

# **Public Forums in the Arab World**

**Final Report**

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## **Introduction**

The Establishment of the Arab Network for the Study of Democracy (ANSD) in 2005 came as a response to needs and challenges facing the democratic transition to democracy in many of the Arab countries. Although, differences in political experiences of reform and democratization do exist, there are a lot of commonalties among these countries as well.

The founders from the different Arab countries that make up the Network believe that understanding of those challenges and promoting the democratic principals and procedures are very crucial.

The ANSD embarked on many actions such as research on specific aspects of the democratic transformations taking place in the region and the engagement of the public and civil society in the issues of public concern. Therefore, the idea of "Public Forums" was introduced as an experiment in the endeavor.

To realize this mission, the ANSD entered into a joint-learning agreement with Kettering Foundation in 2006 and launched the Arab Public Deliberation Initiative. The teams representing Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco, Yemen, Algeria, and Bahrain selected issues of major concern prevailing in their respective countries and started creating issue books and undertaking nations-wide issue forums.

This report is about the experiences of the public forums and deliberation that were held in seven Arab countries in the past couple of years.

### **Objectives of the Public Forums**

Deliberation of public issues in a systematic and non-partisan manner is something that is relatively new to the political culture of region. This should not mean that forms of consultation have never existed in the political or social systems of the region, but to say that deliberation at the citizens' level is rather new and that the demand for such mechanism has grown because of the late move toward democratic governance in many of the Arab countries. Therefore, by introducing public forums the Network hopes to achieve the following interlinked objectives:-

## **1. Citizens Engagement:**

Citizen's participation and engagement in public issues was one of the main objectives of the forums. In all countries represented at the Network, democracy is mainly equated with political elections and once elections are over, politics-making almost ends. The engagement of citizens is very important to keep citizens informed about public issues and getting them involved in debating public issues. The hope is to generate interest among citizens and civil society organizations to get involved and participate in the decisions that are of relevance and importance to them, especially that there is a citizen's alienation from the political processes due to technicalities, professionalism and some extent elitism of civil society in most Arab countries. Consequently, the hope is to transmit the citizen's voice to the decision and policy makers through the forums

## **2. Raising Awareness of and about public issues**

Another major objective of the public forums is to raise awareness among the public of and about the important public issues. Providing knowledge, facts, and options of dealing with issues and problems is crucial for informed policy and engagement. Public forums and deliberation are excellent methods to raise awareness about politics, choices of policies and compromises that have to be made when making public policies. In most Arab countries, there is almost no public discourse of public issues and more importantly, there are no non-partisan public debates.

## **3. Strengthening the Role of Civil Society**

Civil society in the Arab world is relatively new and in many countries is rather weak and unable to make an impact on the process of democratization. Also, political parties (with few exceptions) are weak; and those who are not, are still adopting totalitarian ideology that does not engage citizens and civil society in the process and in some instances are not even democratic. Therefore, by working with civil society organizations through the public forums, we hope to help stimulate and engage these organizations in the discussion of public issues. The approach should be of

direct benefit to civil society organizations in the development of non-partisan Knowledge of public issues as well as to highlight the advocacy role of these organizations. Deliberation as a method could be utilized by civil society organization in their future work.

## **Methodology**

The methodology that was followed in designing and conducting public forums was based on the experience of public forums elsewhere. The group directly benefited from the Kettering Foundation's long experience in this field in The United States in this regard, and was conducted as follows in all of the network members, teams and countries.

### **1. Research and strategic Facts**

The first step was to review existing research that has been conducted on the issues and obtain the main data or facts about the relevant topic. It was important to gather updated data on the topic for understanding the issue and develop a presentation for the participants. In addition to the literature review and data gathering, team members representing the Network in each country conducted personal interviews with main stakeholders of the topic or issue. Interviews were conducted with government officials, academics and experts, NGO's, political parties and others to gain more insights about the issue.

The research helped the team to gain the knowledge about the most important aspects, positions held about the issue, and the existing policies that deal with the issue. This part of the work was very helpful in consolidating the team's knowledge about the issue and was used in the next steps of the process.

### **2. Focus-Group Discussions**

Focus-Group Discussions were held in two stages. In an initial stage, they were held in each country (3-5 groups). The composition of the groups was from main stakeholders relevant to the issue, but groups also involved

ordinary citizens, NGO's and experts. The strategic facts and options were presented to the members of these focus groups.

The facts, the issues and the concerns of discussion participants were freely discussed and debated. The discussions were held and/or recorded and then analyzed by the team members. Later on, discussions were integrated into the "previous information" that was gathered about the issue.

