

Women in Agricultural Sector in Yemen

Resilient Women Farmers in Yemen: Struggles for the Land and its People

Yemeni Women Face Agricultural Challenges despite their Multiple Responsibilities

WDP

المجلة في التنمية والسلام

WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

A Monthly Newspaper Specialized in Women's Affairs, Published by Yemen Information Center (YIC)

Issue: 15

Pages : 20

Price: Free

15 / 9 / 2023

Unveiling the Crucial Role of Official Authorities in Empowering Rural Women



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Female Farmers in Yemen: Past and Present

Agriculture, being one of the oldest human activities, holds significant importance as a primary source of food. Its methods and systems, rooted in tradition, were centered around specific crops and the care of livestock. Over time, agriculture in Yemen has undergone various stages of development, gradually transforming to meet the demands of the present era.

By: Yasmine Abdulhafeez
Women in Development and Peace

Yemen, a country where agriculture plays a vital role in both sustenance and the economy, has witnessed generations of Yemeni individuals dedicating their effort and time to the land. Despite the challenges and obstacles hindering the progress of this profession, Yemenis have continued to persevere, considering agriculture a primary occupation and a source of income for many.

In the past, Yemeni men were expatriates striving to support their families and provide a decent life. Throughout those times, Yemeni women remained steadfast in the fields, tirelessly tilling the land, cultivating terraces in mountains, as well as vast areas along the coast and plains. They took charge of nurturing crops, raising livestock, and bolstering the country's economy.

Yemeni women farmers played a significant role in fostering agricultural development, enriching Yemen with a diverse range of crops and a thriving livestock industry. Their efforts have

enabled the country to withstand numerous long-standing challenges it has faced. Despite starting their work in agriculture using traditional methods, Yemeni women had to dedicate double the time and effort due to the absence of agricultural machinery that could alleviate their burdens and save time. Nonetheless, they remain an active and integral force within the agricultural sphere.

Agriculture in the Past

Fatima, a 50-year-old woman, has spent her

life working on agricultural terraces, tending to the land, harvesting crops, and caring for livestock. She, along with her family, has moved across multiple Yemeni governorates. Coming from a rural background, her family consists of five females and three males. The demands of agricultural work often disrupted her education, as well as that of her sisters, who were content with completing basic schooling.

Reflecting on her past, Fatima describes the arduous process of extracting grain from the corn ear. She explains, "During the grain harvest season, rooftops in our village transformed into open camps, where the painstaking task of extracting grain from the ears took place. Women were primarily responsible for this task, with assistance from men in cases of large quantities."

She continues, "To shield ourselves from any impurities that may fly from the grain and cause rashes, we used to wear tightly fitted garments that covered our bodies completely. Addition-

nally, we would don transparent face covers to protect our eyes. This task usually required a minimum of two people, but the number could increase depending on the quantity of ears harvested from the terraces and agricultural areas owned by families in the vicinity."

Fatima elaborates, saying, "After cutting the ear from the stalks, we would collect the ears and pile them on the roofs of houses, allowing them to dry for a specific period. We would then gather long, slender wooden sticks. Standing at a considerable distance from the ear pile, we took turns striking them with the sticks until the grains of wheat or corn were separated and extracted. This process would be followed by purification, carried out by a person known as 'Al-Thari.' He would position himself where a strong wind could dislodge impurities clinging to the grains, pouring them into their own bowl."

Speaking about traditional agricultural

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methods in the past, Fatima mentions, "Owners of large farms used to construct large circular barns, made of cement with open roofs and a single door, in front of their homes. These structures served as separation centers for grains and ears. This traditional method has been passed down to us from our ancient ancestors, and it has stood the test of time, being utilized by generations throughout history."

To dive deeper into the details of this method, regarded by agricultural specialists as one of the most significant operations to have witnessed remarkable development over time, we turn to agricultural engineer Abdulwahhab Sharaf Atta. He provides us with a comprehensive explanation, stating, "This process, known as 'Labeij,' involves the extraction of grains from the ears. Over time, this process has undergone significant advancements with the introduction of machines, which have resulted in saving considerable effort, time, and money."

Continuing his explanation, Atta reveals, "In the past, the manual 'Labeij' process involved workers utilizing approximately two-meter-long wooden sticks from trees. One end of the stick was bent into a crescent shape, forming a handle, with a circumference equivalent to the size of a

fist, while the other end was thicker."

Atta elaborates that the 'Labeij' process would take place in a designated area called 'Al-Mijran' or 'Al-Jum.' The area would either be square, measuring around five to six square meters, or circular, with a radius of three meters or more. He explains the process further, stating, "The ears of grain would be stacked in a heap within 'Al-Jum.' The worker would grip the handle of the 'Malbaj' and swiftly maneuver it in a circular motion around their head, subsequently lowering the thicker end over the pile of ears. This motion allowed for a rapid and continuous extraction of grains from the ears, causing them to accumulate at the bottom of the heap. These grains would then be purified, separating them from any impurities."

Concluding his explanation, Atta notes, "In recent times, particularly within the past two decades, the 'Labeij' process is predominantly carried out using machines that are available in every agricultural community or village. This marks a significant shift from the previous manual methods."

Daily Tasks

On the other hand, Ahmed Saeed, a farmer,

holds the viewpoint that agriculture in our country has undergone significant transformations until the present day. The nature of farming tasks has evolved considerably, particularly in terms of the roles of human farmers, notably women who are no longer solely responsible for cultivating and tending to the land. Their daily routines have shifted from what they used to be.

Ahmed, a father of five daughters, all of whom are farmers, vividly recounts how women farmers would spend their days. He states, "In the past, the labor was arduous. Women would rise early in the morning and travel long distances to rugged areas and mountains. Their objectives were to gather firewood or collect grass and fodder for cows and other livestock. They would return after several hours and prepare breakfast for their husbands and children, before proceeding to the agricultural fields to work until noon."

Continuing his account, Ahmed adds, "Afterwards, they would return home to prepare lunch for their families. Following this, they would engage in laundry, household chores, and cleaning. In the afternoon, they would either continue with agricultural work or fetch fodder. They would then return home around sunset. Af-

ter dinner, they would tend to the animal barn, taking care of the animals and milking them. They would also attend to their children before retiring to bed, only to wake up the next morning and repeat the same routine."

Shahad Qaid, a female farmer in her fifties, acknowledges the changing situation of women in the countryside. The introduction of better infrastructure, such as improved roads and access to water through various projects, has alleviated many burdens for women. Additionally, the availability of domestic gas has enabled women to rely on it for cooking and bread preparation. However, the current high gas prices have contributed to some of their struggles, although it is not as severe as before since most families can still afford it.

She highlights that the transportation of firewood, grass for livestock, and harvested agricultural crops is now facilitated using various means of transportation. With the introduction of modern harvesting machines, women no longer need to manually purify and filter grain.

Shahad mentions, "A modern machine for cutting hashish has become widely accessible to many families in rural areas. Today, women have the opportunity to pursue education and en-

gage in agricultural work during their free time. Furthermore, they no longer work from morning till evening on the farm, but instead, they go out in the morning, return in the afternoon, take a break, and then continue cutting hashish until just before sunset."

She further notes, "The implementation of water projects in numerous villages and rural areas, predominantly carried out through community initiatives, has eliminated the arduous task of fetching water over long distances. Additionally, the water network has been extended to some households. As a result, many women have reduced the number of animals they raise compared to the past." Shahad also emphasizes the significant impact of technological advancements on their lived reality. Today, women are no longer isolated but have become an integral part of this new world.

Yemen has also embraced the global development trend across various sectors, including agriculture. The Yemeni market has witnessed the entry of numerous agricultural machines with diverse functionalities. Moreover, there has been an increase in the availability of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and the cultivation of new agricultural crops.

Female Farmers: An Essential Economic Force

Relying on Home Gardens, Urban Female Farmers Fulfill their Needs

"Albait almarih walhab aldirih...qulu lmisidah tuqae mudabireh" [a woman is essential for the household's affairs to be managed, and corn is a staple in every home...Tell Musidah to manage the house's affairs wisely]. This is a mahjel, one of the agricultural folk songs that farmers masterfully repeat during planting in order to motivate them to work hard, be diligent and dedicated, and men use it to praise their wives and advise them to be keen on managing their lives. This popular proverb was a lyrical introduction to a famous radio program that was broadcast on Sana'a Radio in its public program, which lasted for nearly two decades, starting in 1988, and it was presented by the two famous broadcasters Abdulrahman Mutahar and Habiba Mohammed.



By: Hanan Hussein
Women in Development and Peace

As evidenced, female farmers are always among the most important components of a happy rural life. Due to the women's keenness to manage the households' expenses and their interest and care for all what their families own including farms, livestock and property, there is an old popular proverb that says, "The presence of a woman in the house is better than the presence of a hired worker who does rural work."

According to Sawsan Yahya, a farmer from Sanhan, "Women are the primary source of support for the household because they are responsible for running it and the family and men are fully dependent on them. Therefore, when men decide to get married, they are keen to choose girls who complement their rural lifestyles in the first place, and they are eager to choose rural girls who are aware of what must be done without being instructed."

Abdulrahman Al-Ghabri, a photographer, asserted that the presence of female farmers in rural areas is crucial since they are the ones who carry out most of the agricultural tasks, starting from planting seeds, harvesting and grinding the agricultural crops. In his opinion, women do most of the agricultural work by 80%, as they work to sow the grain and care for it until it reaches the stage of alfaqh (refining the crops that are viable) until reaching alsharif stage (collecting leaves and twigs for sheep and cows in the winter season).

"Women contribute to having access to a respectable standard of living for families by accumulating large financial returns when selling the agricultural crops. They can also raise livestock, produce and sell milk, and use it to make local ghee, which has a high return. Moreover, producing and selling sheep generates a profit that enables households to live decently. Women can now keep bees and sell honey, in addition to manufacturing and selling some products at home," Al-Ghabri added.

Self-Sufficiency

Basma Ahmed - a graduate of Mass Communications - explained that agriculture contributes to achieving self-sufficiency for all. "Al-Maqashim, which refers to Al-Qashem (radish plant), is an area of the old city of Sana'a which includes small farms located in the center of residential neighborhoods. Men and women used to share the same tasks there, and while the men are away, it is totally up to the women to take care of the farm. However,

due to the ongoing conflicts and their impact on the economic life of all, we see now many women have started working in home gardens to cultivate specific crops, such as peppers and tomatoes, and they take care of them continuously. Accordingly, if they had larger fields or spaces, they would certainly grow other crops."

Umm Muhammad - a housewife - believes that even a small portion of their requirements can be met at home by women. "My husband brought me seedlings of peppers, leeks, mint and tomatoes, and he assisted me in planting and caring for them. During the period of crisis, I really benefited from growing such plants, as I prepared some dishes such as saltah, making lemonade with mint, or preparing tomato sauce with chili pepper. Despite the limited amount of the crop, it met our needs," she said.

According to the agricultural engineer, Mayar Muhammad, who owns "PLANTAE" shop for selling agricultural seedlings, female farmers assist in ensuring that their kids eat healthy foods grown on the farm. Additionally, they support their children's education by paying the dues with the money they make from selling the products from their farms, which is a beneficial development.

Source of Income

According to Hooriya Motahar, a housewife who grew up in a family that works heavily in the agricultural field, "Women can achieve self-sufficiency and gain profits that may benefit them in the future, as they can meet some of their households' food demands through the yield of the crop they reap, and they can provide them with vegetables and fruits that may not be affordable. Additionally, they can make financial profits by saving large amounts of the revenues from the proceeds they sell."

"Agriculture is a treasure for those who



Abdulrahman Al-Ghabri

make the best use of it. I know a woman whose husband died and she had two daughters, and they only inherited a piece of land. This woman had adequately benefited from the land's cultivation, as she was able to build the second floor of her house through the proceeds from the sale of the land crops. She was able to achieve this success as a result of her wise decision to utilize this agricultural land," Houria added.

A 55-year-old widow named Laila Tamish claimed that she was able to marry off her five children using the proceeds from agricultural products. "My oldest child was just 11 when my husband passed away. Because my older brother lived far away in another area, I was an orphan and had no one to support or assist me at the time. Nevertheless, I worked hard, hired workers, cultivated our land, cared about the timing of each season and agricultural season, and provided everything the land

needed. I conducted the necessary inoculation and provided a pump to extract water, in addition to planting the seeds that are suitable for our environment. I took a risk at that time and planted some fruit trees that were considered new on our land, but, thanks to God, they all grew and provided me with a significant income that left me stand amazed at the time."

"Women are very strong when faced with difficulties, let alone when they have agricultural skills that enable them to plant and reap the fruits of what they sow. Those who are incapable of acting do not acquire the means of living; rather, those who continue to labor and look for them do," Laila added.

Lubna Abdulrahim, a 26-year-old student at the Faculty of Agriculture, said that her mother's home garden plays a major role in covering some of the house's needs. "My mother plants some veggies in our garden, including tomatoes, peppers, mint, aloe vera, and onions. This has provided us with some self-sufficiency and we do not need to buy these crops, especially the mint, which we pick whenever we want," she added.

In terms of achieving financial income, Lubna explained, "I have a friend who did not find a job after her graduation, so she opened her own project in the field of agriculture, because she was interested in it. Thus, she established a home nursery garden, through which she produces multiple seedlings, then markets and sells them through social media, or promotes them through her friends and family."

Lubna observed that her friend has a distinctive marketing strategy for her goods since she presents the seedlings in a lovely pot, which may be made of pottery or straw crafts and attracts consumers to buy it as a nice gift. She highlighted that the financial returns from the project may not be high, but at least she has succeeded and has good customers.

Umm Aziza Ali - a seller of aromatic plants

- explained that women struggle and strive with all their energy and effort in order to obtain a Halal (lawful) livelihood. "I get aromatic plants like rue plant and basil from a widow who grows these plants continually in her small yard in order to support her children. Every weekend, I purchase these plants from her and sell them in a cemetery. I make money by adding financial profits in order to give the woman who grows these plants and myself a respectable source of income," she said.

"Growing aromatic plants has a number of challenges, particularly in the winter when the cold falls, which prevents their growth, exposes them to harm and irreparable damage. However, this woman's project is successful and we both benefit greatly from it, along with other women who have the same profession as mine and buy from her when there are a lot of these plants," she added.

Passion & Talent

Hajja Amna Musleh - a housewife who owns a home garden on the roof of her house, in Huzia area of Sana'a city - said that her family has been growing aromatic and ornamental plants for a very long time, thus she has a strong passion for doing so. She has been doing this as a hobby since she was a young child. "Along with mint, I also grow basil, rue plants, and other aromatic and ornamental plants. When there is any occasion, such as gatherings at the house of a woman who gave birth, people come to me to pick some of these plants. I am famous in the neighborhood for my gardening and my little rooftop garden. As you know, mazaher alshathab [vases in which rue plants are placed] are among the most prominent customs that Yemenis are keen to follow in some occasions, as they take the sprigs of rue plant and place it in specialized containers on the shelves of the room where women gather to express their joy with the new baby. They continue to visit the woman who gave birth to a new baby for forty days, and end it with a small party called alqawma. They usually use these plants on such occasions because they believe that these plants protect the mother and her newborn baby from evil and envy. In occasions of condolence, they take many bunches of basil from me and spread them on the body of the dead person, after he has been shrouded and perfumed," Hajja Amna said.

"I grow these kinds of plants because I love planting in general, especially aromatic plants. Due to how far the market is from our location, I perform this profession as a community duty for my neighbors. I also consider it a charity that I present to my afterlife," she added.

There is no doubt that Yemeni women make significant contributions through their effective use of the money they receive from the crops they sell to support their families and their homes. Moreover, they don't hesitate to learn more about agricultural organization, develop their agricultural talents, or invest in new businesses or profitable tree planting projects as additional income sources. On the other hand, agricultural and financial knowledge also helps them become pioneering women who succeed in their endeavors to become self-sufficient, so they do not view the unstable circumstances as a threat and instead see them as a challenge that should be overcome, so that they can help themselves and others.

Balancing Family Responsibilities and Farming: The Struggles of Women Farmers

Women hold significant and influential roles across various fields, contributing both to their work and their families. In the realm of agriculture, women farmers embody resilience and determination as they engage in cultivating the land and participating in all agricultural activities such as sowing, plowing, and harvesting. Additionally, they diligently fulfill their family obligations, including household chores, cooking, cleaning, raising children, and attending to the needs of all family members.



By: **Afrah Borji**
 Women in Development and Peace

While many women in the agricultural sector successfully manage the dual responsibilities of working on the land and maintaining their household, some find it challenging to endure the physical demands of agricultural labor while shouldering family responsibilities. Consequently, they transition away from agricultural work and explore alternative crafts that can provide them with a sustainable source of income.

Burdens of Daily Life

Nazira, a dedicated farmer, shoulders numerous responsibilities and additional challenges. Among these, she is a mother to children afflicted with thalassemia, a genetic blood cell disorder.

Nazira, who has been actively engaged in agriculture for quite some time, shares her daily routine, stating, "Every morning, I commence my work on the land. However, before heading to the farm, I fulfill my duties towards my family by preparing breakfast and fetching water, as my children are still young. My husband assists me before leaving for his job in the city. Once we collect water from the well, I ensure my family is fed before proceeding to work on the farm, while my husband heads to his workplace."

Opening up about her challenges, Nazira reveals, "There are days when the stress becomes overwhelming, hindering my ability to go to the farm. Consequently, my work may experience slight delays, leading to decreased production and crop yield. Nevertheless, I refuse to give up and strive relentlessly to make it to the land. On occasions when I face difficulties, I seek assistance from other women and compensate them for their help."

My Children's Illness Hindered my Farming

Nazira candidly shares the weight she carries and the invaluable lesson that burdens her, stating, "In addition to the regular responsibilities towards my family, I have the added challenge of raising children who are unable to walk due to thalassemia. This has further increased my burdens, causing delays in my agricultural work. Initially, I used to take them to the city for treatment. Upon returning, I immediately resume my work on the farm, aiming to secure a harvest for our consumption and to sell in the markets. This income helps us meet our needs and provides funds for my children's treatment."

Not only does she prioritize her children's health, but Nazira also excels in her formidable role as a farmer and diligently fulfills her domestic responsibilities. Furthermore, she is devoted to nurturing her children and ensuring their education continues, laying a strong foundation for their future.

