plan
- Technical support to implement the GDM plan and awareness raising activities.



*“Applying GDM has opened our eyes on simple but valuable actions that both male and female employees appreciated and that made them feel valued.”*

Mr. Marwan Hamdan - Chief Executive Director of Finetech Solutions

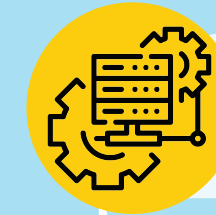
SHETECHS in partnership with a local BSP piloted the GDM service with 20 ICT SMEs, creating tangible impact for the businesses and their employees. Importantly, the two organizations developed a business plan to market the service to additional SMEs and built case studies to show the impact of GDM. As a result of the pilot, male leaders at participating SMEs have created a network of GDM champions that will promote the GDM practices and services to other enterprises in the sector, thus contributing to creating equal opportunities for women across the sector.

MoDEE contributed to this activity by promoting the GDM service on different occasions e.g. when holding events on related topics such as on the labour law. The MoDEE minister has committed to participate in the recognition ceremony for SMEs who implemented GDM foreseen to take place in 2024.



*“After reviewing our recruitment policy, and applying flexible working system, we were able to recruit two new female technical employees.”*

Ms. Sara Abdulraheem -HR Manager at Neo Genesis



### Complementing the system: Towards a self-perpetuating system able to expand, scale, and learn

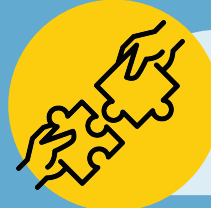
As part of the Engendered Strategy of the EMV, JNCW currently develops a national “Gender Seal” for both public and private sector entities. The MSME project along with further national and development partners supports the development. The seal is long awaited by the private sector and is expected to boost the uptake of the GDM service.

To create further synergies and share learnings, the MSME project has actively sought opportunities for collaboration and promoting the Feminist Development Policy beyond its project boundaries: Within GIZ, the project partnered with the sister project “Employment in Jordan 2030” to document and promote case studies for enterprises that implemented GDM measures, showing the positive impact on the businesses’ performance, while the sister project “Entrepreneurship for Development and Employment” was connected to MoDEE and SHETECHS to support an entrepreneurship study as part of their WEE action plan for the ICT sector.

The MSME project further initiated and engaged in consultations with other development partners to align and exchange on the GDM services as well as to promote the two WEE units’ work and offerings. This will help facilitate alignment and channel support to WEE activities in the ICT sector.



# Our key insights to consider for replication



## Sustainable WEE integration goes beyond individual interventions

Collaboration across the project's fields of activity with sister projects and with other development partners is key. Before planning for an integrated WEE approach, ensure that the whole GIZ project team is sensitized and capacitated on WEE related topics and can mainstream WEE throughout the planning and implementation of their activities. Moreover, cooperation with GIZ projects and other development partners to strengthen the linkages built will have a direct positive impact on sustaining the integrated approach.



## Public-private partnership is key, but not easy

Partners from both sectors need to feel ownership for their interventions and to see the value of the integrated approach for their operations, performance, and reputation. This can be achieved through joint planning and implementation, monitoring and celebration of achievements.



## WEE mainstreaming is about attitudes and beliefs

Partners and relevant stakeholders need to be sensitized on WEE related topics along the way through formal and informal awareness and capacity development activities – or even through side talks over coffee. GIZ team members need to be willing to put in the extra efforts required for this and not just stick to the interventions' technical plan and activities.



## Make sure to engage men as agents of change

While not at the center of the approach, the project sought to actively involve men as agents of change throughout the interventions, from men in leadership positions at MoDEE and Int@j to male managers and staff of SMEs participating in the GDM service and awareness campaign. Providing opportunities to question social norms and stereotypes regarding women's economic contributions and encouraging men to advocate for better opportunities for women makes a meaningful contribution to gender-transformative change.