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**209 King Hussein Street**

*Greyscale Films*

**Jordanian Civic Activists Toolkit II:  
Case Studies of Jordanian Advocacy Campaigns**

Civil Society Capacity Building in Jordan  
USAID Civic Initiatives Support Program  
2013 – 2018



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<sup>1</sup> Source: The information related to these four areas of rights are adapted from and found in Discover Human Rights: A Human Rights Approach to Social Justice Work, The Advocates for Human Rights (<http://bit.ly/1TmOp6v>). The New Tactics Method utilizes: safety and security; non-discrimination; participation; and protection–accountability. NOTE: The rights listed in these four “categories” may be placed in any area depending upon the context where the right is being violated. For example, Article 23: Right to join trade unions might be placed in “Safety and Security” rather than “Participation” where organizing or joining a union is dangerous.

<sup>2</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Article 21(1): Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

<sup>3</sup> The identification of the four action areas outlined in the Legacy Tool comes from the advocacy experience of Mr. Faisal Abu Sondos, former Executive Director of The Royal Conservation Society of Jordan (JREDS). Mr. Abu Sondos has been a New Tactics Method Trainer since 2010 and Lead Method Trainer since 2011. While using the New Tactics Strategic Effectiveness Method in his own organizations’ advocacy efforts and coaching other civil society organizations in using the Method he identified these four action areas to assess progress. The benefits and drawbacks regarding the use of technology in each of these advocacy action areas needs examination in relation to the appropriateness for the intended target groups and goals of an advocacy campaign.

## **Overview**

### **Advocacy Issue**

The right to participate in the country’s governance processes

### **Human Rights–Based Focus Area<sup>1</sup>**

Participation (UDHR– Article 21(1)<sup>2</sup>)

### **Scope of Advocacy**

National

### **Advocacy Action Areas<sup>3</sup>**

A challenge for many civil society organizations is distinguishing between being busy with activities and implementing tactical actions that strategically advance an advocacy effort. In order to help organizations better assess how to expend precious resources, the Legacy Tool offers four action areas that are needed to conduct any advocacy campaign: internal capacity building, research, mobilization and engagement with decision makers. This case provides insights into all four action areas:

- internal capacity building
- research
- mobilization
- engagement with decision-makers

### **Tactical Aim**

New Tactics in Human Rights has identified four primary human rights-based tactical aims: prevention, intervention, restorative and promotion. This case demonstrates:

- promotion

### **Campaign Period**

1 July 2014 – 31 January 2018 (**209 King Hussein Street** project containing Season Two and Three) with an independent performance evaluation of the relevance and effectiveness of the effort that took place during Season Two. It is worth noting that during this period, Greyscale implemented a brief campaign took place in the run up to parliamentary elections (September 2016) aimed at creating awareness, mainly amongst youth between the ages of 18 to 25 about their role as voters, by facilitating their understanding of and engagement in issue based voting, and accountability of representatives in the lead up to the parliamentary elections (**Issue based voting awareness raising campaign**).

## **Brief Summary**

Major emphasis has been placed on the leading role of parliament in engineering reform efforts under its own dome. This emphasis, while sound in theory, is problematic in practice due to the existing public mistrust and dissatisfaction with parliament's performance. In response, Greyscale Films promoted Jordanians' right to participate in the country's governance processes through an innovative online web series called **209 King Hussein Street**. Their ultimate aim was to change the views, attitudes and voting habits of Jordanians towards parliament. The series exceeded their expectations in increasing citizens' knowledge and participation.

Through the Aramram – WebTV platform<sup>4</sup>, Greyscale Film's produced a total of 32 episodes of **209 King Hussein Street** to provide viewers with monthly updates on parliamentary work and proceedings (25 episodes and 3 Public Service Announcements (PSAs) produced during Season Two, and 7 episodes produced under Season Three). The online series took the shape of a parliamentary watchdog, enhancing transparency and providing the public with quality media coverage of parliamentary proceedings. The "**Issue based voting awareness raising campaign**" took place during the time period of these episodes in the lead up to the parliamentary elections that took place in September 2016, where Greyscale disseminated eight videos, four animations, and three research papers. These focused on the different layers of citizen representation, issue based voting, economic and political platforms, and used two national issues, tax and employment, as examples of what policies to expect from candidates. The videos and animations produced under this campaign were aired through the **209 King Hussein Street** channel.