A Schedule for Farm Work and Fulfilling Responsibilities

Marwa, a resilient female farmer residing in Taiz Governorate, has taken on the role of a single parent after her divorce, assuming full responsibility for her children and household. She chronicles her experiences in agricultural work and her unwavering dedication to her family. Marwa explains, "To effectively manage my work alongside my responsibilities at home, I adhere to a carefully planned schedule that encompasses my entire day, starting from the early

hours of the morning until I complete my tasks on the agricultural land."

Expanding on her routine, Marwa adds, "With the break of dawn, I rise promptly to prepare breakfast and attend to household chores until six o'clock in the morning, at which point I am prepared for work. Since the farm is in close proximity to my home, I leave my children there without any concerns. In the event of an issue, they can easily reach me for assistance."

Marwa continues, "During school holidays, my older children take charge of caring for their younger siblings. However, on regular school days, three of my children attend primary school while I bring along the youngest child to the farm. This is where my challenges commence. From morning until noon, I dedicate myself to working on the land while also tending to my children's needs. Once I finish my work on the farm, I return home to fulfill the remaining responsibilities, including cooking meals, providing educational support to my children, and helping them with their homework. As the afternoon arrives, I resume my work on the farm, and at this point, my children lend me a helping hand."

Difficulties & Challenges

Nazira, a determined farmer, recounts the numerous challenges she encountered when she had to travel to the city for her children's medical treatment. She explains, "During those times, I relied on the assistance of my neighbors to carry out the farm work, compensating them with wages. However, during harvest days and

seasons, they were unable to help as they were occupied with their own agricultural tasks. This resulted in a deficit in our harvest. Upon my return, I had to shoulder the burdens and endure hardships beyond my capacity to ensure the completion of the work on the land."

Echoing Nazira's sentiments, Marwa, another farmer, acknowledges the varying capabilities among women. She observes, "In rural areas, one can witness numerous women engaged in agricultural labor, managing household chores, and even participating in market-related activities such as selling crops. Despite encountering difficulties, these women possess the resilience to overcome them."

Discussing her own challenges, Marwa reveals, "Working alone without the presence of a man, given my divorced status, is one of the obstacles I face. Everything I mentioned earlier about capabilities encompassed these tasks and the numerous challenges and difficulties I encountered. However, I am proud to say that I have managed to overcome them."

Marwa further elaborates, "Marketing has been a particularly daunting aspect for me. Initially, I struggled to effectively market the crops I harvested from the farm. Nevertheless, I have now acquired the necessary skills to navigate this area. Additionally, having to occasionally bring my children with me to the farm poses another challenge. This diverts my attention from the land and consumes a significant amount of time and effort in caring for my children."

Farming in Yemen: Crops Thriving on Mahajel and Songs

By: **Haneen Al-Wahsh**
 Women in Development and Peace

Almahajel, an ancient agricultural tradition in Yemen, celebrates the harmonious connection between the farmers and the countryside. This cultural phenomenon revolves around the melodic hymns of colloquial poetry sung by women who are deeply rooted in the rural farming community.

The essence of almahajel lies in its strong association with agriculture, particularly with women farmers. These remarkable women effortlessly weave together sweet, measured colloquial words, which they sing in harmony with their work in the fields and during the bountiful harvests. The cadence of their chants mirrors the changing seasons, rising and falling in synchrony with their movements, especially during the period known as alalan season. This crucial time marks the final month of the year when the fruits have ripened, and women gather in teams to recite verses filled with hope for the forthcoming months' prosperity and abundance. It is a heartfelt farewell to the hardships endured during the challenging months that have passed, as they eagerly anticipate the goodness that lies ahead.

Melodies & Harvest

The popular rural chants, sung by women farmers in farms, fields, and during harvest, are brimming with an enthusiastic energy derived from their lived experiences. These chants serve as vivid examples of the vibrant oral tradition that resonates throughout the agricultural communities.

Intangible Heritage

Over time, various Yemeni cultures, arts, and legacies have undergone significant transformations. Among them, almahajel, like other folk arts, holds a special place in Yemen's intangible heritage, which has evolved under the influence of the country's cultural dynamics.

In the quest to explore oral folklore, Dr. Abdulaziz Al-Maqaleh's book of colloquial poetry in Yemen sheds light on the significance and timing of



almahajel for rural women farmers. It elucidates the evolving goals and purposes that correspond to the demands of agricultural work and the diverse inclinations of women farmers in the Yemeni countryside.

Dr. Al-Maqaleh explains, "These purposes encompass various aspects such as the morning rituals that mark the beginning of the day, the enchantment of sunrise, emotional expressions, connection with the surrounding nature, expressing gratitude for blessings, and rejoicing in the harvest. They also encompass the advertising season and other aspects of the daily lives of women farmers and rural communities."

Academic researcher Najiba Al-Faqih, an expert in popular oral heritage, emphasizes, "Almahajel holds a significant place among the folk traditions deeply rooted in the Yemeni countryside. It serves as a medium through which individuals, particularly rural men

and women farmers, express their emotions, joys, sorrows, hopes, and fears in accordance with the prevailing circumstances. Almahajel embodies the instincts and values of rural communities, fostering a sense of belonging to the homeland and its people. It also facilitates intergenerational transmission, nurturing a sense of unity and friendship among individuals, and bridging the gap between the past and the present."

Expressing concern over the dwindling fate of almahajel, Al-Faqih issues a warning, stating, "Despite its endurance over countless centuries, almahajel now teeters on the brink of extinction. This unfortunate circumstance can be attributed to several factors, with the most significant being the lack of awareness regarding the significance of popular oral heritage. Additionally, the shift in traditional lifestyles and the inclination of younger generations, in particular, towards modernization and a disregard

for the past, have contributed to this critical decline." Furthermore, the inadequate documentation, research, and preservation efforts surrounding almahajel have resulted in the loss of numerous pieces of this cultural treasure. The departure of successive generations who had faithfully committed these traditions to memory and passed them down from parents to grandparents has further exacerbated the situation, leading to irreparable losses."

Heritage Documentation

In terms of heritage documentation, almahajel stands as a valuable repository of social and political wealth, reflecting the emotions and circumstances of both the general populace and female farmers. Whether conveying joy or sorrow, it serves as a testament to their thought processes and their perspectives on issues and solutions. This cultural treasure was meant to be meticulously documented, yet it has not received the attention it deserves due to the current absence of a cultural scene, stagnation, and overall lack of interest in heritage preservation.

On a personal documentation level, there exist exemplary young individuals who have dedicated themselves to collecting and archiving almahajel, drawing from the wisdom passed down by their parents and grandparents in various villages. One such remarkable figure is Abdul Bari Al-Sufi, who has taken the lead in transforming oral heritage into written texts. This undertaking serves the purpose of safeguarding against distortion and the perils of forgetting, while also providing a valuable resource for enthusiasts and researchers.

Social, Developmental,
 Comprehensive, Independent
 Newspaper, Published Monthly by:
 Yemen Information Center

YIC specializes in research
 and media that promote peace
 & Development in Yemen

Our Vision

A society that believes in
 the importance of women in
 establishing peace and raises
 their public awareness. Therefore,
 they become able to participate
 in all areas of building and
 developing the society.

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Resilient Women Farmers in Yemen: Struggles for the Land and its People

Women in rural and agricultural areas of Yemen play a crucial role in shouldering a majority of the tasks. One significant responsibility they undertake is farming, which encompasses a wide range of activities varying from planting crops to harvesting. These tasks differ from one region to another, influenced by the traditions passed down through generations, pertaining to land maintenance and the different stages of crop cultivation.

By: Yasmine Abdulhafeez
Women in Development and Peace

Siham Yahya, a young woman residing in Al-Jarrah district in Al-Hodeidah Governorate, highlights the early rising habits of rural women, as they have a multitude of tasks awaiting them. Cultivation and land servicing primarily fall under their purview. In certain rural areas and villages, agricultural practices involve numerous stages, each necessitating various tasks. However, in some agricultural regions, the workload diminishes throughout the season, aligning with customs and inherited traditions specific to agricultural responsibilities.

Experts in the agriculture field emphasize that the nature of agricultural tasks depends on the specific crops cultivated in each region of Yemen. These encompass a wide range, including grain crops like barley, wheat, corn, sorghum, and millet. Vegetables such as potatoes, tomatoes, onions, okra, cucumbers, carrots, molokhia, zucchini, peppers, eggplant, radishes, garlic, cabbage, and leeks are also prevalent. Fruit crops grown throughout Yemen consist of bananas, apples, pomegranates, prickly pears, grapes, dates, oranges, mangoes, papayas, tangerines, plums, kharmash [sugar apple], guavas, quinces, peaches, and palm trees. Additionally, Yemeni agriculture includes cash crops like almonds, coffee, cotton, and sesame.



Roles of Women in Grain Farming

Khawla Yahya, a farmer, shares her experience of the farming season in the countryside, where she resides with her family. She explains, "When the farming season commences, the women of the village begin collecting animal dung from a designated area inside or near the houses. After a considerable period, they agree on a specific day to transport the dung to the agricultural terraces, where it is organized into piles and later burned at distant locations within the terraces."

Khawla further elaborates, "Before plowing the land, women distribute the dung along the pathways, allowing it to blend with the soil. Following this, it is thoroughly mixed using special axes or by a man utilizing a team of oxen attached to an iron tool, which serves the purpose of tilling the soil. Subsequently, groups of women utilize a wooden tool called mardas to further break up the soil after the tool has passed."

She continues, "Women also play a crucial role in preparing meals for the workers, whether they are women or men assisting them. The food is transported to the workplace, where the men have their separate mealtime, while the women eat together under the shade of trees."

Continuing her account, Khawla mentions,

"The land remains in this state until it rains. Then, women proceed to sow the seeds in the agricultural terraces, after another round of plowing facilitated by two oxen pulling a sharp machine that forms longitudinal lines. The women sow the seeds along with the soil, ensuring its compactness."

Khawla explains, "As the seeds germinate and grow, a stage known as 'weeding' ensues. During this stage, women meticulously purify the seeds and remove any harmful weeds that could hinder the crop growth. This process is repeated until the plants have progressed further. Subsequently, they undertake another stage referred to as water harvesting. In certain rural areas, women create basins adjacent to the crops to collect rainwater for irrigation purposes."

Furthermore, she emphasizes the significance of continuously removing weeds throughout the entire farming cycle, from planting to harvesting. This diligent practice ensures the well-being of agricultural crops and positive outcomes during the harvest season. Neglecting the removal of these weeds may ultimately lead to subpar and insufficient yields.

Um Mahyoub, a friend, provides additional insights into the tasks carried out by women in their region after the water harvesting process. She

explains, "One of these tasks is collecting fodder from agricultural terraces and green spaces to feed their livestock. Any excess fodder is stored in rooms within their homes for use during the winter season or stacked in conical or square shapes outside the houses."

According to Um Mahyoub, education is an ongoing task. In areas where rainfall is abundant, the fodder proliferates, prompting women to continuously cut it as the grass grows. The rapid growth brings joy to the villagers since they secure a ready food supply for their livestock during years with limited rainfall.

She continues, "Women come together to collect firewood, taking turns among themselves. After cutting down trees, they bundle the firewood and transport it to the vicinity of their houses, where it is stacked to dry. It serves as fuel for cooking their meals. This demanding task, prevalent in most rural areas of Yemen, poses risks. The trees are often located in remote areas such as mountains, dangerous slopes, and high places. However, the determined farmer women overcome all challenges in their commitment to serving the land and its people."

Roles of Women in Vegetable Farming

Nadia Hassan has a strong passion for culti-

vating onions and leeks in her agricultural fields. Her process begins by visiting the market to acquire high-quality seeds, which she carefully selects. Alongside her friends, Nadia plows the ground and proceeds to sow the crops. She diligently tends to them by periodically activating the water pump for irrigation purposes, repeating the process as needed.

Reflecting on her expertise, Nadia explains, "I have learned from my father the proper usage of pesticides to combat harmful pests and how to nurture the crops. Once the growth cycle is complete, I am frequently approached by numerous people interested in purchasing onions and leeks. The entire crop is sold directly from the farm without having to rely on the market for marketing purposes."

It is common to find women across various Yemeni countryside and villages actively engaged in cultivating a broad range of agricultural crops. This includes onions, leeks, potatoes, groundnut, as well as garlic, coriander, and radishes. Women play a significant role in cultivating these crops, which are renowned in their respective regions of the country.

From the Perspective of Experts

Abdulwahab Atta, an agricultural engineer, highlights the active involvement of Yemeni women in diverse agricultural tasks. Their role even surpasses that of men in specific crop types, including white, red and yellow corn and millet. These tasks are undertaken solely by women without any participation from men in the agricultural processes. They engage in activities such as applying organic manure (livestock waste) to fertilize the soil, and thinning out densely planted crops in a process called "weeding." Additionally, they replant vacant spaces in a process known as tarqie.

Furthermore, women remove yellowing leaves that are suffering from withering through a process called sar. They also eliminate weeds from the soil to prevent competition with crops for nutrients, referred to as hashoosh. Women ensure an adequate food supply for livestock, while men participate in other agricultural operations such as sowing seeds in the ground, known as planting. Men also engage in lightly cultivating the soil around crops to improve soil ventilation, a technique called scattering.

In recent years, the Yemeni agricultural markets have introduced various machines that have resulted in time and effort savings and facilitated farmers' tasks. This, in turn, has led to increased agricultural production. These machines include soil tillers, pesticide sprayers, and crop harvesters that separate grains from straw. They have significantly assisted rural women in Yemen by relieving them of the burden associated with their assigned duties.

Early Marriage Imposes Additional Responsibilities on Women Farmers

By: Hanan Hussein
Women in Development and Peace

Jihan Atef began to recount her story with bitterness. "My father married me off to my cousin so that I could protect our inheritance." Her narrative echoed the experiences of many Yemeni girls who were wedded before reaching the legal marriageable age, compelling us to listen closely to her tale.

Jihan, who is 29 years old, is her parents' oldest child. She has a brother and two sisters. Jihan claimed that before her mother gave birth to her, her paternal aunt had decided to marry Jihan off to her son in the future in order to preserve the family's legacy and prevent strangers from inheriting it. Accordingly, when she reached the age of thirteen, she was married off to her cousin, and now she has four children, the eldest of whom is Hamdi (16 years old), Shahd (14 years old), Zaid (12 years old), and the youngest is Ayman (5 years old). In reference to the age gap between herself and her oldest kid, she said, "When I go out with my son, no one can believe that he is really my son. This is because of our close age gap, so they mistake him for being my brother."

"Any girl who has not attained the legal age to marry and take full responsibility for a man and a home is being unfairly treated by getting married too young. I've taken on the responsibility of being a wife who looks after her husband's affairs, in addition to carrying out the tasks of the house alongside the wives of my husband's brothers, as everyone of us has a set day to fulfill the household's responsibilities alone. The household activities include grazing the cattle, milking the cows, gathering firewood, plowing the land, harvesting the crops, cleaning the entire house and the cattle barn, in addition to performing other heavy agricultural work that used to exhaust me since a young age. I spent the majority of my childhood in the city since I was not accustomed to the hard rural life, unlike the wives of my husband's brothers who lived in the country and were used to doing so and were unaffected by such hard work," she added.

Early marriage is one of the scourges of society that devour girls, prevent them from completing their education, and subject them

to unjust customs and traditions, including getting married at a young age, especially in rural areas. A female is often referred to as a spinster when she reaches the age of 20 without getting married, and this is what Ghaida Ahmed (a housewife) discussed, adding, "When I got home from school, my father told me that you will get married in the afternoon. As a result, I married and gave up school when I was in the sixth grade. As a result, I have forgotten how to read and write, which makes it difficult for me to teach my children because I don't understand anything. Even though I now reside in the city, the negative effects of early marriage still affect me on a daily basis."

"Sometimes my husband threatens me to marry an educated woman who can understand him and keep up with him in thinking and dialogue. Therefore, I can only pray that God would pardon my father and brother for marrying me off so young out of fear of becoming a spinster and believing that 'marriage is a protection for me,'" she added.

According to (N.P.) a twenty-year-old country girl, "When I was fourteen or fifteen years old, and during the harvest season, I wed a young guy of my own age in the village. The black henna on my hands and those dresses they gifted me didn't sway me from going to the field at dawn on the second day of my wedding – both my husband and I – to participate in the harvest. Since girls in their eyes shouldn't learn, I never enrolled in school. My father stated that when he married me off, he had relieved himself of a significant burden, as I was one girl among five sons. He sees me as a shame and considers marrying me off as a protection, saying, 'I protect you, because the only way for women to be protected is by getting married and moving into their husbands' houses.'"

Surveys & Numbers

Girls are compelled into early marriage in many rural Yemeni governorates as soon as they reach the age of nine or 10, and maybe even younger. This issue is still relevant today, as despite the efforts of jurists, civil society organizations, and others that have tried to make the judiciary and legislation enact a law that determines the age of marriage, all attempts failed.

A report issued by the Gender Studies and Re-

search Center at Sana'a University showed that about 52% of Yemeni girls got married under the age of fifteen, compared to 7% of males. On the other hand, the percentage of child marriages accounts for 65% of all marriages, with 70% of them are in rural areas, and in some cases the age of the married girls does not exceed eight or ten years.

The report revealed a large age gap between the spouses, sometimes the husband is 56 years older than his wife. The majority of those surveyed who were under the age of 18 said that women should get married when they are between the ages of 15 and 16, while boys should wait until they get a job offer or can afford to pay a dowry.

In 2000, the baseline survey showed that 24.6% of rural women in Yemen were married between the ages of 10 and 14. In the same context, the Monitoring and Protection Center of Seyaj Organization for Childhood Protection conducted a study which showed that under-age marriage is more prevalent in Yemen's rural areas, where it affects roughly 70% of the country's population, amounting to about 24 million people, most of whom are females. According to the study, at least 60% of Yemeni girls get married before they turn 18, and between 30 and 40 percent of them do so before reaching the age of 15.