The discussions were important in helping the team to: 1) refine the material or the information about the issue in hand; 2) do the initial naming and framing of the issue; and 3) draft the different choices available to go around the issue.

In a second stage, another round of group discussions was held using the same composition of the previous groups. The purpose of holding the group discussions at this stage was to pilot-test the entire methodology in terms of the strategic facts as well as for the policy choices and the trade offs that underline each issue. To put it differently, the purpose was to test and validate the public forums and deliberation processes.

The comments of the participants on the issues or the choices were taken into consideration in finalizing the choices and the production of an Issue Book that can be used to guide future forums.

### **3. The Issue Books**

After the second round of the focus group discussions, an issue book was developed for each issue in each country. The issue book consisted of the following sections: an introduction about the network and its objectives, the strategic facts about the topics, the public policy choices and all trade offs or compromises surrounding each issue and a conclusion section. In the issue book, each choice was given equal space in the book.

Some issue books used cartoons to illustrate the issue and the choices. The books then were published in preparation for use in the deliberation process.

### **4. The Questionnaires**

A questionnaire was also developed for each issue and attached to each issue book to be used in the deliberation process after each forum. Although, there are different topics or issues that were used in each

country, it was attempted to standardize the questionnaires as much as possible for comparative purposes, leaving at the same time the room for specific questions based on the issue itself or the specific context of the country.

The questionnaires consisted of questions about the causes of the issue or the problems, participant's attitude toward the solutions, the compromises or trade-offs, the value of participation in the forums and background information about the participants. The background information was gathered on age, occupation, educational levels and membership in civil society associations. The questionnaires were distributed and filled by participants after each deliberation forum. The questionnaires were then gathered and statistically analyzed.

## **5. Deliberation**

After the publication of the issue book and finalization of the questionnaires, public forums were held for each issue in the different countries. The forums were run by a moderator who is a member of the Network. The procedure that was followed (with some variations from one country to another) in the deliberation forums is the presentation of the issue and then the choices and compromises were presented to the forum participants. Each forum was supposed to be composed of about 20 – 30 people from diverse backgrounds. The forums were held in different parts of each country to ensure that there is a geographical representation.

As in the book, each choice was given an equal time for discussion. The participants had the chance to express their views on each issue, and debate the choices and build some consensus around the choices for each issue. At the end of each forum, participants took part in filling out the questionnaires and returned it back to the moderators.

**Part One**  
**Topics and Themes of the Forums**

As can be seen from table (1) below, Public Forums were held in Seven Arab Countries representing all the geographical sub-regions and diversity of political and economic systems with different stages of development.

It was decided by the network to have at least two countries conducting the same topic for the purpose of comparison between the countries. With the exception of Jordan and Bahrain who chose economic issues including Unemployment (in Jordan) and Wage-Gap (In Bahrain); Egypt, Morocco, Yemen and Lebanon chose Political Participation (with Lebanon focusing on Electoral Reform only) and finally Algeria chose to work on the Environment.

**Table (1)**  
**Issues, Forums and Participants**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Issue</b>	<b># Forums</b>	<b># Participants</b>
<b>Jordan</b>	<b>Unemployment</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Bahrain</b>	<b>Wage-Gap</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Egypt</b>	<b>Political Participation</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Lebanon</b>	<b>Political Participation (Reforming Election Law)</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Yemen</b>	<b>Political Participation</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>Morocco</b>	<b>Political Participation</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>Algeria</b>	<b>Environment</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>38</b>	<b>798</b>



## **1. Relevance and National Context**

Although each country had its own context, there were shared concerns and relevance between the countries especially for countries that chose similar topics.

For in the cases of Jordan and Bahrain, both countries have high levels of unemployment; the economies of both countries have reasonable economic growth rates; high levels of foreign labor in their labor markets; and people in both countries still prefer working for the public sector. In essence, they both have a dilemma that can be described by the fact that both economies do generate jobs, but these jobs are not taken up by nationals but rather by foreign labor whose size is growing.

Jordan is a small country with poor economic resources, well educated population and significantly large public sector. Due to economic crisis in the 1980's, Jordan went on a long structural adjustment program (SAP) that aimed at privatization of the public sector, liberating the market from governmental interference and attracting foreign investment. At the beginning of this process, unemployment and poverty were very high; yet began to gradually decline as the economy began to grow steadily. However, as the number of foreign labor in Jordan was growing and many of the newly created jobs were taken by migrant workers, the unemployment problem continued.