To measure their impact, Greyscale sought an independent external evaluation of the effort that took place during Season Two as part of their **209 King Hussein Street** project. Although, the rate of return for online survey can be considered one of the evaluation constraints, 95% of respondents said the web series increased their awareness of parliamentary proceedings and highlighted the role of parliament and laws. Over 77% of the respondents said the web series encouraged them to engage with parliament through one or more these behavior changing activities: following up on parliamentary news more closely, monitoring their representatives, researching parliamentary affairs, discussing parliament with their friends, instilling in them a sense of responsibility and participating in the elections.

Initially, Greyscale conducted media analysis and found that there wasn't a source of news giving people a realistic view of what happens regarding legislation in parliament. Their analysis underscored that information regarding what the process actually involves did not exist. Two major factors contributed to the importance and relevance of Greyscale's launching of the **209 King Hussein Street** online series:

1. misleading media coverage of parliament which focuses on squabbles, violence, and misconduct, or mischaracterized as hard news, and in many

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<sup>4</sup> Aramram – Web TV, launched by Greyscales Films, is an online Arabic language platform offering video clips and features in an alternative and civilian oriented view on events and happenings and includes the **209 King Hussein Street** series. (<http://www.aramram.com/about-us>)

cases is biased and out-of-context, which reinforces the public's negative views of parliament

2. the lack of public understanding of the role of parliament which results in apathy towards parliamentary life, inadequate monitoring of MP performance, and therefore weak accountability.

Additionally, two long suspensions, frequent dissolutions, vote-rigging, and an election law that favors tribes over political parties, have all marked Jordan's contemporary history. This has yielded successive weak parliaments that do not live up to the public's expectations. An opinion poll conducted by the Jordan Parliament Monitor<sup>5</sup> found that 58.6% of Jordanians doubt MPs' ability to discuss and address challenges facing the country. Weak parliamentary life has affected people's perception and behaviors towards the fundamental role of parliament. Only 9% of Jordanians view the role of parliament as legislative<sup>6</sup> and 76% of voters chose their candidates based on tribal basis or for services<sup>7</sup>. These factors all contribute to the Jordanian parliament being negatively received by the public and the general apathy towards it.

A study of parliamentary monitoring organizations (PMOs) by the World Bank and the National Democratic Institute<sup>8</sup> indicated that coverage of parliament by PMOs should strike a balance between the desire to gain public attention and the necessity to constructively criticize parliament in a manner that can benefit both citizens and lawmakers. When activities by PMOs confirm public cynicism of parliament, this can actually result in the undermining of democratic governance. Yet, the study also revealed that when PMOs facilitate and promote public knowledge of parliament this strengthens several components of democratic governance such as citizen engagement in the legislative process, the accountability of parliaments to the electorate, and parliamentary reform. The study noted that transparency and access to information will eventually lead to greater citizen influence over government's general approach.

When citizens don't understand the process, this curtails people's participation. They don't vote or participate in other ways. The web series addressed these shortcomings by promoting and specializing in coverage of parliamentary life in Jordan with an emphasis on human rights, political participation, civic responsibility, sustainability, and diversity. Greyscale's **209 King Hussein Street** web series highlighted the role of Parliament as an accountable policy making body. It impressed upon their audience that rather than Members of Parliament (MPs) being service providers driven by personal interest, they should represent the views of the public. This process undertaken by Greyscale, known as parliamentary informatics<sup>9</sup>, is a growing trend. It makes use of information and communications technologies to promote constructive parliamentary engagement by developing tools that help citizens understand parliamentary work and legislative processes. It involves quality parliamentary monitoring and reporting to promote constructive parliamentary engagement by developing tools and information in plain language that help citizens understand parliamentary work and legislative processes. Greyscale's **209 King Hussein Street** web series has been a significant contribution in providing citizens with greater legal literacy and access to the political process.