In a social study conducted by Women in Development and Peace newspaper, issued by Yemen Information Center, under the title "Child Marriage in Yemen: Effects and Solutions", Prof. Fathia Bahashwan stated that the prevalence of the phenomenon of child marriage in Yemen is due to illiteracy and the lack of intellectual awareness among some families. It is also due to the economic and social conditions in Yemen, as well as the inherited customs and traditions in the Yemeni society about child marriage, in addition to the existence of shortcomings and defects in the legal texts, because there is neither explicit text specifying the age of marriage, nor a punishment for those who violate it.

The study concluded that one of the most significant negative effects of child marriage is the damage to their health and psychological status. Moreover, they are exposed to psychological pressures at that early age, and their scientific life is negatively affected. In return, this hinders

the social, economic and health status of many girls in the future.

The rate of child marriage increases in rural areas where ignorance and poverty are more prevalent. Poverty is associated in many cases with greed, and some families consider having daughters an investment project that may bring the family a good amount of money in the future, or view girls as a scandal and a source of shame that must be concealed through marriage. In the best cases, young girls are forced into marriage out of fear for their safety. There are no documented statistics for such marriages, but a report from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) stated, "52% of Yemeni girls and women were married before the age of 18 in 2017, and that the number of cases tripled by 2018."

Under Scrutiny

Many girls oppose early marriage and are aware that it is a trap they fell into—either voluntarily or inadvertently—as an alluring dream for any girl, as if it is just about having a lot of red lipstick and new gowns and dolls. However, some of them became victims of violence, assault, and coercion, without ever giving their consent to the marriage.

The divorce case of ten-year-old Nujood Al-Ahdal gained public attention after she filed a complaint against her father, who forced her into marriage with a man nearly twice her age. She was awarded the title of "Woman of the Year 2008". Following this, a novel titled, "I Am Nujood, Age 10 and Divorced" was published and was translated into many foreign languages. Subsequently, a movie was made based on her story, which was screened at the Berlin Film Festival and won the award for Best Film. At that time, the story gained significant popularity and support, and the child, Nujood, was able to obtain a divorce from her husband.

Nada Al-Ahdal is another minor who fell victim to the trap of an early marriage because of her father, who wed her off without her consent. Overnight, she found herself in the house of a man she did not know. However, she fled her husband's home, and the news of her escape quickly circulated throughout the media, so at that time she received great support. Unfortunately, we continue to hear about cases of early mar-

riage without having legal sanction to prevent such crimes.

Opinion of Intellectuals

Yemeni law, Law No. 20 of 1992, regarding personal status, stipulates the minimum age for early marriage in Article 15 as 15 years for girls. Consequently, any individual who has reached the age of fifteen has the right to all civil rights, including the ability to enter into contracts, including marriage.

According to Ibtihal Al-Aghbari, a psychologist and counsellor, "We must constantly promote awareness and host events and workshops to introduce the negative effects of early marriage. This should be done if we see that it might have an impact on the very young girls who are unaware to what is happening to them, lack physical ability, and have no knowledge of marriage at all. However, if the girls are in good health and they have psychological and physical ability and have received a good upbringing, they must be informed of what responsibility they will bear. As a psychologist, I can see that this kind of marriage is fruitful and has a favorable outcome. It might even be one of the factors preventing girls from turning to undesirable behaviors. This is demonstrated by the marriages of our mothers, who, in spite of their youth, got married, settled down, led happy lives, went on to have children, and were unharmed."

Noura Attia, a general practitioner, confirmed that there is a significant disparity between rural and urban communities regarding the issue of early marriage. We find that people in rural regions still accept it as part of their customs and traditions, despite being aware of its negative aspects. This is caused by ignorance and a lack of awareness, and we observe that its prevalence has risen over time. However, a significant portion of the population in cities is now aware about the risks and negative effects of this practice as a result of increased knowledge and the spread of education, which has led to a decline in both the prevalence and the number of people who follow it.

According to Dr. Noha Al-Areqi, a physician, "Early marriage for girls is a crime worldwide, because they are unaware of what they need to do in terms of their physical, psychological, and life obligations."

Unveiling Female Farmers' Challenges and Opportunities in Livestock Rearing

In Yemen, numerous families, particularly those involved in agriculture, depend heavily on their livestock, including cows, sheep, and goats, as a vital source of income. For many women engaged in agriculture, raising livestock is not only essential for meeting their basic needs but also supplements their agricultural work. Regrettably, the outbreak of the conflict in Yemen has drastically disrupted this dynamic, leading to a decline in livestock numbers and a reduction in agricultural areas. This, coupled with the economic crisis exacerbated by salary suspensions and the significant decline in livestock, has further deepened the challenges faced by these families.

By: Hebah Mohammed
Women in Development and Peace

Decreased Interest in Rearing and Caring of Livestock

Due to its nutritional importance to the residents and its availability in every Yemeni home, livestock served as the primary source of food in both rural and urban areas of the country. They relied on grazing to raise livestock, given that Yemen was privileged with vast areas of agricultural grounds filled with grain crops, which served as their main source of food. They also grew fodder and benefited from milk and livestock fat. According to agricultural engineer, Ahmed Qassem, "Since most rural residents were reluctant to take care of animals, interest in caring for and keeping livestock seemed to decline as urban migration increased. Over time, this had a direct impact on the lives of rural residents. Numerous factors contributed to this, including the high cost of feed and medications, which directly influences livestock."

"Among the factors affecting livestock is the lack of state support for livestock breeders or encouragement of them by providing the necessities for animal husbandry, the absence of markets that allow them to market their goods and protect them, and the limited assistance that is provided by organizations, which is superficial support and is unrelated to the citizen's needs. As a result, the livestock index declined," he continued. According to Alhan Muzahim, one of the volunteers in the agricultural committees in Al-Sayani district, "The primary source of food for Yemeni farmers was meat from local farms, as each Yemeni farming family owns more than three cows or sheep. However, the local livestock decreased gradually due to its replacement by meat imported from abroad, which was cheaper at the beginning of its spread in the markets. Moreover, due to the decline in living standards and the low purchasing power of local meat, imported meat has increased in price."

"Although livestock was a significant source of income for all Yemenis, many farmers were reluctant to preserve or care for it. Thus, they tended to take care of poultry farming due to their reliance on imported grain in the system of poultry farming abroad. Farmers abandoned raising livestock,

goats and sheep because the competent authorities did not adopt projects to develop and improve livestock breeding," she continued.

The Impact of Conflict on Livestock Breeding

With the outbreak of the crisis in Yemen, agriculture was negatively impacted and turned against what the farmers had intended. This had a tremendous impact on livestock that witnessed a significant decline due to the difficult economic conditions, wide climatic changes, the reduction of natural pasture areas, and the high costs of basic needs essential for the preservation of livestock.

According to data issued by the Department of Statistics and Agricultural Information at the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation for the year 2020, the volume of livestock in Yemen for the year 2020 is estimated at 21,469,000, including 9,717,000 sheep and about 9,485,000 goats, in addition to 1,818,000 cows, and 447 camels.

According to these sources, the livestock has shrunk from its estimated 35,000,000 pre-conflict size, which included sheep, goats, cows, and camels in addition to poultry. On the other hand, the annual production of red and white meat, dairy products, egg products, leather, wool, and honey totals 570,000 tons.

Fatima Muhammad Qassem, a farmer for thirty years in Al-Sabla village in Al-Odain district of Ibb Governorate, talked about the challenges caused by the ongoing conflict in Yemen, saying, "I enjoy farming and depend on it for providing a living, so I have been interested in raising cows and some sheep for years. However,

most of the time I think about selling the livestock I own due to the challenging living circumstances we experience every day as a result of the epidemics and diseases that affect cows, the high costs of treating these illnesses, lack of rain, drought, the scarcity of water sources in our village, and the absurdly high prices of fodder, which forced us to use grain to feed livestock instead of fodder. As a result, this caused us an additional burden, which was beyond our capacity, and some women offered their livestock for sale in the markets to get rid of them because they couldn't afford to feed them."

"Today's majority of female farmers do not keep cows, sheep, goats, or even chickens, and some of them prefer to use imported products rather than domestic ones, so they purchase imported eggs or yogurt instead of producing them. There has been a decline in the culture's interest in agriculture and livestock as a result of the false culture about farming that is being disseminated among female farmers today, such as the ideas of 'being civilized' and 'following the fashion'," Fatima continued.

According to Safia Mansour, a farmer in her sixties, "The crisis in Yemen has had a significant impact on all facets of life, including the agricultural and animal sectors, and it has caused the prices and the costs of goods needed for animal husbandry to rise dramatically. The agricultural soil was also affected by climate change, and most of the lands became unsuitable for cultivation. Consequently, there are no natural pastures or fodder to feed the livestock, in addition to the use of synthetic pesticides and toxins by farmers

that have damaged the soil. Since ancient times, we have relied on natural fertilizers, which are cow waste, and they had great benefits on the fertility of the soil, which provides it with essential nutrients."

Rural Women's Association with Agriculture

According to Ms. Khairiya Al-Damasi, Director of the Women's Development Department in Yarim District, Ibb Governorate, "Since their childhood, rural women have had a unique relationship with livestock, particularly cows. The typical day for rural women starts with removing and cleaning the cowsheds, followed by feeding and caring for the cows, milking them, and using the milk and its derivatives to feed the family. Goats and sheep are also raised alongside cows in some mountainous areas."

Al-Damasi pointed out that caring for livestock has taken up the largest portion of rural women's daily activities since ancient times, and its presence serves as a foundation for their position as farmers as well. Currently, there are some families and women in the countryside who still own livestock such as cows and goats, while other families are no longer able to raise livestock due to the high costs of fodder and materials related to raising them.

Immediate Solutions

"To improve livestock breeding in Yemen, farmers must ensure that animals receive high quality fodder, in addition to providing clean and potable water. They also need to implement preventative measures for animal diseases, improve farm in-

frastructure and provide agricultural support to farmers by the government and international organizations," said Nabil Khushafa, director of the Agriculture Office in Baadan.

"To overcome these challenges, the Yemeni government and international and local organizations must provide support and assistance to farmers, provide the necessary agricultural services, provide water and animal feed, develop infrastructure and improve the living conditions of farmers in rural areas," he continued.

Abdulkhaki Al-Mufti, an agricultural guide, pointed out that the government must support and promote locally produced livestock and agricultural wealth, and it should work to improve them through the implementation of plans, studies, and research related to these projects due to their importance in economic development, and achieving self-sufficiency when caring for natural pastures. Rural families should also be supported and encouraged to raise livestock by distributing cows, sheep and goats to them, providing vaccinations and treatments for animals, and activating extension and awareness programs among farmers and livestock breeders in order to increase production by improving living conditions, feeding animals and taking care of their health.

Thus, the decline of livestock breeding in Yemen represents a major challenge for the future, as many citizens depend on this sector as a source of livelihood. Therefore, working on a national strategy to revive livestock will help to improve living circumstances and provide the resources needed for it to play its part in supporting the national economy and achieving food security.



Empowering Yemeni Women in the Agricultural Sector: A Societal Shift

In the agricultural sector, Yemeni women play an indispensable role as part of the workforce. Agriculture holds immense economic significance in the country, serving as a primary source of income for the majority of rural families, who constitute approximately 75% of Yemen's total population. However, despite their crucial involvement, Yemeni women often find their contribution in this sector marginalized, facing numerous challenges and obstacles.

By: Ahmed Bajoaim
Women in Development and Peace

This investigation endeavors to comprehensively examine the role of Yemeni women within the agricultural sector, encompassing an analysis of societal perception towards them, the extent of their participation, their work predominantly in rural areas, as well as the key challenges they encounter. Moreover, it aims to explore potential avenues for enhancing their participation, emphasizing the importance of empowering them through financial support, training, and knowledge. By doing so, we can elevate the role of women and maximize their meaningful engagement in the agricultural sector.

Societal Perspective

Across all regions of Yemen, women farmers are universally revered and recognized for their significant contributions to the local economy. They are regarded as genuine partners in enhancing agricultural production. Despite this positive perception, they confront various societal challenges that can impact how their role is perceived, particularly due to persisting gender discrimination, inequality, and limited access to agricultural land.

Muthanna Badhris asserts, "The local community views women working in agriculture in an entirely positive light, considering them as pioneers in this field, even preceding men. Women have been actively engaged in agriculture for decades, and differing perspectives on their role are not abrupt." Women farmers possess exceptional skills in land management, crop harvesting, and livestock rearing, including sheep, camels, and cows. The historical connection between agriculture and animal husbandry has strengthened their expertise in these areas.

Furthermore, Badhris, a former lecturer at Hadramout University, highlights that women farmers are globally admired and appreciated for their comprehensive understanding of their crucial and effective role in enhancing agricultural land quality, reclamation efforts, and promoting resilience. Additionally, their immense endurance, patience, and inherent responsibility in ensuring food security contribute significantly to the vitality of both the sector and the economy.

Community activist Sarah Bamahdi attests to the



deep-rooted presence of women in the agricultural profession, a tradition passed down from generation to generation in our society. This viewpoint aligns with the high esteem that women farmers are held in by the community. Despite the challenges they face, women take pleasure in their agricultural work, which can be physically and mentally demanding. They navigate through the scorching summer heat and harsh winter cold, alongside various agricultural hardships that often necessitate the support and assistance of men.

Bamahdi elaborates that agriculture has been a shared profession between men and women since the dawn of civilization. However, with the prevalence of modern jobs and societal preferences for men in certain fields that align with their physical and mental capabilities, women have gravitated towards traditional crafts and agriculture—particularly in rural areas—utilizing simple means to this day.

Women's Representation in Agriculture

According to the World Bank's statistic, outlined in their report titled "Yemen: The Vital Role of Women Farmers in Climate Change," it is highlighted that over two-thirds of the Yemeni population relies on agricultural crops to fulfill their essential livelihood requirements. Remarkably, women constitute nearly 95% of the workforce within this sector, underscoring their substantial contribution.

Furthermore, the UN report released on March 30, 2022, emphasizes that following the outbreak of armed conflict among different factions in Yemen, rural communities have increasingly relied on women in the agricultural domain. In many cases, women have become the sole providers for their families due to the prevailing economic hardships

faced by the majority of the Yemeni people. These difficulties have only intensified throughout the prolonged eight-year conflict.

Rural Female Farmers

Rural women farmers in Yemen confront numerous challenges that have led to a decline in crop production. These challenges include adverse climate changes resulting in reduced rainfall, desertification, and high temperatures. Moreover, the increased prices of oil derivatives have caused the engines that pump water from wells to stop, further exacerbating the situation. Many farmers are unable to afford these essential resources, creating additional physical and moral obstacles. Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, rural women continue to engage in their strenuous profession with unwavering determination. The World Bank, a specialized agency of the United Nations focused on development, acknowledged the vital role played by rural women in the agricultural sector and their contribution to food security in its report. Notably, these women are responsible for managing and nurturing agricultural lands while also mitigating the effects of climate change on water availability.

The ongoing conflict in Yemen has had a significant impact on the agricultural sector. The report further revealed that within one year of the conflict's emergence in 2016, agricultural areas were reduced to a mere 38% of the total agricultural land. Recognizing the importance of rural women's dependence on natural resources and agriculture for food security, the United Nations General Assembly designated October 15th as the International Day to celebrate them. Statistics from the educational website "twinkl" indicate that rural women consti-



Muthanna Badhris

tute approximately 43% of the global agricultural workforce. Additionally, they produce a diverse range of food items, establishing their primary role in ensuring food security.

Furthermore, the National Committee of the Red Cross emphasized the critical role of agriculture in Yemen, as stated in their report titled "Conflict and Climate Change Pushing Farmers to Breaking Point." In this report, it was revealed that a staggering three out of every four Yemeni individuals

rely on agriculture and livestock for their survival. The report, dated November 16, 2022, highlighted the detrimental impact of floods and unpredictable climatic fluctuations on the country's agricultural areas. As a consequence, approximately 19 million people were left unable to meet their basic food requirements.

To aid the most vulnerable rural communities, including women farmers, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), in collaboration with the Yemen Red Crescent Society, has taken action. In 2022, thousands of farmers benefited from the ICRC's multi-purpose cash grants, which encompassed essential resources such as coffee seeds, wheat seeds, and other grains. The primary objective behind these initiatives is to alleviate the challenging circumstances encountered by both male and female agricultural workers.

Within a related context, Muthanna Badhris shed light on the considerable challenges faced by rural women working in the agricultural sector. Among these challenges, one of the most significant is the utilization of primitive techniques, such as manual tilling with livestock. This physically demanding labor is ill-suited for women, particularly considering the progress and advancements achieved in the agricultural domain, including the introduction of modern machinery. Furthermore, the adverse effects of climate change, such as floods, soil erosion, desertification, high temperatures, insufficient rainfall, and drought, have further compounded the difficulties faced.

Expounding on the matter, Badhris expressed, "The involvement of rural women in the agricultural sector has been instrumental in its resilience and productivity in navigating the arduous conditions that the country has endured over the past eight years. These challenges include armed conflict between local forces and the inadequate support provided by authorities, which have detrimentally impacted this vital sector and affected the economy." Woman farmers play a crucial role in meeting the basic sustenance needs of millions of families. They also supply local and foreign markets with diverse crops amidst the accelerated deterioration of the economic situation.

Recognizing the pivotal role of Yemeni women farmers in bearing the burden of agriculture within their rural communities, it is essential to provide encouragement and support. Such efforts serve to fulfill the community's food requirements, bolster the nation's self-sufficiency, generate vital income for families, promote women's economic and social empowerment, and foster rural development. Despite obstacles such as gender discrimination, lack of awareness, and limited access to education, public perception of the active role played by Yemeni women in agriculture is steadily improving.

In conclusion, it is imperative for government agencies and donor organizations to collaborate in enhancing the status of Yemeni women in agriculture. This necessitates providing crucial support, training, and financial resources to enhance their skills and opportunities for sustainable development. Encouraging the integration of Yemeni women across all agricultural domains and facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experiences with others will contribute to achieving sustainable agricultural development and fulfilling development goals in Yemen.

Gender Disparities in Wages and Employment among Women in Agriculture

By: Haneen Al-Wahsh
Women in Development and Peace

The wage and job gap between women and men can be attributed to various social and economic factors. However, achieving gender equality in wages remains a challenging goal, often overlooked and underestimated. Particularly in rural areas and regions where ignorance prevails, this objective may appear seemingly unattainable.

