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Arab Renaissance for Democracy & Development
ARDD

جمعية رجال الأعمال الأردنيين
Jordanian Businessmen Association

Ethics in Business Award
التميز الأخلاقي لقيادة الأعمال
2025

ETHICS IN BUSINESS AWARD 2025

Future Forward:
Celebrating Champions of
Localized and Sustainable Growth

FROM RECOGNITION TO POLICY INFLUENCE

A Strategic Report on Advancing Business and Human Rights for Localized and Sustainable Economic Growth in Jordan

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The Ethics in Business Award 2025

Future Forward: Celebrating Champions of Localized and Sustainable Growth

The Ethics in Business Award is a civil society-led initiative implemented in partnership between The Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD) and Jordanian Businessmen Association (JBA). It aims to recognize the efforts of small, medium, and large companies in Jordan to achieve excellence concerning principles of sustainable entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility.

The Business Ethics Award, launched in 2023, aims to provide a platform to highlight the role of the private sector in advancing decent work, local opportunities, labor rights, and inclusive and sustainable economic growth. These business leaders are also signatories to the voluntary Goodwill declaration “Towards a Common Goal”.

The 2023 edition of the Ethics Award honored each of the leading institutions participating in the initiative, and the 2024 edition´s theme was “Strengthening the local market: Towards a more competitive, Shock-resilient and Sustainable Jordanian Economy,” which also honored renowned contributors to these efforts.

The 2025 Award, held as part of the “Future Forward: Unlocking Sustainable Local Opportunities” project advocacy efforts, in collaboration with the Jordan NGOS Forum (JONAF) and JBA, emphasizes the importance of positioning the private sector as a champion for livelihoods and sustainable development in Jordan. Integrating the award under the Future Forward project amplifies the project’s efforts to foster a more inclusive approach to advocacy, ensuring that local voices and experiences shape the discourse on livelihoods

Each year, a theme is selected based on the Jordanian national priorities. The theme for the 2025 award is “Future Forward: Celebrating Champions of Localized and Sustainable Growth.”

As Peter H. Denton reminds us, “A sustainable local economy is one that enables the local community to be sustainable in all of its aspects in the long run. If the local economy is not sustainable, its future has been traded away, literally, to people at a distance, for the proverbial bowl of stew.” In Jordan, this means strengthening local opportunities that empower both host communities and refugees to build resilience and shared prosperity. The Future Forward Business Ethics Award 2025 celebrates businesses that champion sustainability and localization, proving that inclusive hiring, ethical supply chains, and decent work are pathways to a stronger Jordanian economy and a more sustainable future for all.




1. Executive Summary

The Ethics in Business Award 2025 is a significant step in ARDD's Business and Human Rights (BHR) roadmap, part of the ARDD Sustainable Livelihoods and Economic Well-being Program, which aims to strengthen inclusive, resilient, and locally anchored economic opportunities. The initiative reflects ARDD's strategic commitment to localizing the livelihoods sector by engaging national private-sector actors as active partners in sustainable development. By promoting ethical business practices, responsible investment, and equitable employment, the Award supports local economic growth and fair access to economic participation, bridging humanitarian and development efforts with market-driven solutions that make livelihood interventions more sustainable, context-responsive, and locally led. More than a recognition ceremony, the Award serves as a practical mechanism to engage the private sector in advancing ethical leadership as part of Jordan's economic development trajectory.

At a time marked by funding volatility, economic pressures, and increasing global expectations around corporate governance and due diligence, the role of the private sector in safeguarding livelihoods and strengthening national resilience has become more critical than ever. The 2025 edition, held under the theme "Future Forward: Celebrating Champions of Localized and Sustainable Growth," positioned ethical business conduct not as a symbolic commitment, but as a strategic economic imperative.

Building on prior phases of diagnosis and tool development, including the "Towards a Common Goal" declaration and structured evaluation criteria, the Award turns human rights principles into practical incentives, reinforcing responsible governance, decent work standards, and sustainable supply chains as integral parts of business performance.