## Achievements

Crucially, Greyscale's **209 King Hussein Street** gained the trust of MPs and civil society organizations with which it worked closely. The online series also attracted a wide audience base to engage in public dialogue on selected issues, particularly among younger Jordanians. It is important to note that the format

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<sup>5</sup> Jordan Parliament Monitor, *Opinion Poll on Performance of the Sixteenth Parliament, 2012, Amman - Jordan*, al Quds Center for Political Studies, <http://www.jpm.jo/index.php?type=pages&id=54>

<sup>6</sup> Rased, *Investigating Trends within Jordanian society regarding political parties, Political Knowledge and Participation in the elections, 2012, Amman, Jordan*, Al Hayat Center, <http://www.hayatcenter.org/uploads/2015/02/20150209164148en.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Center of Strategic Studies, *State of Democracy in Jordan, 2012, Amman - Jordan*, University of Jordan, <http://www.jcss.org/Photos/635066455531678818.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> **Strengthening Parliamentary Accountability, Citizen Engagement, and Access to Information: A Global Survey of Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations**, Andrew G. Mandelbaum, 2012, National Democratic Institute and World Bank Institute Source: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTPARLIAMENTARIANS/Resources/PMOWorkingPaper.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*

of the videos, particularly the shorter length, were successful in attracting the target audience of youth, 65% of the followers are aged between 18 and 34.

The independent external evaluation conducted on the **209 King Hussein Street** online series (Season Two) assessed its ability to reach its goals. **Figure 1** shows the average reach per episode and the total reach and engagement. The information highlights the number of audience comments on videos, infographics and stills which reached about 73,000. As a representative sample, the evaluation targeted 5% of the total comments or 3,656 audience members for an online survey.

The online survey was published for a total of five weeks with 1,590 actual responses to the survey. As mentioned previously, while the rate of return can be considered as one of the evaluation constraints, nevertheless, it is noteworthy that 92% of the online evaluation survey respondents indicated that **209 King Hussein Street** assisted them in following up on parliamentary activities.

In addition to the online survey, the external evaluation included indepth phone interviews. Although fifty were targeted, interviews were completed with twenty respondents using the following criteria based on the online survey results:

- level of engagement, i.e. the number of times they visited the **209 King Hussein Street** Facebook page
- level of increase in knowledge
- gender
- location

Additional indepth evaluation interviews engaged other stakeholders including MPs and CSOs. The list of MPs was based on an analysis of the online habits of 50 randomly selected MPs from which ten MPs were interviewed. There were 42 CSOs who collaborated with Greyscale on the various episodes from which five CSOs were interviewed. The selection criteria for these interviews included the level of involvement (active or not active for MPs); and the type of activities (for CSOs).

Explored more fully below, the evaluation results identified several key indicators of benefits that could be sustained: consumption habits of parliamentary news; knowledge of parliamentary life; and attitudes towards voting habits.

**Consumption habits of parliamentary news: media coverage and engagement of youth**

Greyscale’s **209 King Hussein Street** succeeded in addressing the lack of adequate and informative parliament media coverage as well as attracting a wide and youthful audience. Compared with other media outlets, Greyscale’s media coverage was considered more detailed in both parliament and election coverage.

As more organizations are using social media for outreach and engagement, it is important to understand and measure social media activities<sup>10</sup>. The overall reach of the **209 King Hussein Street** episode videos was 9,701,234 with

Engagement		Average	Total	Sample Target of 5%
Video	Reach	461,964	9,701,234	
	Views	99,167	2,082,508	
	Shares	705	14,801	
	Likes	4,784	100,454	
	<b>Comments</b>	<b>3,269</b>	<b>68,654</b>	<b>3,433</b>
Infographic	Reach	75,670	1,589,062	
	Views	3,586	75,302	
	Shares	73	1,524	
	Likes	3,558	74,720	
	<b>Comments</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>3,269</b>	<b>155</b>
Still	Reach	35,016	735,335	
	Views	N/A	N/A	
	Shares	16	339	
	Likes	2,840	59,645	
	<b>Comments</b>	<b>3,269</b>	<b>3,269</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Total Comments &amp; 5% Target Sample</b>			<b>73,121</b>	<b>3,656</b>
<b>Actual Number of Respondents</b>				<b>1,590</b>

Figure 1: Engagement Information with 5% of totals targeted for the independent external evaluation survey & interviews

"Everything related to politics in Jordan needs a program like this."