A Wasted Day & Lost Reward

The aroma of henna and milk fills the air in Kafa Salem's household, where she toils as a female farmer on her husband's family farm in Lahj. For Kafa, this scent is the most rewarding part of her day. At the crack of dawn, she rises to awaken her family members and commences her daily routine, milking the livestock, tending to their feed, and filtering the milk. Then, she ventures down to the farm, engaging in tasks such as harvesting and planting.

Kafa explains, "Our day is divided into two intervals: from morning until noon, and from two o'clock in the afternoon until sunset. In between, I prepare meals for my family and fulfill other household duties."

However, Kafa's responsibilities as a rural woman and farmer extend beyond the farm. She also engages in selling her products, delivering them to the Rural Women's Association, where she is an active member. Together with her fellow association-affiliated farmers, Kafa participates in grinding and packaging henna, which they subsequently sell.

Detailing the sales process, Kafa elucidates, "We grind henna approximately four times a

month. In terms of our products, we sell around 30 small bowls of cow's milk and 15 large bowls. Additionally, we offer about 25 small containers of camel's milk and approximately six containers of locally produced ghee."

Kafa further highlights the disparity between women and men in rural areas, emphasizing that women exert twice as much energy compared to their husbands. While women shoulder the bulk of the work, their wages are often lower than what men receive, sometimes even less than half. In some cases, if the farm is owned by the women themselves, they may not receive any compensation at all. This stark contrast between female and male farmers underscores the notion that women are perceived merely as laborers, with their daily tasks and contributions undervalued. Meanwhile, men have full discretion over the money earned, leaving the women with little control in financial matters.

Hard Work

Addressing the daily hardships faced by women, Asmaa Ahmed, an agricultural engineer, sheds light on their plight. She asserts, "Yemeni women residing in rural areas heavily rely on farming and grazing for sustenance. Despite the laborious nature of these occupations, women are expected to fulfill their roles as mothers and wives, alongside their responsibilities in land cultivation and harvesting. Unfortunately, women in agriculture encounter wage disparities and inequality in job opportunities, despite their significant contributions that often surpass those of men."

Moreover, Asmaa emphasizes the violation of basic human rights experienced by women in rural communities. She states, "These women are

deprived of fundamental rights, such as education and freedom of expression. Additionally, they lack the financial and intellectual independence necessary for a decent and equitable life compared to men, who have assigned themselves specific tasks and granted themselves priority in all matters. Consequently, the burden of agricultural tasks, water fetching, and other arduous duties has increasingly fallen on women alone."

Exploring the factors driving rural women to bear dual burdens in agriculture, Asmaa explains, "The migration of male labor to cities and their departure from the country often leaves women with the sole responsibility of shouldering these work burdens. Furthermore, traditional agricultural work, coupled with limited agricultural production, does not necessitate higher levels of education and qualification."

Adding to the discourse, Ashjan Al-Khader, another agricultural engineer, highlights the compounded difficulties faced by women due to conflicts and their ensuing consequences. She remarks, "The currency depreciation and the rise in prices of goods and services have placed an increased burden on women working in rural fields. They are compelled to travel long distances in search of firewood due to the inability to afford gas. Additionally, they must fetch clean water from distant locations, traversing treacherous mountain roads in adverse weather conditions, as water systems have been disrupted. Given women's physiological characteristics, they are more susceptible to harm while performing these labor-intensive tasks."

Lost Hope

Like other women who were born dreamers and aspire to change their lives for the better, ru-

ral women farmers also share similar aspirations, albeit with differences in the simplicity of their dreams. However, gender disparities and societal norms have hindered their hopes for higher education. The remote locations of public universities, coupled with traditional restrictions that require women to be accompanied by a mahram [guardian] on long journeys, further complicate matters.

Speaking about the educational disparities between women farmers and men, Engineer Fathia Arshad, President of the Rural Women's Association in Lahj, highlights the declining percentage of educated girls in rural areas since the onset of the conflict. Despite the academic excellence, diligence, and high grades achieved by many girls in their secondary exams, various factors such as low income, expensive transportation, parental concerns, and societal perceptions force women farmers into early marriages, depriving them of their right to education. Instead, they are expected to find fulfillment in tending pastures and farms.

Regarding the lack of attention given by authorities to the plight of women farmers, who face economic and social discrimination in Yemen, Arshad emphasizes the disregard shown by both official authorities and the international community. Despite the significant number of women in rural areas, media coverage of women farmers is severely lacking. This lack of visibility contributes to the local and international communities overlooking the immense pressures, grievances, and gender-based discrimination faced by women farmers.

Similarly, Engineer Mahani Al-Saqqaf, Deputy Director of the Agriculture Office and Head of the Women's Department in Tuban district,

echoes the challenges faced by women in rural areas. She asserts, "A woman in the countryside has limited decision-making power, whether within or outside the family. Even if she owns the land and the man works on it, the man retains the financial benefits. She may receive only half of his wages or even less, despite bearing double responsibilities and often working in multiple professions. Yet, she remains more diligent in managing the household finances."

Visions & Solutions

Engineer Fathia Arshad puts forth a series of visions aimed at reducing the gender disparities that discriminate against women farmers. She emphasizes the significance of empowering women's capabilities to contribute to the rebuilding of vital industries, such as agriculture, education, and water supply. By integrating women into these sectors, society can challenge stereotypical views and enable their active participation in public life.

Arshad highlights that each issue faced by women farmers represents a unique challenge. To alleviate their daily struggles, concerted efforts are required to address the underlying economic, political, and social hardships that women working in agricultural lands encounter. These efforts should include gender awareness sessions to combat discrimination in wages and employment opportunities within rural communities.

Despite their hard work and dedication, female farmers continue to suffer, facing marginalization and denial of their rightful demands. If women engage in labor-intensive tasks similar to their male counterparts, why do obstacles persist in achieving the equality they aspire to?

Yemeni Female Farmers Persistently Struggle for Survival Amidst Challenges

"We carried the burden of the agricultural terraces, cultivating the crops, providing animal feed, alongside the tasks of collecting firewood, fetching water, cooking food, and helping the village women in their various tasks." This is how Latifa Hammoud began her speech on the status of women in the agricultural field.

By: Yasmine Abdulhafeez
Women in Development and Peace

Latifa comes from a family of six children, three males and three females, and she lives in one of the rural areas of Taiz Governorate. Her mother passed away after a battle with illness, while her father, despite his advanced age, moves between Yemeni cities searching for work to provide his children a decent living.

"I have been working on the land since I was a young child, along with my two sisters, Samah and Halima. We were unable to complete our education, because we spent most of our time on agricultural terraces. Additionally, our difficult financial situation prevented us from enrolling in school," said Latifa.

"I wake up before six in the morning and wake my sisters up too. Then, we distribute the household tasks between us. I go to the kitchen to prepare breakfast. My sister, Halima, takes the livestock out of the cattle barn downstairs to the front of the house, where she feeds them some fodder that we brought from the terraced farms the day before. Samah, on the other hand, brings the firewood that we dried earlier near our house," Latifa described how she and her sisters spend their typical day.

"We cook breakfast and eat it with my father and brothers, after that my father and brothers go to work. On the other hand, I go with my sisters to fetch water from the well near the village. Then, we take our farming equipment, including the sickle, (a tool used to cut crops and livestock fodder), along with our gloves to protect our hands from thistles and insects, in addition to bags by which we carry the fodder from the agricultural terraces," she continued.

"We always have a bottle of water with us, along



with some coffee or tea to keep us active and some bread in case we get hungry. Sometimes we have female friends that help us out, and if we want one of them to come, we go by her house and ask her to help us. Depending on the nature of work in the agricultural terraces, we and the village women may exchange duties," she added.

According to Latifa, they attempt to get to the agricultural terraces early so that they can return home before noon to make lunch and go again to fetch water, among other household chores, and then they go back to the agricultural terraces until dusk. After that, they have to make dinner, feed the livestock, milk the cows, clean the place where the cattle sleep, and collect their dung in a room designated for it.

"Women in rural regions suffer the most due to water scarcity, which doubles their suffering, along with the troubles they face in agricultural work, livestock rearing, and other domestic tasks," said Latifa.

"In some seasons, many of our regions suffer from water scarcity, and women are mainly responsible for fetching water, along with working in the fields. In order to get water, we sometimes have to travel long distances, cross dangerous roads, and climb steep mountains, which makes our life

fraught with fears," she said.

Latifa described an incident that occurred to her one winter while she was fetching water, saying, "There wasn't enough rain one summer, and the wells in our village dried up, depleting numerous springs and wells, so our area experienced an unprecedented water crisis. At that time, many women were forced to go out at night in order to fetch water, so I went out with my sisters and other ladies from the village to a well that was 20 minutes away from our village to fetch water."

"While we were walking a bend in the valley leading to the well, I noticed a shadow walking behind us. Then, I cried out loud, and the women gathered around me, as did my sisters. After that, I felt dizzy and almost fell down. One of my sisters splashed some water on my face that she found in a plastic bowl belonging to one of the women who was walking with us," she continued.

"Then, I got up and we walked on. While we were walking, we heard stones falling from one of the nearby mountains, so we immediately returned home without fetching water. Since that day, we have been careful not to go out at night to get water. Rather, we would prefer to fetch water during the day even if we travel a longer distance that may take up most of our day," she continued.

"Rural women and farmers experience a lot of difficulties, particularly in years with lower rainfall, as the crops decrease and the income declines. Accordingly, it is impossible for us to supply our livestock with grass and fodder," said Latifa.

She confirmed that in the winter of 2018, many people in many rural areas were forced to sell their cattle due to their inability to buy fodder, as those stored from the previous farming seasons did not meet the livestock's needs for food, and it was also challenging to provide them with water.

Latifa recounted many problems facing farmers, including the high prices of fertilizers, especially seeds of high quality, the high wages of workers, the difficulty of obtaining pesticides to combat agricultural pests, the high costs of tilling the land, as well as the high cost of agricultural tools, which exceeds the material capacity of people in rural communities.

"Female farmers experience a variety of challenges, in addition to being marginalized and neglected by society and authorities, as they lack agricultural means and material and moral support through which they can achieve unprecedented agricultural development," said Latifa.

According to a report published on October 15, 2021, the International Center for Local Agriculture

(ICBA), entitled "Rural Women, a Driving Force for Achieving Food Security and Prosperity", if women get the same resources as men, they will inevitably contribute to a decline in food insecurity around the world.

The Importance of Women's Role in Agriculture

Considering that they perform the majority of the agricultural labor, women play a significant role in agricultural development, and nations make significant contributions to assisting and supporting them in achieving the required progress in rural communities. Women have a significant role in the agricultural sector in developing nations, according to a UN paper titled, "Women and Agricultural Water Resources Management: A Path to Gender Equality," which was published on the UN website. They also make up 43% of the workforce in the agricultural field, and the report confirmed that women produce two-thirds of the food in those countries.

Despite the numerous hardships they endure, Yemeni women play an essential role in the agricultural sector. According to researcher and writer Al-Sharabi, "Yemeni women contribute to improving family income and securing food. They also play a crucial and significant role in a variety of agricultural tasks, particularly in the countryside, such as irrigating the land, cultivating crops before harvest, and more, as well as during harvest and marketing preparation."

"Rural women contribute between 30 and 40 percent of the agricultural marketing activity in agricultural activities, and up to 50 percent in agricultural activities that are limited to providing the family's needs from cultivating their land," he continued.

"Women's contributions to agriculture have good effects on themselves, their families, and even the society they live in. Women's significant and varied contributions to agriculture assist in increasing crop output and producing greater financial returns," he continued.

In Yemen, there are numerous women who work in agriculture, like Latifa and her two sisters, who fight for land and people and put great effort for ensuring the self-sufficiency of their families and communities. Therefore, if they are provided with appropriate assistance, they may succeed in bringing about an unprecedented agricultural renaissance in the country.

Unveiling the Crucial Role of Official Authorities in Empowering Rural Women

Programs and Plans Lack Implementation

The agricultural sector plays a crucial role in ensuring food security for society. It encompasses the production of agricultural products and the provision of raw materials for numerous agricultural and food industries. In Yemen, approximately 60% of the population is employed in rural areas, emphasizing the sector's significance. Notably, rural women contribute significantly, with their employment accounting for 70% in the vegetable side and approximately 90% in the animal sector. Furthermore, Eng. Nadia Hamid, Director of the Rural Women's Department at the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Fisheries - Aden, highlights that the agricultural sector also carries the responsibility of providing livelihoods for the rural population. This population constitutes a substantial portion, accounting for 76% of Yemen's total population.

By: Haneen Al-Wahsh
Women in Development and Peace

Official Programs

Regarding the programs offered by the ministry, which specifically focus on supporting women in rural farming, Hamid emphasizes that the ministry is dedicated to implementing the state's agricultural policies in accordance with the constitution and existing legislation. The General Administration of Rural Women Development takes on the responsibility of devising plans and projects aimed at the advancement of rural women. It is crucial for these women to be the primary partners with organizations and donors, and as such, the ministry provides training, financing programs, and various initiatives tailored to their needs.

Furthermore, Hamid states that the ministry has devised a national strategy for the agricultural sector, with a focus on enhancing nutrition, particularly for vulnerable families, in a sustainable manner. The strategy also aims to improve the performance and competitiveness of crop value chains, livestock, and fish farming practices while emphasizing sustainable management and climate resilience. Additionally, it aims to pro-



mote social and economic integration for the most disadvantaged individuals within the agricultural food system.

In order to achieve sustainable development goals, Hamid emphasizes the importance of enhancing governance, fostering an enabling environment for planning, and mobilizing resources. The ministry has engaged in extensive discussions to refine and amend proposed activities and initiatives to align with the country's needs and the resources available. Several programs and projects have been introduced to support rural women, funded by organizations with a keen interest in the agricultural sector and rural women's welfare. These initiatives are carried out in close coordination and supervision with the rural women's departments.

In a related context, Fathia Arshad, the president of the Women's Rural Association in Lahj Governorate, highlights the impactful role played by the association in collaboration with funding from the Red Cross. Through this partnership, the association has successfully provided employment opportunities for numerous farmers, offering training and organizing them into groups for specific tasks. For instance, 84 women have benefited from the association's support in hen-

na grinding, packaging, and sales. Agricultural engineers from the association provide guidance and oversee the entire workflow, from the initial stages to marketing and sales.

General Challenges

When discussing the challenges at hand, engineer Nadia Hamid emphasizes the lack of recognition and involvement of the General Administration for Rural Women's Development as the primary partner responsible for overseeing and implementing programs and projects for women. Additionally, she highlights the absence of their participation in meetings with donors focused on rural development. Another concern raised is the absence of a dedicated budget to execute the administration's annual plans.

Hamid further points out that numerous difficulties arise during meetings with ministry leadership. Despite directives issued by the minister to the sector's agents, these directives are not effectively implemented by public directors. This lack of implementation hinders the ability to benefit from opportunities designed to support rural women working in agriculture. Moreover, the absence of a comprehensive statistical database for farms in general, as well as the beneficiaries

of programs and projects, further complicates the development of effective plans and initiatives.

Regarding the coordination between the ministry and the private sector to support women farmers in rural areas, Hamid explains that some coordination exists between the management of rural women and certain marketing centers for products such as dairy and its derivatives, particularly in Lahj and Abyan Governorates. However, she notes that coordination related to broader support is lacking due to the absence of a private sector engaged in agriculture that is not reliant solely on donors and institutions.

In response, Arshad highlights various significant difficulties impeding progress in supporting farmers. These challenges include a shortage of mills, decreasing worker numbers due to low wages, the absence of social security, the marginalization of female farmers in terms of support provided, and a lack of training and awareness programs focused on gender and agriculture for women.

Recommendations & Interventions

Regarding recommendations, Hamid emphasizes the importance of providing moral support by officially recognizing the General Adminis-

tration for Rural Women Development in the General Court, as well as establishing women's departments in agricultural offices across the governorates. It is crucial to create a comprehensive database that includes information on women working in rural areas, as well as the personnel involved in rural development. This will facilitate effective coordination in implementing programs and projects targeting rural women, with the administration playing a key role in supervision and implementation. Furthermore, support should be provided to implement programs and proposals put forth by public administration and departments in the governorates, specifically aimed at developing the capabilities of female farm workers. Additionally, there is a need to establish a dedicated center for marketing and selling their products.

In terms of training courses, Hamid highlights their role in supporting women, particularly in the field of agriculture. These courses aim to educate women about the importance of agricultural work and focus on specific areas such as cash crops (e.g., henna cultivation), beekeeping, honey production, and the formation of women's associations to provide support for their families. Numerous plans and programs have been developed to support rural women, including awareness programs related to various agricultural crops and livestock. Support is also provided through the Ministry of Agriculture and its associated offices to enhance the living standards of rural women.

In a similar vein, the President of the Rural Women Association emphasizes the need to involve women and introduce technology to assist them in various aspects of agriculture, animal husbandry, and industrial practices. They also advocate for the enactment of a social security law specifically tailored to women farmers in rural areas, particularly addressing wage-related issues. Furthermore, opening up marketing channels to enable the export of their products, such as obtaining henna export permits, is deemed essential. Despite continuous appeals to competent authorities, there remains a lack of adequate resources and services for female farmers. This raises the question of how the agriculture sector in Yemen, especially concerning rural women, can be promoted if their needs and demands are not met with the required attention and fair entitlement, despite their significant contribution as the majority of the workforce in this field.

Female Farmers Battle for Survival

Yemeni Women Face Agricultural Challenges Despite Their Multiple Responsibilities

Women farmers hold a crucial position within the agricultural sector, alongside their numerous other responsibilities such as managing households, raising children, and assuming additional duties when men are absent from their communities. Their active involvement spans every stage of agricultural work, encompassing tasks like sowing seeds, nurturing plants, tending to their growth, harvesting, and selling produce at local markets.

By: Alia Mohammed, Ahmed Bajoaim
& Afrah Borji
Women in Development and Peace

Moreover, women farmers actively contribute to securing food for their families and play a significant role in enhancing food security across the country. They also serve as custodians of Yemeni agricultural heritage and traditional farming practices, particularly in rural areas that lack certain services and modern agricultural machinery. However, Yemeni women farmers encounter various challenges and obstacles, including limited access to resources and capital. In this report, we will delve into the responsibilities and difficulties faced by women farmers in Yemen, shedding light on their experiences.