Unemployment and especially among youth and women is a major problem in Jordan and appears in public polls as the first or second national problem.

Bahrain has a different context as an oil producing country with a small national population but it has large foreign labor migrants. There is almost a private public/ divide in the labor market in Bahrain where foreign migrants are dominating the private sector and nationals in the public sector. But as the population was growing and becoming more educated, the public sector can no longer accommodate the growing and educated population. On the other hand because the private sector has been

dominated by foreign migrant workers, a stigma has been attached to it, in addition to its low wages that do not suit the living standards of the nationals.

After starting with “Unemployment” as a name for the issue in Bahrain, the Bahraini team realized for the discussion that the public is struggling with a sub-issue related to employment yet hold more value to them. The issue of wages and wage gaps between people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds occupied a significant share of initial debates forcing the team to rename their issue to “wage Gaps” instead of unemployment.

Political participation was another issue of public concern that was picked by the teams from Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, and Yemen to work on. Each of the four countries has its own context but for all of them political participation is a major issue albeit for different reasons. Egypt holds elections regularly but their politics is dominated by the national ruling party with very weak small political parties with official ban of the Muslim Brotherhood association from political participation. The one party system in Egypt controls the political process not only at the national level but at levels of NGOs, professional associations and labor unions. There are too many obstacles and restriction and obstacles the political opposition regarding effective political participation. Consequently, citizen's political participation is very low at both national and local levels, and many groups are marginalized from the political process, such as women, youth, religious groups (mainly Christians) and opposition parties. Therefore, political participation is a major issue for citizens in Egypt.

Yemen has a similar situation in the sense of one strong national party dominating the political and public life. Although Yemen is a poor country with large rural population, it has a dynamic political life. But the political party policies in Yemen intersect with tribalism where the major party is also dominated by one or two large tribes. Yemen also has experienced unification between what used to be called the North and South of Yemen. South Yemen had a socialist orientation which is at odds with the conservative and tribal politics of the north. The people in what used to be called South Yemen suffer from the domination of the northern politics and feel a great sense of marginalization and exclusions. Although there is

political dynamism in Yemen, many groups feel marginalized because of the domination of the National party that is also dominated by major tribes. Small tribes, people of south Yemen, women and youth are marginalized in the political process. Therefore, political participation is a major concern for the people in Yemen.

Morocco is another country with different circumstances which had witnessed unique political dynamism in the last decade. After the ascendance of the current king to the throne, series of political reforms were initiated. There was a new political party law that encouraged party politics which culminated in the formation of the cabinet by the socialist party. Also political Islamic parties are strong and participate in the political process publicly. But in spite of the political reform in Morocco, the multi-party politics and the presence of the Islamists, there was a serious decline in the political participation of the people in the last few years which makes the issue of political participation a timely choice.

Lebanon represents a unique situation because it is the longest, freest and the most dynamic democracy in the Arab world. However, its politics is dominated by sectionalism. As a result of the civil war, the Syrian hegemony and the Israeli occupation of south Lebanon (till 2000), nationalists and secular parties gave way to religious sects based political parties. Another development that aggravated the political situation in Lebanon is the assassination of late Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. His assassination has triggered a huge movement called (14<sup>th</sup> of March) which is a coalition of Sunni, Druze, part of Christian political parties and some secularist political parties. The movement's objectives were to drive the Syrians out of Lebanon or to get rid of their domination and to move forward in the political process. In response to this movement, another coalition (which is close to both Syria and Iran) was created mainly from Hezbollah and Amal (both Shiite parties), a major Christian party and other smaller groups.

Politics in Lebanon was dominated by this split. Elections were scheduled to be held in 2009 under a new election law. The elections were viewed as a major step in the political reform process because they were to be held after the new realignment of power in Lebanon. The confessional nature of politics in Lebanon made the role of citizens a minor and marginalized one,

especially in the discussions and debates about the new election law. Therefore, the forums were very timely because they tap into the ordinary citizen's views and concerns about the new electoral law and potentially contribute to the national debate about this issue.

As demonstrated above and in all the cases reviewed, there were two themes that are common to all cases. The first is the weak participation of citizens in public life in all countries. The second is the domination of politics and public life by the state in all the above cases.

## Part Two

### The Forum Experiences & Reactions

The forums were held in different parts in each country both in rural and urban communities. Most forums drew participants from ordinary citizens, activist, and members of NGO's, both old and young, men and women.