The ceremony and accompanying panel discussion brought together private sector leaders, financial institutions, development partners, and civil society actors to explore how ethical governance strengthens competitiveness, enhances job creation, and supports local economic ecosystems. The dialogue highlighted several key insights:

- Ethical governance enhances market trust, investment attractiveness, and long-term competitiveness.
- Localization of supply chains and support to MSMEs are central to building economic resilience against external shocks.
- Financial institutions play a pivotal role in incentivizing responsible practices through accessible and ethical financing tools.
- There remains a structural gap in supporting smaller enterprises to formalize governance and sustainability frameworks.

The partnership with the Jordanian Businessmen Association (JBA) reflects a deliberate strategic choice to engage actors with systemic economic influence across multiple sectors, reinforcing the Award's potential to contribute to national-level policy dialogue and institutional reform.

Looking ahead, the initiative aims to move from voluntary recognition toward structured institutionalization. This includes strengthening monitoring mechanisms for signatories of the declaration, facilitating sectoral roundtables, advancing policy advocacy for regulatory and financial incentives, and supporting MSMEs in operationalizing ethical standards.

The Ethics in Business Award 2025 thus marks a transition from awareness to structured influence, positioning ethical leadership as a structural pillar of Jordan’s economic modernization.

2. Strategic Context: Why Business & Human Rights Now in Jordan

Jordan’s economic landscape is undergoing a period of structural pressure marked by regional instability, global market volatility, and increasing constraints on international development funding. In this context, traditional aid-dependent development models are proving insufficient to sustain long-term resilience. The need to strengthen local economic ecosystems and mobilize domestic actors, particularly the private sector, has become both an economic and strategic necessity.

Simultaneously, global regulatory trends are redefining expectations of corporate conduct. Emerging due diligence frameworks, supply chain transparency requirements, and ESG-driven investment criteria are reshaping the competitive environment in which Jordanian companies operate. Businesses are no longer assessed solely on financial performance, but on their governance structures, labor practices, environmental responsibility, and broader societal impact.

Within this evolving landscape, the Business and Human Rights (BHR) framework offers a structured pathway to align economic growth with social stability and institutional accountability. Rather than positioning ethics as an external compliance requirement, the BHR approach integrates human rights principles into core business strategy, transforming governance, decent work, and responsible sourcing into drivers of competitiveness and resilience.

For Jordan specifically, this alignment carries particular urgency. Strengthening local supply chains, supporting MSMEs, and enhancing labor market participation are not only social objectives but foundational elements of economic modernization. The integration of ethical leadership into business practices contributes directly to:

- Increased market trust and investor confidence;
- Enhanced productivity through improved workplace standards;
- Greater resilience against external shocks through localized value chains;
- Reduced socio-economic risk through transparency and accountability.

Against this backdrop, the Award should be understood not as an isolated initiative, but as part of a deliberate strategy to institutionalize ethical leadership as a core pillar of Jordan's transformation. In this context, the Ethics in Business Award is also a direct expression of ARDD's Sustainable Livelihoods and Economic Well-being Program. By engaging the private sector as an active partner in ethical practices, the initiative contributes to localizing the livelihoods sector—generating job creation, inclusive economic participation, and market-driven solutions that strengthen community resilience and reduce humanitarian dependency.

3 ARDD's BHR Roadmap: Where the Award Sits within the Strategic Framework

The Ethics in Business Award is not a standalone initiative; it represents a defined phase within ARDD's broader Business and Human Rights (BHR) roadmap. Since 2022, ARDD has progressively structured its engagement with the private sector through a phased approach designed to move from awareness to institutional influence.

Phase I – Diagnosis: Identified the lack of private sector accountability and the need for a "Common Goal" between civil society and businesses

Phase II – Tool Development: Led to the creation of the training materials, the "Towards a Common Goal" declaration, and the evaluation criteria used in this award cycle.

Phase III – Engagement and Recognition (the current phase): Acts as the Engagement and Recognition Mechanism. It serves as the "bridge" that translates theoretical human rights principles into tangible business practices.