Challenges & Determination

Despite her emaciated and weary appearance, adorned with wrinkles and white hair, Fatima Mohammed, a resilient seventy-year-old, continues to fulfill her agricultural responsibilities. She reflects, "From my earliest years, I have toiled on the farm. We were born into a life dedicated to agriculture, where hardship and fatigue are our constant companions."

Fatima stands as a representative figure for numerous rural women engaged in agricultural pursuits, exemplifying the challenges they face. Her journey has been marked by enduring hardships while laboring on her father's agricultural lands, only to find herself confined to the domestic sphere within her husband's household.

Female Farmers & their Struggles

The plight of young women engaged in agriculture is multifaceted under the current circumstances, necessitating awareness and educational support regarding farming and animal grazing. Rural women exhibit proficiency not only in agricultural endeavors but also in various other tasks such as handicrafts, sewing, and land development. However, several challenges have hampered their agricultural pursuits.

Sima, a farmer and one of the young women toiling in the agricultural sector, articulates the difficulties she encounters, stating, "We face numerous hardships and deficiencies in our country, foremost among them being the scarcity of water. We rely on traditional methods for water retrieval. Moreover, rain has become sporadic, occurring solely during the summer season, leaving certain agricultural regions with arid soil and limited well availability, resulting in water scarcity."

Sima further emphasizes, "To support us in our agricultural endeavors, it is crucial to construct reservoirs for rainwa-

ter utilization or acquire metal tanks for water storage. Additionally, providing us with essential supplies such as seeds and fruit and vegetable saplings would diversify agricultural lands. Equipping both male and female farmers with these resources would enable them to meet their family's needs and achieve self-sufficiency within a short span of time."

According to Hassan A-Khawlani, an agricultural affairs researcher, Yemeni women residing in rural areas play a significant role in various aspects of daily life. They shoulder the responsibility of household chores, encompassing cooking, cleaning, and childcare. Moreover, they bear the greatest burden in tending to domestic animals, engaging in tasks such as grazing, feeding, cleaning enclosures, milking, and caring for the young. Additionally, they contribute to a range of agricultural activities, including sowing, fertilization, harvesting, and occasionally irrigation and pesticide spraying.

Al-Khawlani further stated, "Women's involvement extends beyond crop cultivation and harvesting. They also undertake the arduous task of fetching water from distant sources, carrying it on their heads or with the assistance of animals. The challenges intensify in elevated and mountainous regions, where logging becomes a regular occurrence, irrespective of their physical condition." He pointed out that women, even in the final stages of pregnancy, may partake in logging, leading to instances of childbirth during these logging endeavors.

He explained that some may assume that modern agricultural technologies alleviate the hardships faced by rural women. However, the reality is quite the opposite. The presence of machinery such as tillers or harvesters within rural households encourages an expansion of agricultural areas, thereby increasing the workload for all family members, including women. He emphasized that rural women often face challenges in asserting their legitimate rights in agricultural lands, being compelled to accept



Saeed Qawqah

whatever is offered by their community. Additionally, they are expected to comply with their husbands' wishes and expectations, despite enduring fatigue and hardship throughout the day.

Fatima's Story

For the past 15 years, Fatima, a resilient farmer, has dedicated herself to her land in the Al-Qattan District in Hadhramout Valley. Her husband's expatriation forced her to take charge of the farm, striving to improve her family's living conditions. With unwavering determination, Fatima has single-handedly managed her one-and-a-half-acre farm, alongside her household responsibilities and caring for her children.

Despite her remarkable efforts, Fatima candidly discusses the challenges she faces as a female farmer. She acknowledges that certain farm tasks traditionally performed by men, such as palm tree pollination, pose difficulties for her. With more than 200 palm trees requiring manual pollination, she seeks assistance from men to accomplish this crucial task. Additionally, during the season of palm fruit harvesting, Fatima protects her dates by placing burlap over them to deter birds.

Fatima emphasizes that she relies on a



Salem Bakrishan

sense of community among neighboring farmers, particularly women, to overcome various obstacles. She collaborates with other women, offering assistance during crop harvesting and reciprocating when her neighbors require help. This cooperative spirit, instilled in her by her ancestors, fosters a collective effort among women farmers. However, Fatima highlights the challenges of transporting and storing crops, as these tasks often prove physically demanding for women. She advocates for the use of modern machinery that can alleviate the burden, enabling women to save time and effort.

Difficulties & Challenges

Numerous reports shed light on the immense challenges and hardships faced by women farmers in Yemen, where they encounter difficulties in accessing essential agricultural resources and endure marginalization and injustice within society. One such farmer, Anisa Mohammed, finds herself assuming the role of her husband, who is working abroad in a Gulf country. Shouldering the burden of rural life and caring for her six children, Anisa navigates the realm of farming with determination.

Anisa emphasizes, "Women in rural areas are destined for labor, and little else.

We confront life's trials alone, carrying numerous burdens." She highlights how the nation's deteriorating economic conditions and ongoing conflict have adversely affected agricultural productivity and the overall family income.

Commenting on the matter, Shaher Al-Homaidi, a writer, human rights activist, and media officer at the Ministry of Agriculture, points out that the challenges faced by women working in agriculture vary, depending on regional disparities, prevailing customs, and traditions in each governorate. To gain insights into the unique struggles of women in the agricultural sector, both male and female farmers were interviewed in the fields, with female guides assigned to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the issues faced by women.

The lack of guidance and awareness poses a significant hurdle for many young women working in agricultural lands. Sima, a young farmer, underscores the importance of raising awareness and providing education, stating, "Women farmers require heightened awareness. They also need access to essential resources, such as pesticides, treatments, inoculations, and fertilizers. These are crucial for ensuring proper plant growth. Additionally, specific machinery and tools are necessary to cultivate arable lands and provide adequate protection for crops. Some crops demand specialized care, including the construction of tents and umbrellas to facilitate their growth in a comfortable and simplified manner."

Lack of Legal Protection

Saeed Qawqah, the Executive Director of Al-Badr Women's Association in Wadi Hadhramout, believes that the absence of an institutional and legal framework for women farmers who work on a daily wage basis exposes them to injustice, marginalization, and exclusion. Thus, it is crucial to establish associations and unions that can advocate for their rights. Consequently, women's contribution to agriculture has significantly declined compared to previous eras. Furthermore, working



in agriculture has become arduous and exhausting for women. Despite these challenges, some women, especially in desert and agricultural areas, continue to engage in farming and livestock herding, alongside fulfilling their household duties without fatigue or weariness.

On the other hand, Salma Nasser, a community activist in Amran Governorate, highlights the plight of women farmers who suffer from male abuse. These women often work for individuals who deprive them of their rights and exploit them. Due to fear of violence, they remain silent and refrain from demanding their rights.

Salma emphasizes that women farmers are denied their human rights, subjected to discrimination and injustice within society, and face restrictions that prevent them from controlling and owning agricultural lands. Many women are not allowed to dispose of or sell any products from their own farms without obtaining permission from men.

She further states, "There is a lack of laws or legislation that protect women farmers and safeguard their rights against various violations. Therefore, concerted efforts and serious actions are urgently needed to defend women farmers, who may encounter physical, psychological, moral, and material harm in their work."

During her speech, Salma emphasizes the importance of promoting girls' education, transforming societal and cultural perceptions of women, and viewing them first and foremost as human beings. Additionally, she highlights the significance of training and preparing women in agricultural extension, as well as providing support and assistance to women farmers. This includes facilitating their access to loans for income-generating projects.

Women Working in Farming Alone

Amidst scorching sun and harsh cold weather, numerous Yemeni women endure the challenges of working in agricultural lands alone. They strive to secure a livelihood for themselves and their families, attempting to alleviate the impact of poverty that has affected millions of Yemeni citizens due to the ongoing conflict spanning eight continuous years.

Salem Bakrishan, the Director of the Agriculture Office in Dawan District in Hadhramout Governorate, sheds light on the difficulties faced by women working independently in agriculture. He explains, "The work of women operating alone is distinct from the past. They undertake various tasks, including plowing the land, soil turning, irrigation, seed separation, transportation, and marketing."

Bakrishan highlights the significant shift in women's roles in agriculture today, where they can focus on tasks that

suit them while leaving labor-intensive work to agricultural machinery. He continues, "Working in agriculture is a collaborative effort between men and women. However, when a woman works alone in agriculture, she goes beyond her capacity and may struggle to manage the farm on her own."

Additionally, he views women's participation in the agricultural sector as an opportunity to earn a living and attain economic empowerment, enabling them to support their families and alleviate poverty and unemployment amidst enduring senseless conflicts and a suffocating economic crisis. Nevertheless, women working alone in agriculture are susceptible to exploitation due to the lack of proper empowerment in managing land and agricultural work. The prevailing gap between men and women in rights and responsibilities significantly affects women farmers.

The Executive Director of the association, which focuses on the development and support of women farmers in the Hadhramout Valley, emphasizes that the majority of women working on farms receive meager daily wages compared to the efforts they invest in land cultivation. He asserts that they have not been adequately empowered to manage their work, resulting in the exploitation of their significant role in agriculture. Furthermore, he highlights how customs, traditions, and limited religious and societal awareness hinder women from obtaining land ownership. Consequently, the state must enable women to acquire agricultural areas to establish their own projects.

Men's Migration to Cities

In a related context, Bakrishan highlighted the challenges confronting women farmers, particularly in rural areas, as their male relatives migrate from cities in search of improved living conditions. He stated, "Women bear heavier burdens both on agricultural lands and at home, requiring them to exert greater effort in balancing their work and household responsibilities. This contradicts their physical capabilities, as women have limited energy. Moreover, they encounter various agricultural difficulties and challenges in their daily routines."

Adding to the discussion, Qawqah expressed, "The migration of men from rural areas to cities or abroad, leaving women to solely shoulder agricultural work, profoundly impacts production, yields, and food security due to women's limited capacity and effort."

He further elaborated, "Rural women farmers working alone face numerous hazards, including rough roads during their commute to and from the fields, inadequate occupational and health safety mea-

sures for agricultural workers, and a lack of tools and resources for their work."

The Problem of Marketing

Women working in agriculture face numerous challenges, one of which is the limitation placed on their produce. As sharecroppers, they grow fruits but are only allowed to use them for domestic purposes. They are then compelled to distribute the remaining produce to those in their vicinity due to the lack of manpower available for marketing and sending the fruits to markets.

Farmer Huda Salem shares her insights, stating, "In our daily lives as women farmers, we encounter various difficulties. Many of us not only take care of our families and household chores but also work outside the home. Striking a balance between our agricultural work and family responsibilities poses significant challenges and demands great effort."

Huda further explains, "Sometimes, I have to bring my children along with me to the farm to ensure that both my agricultural work and my children are attended to. This situation amplifies the effort, fatigue, and hardships I face."

Concluding her remarks, Huda emphasizes the need for support and solutions in such challenging circumstances faced by young girls and married women who find themselves caught between two choices and two jobs.

Solutions & Recommendations for Women Farmers

Bakrishan appealed to international organizations and donors, urging them to focus their efforts on women in agriculture. He emphasized the importance of implementing programs and training courses that would enhance women's knowledge and develop their agricultural skills, enabling them to adopt modern and productive farming practices. Furthermore, he highlighted the need for providing subsidized agricultural inputs and opening marketing channels for products and crops. This would help both male and female farmers cover their land service costs.

In response to the challenges faced by female farmers working alone, Qawqah proposed a set of solutions and recommendations. These included granting women their legal and financial rights equal to men, ensuring occupational and health safety measures in the field, and raising awareness among female workers about their economic and social rights. Qawqah also called upon donors to economically empower women in agriculture through training programs, alternative job opportunities, and support for establishing income-generating projects. He further emphasized the importance of forming

committees dedicated to advocating for the rights of women working in agriculture.

Qawqah emphasized the significance of organizing awareness lectures for women farmers. These lectures would provide accurate cultivation instructions and raise awareness about potential factors that could harm crops or fertile soil. Additionally, he suggested holding workshops and panel discussions conducted by agricultural offices in different regions. The aim of these events would be to introduce modern and advanced methods of irrigation and harvesting to agricultural workers and landowners in governorates and districts.

Continuing his speech, Qawqah highlighted the benefits of organizing training and qualification courses for agricultural workers. These courses would create better job opportunities, empower workers economically in areas such as sheep breeding and cultivating new crops, and equip them with knowledge of climate variables to avoid potential damage to agricultural products. He also proposed providing financial grants to agricultural workers, enabling them to expand their cultivated lands, import fertilizers, and adopt modern technologies. These measures would contribute to enhancing food security, strengthening the local economy, and aiding in the country's recovery.

Counseling & Education

Engineer Fathia, a guide from the Rural Women's Administration in Lahj, has been working with female agricultural workers for over 30 years. In the past, women received agricultural production recommendations through research centers, which were then transferred to them either in the field or during women's gatherings. However, Fathia notes that this practice has come to an end, resulting in a loss of valuable information and guidance for women farmers in the agricultural field.

Fathia explains that the retirement of experienced women has led to a lack of expertise and guidance in agricultural work. Many women in the agricultural sector now face a significant dearth of proper guidance, resulting in random and inefficient farming practices. Fathia observes that women farmers often work in their own ways without following the appropriate agricultural methods that could help increase and improve production.

One of the critical challenges faced by women farmers, according to Fathia, is the lack of extension awareness programs that could enhance production. The absence of information and guidance about agricultural work severely hampers women's awareness and knowledge in this field.

Highlighting the difficulties faced by women farmers, Fathia mentions that they work tirelessly from morning until the end of the day, yet receive lower wages compared to their male counterparts. This wage disparity leads to frustration among women farmers. Additionally, women often neglect their own hardships and fail to receive the attention and support they deserve.

During her visit to a farm, Fathia noticed that some women farmers were suffering from skin diseases due to harvesting crops among thorny trees and working in hot weather. However, their efforts often go unnoticed and unappreciated.

Fathia recounts visiting agricultural land that had turned into residential areas, expressing her disappointment. According to her, the lack of extension and awareness programs, as well as the absence of practical application, have caused agricultural land to become barren. This is a concerning and unfortunate situation.

Fathia emphasizes that most of the agricultural work is carried out by women, as they handle tasks from sowing to harvesting. While men primarily focus on irrigation and marketing processes, women are the backbone of farming operations.

Health Care

Rahma Al-Mazyad, President of the Social Women's Association in Al-Bayda Governorate, sheds light on the challenges faced by women farmers in Yemen. These challenges include the absence of healthcare facilities in rural areas due to the lack of health centers and medical personnel. Additionally, there is a prevalence of ignorance and illiteracy, and girls working on farms often struggle to complete their studies due to agricultural responsibilities. Furthermore, women bear the brunt of these difficulties, especially in the absence of the head of the family.

Al-Mazyad further explains that Yemeni female farmers encounter obstacles in obtaining agricultural supplies, as they are unable to access cities where these supplies are available. Moreover, basic necessities of life, such as electricity, water, and roads, are inadequately provided in rural areas.

She highlights that "women farmers also face the challenges posed by climatic changes, which impact their agricultural work. Due to insufficient experience in handling these changes, they struggle to adapt effectively." Al-Mazyad emphasizes the importance of empowering women through necessary training and achieving gender equality in wages. She also stresses the need for equal opportunities for women farmers to access resources.

Challenges Faced by Women in Agricultural Work

By: **Afrah Borji**
Women in Development and Peace

The agricultural sector holds significant importance as a source of employment and income for women. However, despite its potential to provide a sustainable livelihood, the role of women in agriculture often remains marginalized. Numerous challenges persist in this domain, hindering their progress and success.

According to Shaher Al-Hamidi, a writer, human rights activist, and media official at the Ministry of Agriculture, "the specific problems faced by women in agricultural work can vary based on regional disparities, local customs, and prevailing traditions in different governorates. Over the years, these challenges have evolved. In the past, as extension workers or media representatives, we would directly interact with male and female farmers in the fields, enabling us to better understand the issues faced by women in the agricultural sector. However, the current scenario has witnessed a shift, with fewer young women or girls actively engaging in fieldwork, except when dressed in black Abayas that cover their bodies and faces. This particular practice raises concerns as the black color tends to absorb ultraviolet rays from the sun, potentially endangering their health. For instance, I was taken aback when I saw my sister and neighbor wearing black Abayas while working outdoors, as this can have harmful effects under direct exposure to sunlight."

Female Farmers & Their Struggles

The plight of young women engaged in agriculture is multifaceted under the current circumstances, necessitating awareness and educational support regarding farming and animal grazing. Rural women exhibit proficiency not only in agricultural endeavors but also in various other tasks such as handicrafts, sewing, and land development. However, several challenges have hampered their agricultural pursuits.

Sima, a farmer and one of the young women toiling in the agricultural sector, articulates the difficulties she encounters, stating, "We face nume-

rous hardships and deficiencies in our country, foremost among them being the scarcity of water. We rely on traditional methods for water retrieval. Moreover, rain has become sporadic, occurring solely during the summer season, leaving certain agricultural regions with arid soil and limited well availability, resulting in water scarcity."

Sima further emphasizes, "To support us in our agricultural endeavors, it is crucial to construct reservoirs for rainwater utilization or acquire metal tanks for water storage. Additionally, providing us with essential supplies such as seeds and fruit and vegetable saplings would diversify agricultural lands. Equipping both male and female farmers with these resources would enable them to meet their family's needs and achieve self-sufficiency within a short span of time."

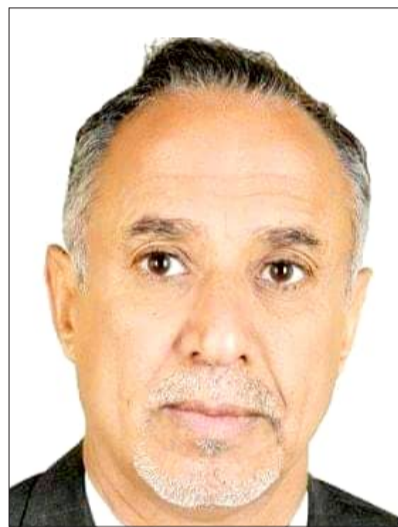
Difficulties

The lack of guidance and awareness poses a significant hurdle for many young women working in agricultural lands. Sima, a young farmer, underscores the importance of raising awareness and providing education, stating, "Women farmers require heightened awareness. They also need access to essential resources, such as pesticides, treatments, vaccines, and fertilizers. These are crucial for ensuring proper plant growth. Additionally, specific machinery and tools are necessary to cultivate arable lands and provide adequate protection for crops. Some crops demand specialized care, including the construction of tents and umbrellas to facilitate their growth in a comfortable and simplified manner."