The forums represented a unique experience for both the Network members as well as to the participants. We have not had such a tradition in our modern political culture neither in form nor in focus. Typically, discussions of specific public issues at the policy level are largely non-existent (repetitive!!!). What is more common in public discussions (if any) in the Arab public life is that they are more general and ideological and focus more on intentions rather than on pragmatic considerations. Furthermore, discussions of public issues were always the concern of the elite rather than the masses. The opinion of the public was never viewed as important in the process of policy formulation let alone the implementation. Therefore, the public forums represented a unique opportunity for the network members as well as to the participants as new tool in the democratic experiment in the region.

There was a consensus from the country reports that one of the main features or results of the forums were that the participants felt empowered by the forums and the discussions. The forums gave the chance to ordinary people to be listened to and to voice their opinions. They indeed felt that their opinions matter. As one of the participants from Karak (a city in southern Jordan) had said:

***"It feels like someone has eventually decided to listen to what we have to say".***

Indeed, in most Arab countries, policies are decided by the elite with none or almost a limited participation from citizens. Therefore, the forums represented (for many participants) an important tool enabling them to discuss, debate and deliberate on public issues.

Another aspect that was highlighted by participants in several countries is the role of the forums in raising the awareness of the participants not only

on the specific topics being discussed but also on the process that lead to the forums and during the course of implementation. Many participants stressed the fact that it was the first time that all the facts, choices and trade offs have been presented to them in a neutral and non-partisan way in one time and place. Participants mentioned that normally, they are used to either the government or to the opposition view points, but not to non-partisan views and to all possible options. So, objectivity and neutrality were highly appreciated by the participants of the forums.

A third important issue that was highlighted by participants is that they learned from the forums that public policy is about choices and compromises and it is not a zero sum game. For them it meant that policies should take into consideration the views and the interest of others and not only their interests. Also the idea of compromise and consensus building was something new to most of them. As one political activist in Egypt put it:

***"To sit around the table with those who oppose your views and reach a compromise with them has never occurred to me as possible. I was trained to discredit the views of others and not respect them".***

Another issue that came out from the experience of the forums in terms of the reaction of the participants to the forums is that some participants felt that the forums were an indirect training for them in how to handle and deal with public issues in their future activities. One female political party member made the point that she was trained to look for evidence or views that supports the pre-existing position of the party and to ignore the opposing views or to oppose them on an ideological grounds. She thought that getting acquainted with the views of the others made here understand her position better and open to alternative policies.

Finally, the forums represented a unique opportunity for marginal groups to express their opinions on issues of direct concern to them. What is even more important is the attention that they felt was given to them through their participation in the forums. In the Arab region, there are many groups who have been marginalized from the overall development and political process. The backgrounds of these groups differ from one country to another but they include women, youth, ethnic and religious minorities,

rural population, and members of political opposition. In most forums that were held in the different countries, participants enjoyed that fact that somebody is talking to them and listening to their views and taking their views into consideration with full respect.

## **Part Three**

### **The Results of the Questionnaires: The Case of Jordan**

#### **Introduction**

This part was initially designed to present findings from the questionnaires that were filled by the participants in the public forums that were held in all the ANSD member countries which unfortunately were not possible. Luckily, the data about the Jordanian forums was available and accessible. Therefore this part of the report will present the experience and opinions of Jordanian participants as a case study. It is important to note that these results do not represent the experience of the participants in all the forums that were held in other Arab countries.

#### **1. Background of Participants**

The Jordanian team held five forums in different geographical locations in the country with a total of 100 participants. As can be seen from the tables in the annexes, the participants in the forums represent a wide spectrum of social and economic backgrounds in the Jordanian society. They included males and females, wide range of occupational groups including unemployed, diversified age distribution, different levels of educational levels, and people from urban/rural and small and large towns or cities.

This diversity of the background of participants was important in order to ensure that most groups of the society are represented. It is needless to say that the diverse background of the participants was essential for the debate and the enrichment of the discussions. What follows is a presentation of the most important aspects of the questionnaire that was filled by the participants after each forum.

#### **2. Reasons of Unemployment**

It is obvious from the table below that the majority of the participants think that the main reason for unemployment in Jordan was the failure of the economic reform policies of the structural adjustment program that was implemented by the government with the supervision of the



World Bank. That implementation of the program followed a major economic crises and entailed liberalization of prices of essential goods and services, lifting of subsidies, and privatization of major public economic institutions. Next in importance is the low quality of education. The other reasons were more distrusted in terms of their importance among the different ranks. The reasons for unemployment from the viewpoint of the participants, contrast very sharply with the official view which asserts that the negative attitudes of people towards skilled and unskilled work or what has become as the "shame culture" is the main reason for unemployment in the country.