Phase IV – Institutionalization and Policy Influence: The long-term objective extends beyond voluntary commitment. The roadmap envisions the gradual embedding of ethical business standards through:

- Structured monitoring of declaration signatories;
- Policy dialogue and advocacy for regulatory and financial incentives;
- Strengthened partnerships between civil society, the private sector, and financial institutions;
- Development of evidence-based recommendations to inform national economic discourse.

Within this trajectory, Award marks a transition point from awareness building and tool development toward systemic engagement and policy-oriented positioning. It consolidates prior investments while laying the groundwork for sustained influence at the institutional level.

4. The Award as a Strategic Mechanism - From Recognition to Incentive and Systemic Influence

The Ethics in Business Award, launched in 2023, is designed to promote human rights principles and ethical values across the public and private sectors. It strengthens stakeholders' engagement in policy and legislative discussions, enhances corporate capacities to support labor protection, and encourages the adoption of best practices in corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Furthermore, it fosters partnerships with civil society to advance sustainable development goals and national economic and development priorities.

The award should be understood not merely as a ceremonial recognition, but as a strategic incentive mechanism designed to influence market behaviour. Its value lies in translating ethical leadership from a normative aspiration into structured market practice.

By introducing structured evaluation criteria and public acknowledgment, the Award strengthens public credibility and institutional trust for companies that integrate governance, transparency, labour standards, and sustainability into their operational models. In doing so, it reinforces the principle that ethical conduct is not external to profitability, but intrinsically linked to long-term performance and resilience.

Ethical Leadership as Economic Strategy

Ethical leadership, in this context, is defined as the capacity of business leaders to embed governance, accountability, and social responsibility into core decision-making processes, aligning business growth with societal well-being. Rather than positioning ethics as compliance, the Award reframes it as strategic foresight: anticipating regulatory shifts, investor expectations, and market trends.

This reflects widely recognized approaches linking governance, trust, and long-term economic performance:

- Trust as a form of social capital, directly influencing productivity and investment confidence;
- Shared value models, where profitability and social impact reinforce one another;
- Stakeholder-oriented governance, recognizing that sustainable success depends on balancing the interests of employees, communities, investors, and markets.

Through operationalizing these principles within a national platform, the Award bridges theory and practice—demonstrating how ethical frameworks can translate into measurable business behaviour.

From Voluntary Commitment to Structured Transition

The “Towards a Common Goal” declaration provides the normative anchor of the initiative, while the Award mechanism adds visibility and incentive. Together, they create a transition pathway:

- Awareness and voluntary alignment;
- Public recognition and reputational reinforcement;
- Gradual formalization of governance systems;
- Movement toward policy-supported institutionalization.

This structured transition is particularly relevant for MSMEs, which often face resource and technical constraints in formalizing ethical standards. The Award reduces the perceived cost of transition by providing visibility, legitimacy, and access to dialogue platforms.

To ensure coherence and progressive impact, the Award adopts an annual thematic focus aligned with emerging national priorities and systemic gaps within the business environment. Each yearly theme serves as a targeted entry point that deepens engagement around a specific dimension of ethical business practice while contributing cumulatively to the overarching objective of institutionalizing ethical leadership within the market system. This thematic approach enables the Award to remain context-responsive, policy relevant, and strategically positioned as a long-term mechanism for systemic influence rather than a standalone recognition initiative.

5. Ethics in Business Award 2025

Under the theme of Future Forward: Celebrating Champions of Localized and Sustainable Growth" and as part of the Future Forward: Unlocking Sustainable Local Opportunities project's advocacy efforts, in collaboration with the Jordan NGOS Forum (JONAF) and JBA, to amplifies the project's efforts to foster a more inclusive approach to advocacy, ensuring that local voices and experiences shape the discourse on livelihoods. The event celebrated leading companies that have demonstrated that embedding ethical values within business practices and strengthening local economic opportunities are fundamental pillars for building a stronger, more inclusive, and sustainable Jordanian economy. The event combined recognition of awardees with a moderated panel discussion that explored the role of ethical business practices in supporting localized markets, sustainable livelihoods, and social responsibility in Jordan.