- male, (18-25), Zarqa

<sup>10</sup> For a brief summary of types of social media measurement see this article: **5 Essential & Easy Social Media Metrics You Should Be Measuring Right Now**, by Jenn Deering Davis, <https://blog.kissmetrics.com/essential-social-media-metrics/>

"I understood the real role of parliament which is opposite of what I used to believe that it is a service provider. It made me more aware of my rights."

– male, (18-25), Amman

"I understood the difference between right and left economic policies, the responsibility of parliament and the extent to which it can change Jordan and represent the will of the people. If people changed their voting habits they can change the way the country is run."

– male, (18-25), Irbid

an actual number of video views of **2,082,508** (see Figure 1). This exceeded Greyscale's expectations and constituted 21.4% of the overall reach. The number of video views and audience engagement increased with the progression of the episodes. The **209 King Hussein Street** Facebook page is very active with 130,269 followers consisting of a fanbase of 73% male and 27% female. As an outreach medium, Facebook successfully reached the target audience of youth. Based on Greyscale's Facebook analysis, youth between 18 and 34 years of age represented 65% of the audience (29% aged 18 to 24 and 36% aged 25 to 34). It is noteworthy that an additional 17% of the audience fell between the ages of 35 and 44. The audience clearly represented the younger Jordanian population who are comfortable using and engaging through social media. The Facebook page created a strong online discussion with over 73,000 comments registering 23% of total engagement (see Figure 1). They did, however, encounter challenges engaging women.

#### **Knowledge of parliament: transparency and the role of parliament (oversight, budget and legislation)**

The key messages of Greyscale's **209 King Hussein Street** online series enhanced parliamentary transparency and highlighted the roles and responsibilities of parliament, analysis of legislation, parliament's oversight role, and the importance of electing capable MPs that represent citizen priorities. While the online series did not succeed in creating a direct online engagement channel between the MPs and the public audience, it did successfully raise the publics' knowledge on parliamentary activities, roles, and responsibilities. This was validated with 91% of the online evaluation survey respondents indicating that their knowledge increased on important issues and laws discussed in parliament. Topics such as the general budget, election law, decentralization, and the role of parliament as an accountable policymaking body were cited. These were key themes that had been explored in multiple episodes. There were 40% of the evaluation survey respondents indicating their knowledge increased regarding the role of the parliament in drafting, discussing and approving legislations; over 23% indicated their enhanced understanding of the oversight role of parliament on government performance; and 20% of respondents better understanding the role of parliament as an accountable policymaking body.

#### **Attitudes and voting habits**

A change in attitude is very difficult to gauge without seeing corresponding behavior changes. The independent external evaluation revealed some significant shifts in attitudes that resulted in voting behavior changes. There were 74% of survey respondents stating they changed their voting habits as a result of their engagement with the **209 King Hussein Street** online series. For example, 43% indicated they elected candidates that represent their views. Almost 33% said they voted on the candidate's ability to deal with legislation, and 31% based their decision on how candidates should deal with national issues. Notably, over 17% stated that they actually attended candidate debates and tents which helped them to better understand the election platforms of candidates.

### **Key Lessons**

The following advocacy action areas provide challenges and key lessons for reflection regarding Greyscale's experience researching, producing, and distributing the **209 King Hussein Street** online series to promote the publics' right to participate in the country's governance processes.

## Advocacy Action Areas

### Internal Capacity Building

#### Meeting production deadlines

Greyscale has a very strong team with a great deal of production experience, resulting in the relatively smooth implementation of each episode of **209 King Hussein Street**. They have team members with expertise to carry out the specific and required roles. The production process is clearly outlined and the executive producer manages the overall production pipeline for each episode. While the work schedule tends to fluctuate over the process, this can result in the staff literally working overnight to meet the production deadlines.

#### Lessons Learned: *Managing expectations and unexpected success*

Greyscale achieved greater outreach than expected regarding voter participation in the parliamentary election in 2016. Greyscale's Hams Rabah stated, "*we worked on awareness raising for parliamentary elections and the outreach was huge. We reached about 8 million viewers (recurring), but with so many shares on social media we couldn't cope with comments.*" This built people's hopes. The outcome, however, did not reach people's expectations. This resulted in disappointment and disillusionment, with Greyscale learning a lesson regarding the need to address and manage public expectations. Change takes time. The public, especially youth, believe that change will come fast. Building citizen engagement is a lengthy process. It will take preparation and time to get there.