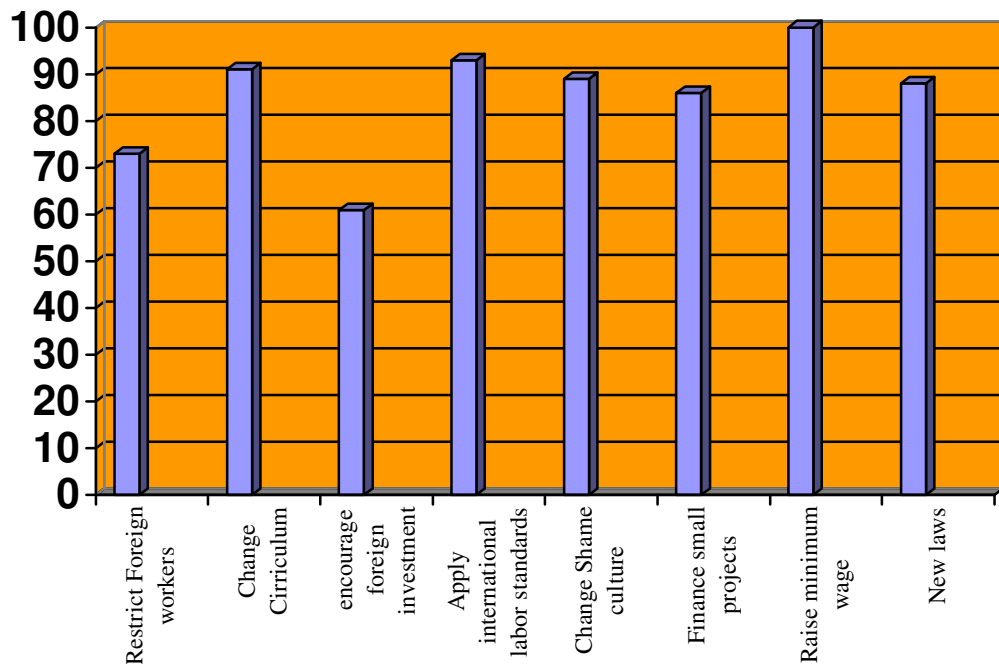
**Table (2)**  
**Reasons for Unemployment as Ranked Order by Participants**

	Rank (1)	Rank (2)	Rank (3)	Rank (4)	Rank (5)	Rank (6)	Rank (7)	Total
Failure of government economic reform policies	64	6	13	7	2	3	5	100
Shame culture(skilled workers)	10	16	10	18	17	9	18	100
The inability of the private sector to generate job opportunities	7	14	21	13	22	17	6	100
Low quality of education	11	26	13	18	16	10	6	100
Low wages in public and private sectors	6	13	22	15	25	14	5	100
No programs for the unemployed	1	13	6	15	7	36	22	100
Allowing the foreign workers in the country	6	15	14	12	9	8	34	100

### 3. Solving the Unemployment Problem

There were several choices and solutions were proposed in the book to deal with the unemployment problem which received the support of the majority of the participants. The highest support among the participants went to raising the minimum wage, to apply international labor standards (especially in the free economic zones), and changing the curriculum of higher education institutions in order to make it more responsive for the labor market needs. The lowest support went to foreign investment. It is clear that participants agree on the need to develop multiple policies in tackling the unemployment problem and that it is not possible to solve the problem using only one approach but it is obvious that people did not have much faith in the ability of the foreign investment to generate employment for Jordanians.