Analytical Synthesis of the Panel Discussion - Ethical Governance as a Driver of Competitiveness and Resilience

The panel discussion, titled *"Supporting Ethical Entrepreneurship and Local Development amidst Current Economic Challenges,"* served as a structured platform to examine how ethical business conduct can be operationalized across sectors. Rather than focusing on individual experiences, the dialogue revealed systemic patterns, structural gaps, and emerging opportunities within Jordan's economic landscape.

Governance as a Competitive Advantage

A central theme of the discussion was the direct relationship between robust governance frameworks and economic performance. Ethical governance was framed not as a compliance burden, but as a mechanism that enhances operational efficiency, strengthens institutional credibility, and increases investment attractiveness.

Transparent decision-making processes, internal accountability systems, and structured labor policies were identified as factors that reduce long-term risk exposure while improving scalability. In this regard, governance emerged as a foundational element of competitiveness rather than a supplementary corporate function.

Ethical Workplace Policies and Decent Work

The dialogue underscored the importance of embedding labor standards, capacity building, occupational safety, and inclusive employment practices into corporate strategies. Ethical institutional policies were linked to higher productivity, talent retention, and workforce stability.

Beyond regulatory compliance, companies that invest in fair labor practices contribute to strengthening social cohesion and enhancing market trust. The discussion reinforced the notion that decent work is both a human rights obligation and a structural economic asset.

Localization and Supply Chain Resilience

Strengthening local supply chains emerged as a strategic priority in light of global volatility and funding uncertainty. Participants emphasized that localization reduces dependency on external shocks, reinforces domestic value chains, and generates employment across governorates.

The integration of ethical standards within local procurement processes was identified as a pathway to amplify developmental impact. However, the discussion also revealed gaps in coordination and technical capacity that limit the ability of smaller enterprises to integrate into structured supply networks. This localization agenda is at the heart of ARDD's Sustainable Livelihoods Program. The Award actively promotes the private sector's role in supporting local supply chains and creating equitable employment, translating the program's development objectives into concrete market practices. Strengthening these linkages is essential to building livelihood systems that are both economically sustainable and locally embedded.

Ethical Finance and Access to Capital

The role of financial institutions was highlighted as a critical leverage point. Accessible financing tools, when aligned with governance and sustainability criteria, can serve as strong incentives for companies to formalize ethical standards.

The discussion pointed to the need for innovative financial instruments that recognize the lifecycle and risk profile of MSMEs, particularly those operating in emerging sectors. Linking financing conditions to governance and sustainability performance was presented as a potential driver of systemic behavioral change.

Enabling Environment and Public–Private Alignment

Finally, the panel underscored the importance of a coherent enabling environment. Regulatory clarity, digital transformation, and structured public–private dialogue were identified as necessary components for fostering a sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem.

While voluntary commitments play a valuable role in awareness and early adoption, the discussion revealed a structural need to gradually align incentives, policies, and institutional mechanisms to support companies that internalize ethical standards.

Main Structural Challenges Identified

Despite strong alignment on the importance of ethical leadership, the discussion revealed several structural constraints that may hinder implementation:

- Limited institutional capacity among MSMEs to formalize governance and reporting systems;
- Perceived cost and administrative burden associated with compliance processes;
- Fragmented coordination between private sector actors and public institutions;
- Insufficient alignment between financial incentives and responsible business benchmarks;
- Need for clearer policy signals to encourage long-term private sector commitment.

These challenges underscore that voluntary alignment, while important, must be accompanied by structured incentives and institutional support.

Cross-Cutting Insight

Across all themes, a consistent pattern emerged: ethical leadership functions as both a stabilizing force and a growth accelerator. However, the transition from principle to practice requires coordinated action across civil society, private sector actors, financial institutions, and policymakers.

The panel therefore reinforced the strategic relevance of the Award as a convening and signaling platform—one that not only recognizes best practice, but stimulates dialogue toward systemic reform.