As the **209 King Hussein Street** online series progressed, Greyscale received more public interaction. For example, Greyscale's last episode on the tax system went viral, receiving more than 1 million viewers and shared over 7,000 times. While these are desired outcomes, the impact on an organization's internal capacity can be highly challenging to manage.

### Research

Important laws are being passed that impact citizens daily lives but are kept out of the daily process. Greyscale spent considerable time conducting extensive research on each **209 King Hussein Street** episode. This included interviews with MPs, experts, and CSOs. Greyscale would collaborate with one or two CSOs for each episode, making it possible to interview those that had already done in-depth research and come up with specific recommendations. For example, they studied the *election law*, particularly how this affects *parliamentary law*. This revealed a process that does not push parliament to be accountable to citizens and actually results in a weak parliament. It highlighted problems in the by-laws that effect parliament's ability to operate as well as people's perceptions. Greyscale's commitment to accurate and important parliamentary information motivated people to be more actively involved with parliamentary processes and with their MPs.

#### Using positive messaging

The messages used were simple and brief. Bold statements were made to attract audience attention. It is important to note, however, that in some cases this approach backfired. Some messages were viewed as negative, or lacking in objectivity, or being highly opinionated, or adopting a certain point of view. Greyscale learned that negative messages caused audiences to become defensive rather than participating in the topic discussion. Positive messaging was a

"The program gave me a legal background. I know my rights more, the responsibility of parliament, and my responsibility as an aware citizen."

– female (40–60), Zarqa

critical lesson learned along with the need to utilize research and monitoring of reactions to the messaging in order to create and maintain engagement.

### **Attracting the target audience while safeguarding accurate information**

Greyscale made significant changes to the video format of **209 King Hussein Street**. Previously, the episodes were presented in a 30 minute format, more academic and including in-depth details on a specific law. This resulted in a primary audience of lawyers and MPs, not the general public, and especially not youth. Greyscale experimented a lot, monitoring the trends from around the world to see what people are viewing in Jordan and internationally. Greyscale also monitored and broke down their own analytics. The bulk of their audience came from Jordan as well as from Jordanians living abroad, particularly many living in the Gulf. They made a big shift, going from a 30 minute format to creating eight minute episodes including featured "sound bites" with people. It was critical, and a challenge, to maintain accurate information. It is especially important to note that the research and interview processes remained the same. A critical lesson is understanding that the same amount of research time and effort is required regardless of the length of the video format. The change occurred in the summary process. This became much more intensive and condensed. Even the eight minute format was eventually reduced to a range of three to four minute episodes. These short episodes went viral. The shift to shorter video formats was clearly very successful in attracting the targeted youth audience. At the same time, regardless of the length of time dedicated to each episode, it was essential to maintain the accuracy and quality of information being provided.

### **Mobilization**

Greyscale's mobilization of the public was defined in terms of "engagement" – such as voting, monitoring parliamentary proceedings, directly communicating with MPs, and objectively holding parliament to account. As indicated previously, the use of social media proved to be an effective outreach tool to engage the younger population of Jordanians. At the same time, it is important to identify the limitations of mobilization using social media platforms.

### **Using social media for engagement**

Greyscale planned to use social media, particularly their Facebook page, as a platform to mobilize the public to directly engage with MPs. They encountered significant barrier to this goal as they discovered that MPs don't utilize or know how to effectively use social media. This was certainly one factor in the failure to create an online channel of engagement between MPs and the public. This revealed a clear need to introduce more innovative methods to create interaction and engagement between MPs and the public. Regarding the MPs elected in the 2016 election, "[o]f the 130 MPs elected on 20 September, 73 are older than 50 years of age and 57 are younger than 50."<sup>11</sup> This will certainly continue to present an ongoing challenge with using social media for such engagement (see Engaging Decision Makers).

Greyscale also noticed that there was no particular trend when analysing the timing of when the videos and infographics were released. The nature of social media has people posting and then forgetting about it. Citizens also have a tendency not to give social media a lot of weight as new information is coming out all the time. This makes it difficult to maintain interest as well as improve outreach and engagement to target audiences. Greyscale acknowledges their need in the future to build collaborations with other media outlets to improve publicity, marketing and distribution of **209 King Hussein Street** episodes through other online, and offline, media channels or on TV.