Labor Shortage Reduces Production & Marketing

Women working in agriculture face numerous challenges, one of which is the limitation placed on their produce. As sharecroppers, they grow fruits but are only allowed to use them for domestic purposes. They are then compelled to distribute the remaining produce to those in their vicinity due to the lack of manpower available for marketing and sending the fruits to markets.

Farmer Huda Salem shares her insights, stating, "In our daily lives as



Shaher Al-Hamidi

women farmers, we encounter various difficulties. Many of us not only take care of our families and household chores but also work outside the home. Striking a balance between our agricultural work and family responsibilities poses significant challenges and demands great effort."

Huda further explains, "Sometimes, I have to bring my children along with me to the farm to ensure that both my agricultural work and my children are attended to. This situation amplifies the effort, fatigue, and hardships I face."

In her concluding remarks, farmer Huda emphasizes the need for support and solutions to address the challenging situations faced by young girls and married women who find themselves caught between two choices and two responsibilities. Despite these difficulties, Huda highlights that many women successfully manage agricultural work, childcare, and all their other responsibilities simultaneously. Huda extends her greetings, peace, gratitude, and appreciation to every working girl, regardless of whether she is an employee, a farmer, or a housewife.

Guidance and Awareness Benefit Women Farmers

Engineer Fathia, a guide from the Rural Women's Administration in Lahj, has been working with female agricultural workers for over 30 years. In the past, women received agricultural production recommendations

through research centers, which were then transferred to them either in the field or during women's gatherings. However, Fathia notes that this practice has come to an end, resulting in a loss of valuable information and guidance for women farmers in the agricultural field. Similarly, it is evident that many women engaged in the agricultural sector lack proper guidance in their field of work. Observation reveals that women farmers often adopt random approaches, lacking the appropriate agricultural methods that could enhance and elevate production levels. Consequently, these women have been excluded from extension awareness programs that play a crucial role in increasing productivity. This absence of information and guidance regarding agricultural practices poses a significant challenge for women farmers, hindering their overall awareness and progress in the field.

Highlighting the difficulties faced by women farmers, Fathia mentions that they work tirelessly from morning until the end of the day, yet receive lower wages compared to their male counterparts. This wage disparity leads to frustration among women farmers. Additionally, women often neglect their own hardships and fail to receive the attention and support they deserve.

Fathia, during her visit to a farm, noticed that several women farmers suffer from skin diseases caused by harvesting crops amidst thorny trees and working in hot weather conditions. Unfortunately, their tremendous efforts often go unnoticed. Furthermore, the lack of training programs specifically designed for women working in agricultural lands, be it on farms or in home gardens, exacerbates the problem. Due to their limited experience, many farms suffer from drought-related issues.

Fathia further emphasizes the importance of past practices such as pruning lemon trees. Previously, with proper guidance and training, farmers would trim the trees by removing dry or excess leaves, creating a balanced eco-

Women have the ability to produce, but they require support and awareness. However, it is currently observed that support is primarily directed towards men

system between vegetative growth and fruit production. As a result, the fruits would benefit from improved nutritional value, leading to a higher quality yield.

Fathia recounts visiting agricultural land that had turned into residential areas, expressing her disappointment. According to her, the lack of extension and awareness programs, as well as the absence of practical application, have caused agricultural land to become barren. This is a concerning and unfortunate situation.

Embodied Experience

Most of the agricultural work is carried out by women, as they handle tasks from sowing to harvesting. While men primarily focus on irrigation and marketing processes, women are the backbone of farming operations. Engineer Fathia highlights the significance of post-harvest techniques, particularly the sorting of fruits. She explains, "For instance, let's consider the sorting process for tomatoes. We differentiate between tomatoes for immediate consumption, tomatoes for processing, and those meant for tomato sauce." This sorting process holds great importance, and Fathia acknowledges the impact of training in improving her understanding of these techniques.

Disheartenment Amid Adversity & Insufficient Support

Expressing her dismay, Engineer Fathia sheds light on the challenges faced by farmers in the agricultural lands. She states, "A large number of women working in the agricultural sector have been compelled to abandon their work due to the lack of support. During my field visits, I frequently hear women farmers discussing the issue of trees failing to germinate." While women possess the potential for production, the absence of support hinders their progress. It is evident that the current support mechanisms primarily favor men. This unequal distribution of guidance and support for women farmers has led many of them to explore alternative crafts, such as sewing, as a means of livelihood.

The Media's Crucial Support for Women Farmers

Urgent Events Inspire Immediate Discourse on Concerns and Issues Faced by Women in Farming

The media plays a vital role in bringing attention to various issues, including those that require effective solutions and treatments.

By: Alia Mohammed
Women in Development and Peace

Among the segments of society deserving significant recognition is the woman farmer, who plays a crucial role in the field of agriculture. Regrettably, women farmers encounter numerous challenges in garnering media coverage due to their limited ability to directly engage with media outlets. Furthermore, the media often prioritizes other pressing matters dictated by the current conditions in Yemen, thereby overshadowing the plight faced by women farmers. Additionally, societal restrictions imposed on them prevent them from openly discussing their hardships. This report aims to spotlight the media's interest in addressing the issues afflicting women farmers.

Marginal Conversation

According to journalist Samia Al-Ansi, the media has historically treated discussions about women's concerns and issues as marginal and fleeting. These discussions were often addressed through occasional programs, events, or emergency news reports.

Al-Ansi argues that the serious inclusion of women's issues as an integral part of societal development and community building was not a significant focus. The lack of emphasis on women's roles highlights societal beliefs that do not fully recognize the importance of gender integration. This is influenced by restrictive customs, traditions, conservative privacy norms, and lingering ignorance within society.

Al-Ansi further points out the multitude of difficulties and challenges obstructing the realization of women's human rights. These challenges include access to comprehensive education, encompassing aspects of health, freedom of choice, and decision-making autonomy pertaining to their own interests, desires, and aspirations. These hurdles hinder active women's participation, not only in their families but also in various professional responsibilities.

Despite the prevalence of negative behavioral and social phenomena that limit women's societal influence (such as gender differentiation, male superiority, and disdainful attitudes perpetuated within families), the media has failed to effectively address these issues. The media's approach has been limited to occasional coverage, awareness campaigns, news reports, events, and superficial recognition during



Mithaq Tawfiq



Samia Al-Ansi

global holidays.

Al-Ansi deems this approach to be a neglectful omission of the media's duty.

Al-Ansi observed that there has been a lack of adequate and impactful representation of women's issues and concerns, whether they are employed or housewives. This oversight extends to rural women, who actively participate alongside their families or husbands in demanding agricultural work, animal husbandry, household chores, education, and providing for their families. Al-Ansi questioned why the local media fails to recognize the immense contributions of female farmers, who endure hardships, stress, and exhausting work surpassing that of their male counterparts. These women take on tasks beyond their capacity without sufficient support, appreciation, or fairness. Despite being indispensable to their families and communities, they often face arrogance and a lack of appreciation, which sadly characterizes their lives.

In addition, journalist Mithaq Tawfiq emphasized that Yemen is a region with a strong agricultural presence, and Yemeni women have been farmers since ancient times. They play a primary role in the field, being the ones who plant, harvest, and gather crops. However, the media fails to adequately highlight their work and the efforts they put in.

Tawfiq further highlighted the challenges faced by female farmers due to societal conservatism that hinders their inclusion in the media. This reluctance stems from the fear of society's perception. Despite these obstacles, Tawfiq emphasized that it is crucial not to overlook the significant efforts of women in agriculture. Their contributions sustain families relying on agriculture for income and have positively impacted their livelihoods over many years. Tawfiq emphasized the importance of the media acting as a platform for open dialogue, discussion, and providing focused coverage on the remarkable efforts made by women in all regions of Yemen.

Ongoing Efforts

Journalist Shaima Ramzi drew attention to the limited and inadequate role of Yemeni media in highlighting women farmers and their contributions to local community development. She lamented the insufficient space dedicated to discussing the issues faced by women farmers, except for brief segments and flashes that barely scratch the surface of their problems, lacking tangible solutions and remedies. In her own initiatives, Shaima aimed to shed light on women's efforts through short films, typically no longer than fifteen minutes, focusing on conveying the hardships experienced by women farmers in rural areas and their

outskirts.

One of the films Shaima produced in collaboration with colleagues focused on a female farmer who assumed responsibility after her husband's tragic death during the ongoing conflict. Tragically, her own journey was cut short when she got caught in a mine explosion, resulting in the amputation of her feet. Shaima also highlighted the issue of girls dropping out of school to assist their families in agricultural work, a consequence of the prevailing conflict.

Shaima emphasized the necessity of employing dramatic methods in films to raise awareness about the significance of education for girls, despite the challenging circumstances. She underscored the importance of highlighting the plight of women farmers, aiming to reach a diverse audience that includes various stakeholders such as local authorities, international organizations, civil society groups, and other relevant parties.

Improving the Image of Women in the Media

During her speech, Samia Al-Ansi affirms the remarkable and tangible roles of Yemeni women that have astonished society. They assume the responsibility of nurturing and raising the younger generation, bearing the burdens of their care, shaping their minds and personalities, and defining the path of their lives and society. These actions underscore the significance and grandeur of their position alongside the other party, representing the head of the family. This is especially crucial given the escalating suffering and tragedies of the conflict, which have resulted in the displacement of numerous families, halted livelihoods, and disrupted the flow of public life. Samia further elaborates, stating,

The role of the Yemeni media in highlighting women farmers is limited and inadequate

"Women farmers have actively contributed to meeting educational expenses, supporting family members, and fulfilling various other needs. They engage in work outside the home, manage small-scale projects, and utilize

personal savings to ensure continuity and maintain a decent life, utilizing their diverse capabilities and abilities." Samia emphasizes the need for Yemeni media to recognize and showcase the valuable contributions of women farmers by sharing stories of successful and inspiring individuals. This serves as motivation for other women and raises awareness about the importance of their role in agriculture.

Similarly, journalist Abdullatif Salmeen highlights the significance of shedding light on the challenges faced by women farmers in Yemen. Additionally, he emphasizes the importance of disseminating information that cultivates awareness among women farmers, aiming to enhance their competency and capabilities. Salmeen suggests that the media can contribute to improving the perception of women farmers by presenting success stories and highlighting the hurdles they overcome. It is crucial to provide opportunities for women farmers to participate in television and radio programs, enabling them to voice their issues and contribute to the development of rural communities. By challenging stereotypes associated with women farmers and enhancing their agricultural and water management skills, they can be economically empowered.

Salmeen also emphasizes the importance of women farmers attending agricultural conferences and exhibitions, enabling them to expand their knowledge and acquire communication, promotion, and marketing skills through various media platforms.

Yemeni Female Farmers Inspire Hope and Overcome Challenges

By: Hebah Mohammed
Women in Development and Peace

Yemeni farms hold significant importance within Yemen's agricultural community, playing a crucial role in enhancing crop productivity and fostering sustainable development. Despite encountering numerous challenges such as conflict, poverty, and social traditions that hinder agricultural progress, farmers have managed to achieve remarkable successes. One such inspiring tale of triumph revolves around Fatima Al-Jaadi, a farmer from Al-Hodeidah Governorate in western Yemen.

Al-Hodeidah Governorate, known for enduring the devastating impact of ongoing conflicts, has witnessed a decline in both its economic and agricultural conditions. Nevertheless, Fatima persevered, choosing to continue her work in the fields to support her family. Her journey has been marked by numerous challenges, including limited access to water resources, agricultural fertilizers, and pesticides. However, she remains committed to enhancing productivity and augmenting her income by incorporating modern and agricultural techniques. Moreover, Fatima actively encourages other women to embrace agricultural work as a means to improve their economic and social circumstances.

Fatima stands as a role model for Yemeni women navigating the obstacles encountered within the agricultural sector. Her accomplishments serve as a wellspring of inspiration and motivation, urging others to persist in their pursuits and achieve success. Recognizing her outstanding efforts and achievements in agriculture, as well as her contributions towards improving the economic and social conditions of women in her region, Fatima has garnered numerous accolades and honors within Yemen and the wider region. Her story reverberates as a testament to determination, resilience, and accomplishment amid challenging circumstances.

In her account, Fatima describes her collaboration with her husband's father in cultivating a vast agricultural expanse, with rain serving as the primary irrigation source. During the summer, she, alongside other farmers, relies on rainfall, while in winter, they utilize the flowing water. Additionally, Fatima shares, "Afterward, my husband's father dug an artesian well and positioned it in the heart of the valley, expanding our agricultural activities."



Female Farmers: Legends of Resilience

We embarked on a journey to North Yemen, specifically to the agricultural fields in the center of Al-Siyani district, located in Al-Dhahra Village of Ibb Governorate. Our attention was immediately drawn to a woman in her sixties diligently working on a farm, gripping the shareem tool in her hand, planting with enthusiasm, and perspiration glistening on her forehead. Completely absorbed in her work, she remained oblivious to our presence. Intrigued, we paused momentarily to learn more about her story and her profound connection to the land that empowers and captivates her. This farmer is Hakima Ali Mohsen Al-Haddad, who has been engaged in agriculture since childhood, considering the land as both her present and her future.

"In the midst of these agricultural fields, I was raised and have lived my entire life. I transitioned from my father's house to my marital home at a tender age of 13," Hakima shares. "In my husband's father's house, memories of our lives were intertwined with that vast valley, teeming with various crops, even though I was just a child. During that time, I assumed the responsibilities of managing the household and tending to the land, as I

was the wife of the eldest son, while my husband worked abroad in Saudi Arabia."

Hakima continues her narrative, her eyes filled with the weight of the years gone by: "At the end of each day, I would retire to my room, overwhelmed by exhaustion and shedding tears. I contemplated leaving my husband and returning to my family's house, but I feared the judgment of society. However, I persevered, fought against the odds, and acquired knowledge that eluded me during my childhood. God has blessed me with four daughters and three sons, whom I raised and educated in schools and universities. Meanwhile, I manage the household, engage in agriculture, rear livestock, and fetch water from a distant place known as al-maenib. My husband's father possessed a substantial number of livestock. I witnessed my children grow and learn, and that brought me immense joy. All I desire for them is to achieve the educational milestones that I couldn't reach. Consequently, I have endured numerous hardships to support and provide for them, as the meager remittances from their father are directed towards reclaiming agricultural land and supporting his siblings."

Regarding the significant crops cultivated under Hakima's guidance, she reveals, "The agricultural

land, nestled alongside a stream, was previously subjected to the torrent's force. However, with the assistance of the public works office, a sturdy barrier was constructed, preventing the torrent's flow into the valley. My husband's father, renowned for his agricultural expertise, held great esteem within the village. We cultivated an array of crops, including white corn, maize, figs, pomegranates, and peaches."

Challenges & Determination

Hakima faced numerous challenges throughout her life, but her determination and patience allowed her to surpass them. Reflecting on the most significant trials she encountered, she expressed, "I could endure any exhaustion, whether it was collecting feed for livestock, plowing the land, transporting firewood, or watering and harvesting agricultural crops. None of these obstacles affected my resolve. Even the scarcity of labor due to migration, particularly the departure of the father and children to work outside the village, as well as the soaring diesel prices, failed to shake my determination."

Elaborating on the difficulties faced by farmers in her region, she highlighted, "When we plant

crops like potatoes or zucchini during periods of decreasing market value, we can barely cover the costs of agriculture. Moreover, the presence of plant diseases and the expensive treatments, along with the proliferation of qat cultivation in the village of Dhahra, resulted in significant losses of agricultural crops. Additionally, poor-quality seeds that yield no crops and the changing agricultural seasons due to climate change further added to our struggles. In the end, the revenue from agriculture did not even cover our expenses."

As the burdens and responsibilities increased, she found herself shouldering the responsibility of providing for her family's needs solely from the income generated by agriculture. She described the circumstances, stating, "I faced increased pressure to support my children's university expenses after my husband returned from the Gulf War. He had been working there as a carpenter, providing for his family and saving some money. However, he returned bankrupt and remained unemployed until 2010."

Persistent Resilience

After a considerable period of time, Hakima's husband secured a job in transportation, while she remained dedicated to managing the land and tending to the livestock. She emphasized the significance of the agricultural land, describing it as not just a piece of property, but a symbol of her struggle for survival. Following her father-in-law's passing, the land was divided among the heirs, and her husband received his share, enabling her to continue her agricultural endeavors and sheep rearing on his land. Despite the weariness accumulated over this long journey, Hakima's commitment to agriculture persisted. Although she experienced spinal pain that limited her ability to work extensively, her passion for farming remained unwavering. Presently, she has planted white corn and, with the cooperation of fellow villagers, successfully initiated a water project that has supplied every household in the community.

Hakima and Fatima, the two farmers, serve as living examples of Yemeni farmers who confront numerous problems, challenges, and hardships in their pursuit of success amidst adverse circumstances. Their story embodies resilience and determination in the face of obstacles. They stand as a source of inspiration and motivation for all agricultural workers, encouraging them to persevere with unwavering resolve until they achieve success and excellence.

Female Farmers Battle for Survival

Challenges in Yemen's Agricultural Sector Exacerbate Hardships Faced by Women

By: Ahmed Bajoaim
Women in Development and Peace

Yemeni women, known for their strong faith and remarkable agricultural skills, are deeply engaged in the production of crops. Devoted to cultivating fertile fields and tending to livestock, they work tirelessly to preserve the country's natural resources. Within the fields of Yemen, these women are not just beautiful flowers; they embody a vibrant spirit pulsating with life and hope. Unfortunately, their journey is fraught with formidable challenges and unimaginable hardships. In this investigation, we aim to shine a light on their suffering and uncover the immense difficulties faced by this resilient group of Yemeni women.

Amidst arid lands and limited resources, female farmers find themselves trapped in a harsh reality. The country's unstable security situation has led to a decline in economic and social conditions, further exacerbating their struggles. Moreover, women farmers encounter significant obstacles in accessing vital agricultural resources, including fertilizers, seeds, pesticides, and advanced irrigation equipment. These challenges, among many others, have a detrimental impact on the quality and quantity of their agricultural output, resulting in a decline in expected financial returns.