Figure (1)  
Attitudes of participants towards the unemployment Problem

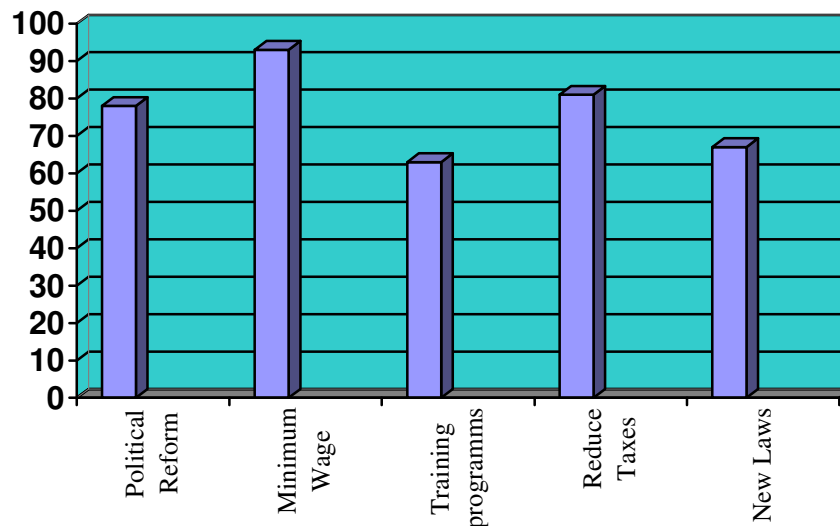


#### 4. Agreement with the Compromises

Figure (2), indicates the degree to which participants agree with the compromises arrived at in the issue book. This amounts to some form of consensus around these compromises. For instances, there was high level consensus on raising the minimum wage so people are encouraged to work in skilled and semi-skilled jobs. What is more interesting is the high level of agreement on the need for political reform as means of solving the unemployment problem. This reflects high level of awareness among participants in the role that politics play in the social and economic issues.

Figure (2):

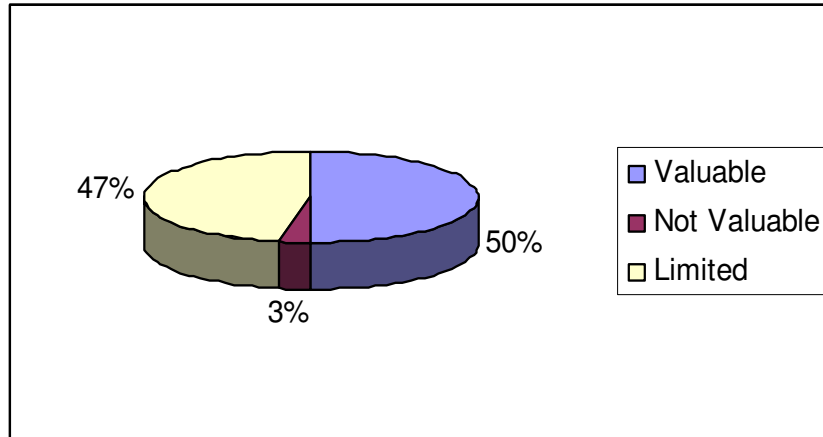
Do you agree with the following compromises to face the unemployment issue?



#### 5. Participants Perception of their Roles in Public Life

As indicated in the figure below, half of the participants perceive their role in public life as valuable where as less than half see it as limited with only small percentage of participants who do not see their role in public life as valuable at all. So it is obvious that there is a split of opinion among the participants regarding this issue.

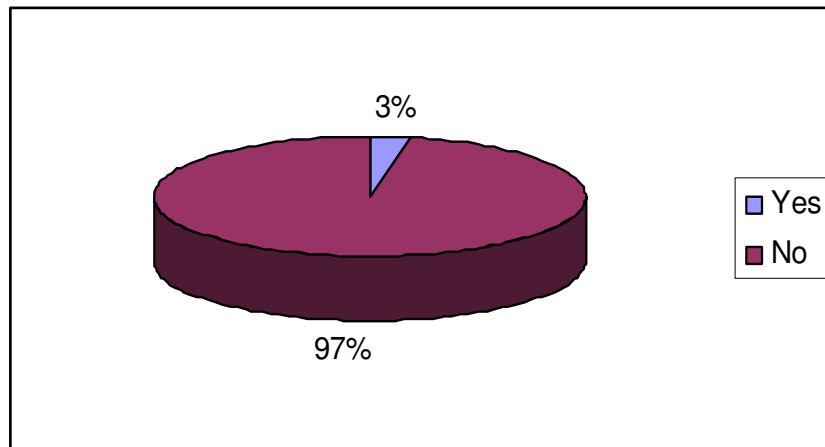
**Figure (5):  
Participants Perception of their Role Public Life**



## 6. Participation in Decision making Process

The overwhelming majority of the participants feel that the majority of the people in their country do not participate in the decision making process. This is not surprising and reflects a great sense of helplessness and apathy among the participants views on participation in the political process but also reflects the actual state of affairs in the country.