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<sup>11</sup> Source: European Union Election Observation Mission, *The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Parliamentary Election, 20 September 2016, Final Report, Final Report*, 13 November 2016, page 45. [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu\\_eom\\_jordan\\_2016\\_final\\_report\\_eng.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu_eom_jordan_2016_final_report_eng.pdf)  
page. 8

### **Addressing gender equity shortcomings**

There was a prominent difference in gender involvement, with a clear weakness in attracting female participation. Greyscale attributed this gap to two key factors: 1) key messages were not gender sensitive; and 2) gender specific information and facts were not provided related to how laws and topics discussed affect women.

In exploring barriers to reach a broader base of women, Grayscale offered one of their films to be shown and discussed from a gender perspective with a group of CSOs funded by USAID-CIS. As a result of the discussion, Grayscale took action regarding how they could address future issues in their upcoming videos and films. This shifted their perspective in addressing women. For example, the general use of masculine language considered to be “neutral”. This revealed that a shift in language may make a difference in how the community interacts with an episode. They also identified the need to assess how women’s voices, experts and opinion leaders are portrayed on a theme and in the discussion. A gender expert also provided a review of two episodes. Grayscale proceeded to produce some episodes that focused on issues that emphasized remedies for gender inequalities such as the women quota in the election law.

Targeting women with specific ads, posts and other efforts to address gender perspectives could open the door for more women’s participation and engagement in the future. More focus on gender sensitivity is required when preparing the videos, infographics and stills. Introducing gender specific language even as this is a challenge given there are no set gender-sensitive guidelines for the Arabic language. Verbs, adjectives and pronouns have to concord with the subject, so it can be cumbersome for the reader if the feminine is put next to the masculine in every instance. But such explorations and experiments in developing gender sensitive language options will be necessary to address the gender engagement gap.

More collaborative work can be done with CSOs on gender equality pertaining to political participation through advocacy efforts to highlight the importance of engaging women in discussions, drafting laws, as well as the gender aspects and impact of laws and legislations on women. Particular effort must also be made to find and feature women role models.

### **Attracting broad engagement**

Greyscale identified some general observations and ideas for future mobilization and increasing their audience’s motivation to stay engaged on issues of concern:

- Expand on the themes, laws, and oversight issues covered
- Increase focus on the views of citizens regarding topics being discussed by conducting street interviews, online polling, and human stories explaining how parliament decisions affects daily life
- Increase the frequency of production and publishing
- Create an audience calendar that summarizes upcoming topics to be discussed and date of posts, and possible email notifications through promotion of the release dates of upcoming episodes to the **209 King Hussein Street** audience

*“There are fewer women in leadership positions and not all of them are willing to speak publicly, which means that it is more difficult to capture women’s perspective on matters.”*

**– Grayscale Films**

- Create a mobile application for **209 King Hussein Street** which automatically notifies people when a new episode is released and the topics covered.

### **Engaging Decision Makers**

As Greyscale assessed each episode, they examined policies, shared opinions, reached specific conclusions and shared recommendations. It is important to note that they never personalized or “picked on” specific politicians. Although Greyscale has been classified as “opposition media”, they gained a reputation as being highly professional, with clear and accurate information. Greyscale focused on building their case through analysis of the information. As a result, the **209 King Hussein Street** episodes gained a positive reputation and an audience from both governmental offices and pro-government people. Greyscale managed to create very good relationships with both liberal and conservative MPs without any clashes. MPs needed time to get to know Greyscale and its work as it is an online medium, not a big media outlet. Greyscale gained respect when MPs and government offices saw the quality of their work. Subsequently, Greyscale was given open access to Parliament and even to closed meetings. This resulted in good relationships with about 50 MPs out of a total of 150 at that time.

### **Relationship building and maintaining confidences**

Relationship building takes considerable time and energy. As a small online medium, there were more opportunities than Greyscale could seize. Greyscale’s extensive research on issues was conducted primarily by a staff of two people, effectively becoming “issue experts”. This became clear when MPs themselves don’t go into detail on laws because they don’t have as much information on the issue as the Greyscale staff. An important lesson is maintaining confidences when building relationships with decision makers. For example, if Greyscale was given information and asked not to use it, they did not use it until given the “go ahead.” This also served to prepare them and their ability to understand the government’s rationale along with other perspectives on issues when the timing for providing the information was approved.