The Difficulty of Obtaining Fertilizers

In its report, the New Arab website highlighted the far-reaching consequences of the disruption in global agricultural supplies and fertilizers caused by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. This disruption is expected to inflict significant damage upon Yemen's agricultural sector, which stands as one of the largest operational and economic sectors in the country. Published on March 24, 2022, the report titled "Yemen is facing a suffocating crisis in agricultural inputs: scarcity of fertilizers and supplies" shed light on the challenges faced by Yemeni farmers. It revealed that a vast majority of these farmers encounter immense difficulty in obtaining fertilizers, primarily due to the tripling of their

costs during the past five years of internal conflict.

The report underscored the alarming surge in agricultural requirements and needs, including seeds and fertilizers, while simultaneously emphasizing the difficulties in acquiring them. Consequently, some farmers, regardless of gender, have been compelled to reduce the size of their agricultural production areas, while others have been forced to abandon their farms altogether due to crop damage caused by the scarcity of fertilizers. These circumstances naturally have a detrimental impact on the financial well-being of farmers, exacerbating the already poor local production of crops and contributing to a heightened state of food insecurity.

Eng. Awadh Balkiman, the Director of the Agriculture and Irrigation Office in Hadhramout Coast, provided insightful details to the Women in Development and Peace newspaper. He highlighted the persistent challenges faced by Yemen's governorates, particularly Hadramout, since the events of 2016. These challenges revolve around the scarcity of access to fertilizers, leading to a significant increase in prices and the illicit smuggling of fertilizers between governorates. Consequently, farmers have been unable to acquire the necessary fertilizers, resulting in a decline in crop cultivation and overall scarcity. The situation is even more challenging for women farmers, especially those lacking male support. Their mobility and ability to travel are limited, which further complicates their interaction with smugglers or intermediaries involved in such illicit activities.

Balkiman further explained, "Between 2018 and 2020, the Agriculture Office played a significant role in supplying approximately 100 tons of fertilizers to the coastal districts. These fertilizers were distributed based on the specific needs of farmers and at reasonable prices. Unfortunately, no further fertilizers were imported thereafter." This scarcity of fertilizers has had a detrimental impact on the quality of agricultural products, leading to substantial financial losses for farmers. Women, in particular, face additional challenges as they are often considered daily wage workers and lack land rights.

Scarcity of Rain

In a recent report titled "How Modern Irrigation Technologies are Transforming Yemen's Agriculture Sector," submitted to the United Nations on April 13, 2023, the adverse effects of rainfall scarcity on the agricultural sector and farmers' livelihoods were highlighted. Insufficient rain negatively impacts crop production, and many farmers lack the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively manage water resources, leading to their depletion. Consequently, green areas have diminished due to the lack of water reserves, including rainwater stored in dams and groundwater reserves.

The report emphasized that the shortage of water, whether from rainfall or groundwater sources, is a significant factor contributing to the decline in local food production. In recognition of this issue, the United Nations has designated March 22 as World Water Day each year, aiming to raise awareness among communities, including farmers, about the importance of water conservation, rational usage, and mitigating the consequences of its depletion. The cultivation of the qat tree in Yemen, known for its high-water requirements, poses a significant threat to water resources, and its continued expansion will inevitably result in a decline in accessible water reserves.

Additionally, the Director of the Agriculture and Irrigation Office in the coastal region of Hadhramout stated, "The majority of farmers in rural areas of Hadhramout rely on rainwater, which leads to an irregular crop production season lasting only a few months, rather than year-round."

The scarcity of rainfall has particularly exacerbated the hardships faced by rural women working in the agricultural sector. Their work is limited to only four months, and they are compelled to seek alternative professions and jobs for the remainder of the year to sustain their livelihoods. Moreover, relying on rainwater exposes women farmers to substantial losses and challenges.

Climate Change

Climate change poses a significant challenge to Yemen's agricultural sector, characterized by the adverse effects of high temperatures and the

recurring occurrence of natural disasters such as floods and droughts. These factors contribute to soil degradation, desertification, scarcity of fresh water, and the proliferation of pests and plant diseases. Furthermore, agricultural activities release substantial amounts of greenhouse gases, further exacerbating climate change. These challenges have a profound impact on overall agricultural production, especially for women farmers.

On January 26, 2023, the "Green Dream" platform released a report titled "Yemen: Impact of Climate Change on Crops." The report highlighted the severe material damages incurred by farmers of both genders due to climate-related impacts, including high temperatures, increased droughts, floods, and salinization of arable land. These factors significantly impede crop cultivation and livestock rearing, consequently weakening the agricultural output.

The report also shed light on the alarming decline in green spaces caused by climate change, leading to food insecurity. The area of arable land in Yemen, which stood at approximately 1.6 million hectares, has witnessed a staggering decrease of around 26.9% between 2010 and 2018 as a result of climate-related effects. Yemen's arid and semi-arid climate exacerbates these challenges, resulting in difficult economic conditions and heightened poverty levels, particularly among workers in the agricultural sector, notably women.

According to statistics shared by Eng. Awadh Balkiman, the Director of the Agriculture and Irrigation Office in Hadhramout Coast, approximately 20,000 palm trees were swept away by floods in the Hajar district, located in the western part of Hadhramout Governorate, within a single day at the beginning of 2020. This devastating event caused significant losses for numerous farmers residing in remote districts of Hadhramout, known as the largest and most renowned area in Yemen for palm tree cultivation. Its valleys are home to nearly 2 million palm trees.

Other Challenges

Um Issa, a farmer who has dedicated her life to cultivating watercress, radishes, alfalfa, and various grains, highlighted the numerous obstacles

faced by rural farmers. These challenges include difficulties in transporting and marketing crops in cities, high fuel prices (diesel) for irrigation, struggles in combating crop-damaging insects like locusts and worms, and the high cost of seeds, which poses a gamble for farmers, potentially resulting in either profit or loss depending on the abundance or scarcity of the crop.

Um Issa works on a farm owned by one of her neighbors in Brom Mayfaa district, located west of the city of Mukalla, under a system known as "the interest" in Hadhramout. This system entails dividing the profits into three sections: one for the farmer, one for the landowner, and the third section for the farm itself, covering maintenance, seed purchase, and other requirements.

In concluding her speech, Um Issa emphasized that many women farmers, like herself, who do not own their own farms, work under similar arrangements. She stressed that living conditions have exacerbated the hardships faced by women farmers, particularly those with limited incomes.

The challenges faced by Yemeni women working in agriculture reflect the broader difficulties experienced by Yemeni society as a whole. These challenges encompass limited opportunities for rehabilitation and training, as well as difficulties in accessing agricultural resources and land. However, women farmers are resilient in the face of numerous obstacles that hinder their contribution to the local economy. Moreover, they must overcome social and cultural prejudices tied to their traditional roles, which restrict their full participation in agricultural work.

Ultimately, it is crucial for the relevant authorities to prioritize societal awareness regarding women's rights and provide the necessary support to enable their access to agricultural resources. This should involve enhancing technical capabilities in the field and fostering local and international partnerships to deliver appropriate training and resources. By empowering women to fully and effectively contribute to the advancement of the agricultural sector, Yemen can break free from its current reality, shaped by conflicts and economic setbacks, and achieve sustainable development. This will uplift living standards and drive progress in the country.

Twins Jawa and Lujain Al-Wazir Showcase Dual Paths to Success and Ambition

Jawa Abdulelah Al-Wazir and Lujain Abd-ulelah Al-Wazir, 24-year-old twins, have diverged on separate projects, yet they are united by their shared achievements in success, excellence, and creativity.

By: Hanan Hussein
 Women in Development and Peace

Jawa Abdulelah Al-Wazir

Jawa's educational journey led her to the College of Agriculture at Sana'a University, where she chose to specialize in Food Science and Nutrition among the eight departments offered by the college. Her time at the university was a period of immense learning and growth. One particular field that captured her interest was the production of human food. Jawa's passion for this subject fueled her creativity and ambition, as she delved into the manufacturing of natural food products. The presence of animals at the college provided her with valuable hands-on experience, and under the guidance of specialized professors, she and her colleagues were able to apply their knowledge practically and extensively.

Reflecting on her studies, Jawa describes them as enriching and enjoyable. She gained expertise in producing various food items such as milk, cheese, labneh, yogurt, haqin, ghee, and animal butter using fresh cow's milk sourced from the college's cows. During her academic journey, an idea took root in her mind — to establish a project focused on manufacturing food products free from industrial additives, preservatives, stabilizers, and harmful powders that could jeopardize human health.

Jawa was determined to create a brand that would represent her values, offering high-quality products made solely from 100% natural ingredients. She decided to focus on the dairy industry, recognizing its widespread consumption across different age groups, including children, adults, pregnant women, young individuals, and the elderly.

Today, Jawa's successful project celebrates its fourth year. The demand for her products has surpassed her expectations, leaving her exhausted yet motivated to produce even more. Single-handedly managing the production at home, Jawa continues to strive for excellence despite the fatigue. As the demand and her reputation within society continue to grow, she finds herself



even happier, savoring the taste of success.

Lujain Abdulelah Al-Wazir

Lujain Abdulelah Al-Wazir, who studied at the same college as her sister, graduated in 2022 from the Department of Animal Production. Upon completion, she decided to pursue a master's degree in the same department, with a specialization in improving the production of municipal chicken breeds in Yemen.

For her project, Lujain aimed to raise a group of productive animals using modern scientific methods on the rooftop of their house in Sana'a. Her livestock consisted of 21 sheep and goats, including imported species not commonly found in the region. Additionally, she had 40 chickens, comprising local breeds, foreign breeds, turkeys, and ducks. Lujain also incorporated a group of rabbits and ducks into her project. To ensure the animals' well-being, Lujain established modern housing with specific standards, prioritizing good ventilation. The ceiling was designed to be high, and the ventilation openings were positioned above the heads of the livestock, ensuring proper airflow for all animals. One advantage of Lujain's project over others is its collaboration with experts and specialized professors, utilizing their expertise.

Lujain developed a specific diet to naturally fatten the goats and sheep, promoting safe, rapid, and healthy reproduction, as well as ensuring a high milk production. For a duration of six months, she fed her livestock

concentrated fodder, such as maize and natural grains. Modern tools like choppers, fodder cutters, and fodder cubes were used to grind and cut the fodder for the goats and sheep. Lujain also provided concentrated feed to the laying hens to support their daily egg-laying, ensuring appropriate lighting for the eggs until they hatched.

Lujain's project and nutritional plans stand out for their excellence, particularly due to her ability to design a scientifically defined diet with clear and achievable objectives. Unlike the shepherds who sell their livestock once a year, Lujain sells her livestock twice a year.

To ensure that no surplus milk goes to waste, Lujain provides her sister Jawa with the excess milk from her cattle, allowing Jawa to create her own products from it. Together, they guarantee that the final products reach consumers in their most natural form, with a 100% natural guarantee. Lujain's project serves as a support and complement to Jawa's project in the production of dairy products and their derivatives. The idea for this project originated five years ago, back in 2014, during Lujain's second year of her bachelor's degree.

Since her childhood, Lujain has been involved in raising various animals, such as poultry and ducks, within their household. This love for animals inspired her to establish a project that produces goods derived from these livestock. Initially, when she started her studies at the university, her aspiration was to become a

veterinarian, driven by her passion for aiding animals. However, at that time, the veterinary specialty was not available at Sana'a University, which led her to pursue the Department of Animal Production instead.

Lujain emphasizes that her desire to become a veterinarian stemmed from witnessing the struggles faced by many shepherds. These shepherds would tirelessly raise their livestock, only to face difficulties when their animals fell ill and couldn't access veterinary care due to the distance and limited availability of veterinary centers. Consequently, their animals would perish despite their efforts. Lujain's dream was to become a veterinarian and establish veterinary centers in every village and region, under government supervision, recognizing the vital role livestock plays in the society's economy.

To promote her project, Lujain utilizes social media as a marketing tool. However, the high demand from certain production companies to purchase her products, coupled with the limited number of animals she possesses, has led her to prefer selling directly to individual consumers. This approach is regarded as more favorable, considering the significant demand for products like fresh milk, goat's milk, local chicken, and their related items.

Difficulties

Jawa recognizes that there are several challenges, with the most significant being the exorbitant prices of

raw materials, particularly powdered milk. Additionally, the high costs of electricity, gas, and oil derivatives pose a major obstacle. These resources are extensively used in operating the dairy manufacturing machine. Power outages and inflated prices have a severe impact on Jawa's project since her products require constant refrigeration due to the absence of preservatives. Natural products necessitate a significant level of cold to prevent spoilage. One of the hurdles Jawa faces is the lack of consumer awareness regarding the importance of natural food products that are free from preservatives. Despite their higher prices compared to other processed products in the market, these natural items remain superior as they avoid the use of hydrogenated oils and preservatives. On the other hand, Lujain highlights the notable obstacles and difficulties she encountered, specifically the steep prices of animal feed in Yemen. Additionally, the soaring costs of oil derivatives pose a significant challenge to various projects, including Lujain's, which relies on fuel for operating generators and specialized machinery.

Solutions & Challenges

Lujain attributes the success and continuity of her project to her unwavering diligence. She diligently carries out daily follow-ups on her animals and provides intensive care. Additionally, she seeks guidance from individuals who are more knowledgeable and experienced, including teachers both inside and outside Yemen. This approach allows her to continually learn, benefit herself, and safeguard her livestock.

Similarly, Jawa recounts her determination in confronting the difficulties she encountered. To address the challenges posed by frequent power outages and high electricity prices, she implemented practical solutions. Jawa opted to install solar energy systems and utilize energy-efficient devices, ensuring that costs remain manageable. This strategic approach prevents the need to increase product prices for consumers.

Tips & Guidelines

Jawa offers valuable advice to aspiring girls who wish to venture into food production projects. She emphasizes the importance of adhering to health conditions, including hygiene and sterilization, and following proper manufacturing methods. Moreover, she encourages girls not to overlook the opportunity to enhance their skills by enrolling in training and educational courses related to the food industry. Jawa enthusiastically highlights the profitability of the food industries due to the high demand from consumers. She suggests the use of new, exclusive, attractive, and eye-catching packaging methods to attract customers. Additionally, Jawa stresses the significance of treating customers with kindness and respect, as it forms the foundation for the success of any project. Lujain adds her own advice, urging girls with even small or seemingly simple ideas to take the leap and launch their own projects. She emphasizes the importance of parental support, assistance, and timely advice to ensure impressive and pride-worthy success.

Women Farmers Bring Extensive Expertise to Agriculture, Playing a Crucial Role in Ensuring Food Security

Female farmers are a powerful force in society due to their pioneering economic and social roles that they play, which improve and enhance the rural environment. They are also the workforce in the rural community who depend mainly on the agricultural profession to improve their financial status and raise their families' standard of living.

By: Alia Mohammed
 Women in Development and Peace

Female farmers enjoy a high status in some societies; yet, this status is absent in other societies. How do the Yemeni people currently perceive and evaluate the work of female farmers to improving both agricultural production and the country's economy?

According to Maram Nasser - a specialist in the field of social service- "Female farmers have extensive experience and knowledge in the fields of climate change, agriculture, and agricultural crops. Additionally, they have marketing and industry expertise."

"Depending on the various cultures that have been adopted, society's perception of female farmers may change. Some people view their work in agriculture as an integral part of their lives and nature, some view it as a hobby, while others see it as a profession," she added.

"Many of the women who work as farmers in our country are underappreciated for what they do, and many people might not realize how important their



contributions are to agriculture. Due to the predominance of men in our society, many people exhibit bias towards men, placing the greatest burden on women to manage farms and take care of household duties," she continued.

She emphasized the necessity of raising awareness of the significance of female farmers' contributions to society since greater awareness leads to greater appreciation. She suggested that in order to organize the labor that female farmers provide and make them equal to males in terms of working conditions and pay, initiatives and regulations from the competent authorities are required.

Providing Benefits to Communities

Hussein Bin Yahya - a project manager - believes that female farmers are an essential part of our societies and play a vital role in food production and environmental preservation. They are also a vital partner in pursuing the goals of sustainable develop-

ment and food security.

"Female farmers provide many benefits to local and global communities, helping to improve food security and reduce poverty in rural areas. They also contribute to protecting the environment and improving public health by providing healthy and fresh food," Hussein said.

Huda Al-Shabibi, a painter, believes that female farmers have a fundamental and a vital role in society, as they contribute to the development and achievement of food security in rural areas.

"Due to their efforts to preserve biodiversity and adopt sustainable farming methods to protect the environment and natural resources, female farmers' work aids in the advancement of sustainable development in rural areas. In addition, they have a major role in preserving the cultural history of the agricultural industry," she added.

According to Hussein Bin Yahya, poverty, unequal access to agricultural resources and technolo-

gy, and the inability to reach markets and effectively market one's products are some of the obstacles and challenges female farmers face, limiting their ability to be successful, achieve the highest productivity possible, and meet the growing demand for foodstuffs.

Hussein emphasized on the necessity for female farmers to have equal access to resources and opportunities as male farmers, including knowledge, technology, and material resources. Female farmers should also receive more attention and appreciation for the vital role they play in food production, preserving the environment and increasing agricultural productivity.

He emphasized on the need for governments and society to recognize the critical role that female farmers play in local and global economies and to provide them with equal opportunities. He also highlighted the value of working with them to improve their living conditions, giving them the as-

sistance, they need to achieve sustainable and stable productivity, enhancing their role in agricultural production, and helping them increase their income. This can be achieved by conducting agricultural training, providing knowledge and technology, along with enhancing market access and improving marketing and transportation of productions.

According to Amina Abdullah, a community activist, "Female farmers make great efforts both inside and outside the home, dividing their time between taking care of their families, the land, and their livestock. Therefore, their roles cannot be dispensed."

"Due to their high levels of productivity in both agriculture and industry, female farmers play a significant role in the production process. Thus, they achieve the highest levels of economic and social empowerment through their work in the field of agriculture and livestock care," she added.

Forced to Work

Mohammed Al-Amoudi believes that many female farmers did not choose to work in agriculture, but some of them were forced to do so because of the challenging living and economic conditions.

"Yemeni female farmers are forced to engage in various economic activities due to the difficult living conditions. Thus, in order to contribute to increasing the household's income and helping their husbands improve the living conditions, they worked on planting, harvesting crops, raising sheep, and rearing poultry," he said.