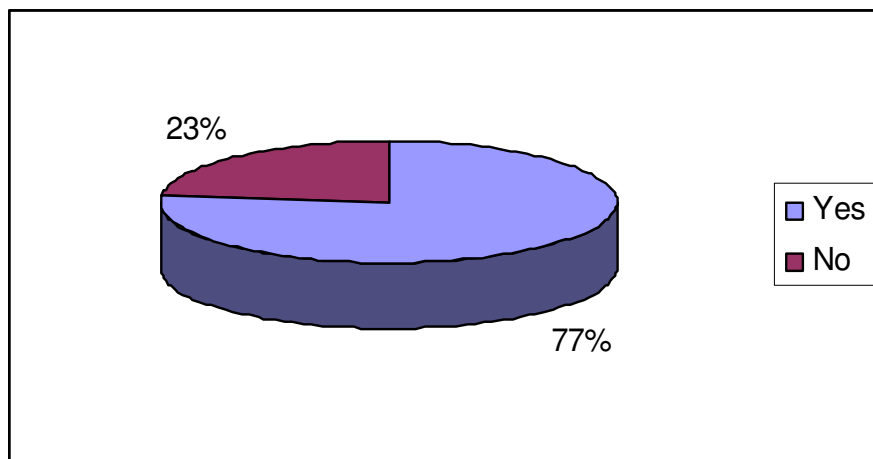
**Figure (6):  
Do you think that the majority of population participates in decision making in your country?**



## 7. Comprehensiveness of the Alternatives in the Forums

The majority of participants feel that the alternatives presented in the book and discussed in the forums cover all aspects of the problem. This represents a significant agreement on what has been presented but also reflects that there are other issues that need to be taken into consideration in dealing with this problem or issue.

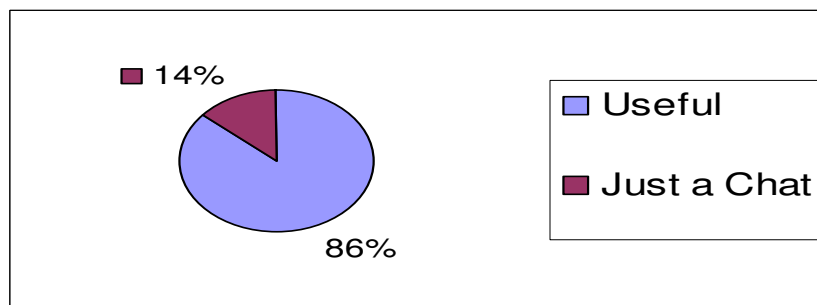
**Figure (7)**  
**Do the alternatives discussed in this forum cover all aspects of this problem?**



## 8. The Usefulness of the Forums

As clear from the chart below, the majority of the participants think that these forums were useful but there is some who think that it is only a social event where people have a chance to chat without any real benefit or consequences.

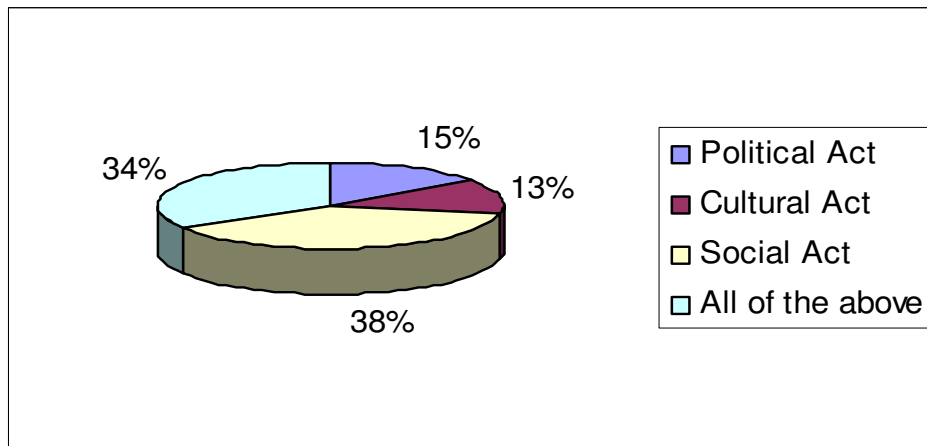
**Figure (8)**  
**The Usefulness of the Forums**



## 9. Participant's Perception of the Forums.

Participants were diverse in their view about the nature of the forums. Only 15% of participants thought it was a political and 13% saw it as cultural act. More than one third of them considered the forums to be a social act. However; there is also more than third who thought that the forums are political, social, and cultural at the same time. That reflects awareness among participants of the relationship between politics and economic and social issues.

Figure (9):  
Do you see this Forum as political, cultural or social Act?



The data about the Jordanian case reveals several interesting points. First, people still and strongly believe that the government should provide employment and set up minimum wages. This is in light of the fact that the role of the government role is changing due to the economic reforms that the government has been implementing. Second, that the democratization process that started in 1989 with the return to the election politics in Jordan has not resulted in more involvement of citizens in public life especially in debating public issues. This point to the weak role of the political parties and civil society in promoting such activities. Third, the information reveal that there is a desire among the people to get involved in the discussions but they lack the means for that. It is difficult to generalize from the Jordanian case to the other counties that implemented the forums, but it is safe to say that these issues are at the heart of development in these countries as well.