6. Private Sector Engagement: Push–Pull Factors and Realistic Barriers

The transition toward ethical business leadership is influenced by a combination of external pressures and internal incentives. Understanding these dynamics is essential to designing mechanisms that move companies from symbolic alignment to structural integration of governance and human rights standards.

Push Factors: External Pressures Driving Change

Several external drivers are progressively reshaping corporate behavior:

- **Evolving global regulatory frameworks**, including supply chain due diligence requirements and ESG-related reporting expectations;
- **Investor scrutiny and risk assessment models** that increasingly factor governance and sustainability performance into financing decisions;
- **Reputational exposure**, particularly in digitally connected markets where corporate misconduct can rapidly undermine credibility;
- **Domestic socio-economic pressures**, including unemployment and market fragility, which heighten expectations for responsible corporate conduct.

These push factors create a shifting operating environment in which companies face growing incentives to formalize governance structures and align with international standards.

Pull Factors: Incentives and Strategic Advantages

Beyond external pressure, the discussion highlighted several strategic benefits that encourage voluntary adoption:

- Enhanced brand credibility and stakeholder trust**;**
- Improved access to long-term investment and partnerships**;**
- Competitive differentiation in both domestic and international markets**;**
- Operational resilience through strengthened supply chain transparency and workforce stability.

When ethical leadership is framed as a value-creation strategy rather than a compliance cost, adoption becomes aligned with business self-interest.

Structural Barriers for MSMEs

Despite these incentives, significant structural barriers persist, particularly for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). These include:

- Limited financial resources to formalize governance systems;
- Insufficient technical expertise to implement sustainability and reporting frameworks;
- Administrative burden associated with compliance processes;
- Fragmented access to information and advisory services.

Without targeted support, these constraints risk creating a divide between large enterprises capable of absorbing transition costs and smaller firms that remain excluded from structured ethical frameworks.

The Role of Coordinated Support

The findings suggest that voluntary recognition mechanisms, such as the Award, are effective entry points. However, sustainable transformation requires complementary measures, including:

- Technical assistance programs tailored to MSMEs;
- Financing tools that incentivize governance performance;
- Structured monitoring and peer-learning platforms;
- Policy dialogue aimed at aligning regulatory incentives with responsible conduct.

In this regard, the Award serves as a catalytic instrument, but its long-term impact depends on embedding incentives within broader financial and institutional ecosystems.

7. Strategic Value of Partnering with JBA

The partnership with the Jordanian Businessmen Association (JBA) reflects a deliberate strategic choice within ARDD's Business and Human Rights roadmap. Rather than engaging through sector-specific or thematic associations, the initiative sought collaboration with a platform that represents cross-sectoral economic leadership and holds systemic influence within Jordan's private sector landscape. This partnership reflects ARDD's approach of engaging influential economic actors as part of its protection-oriented advocacy strategy.

JBA's membership spans multiple key economic sectors, positioning it as a convening body capable of influencing decision-makers whose operations directly affect employment generation, supply chains, and market dynamics. This scale and diversity of representation enhance the Award's capacity to move beyond symbolic recognition toward shaping broader corporate norms.

Systemic Influence over Sectoral Visibility

While partnerships with thematic associations may offer targeted outreach, collaboration with JBA provides structural leverage. By engaging business leaders with national economic weight, the initiative anchors ethical leadership within the mainstream economic discourse rather than limiting it to niche or advocacy-oriented circles.

This positioning strengthens three strategic dimensions:

- Norm-setting capacity: Embedding ethical governance within influential business networks increases the likelihood of peer-driven adoption.
- Policy relevance: Engagement with cross-sector leaders enhances the initiative's credibility in national economic dialogue.
- Scalability: Broader representation facilitates diffusion of standards across industries and value chains.

Reinforcing Institutional Legitimacy

The partnership also signals that Business and Human Rights is not solely a civil society agenda, but a shared platform for collaboration between private sector leadership and rights-based organizations. This joint positioning enhances institutional legitimacy and mitigates the perception that ethical governance is externally imposed.