### **Fostering direct interaction between the public and MPs**

As noted previously, fostering direct interaction between the public and MPs was an ambitious goal that was not reached. Greyscale did engage with the Prime Minister to explain the purpose of the **209 King Hussein Street** online series and the importance of parliament’s engagement with the public. However, MPs had a limited knowledge of the existence of the online series and they did not interact with the **209 King Hussein Street’s** Facebook page audience. In addition to the factors outlined previously, Greyscale identified a number of additional issues that contributed to this challenge:

- MPs have limited use of social media as a tool to engage with their constituents as they prefer offline methods
- MPs primarily use of their Facebook pages to promote their activities and achievements by posting news articles they are mentioned in, however, they do not ask their followers opinions on laws and issues discussed in parliament
- Some MPs Facebook pages are operated by their secretaries and not MPs themselves, indicating that MPs may need to be provided with technical support.

In the future, more specific and structured interventions are needed to raise the awareness of MPs on the importance of social media as a tool to engage with their constituents, especially with younger Jordanians. It would be useful to build in a monitoring plan of the level of engagement which could be used to modify actions based on the results. A number of recommendations emerged for enhancing interaction between the public and MPs:

- Integrate more interviews with MPs to increase their visibility, accountability, and improve the knowledge of its audience of individual MPs and their views
- Conduct live offline debates engaging MPs, citizens, and stakeholders especially as MPs do not see the value of using social media as a way to engage with the public
- Hold networking events to bring together MPs and their constituents, with events covering all governorates, especially as the geographic outreach of **209 King Hussein Street** is highest in urban centers and lower in smaller governorates
- Conduct tweet-ups or Facebook live discussions between MPs and the audience
- Produce brochures about **209 King Hussein Street** to be distributed to MPs in parliament to raise their awareness of its existence
- Divert the audience to MP pages and encourage them use tools in parliament to engage MPs
- Build the capacity of MPs to make use of social media as a tool of engagement with constituents.

## Organizational Impact of Advocacy

*On a personal level, this was great – in terms of knowledge, exposure. It is the most important thing that I have done on a professional level. There was a specific standard to maintain to be respected. In a way, I didn't have the knowledge of Jordan – the details related to the laws, policies, structural issues, how they trickle down, how government works, and perspectives. Initially, I overdid the research. Now I've built my confidence and have more information to draw on, I became an expert on Jordan. In addition, the organization got a lot of exposure. [Greyscale] was covering social cultural issues. However, this was our first political effort. It put us on the map, in terms of journalism, as trustworthy, credible, and resulted in numerous other offers to work – both grants and corporate. – Hams Rabah*

**209 King Hussein Street** online episodes<sup>12</sup>:

### Specific topic area episodes

#### *Elections and political participation*

- Election law 1
- Election law 2
- Women quota in election law
- Political Participation



<sup>12</sup> IMPORTANT NOTE: Greyscale has experienced periodic website issues regarding access to the **209 King Hussein Street** episode links. Use the general website link to access Greyscale's programs: <http://www.aramram.com/programs>

- Electronic voting

*Political parties, representation, responsibilities of parliament, and corruption*

- Political parties draft law
- Political power of parliament
- Code of ethics
- Illegal appointments at parliament
- Audit bureau report
- Parliament performance recap
- Audit bureau
- Investment fund law
- Media coverage of parliament
- Judicial reform
- Penal code

*Budget process, revenues and investments*

- State budget 2015
- 2016 budget
- 2017 general budget
- Procedures for the collection of 450 million dinars related taxes and fees in 2017 budget
- Budget 1
- Budget 2

*Decentralization*

- Decentralization 1
- Decentralization 2 (Decentralization Act: Issues are discussed regarding resources and control of those resources by and for each governorate)
- Municipality (Municipal indebtedness exceeds 80 million Jordanian dinars)

*Other important issues addressed:*

- Jordanian-Israeli gas deal (sharing opinions)
- Unions and the labor law
- Juvenile Law
- Arabic language preservation law
- Medical malpractice