## **Part Four**

### **Conclusion and Lessons Learned**

In this report, we tried to shed some light on the first systematic experience with public deliberations through holding public forums in seven Arab countries.

The forums and the deliberations were perceived as a unique experience for both the network members as well as for the citizens who took part in these forums. I think there is a realization in the part of the Network's members that the experience of the public deliberations touches the heart of the democracy problem in the region. It was so evident to the network members at the beginning of the process that it will be as important as it turned out to be.

Deliberation through the forums were also a unique experience in the sense that it brought opponents together in one table not to argue about their positions or stands regarding the issue but rather to hear each others out. In all the forums, people listened to their opponent's opinion with respect without necessarily agreeing with each other's opinions. Many participants noted that they valued the experience and expressed interest in being invited again if future forums were held. What was appreciated by the majority of participants in all of the Arab countries is the non-partisan nature of the issue book and the moderators. In the book and in the forums, equal time and space was given to all the alternatives with great objectivity in the presentation of the material and the different postions. This was new to the common form of political debate in many countries in the region and was a welcomed and appreciated one.

What also came clearly from the forums in many of the countries is the feeling of most participants that they were let down by both their own governments and the opposition political parties as well. Most governments that started the political reform have done so in a very controlled manner and in many instances progress was very slow if at all to the point where people did not feel it. The governments in the region focused more on the economic reform by implementing massive and long term economic restructuring programs. Political parties on the other hand,

were still holding into grand ideologies with more focus on the political and ignoring the economic and the social. Many political parties did not see working on issues such as unemployment and the environment as worthwhile. They were competing with governments on the "big issues" and they ignored the "small issues". People, however, not totally neglecting the political reform issues, were struggling from their side with issues that affect their lives directly such as poverty, unemployment, and the environment. The end result of this process is that both political parties and governments have ignored the citizens who felt let down. Losing faith in the political process was evident in all countries under consideration. The voting turn out in elections is very low (with the exception of Lebanon because of the sectarian intersection with political parties) and very low or negligible political party affiliation in most of the concerned countries.

As the forums reveal a great potential, they also present some challenges to ANSD. One of the challenges came out from participants themselves. At the end of the forums, we were faced with the question about the next steps. Questions such as are you going to go to different parts of the country and hold more forums? Is there any link between these forums and policy makers or will they hear our voices? Will these forums help solve the problem and how? Certainly, these questions and concerns are legitimate and may be there are no immediate answers to them, but there are healthy and these are one of the desired outcome of these forums.

The other challenge that face the network is where do we go from here and how can we sustain and expand this experiment?

To deal with these types of challenges, I think we have to tackle the following issues:

1. Capacity building and institutionalisation. There is a definite need to think of ways that build the teams capacities, institutionalise their experience, and expand the number of the teams.
2. In order to continue and make the forums and deliberation more effective and useful to the countries of the network, there has to be more regular funding so we can avoid interruption of activities. The network also has to seek additional national funders to the already existing international support.



3. The network is a great umbrella for the national members and should be sustained and developed, but there might be a need to develop its relation with national members and to help popularize the deliberation process in different activities.

## ANNEX (1) Background Information Forum Participants

Table(1): Sex of Participants	
Answer	Percentage
Male	68
Female	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Table(2): Age of Participants	
Age	
Answer	Percentage
20 – 24	12
25 – 29	9
30 – 34	8
35 – 39	12
40 – 44	7
45 – 49	23
50 – 54	10
55 – 59	10
60 +	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Table(3): Occupation of Participants	
Occupation	
Answer	Percentage
Management	7
Banking	3
Engineering	8
Medical	2
Lawyer	3
Journalism	5
Teaching	12
Retired	8
Students	22

Unemployed	19
Skilled workers	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Table(4): Marital Status of Participants	
Percentage	Answer
Single	29
Married	66
Divorced	1
Widowed	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Table(5):Place of Residence of Participants	
Answer	Percentage
Country Side	7
Small Town	40
Large City	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Table(6):Educational Levels of participants	
Answer	Percentage
High School or less	42
Community College	23
University Degree	25
Higher Education	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Table(6):Membership in Associations	
Answer	Percentage
Political Party	7
Professional Associations	23

Charitable Societies	37
Sports Club	14
None of the above	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>