By aligning with a recognized economic actor, the Award strengthens its ability to convene dialogue across business, financial institutions, and policymakers—laying the groundwork for future policy-oriented engagement.

In this context, the collaboration with JBA is not merely operational; it is strategic. It situates ethical leadership within the core of Jordan's economic architecture, increasing the likelihood that voluntary standards evolve into structured norms.

8. Key Recommendations and Next Steps - From Voluntary Recognition to Structured Institutionalization

Building on the insights generated through the Award process and panel dialogue, several priority actions emerge to consolidate ethical leadership as a structural component of Jordan's economic development.

The transition from awareness and recognition toward sustained structural impact requires coordinated measures across policy, financial systems, and private sector support mechanisms.

Policy and Regulatory Alignment

To ensure long-term impact, voluntary commitments should gradually be complemented by enabling regulatory frameworks. Key considerations include:

- Exploring incentive-based mechanisms for companies that demonstrate structured governance and ethical supply chain standards;
- Integrating responsible business conduct benchmarks into public-private dialogue platforms;
- Encouraging alignment between national economic reform agendas and ethical business frameworks.

Such measures would shift ethical leadership from discretionary practice to competitive advantage embedded within the regulatory environment.

Strengthening Ethical Finance and Incentive Structures

Financial institutions hold a pivotal role in shaping corporate behavior. Linking access to financing tools with governance and sustainability criteria can create tangible incentives for formalization.

This may include:

- Development of accessible financing products tied to measurable governance indicators;
- Risk-adjusted instruments tailored to MSMEs transitioning toward formal ethical standards;
- Structured dialogue between financial actors and civil society to align performance metrics.

Embedding ethical considerations within financing mechanisms can accelerate behavioral change across sectors.

Targeted Support for MSMEs

Given the structural barriers identified, technical assistance and advisory services must accompany recognition mechanisms. Priority areas include:

- Support for formalizing internal codes of ethics and governance policies;
- Capacity-building programs on compliance, sustainability reporting, and labor standards;
- Peer-learning and sectoral exchange platforms to reduce transition costs.

Without targeted support, smaller enterprises risk exclusion from evolving governance standards.

Institutionalizing the "Towards a Common Goal" Declaration

The Declaration should evolve from a symbolic endorsement into a structured reference framework guiding future collaboration between ARDD and private sector partners.

This may involve:

- Periodic monitoring of signatory progress;
- Publication of aggregated impact insights;
- Integration of declaration principles into future award cycles and dialogue platforms.

Sustained Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue

Finally, the establishment of a structured public–private–civil society platform would enhance data exchange, evidence generation, and policy-oriented engagement. Such a platform can support evidence-based advocacy and reinforce alignment between economic modernization efforts and ethical business standards.

Looking Ahead

The Ethics in Business Award 2025 marks a strategic inflection point. It demonstrates that ethical leadership is gaining institutional relevance within Jordan's economic landscape. However, its long-term significance depends on continuity, structured follow-up, and alignment with broader economic reform processes.

By consolidating partnerships, strengthening monitoring mechanisms, and advancing policy dialogue, ARDD and its partners can elevate ethical leadership from recognized practice to policy-relevant standard, contributing to stronger linkages between economic reform processes and the protection of rights within Jordan's development framework. In this regard, the initiative strengthens ARDD's role as a bridge between rights-based advocacy and economic reform dialogue.

Looking ahead, sustaining and deepening this initiative will also mean strengthening its contribution to ARDD's Sustainable Livelihoods and Economic Well-being Program. Future editions of the Award should increasingly serve as a vehicle for localizing the livelihoods sector—incentivizing private sector actors to adopt fair employment practices, support local value chains, and invest in communities in ways that reduce humanitarian dependency and advance long-term economic inclusion.

LIST OF ANNEXES

- Strategic Development of the Human Rights and Business Framework within ARRD
- Ethics in Business Award Booklet
- Selection Framework
- Good Will Declaration: Towards a Common Goal