"Many female farmers suffer from illiteracy and ignorance because they did not complete their education due to the demanding agricultural work that women must perform in the field, along with the other household chores," he added.

Mohammed pointed out that due to the ongoing conflict and the economic crisis, female farmers encounter obstacles that prevent them from having access to the required resources and support to develop their agricultural activities. Accordingly, he stressed the need to enhance the skills and experience of Yemeni female farmers to improve their agricultural production and empower them in society in light of the current challenges. Additionally, he emphasized the importance of promoting gender equality in the agricultural sector, and providing them with access to resources, technology, training, and financing.

Challenges Faced by Rural Women in Accessing Education due to Agricultural Responsibilities

“I was not fortunate enough to pursue education, like many rural girls who were unable to attend school for the same reasons, which include being occupied with cultivating the land, fetching water from distant places, and caring for the animals.”

By: Yasmine Abdulhafeez
Women in Development and Peace

With these words, Umm Fatima began her talk about her deprivation of education. She is one of the rural Yemeni women who spend their entire lives farming and caring for the land while being denied an education in order to work in the land and support their families.

Umm Fatima left her village to live in a city. She married a man who works in the field of carpentry and gave birth to two children, Sami and Fatima. “I insisted to my husband that we should move out of the village so that my daughter wouldn’t suffer the same fate that I did in terms of not receiving an education. It is very painful for a girl to be unable to hold a pen or read a book. It is also very difficult to be ignorant in the midst of this great scientific progress that the world is experiencing,” she said.

There is a lot of work in the countryside, including working in cultivating the land and taking care of the crops. Rural women must perform a variety of specific tasks throughout the agriculture process, starting from the planting season to the harvest. They have to plow the land, sow grain, tend to the crops as they grow, collect natural fertilizers to enrich the soil, and take care of the harvest, in addition to the task of raising livestock. They also have additional responsibilities inside the house, such as looking after their husbands and kids. Thus, due to their preoccupation with these and other responsibilities, which demand a lot of their time and effort, they are forced to leave school or decide not to enroll in it at all.

A group of educators attributed the spread of ignorance and illiteracy among girls in the countryside and villages to their preoccupation with various responsibilities, such as cultivating the land, raising animals and fetching water, in addition to the deterioration of services and weak community awareness.

According to Rashid Mohammed, a teacher, “Girls in rural areas face significant challenges and obstacles, which will have an impact on their ability to enroll in school and continue their education at various levels. There is a decline in the percentage of women enrolled in education, and a large number of them drop out of school, especially after the basic stage.”

Rashid attributed the low enrollment of female farmers in education to a number of factors, the



most significant of which is the decline in rural services because girls are preoccupied with looking for the provision of these basic and necessary services for the continuation of life at the expense of losing their education. Additionally, the lack of some services, such as the lack of domestic gas, forces female farmers to go to the mountains and valleys in order to provide firewood.

“Due to the high prices of basic foodstuffs, the girls turn to work in agriculture to secure food and to bring fodder for livestock from long distances. Moreover, because of the lack of water projects, they are forced to travel long distances to fetch water, which takes time and effort,” he added.

Educators’ Opinions

According to Dina Ahmed Abdulbari, a teacher, “Due to the deteriorating conditions in the countryside, women were forced to rely on some activities to help them and their family improve their living conditions, including working in agriculture.”

“Rural families rely on their sons to secure their livelihood, and they believe that girls can work in the agriculture sector more effectively and productively than boys,” she added.

She explained that women devote a lot of time to their work in the agricultural sector, and sometimes the effort they put into the land during the day drains all of their energy. Due to this, they are unable to

perform any other necessary tasks, most notably completing their education and attending school.

She emphasized that if the family is aware of the importance of educating the girls, then the girls can obtain or continue education. Yet, this can be achieved by helping them to find enough time to go to school and performing their tasks in agriculture as well.

“There must be a real will among the girls to perform both tasks, and there must also be an understanding on the part of the family. Hence, all tasks can be carried out without one affecting the other,” she added.

The Family’s Role in Encouraging Girls’ Education

According to Rasha Mesbah, a teacher, “The family bears the responsibility for girls’ preoccupation with agriculture at the expense of their education. It also plays a significant role in motivating them to pursue their education through exempting them from some hard works that may affect their study times and helping them in the agricultural tasks that they undertake. The family can also help them by providing them with the necessary needs of school supplies and tuition fees, in addition to helping them to overcome all the difficulties they face.”

Regarding the family’s responsibility in preventing the girls’ preoccupation with agriculture at the expense of their education, Lubna Abdulraqueeb, a

school principal in the countryside, explained that there has been a significant improvement in this aspect than before. However, working in agriculture is more important for the families, because the largest share of farming burden is borne by women in the countryside.

“Girls must work in the farm even if they pursue secondary education. However, many families now see girls’ education as a need. They believe that they should be involved in activities other than agriculture, and they believe that they can work and support their families,” she continued.

“The family must support their daughters and help them get through any challenges they may have faced in the past, and enroll them in a college or other educational institution. However, just 6% of families are aware of this issue in some areas, while in other places, the number is significantly higher,” Lubna emphasized.

The Role of the School

Fatima Salem, a teacher at a private school, claimed that the school’s administrators and teachers have a responsibility to draw females to education in rural areas and must avoid using strategies that force females to choose agriculture over education.

“There are many girls in the countryside who have dropped out of school, and have preferred agricultural tasks to studying. This is due to the methods of some male and female teachers who

do not encourage girls to study, especially with the absence of oversight and the lack of application of laws that guarantee students their right to obtain a proper education,” she emphasized.

Fatima thinks that those in charge of schools ought to consider the difficult financial circumstances that affect a lot of families and have led a lot of them to pull their kids out of school. For example, they should not force students to buy stationery or pay tuition fees that are out of their price range, so that the school can be a supportive partner for girls in this field.

“Merchants in many rural areas should contribute to encouraging female farmers to get an education by providing them with financial support so that they can overcome the financial conditions that make many of them search for wages in return for working in their fields,” she added.

Continuing Education and Agricultural Development

According to Mansour Ahmed, a teacher, “The girls can continue their education without ignoring agriculture by managing their time so that they can perform agricultural tasks when necessary and focus only on their studies in the evening without being interrupted by other tasks.”

“Teachers should take these situations into account, and they should assign less homework. Parents should assist their daughters in their studies since encouraging and supporting females who are engaged in school will foster a culture of competition and motivation,” he continued.

The provision of separate schools for female students, according to Lubna Abdulraqueeb, allows girls to seek an education without forsaking agriculture and completing at least a secondary education. This also allows them to continue working in agriculture as they used to do.

She believes that the presence of educational institutions in rural areas may make it possible for females to complete their education without having to live far from their families and yet help with agricultural work.

“Here in the countryside, we highly value the work of agriculture, as it is an integral part of our interests. Whatever my field of work is, this does not discourage me from working on the farm. Yet, if women are educated, they can work and support their families financially to search for laborers who could work in agriculture,” she added.

Institutions and organizations that support poor families in rural areas and agricultural areas contribute to alleviating their economic suffering, which often forces them to push their girls to work in agriculture for a daily wage in order to improve their income and meet their various needs. However, since most of the tasks in the countryside are carried out by women who work tirelessly to support their families, especially with the absence of the men who spend their time away from their homes and children in order to obtain a living, the price that women pay here is giving up their education.

Strengthening Economic Capacities and Ensuring Equality and Health Safety for Female Farmers: Key Imperatives

By: Hebah Mohammed
Women in Development and Peace

Yemeni female farmers in rural areas suffer from a variety of dangers and difficulties that have an impact on their rights, safety, and health. As a result of the overcrowding of women working in fields and farms, risks and fears increase due to the absence of state institutions to protect them and organizations that could play a significant and sustainable role in reducing these risks and improving their livelihood and agricultural work.

Challenges & Risks

In light of the conditions that Yemen is going through as a result of the conflict that has been going on for years, Yemeni women remain the most vulnerable group that suffer because of the current situation. However, Yemeni female farmers suffer more because they work day and night in the fields, where they are subject to a variety of dangers and difficulties—some brought on by the conflict, others by the patriarchal attitude of Yemeni culture.

According to Aisha Al-Mufti, a professor at the Faculty of Agriculture at Ibb University, “The declining financial circumstances of many families, which made it challenging to provide the most necessary agricultural supplies, such as seeds, municipal fertilizers, tillage wages, irrigation costs, and other supplies, as well as the lack of supportive agencies reaching many villages and districts, are among the risks that female farmers in rural areas face.”

“Weakness and scarcity of agricultural tenure, due to the generally small agricultural areas and the difficulty of intervening and reclaiming them, are among the additional diffi-

culties they encounter, along with the decrease in rainfall rates in several Yemeni agricultural regions and the absence of irrigation water sources for crops. Moreover, rain has been the principal source of irrigation for a number of crops, especially grains and legumes, due to the lack of irrigation water sources, making them vulnerable to climate fluctuations,” she added.

Al-Mufti emphasized that the absence of economic infrastructure that can support agricultural crops, particularly vegetables and fruits, makes farmers in general, and women in particular, vulnerable to the law of supply and demand in the markets, which results in enormous losses for farmers as a result of decreased demand and increased supply. Accordingly, many of them, particularly women, cannot reclaim the money they invested in the agricultural process.

Gender-Based Discrimination

“Among the challenges faced by female farmers is the lack of agricultural knowledge and skills among many women and the monopoly of such expertise and skills by males, which perpetuates gender-based discrimination and limits access to agricultural expertise to men rather than women,” Al-Mufti believes.

Regarding the health risks that female farmers may encounter, Mona Ali, an agricultural expert, indicated, “Yemeni women who work as farmers face physical and psychological risks since they must carry heavy agricultural implements and loads of firewood on their heads from a distance. Additionally, they travel outside of their neighborhood to get water, exposing them to various forms of abuse, including harassment.”

She also indicated that female farmers care for and tend to agricultural crops by spraying disease-infected crops with toxic pesticides without precise standards due to a lack of awareness and indiscriminate spraying. Moreover, they often do not wear protective suits while spraying pesticides, exposing them to respiratory diseases and malignant tumors.

Rural Women Overwhelmed by Responsibilities

The reality of rural female farmers, who carry the bulk of the load in rural activities, demonstrates to everyone the significant role they play, as we find that female farmers are responsible for producing food in agricultural lands in order to support the family, and they are also responsible for raising animals. In this regard, Professor Aisha Al-Mufti said, “We find that the rural women are entirely responsible for providing the basic needs for their families, in addition to playing an important part in childrearing, fieldwork, household work, and child care. Female farmers are also responsible for fetching water and firewood, consuming a lot of time and energy, especially since water and firewood are usually only available in places far from the village.”

According to Al-Mufti, rural women in Yemen spend about 15 hours on agricultural and domestic work. Men, however, are the ones who seize the revenue of agricultural or animal products and they buy their demands, disregarding what is needed for the family or the women, so they get more from it than women do. This is due to the fact that it is shameful for women to visit the marketplaces in most rural communities, whether to buy or sell.

Solutions & Suggestions

One of the key requirements for eliminating poverty, ignorance, and the risks and challenges that they face in Yemen is the development of the country’s female farmers. This is also important for advancing the agricultural industry and promoting female farmers, who perform the majority of the labor in the agricultural sector. This can be accomplished by uniting the efforts of individuals, institutions, as well as public and private bodies. According to Professor Aisha Al-Mufti, “The only way to achieve community integration is to raise awareness and offer guidance in order to create sustainable development, eliminate poverty and underdevelopment, and enhance the skills of female farmers so they can play an active part in the economy. Additionally, female farmers need to receive vocational, health, and intellectual training to equip them to face the risks and difficulties they encounter when working in agriculture.”

It is essential to shut down stores that sell poisons and illegal pesticides, and to require that pesticides be sprayed by professionals before using any pesticides. Additionally, it is important to inform and educate the customers about the risks and negative effects of applying the pesticide indiscriminately.

“Female farmers need to be made aware of the need of using protective clothing while applying pesticides, as well as the advantages of utilizing traditional disease-control techniques and minimizing the application of pesticides. In agriculture, both men and women must work side by side, and that heavy duties that are not suitable for women should be assigned to men. Men are required to help their wives, sisters, or mothers with chores, tend to agricultural crops, and fetch water and fuel,” she added.

According to Ms. Khairiya Al-Damasi, Director of the Rural Women’s Development Department in Yarim District, Ibb Governorate, “Female farmers and agricultural workers must receive the necessary training and direction to deal with agricultural pesticides safely and effectively, in addition to providing the necessary protective equipment to protect the skin, respiratory system, and reduce exposure to animal waste, in order to protect them from these risks. Additionally, it is necessary to promote and embrace sustainable farming methods that reduce reliance on agricultural pesticides and enhance environmental health in order to ensure that living on farms is clean and healthy.”

She emphasized that female farmers should obtain the necessary training to deal with chemicals and review the guidance and awareness information related to occupational safety and health in agriculture. Moreover, governments and institutions concerned with agriculture, health and the environment should also offer support and guidance to female farmers to protect their health and safety and reduce possible risks in the long term.

According to Ms. Khairiya Al-Damasi, in light of the current conditions and the consequences of the conflict, official efforts to address the needs of rural female farmers are ineffective because they are not currently given top priority. Therefore, local and international civil society organizations must work together to provide rural female farmers with health protection programs, raise their capabilities and provide them with high levels of education comparable to those given to their male partners, and strengthen their economic capabilities by providing them with livestock and grain.

Fifty-Year-Old Shamaah Stays Resilient in Farming Despite Limited Income and Resources

Banana farming is one of the most significant agricultural activities worldwide, because it is not a seasonal fruit and is grown throughout the year. Due to its affordable pricing in comparison to other fruits, some call it the fruit of the poor.

By: Ahmed Bajoaim
 Women in Development and Peace

Our story centers on a woman and her husband who, despite their old age and the difficulty of carrying on in this difficult and exhausting field, which necessitates double efforts, extensive experience, and knowledge to overcome obstacles and achieve success, are motivated by determination and persistence in planting banana trees, numbering more than 240 seedlings.

Shamaah Yaslam is a 51-year-old farmer from the suburbs of the city of Mukalla in Hadramout Governorate, in the south of the country, who has three children. Shamaah, whose name means "candle," embodied several characteristics of her name, as she guides and lights the way of many of her female farmer peers, inspiring them to hold onto hope. She tries to do her best to ease the burdens on her husband Faraj Salem, a farmer who is seven years older than her. They work tirelessly in agriculture, which is their only source of income, from the early hours of the morning until the sun sets, just like two bees.

Agricultural Challenges

The farmer Shamaah and her husband described the difficulties they face, saying, "We work on a farm owned by my father-in-law, covering an area of an acre and a half. We use to cultivate a variety of fruits like bananas, a few mango trees, papayas, and palm trees. However, we did not completely invest in the land because we lacked the resources such as money, water, and labor to develop it. Moreover, there are only two of us working on it, so the cultivated area is about half an acre, almost a third of the land."

"We and eight neighboring farms draw water from the water springs in the nearby area through traditional irrigation channels that are constructed from the site of the spring to the farms. If there's a substantial amount of rain, water is distributed equally throughout the land every four days. When there isn't enough rain, the spring water supply is cut off, so we must irrigate our fields with wells, which is quite expensive for the farmers because fuel is so expensive to run the pumps. We use seven to eight 20-liter canisters of diesel per month, which, at the current exchange rate, would cost the farmer about 133 thousand riyals," Shamaah added.

"Owing to the availability of spring water that reaches the farms free of charge, we continue working in our farms. Otherwise, many farmers would have been forced to leave their fields as a result of the high costs of fuel that is beyond the farmers' capacity, causing huge losses. Additionally, the scarcity of fertilizers on the local market drives farmers to purchase them on the black market at a price that is three times higher than usual, which has a direct impact on crop productivity," she continued.

"The Chapala floods that hit Hadramout Governorate in 2015 swept away nearly a quarter of an acre from our farm, which increased our suffering. We have not received any support or compensation for that to date," she added.

Facing the Challenges with Determination

Despite the challenges and obstacles faced by the farmer Shamaah and her husband, they have continued to work in this field for 35 years without being bored, because it is the only source of income for them and their three children.



ren. "Through continuous work on the farm, we were able to overcome some challenges and adapt to them, and these obstacles eventually became commonplace and normal in agriculture," she said.

Although Shamaah and her husband were unable to fully utilize the land, they were nevertheless able to meet their basic needs by cultivating bananas in spite of the current hardships the country has been experiencing.

Three years after the hurricane that significantly damaged their farm, in 2018, Shamaah was able to save enough money to purchase 19

sheep to improve their living conditions and diversify their income by utilizing the farm's abundant grass and expanding the number of banana trees.

About the percentage of their financial income from selling bananas, as well as other fruits such as mangoes, papayas, and palm trees, Faraj, Shamaah's husband, stated, "The financial income varies from month to month depending on the quantity of production and the price of selling."

Faraj affirmed that the average sale price of bananas is about 170,000 Yemeni riyals each

month, which is more than 2,000,000 Yemeni riyals annually. Regarding the other fruits, they are irregular and seasonal, and the percentage of sales every year is roughly 800 thousand riyals, while the farm's total yearly income is 2,080,000 riyals. He explained that half of this amount goes to his father, who is the owner of the farm, after deducting the costs of agricultural materials such as fertilizer, etc., and that the rest of the financial return is being used to allocate a certain amount to expand the cultivated area.

Needs

Shamaah claimed that farmers confront numerous challenges that cause many of them to leave this profession, including the difficulty of obtaining water and the high cost of fuel that operates the pumps, in addition to the complete absence of the government's role in helping farmers. This is because the government would help increase local production by requesting that international organizations provide farmers with solar energy systems and fertilizers, as well as by holding courses for workers in this field on modern methods that help increase crop production.

In addition, media reports stated that the production of bananas declined to 123 thousand tons during 2020, compared to the production of 2010, as it amounted to 133 thousand tons, according to the report. This decline is likely due to the scarcity of rain in the provinces that are famous for growing bananas, namely Al-Hodeidah, Abyan, Lahj and Hadramout, in addition to the continued depletion of the underground water reserves during the past years.

Shamaah and her husband were able to continue working in this field for many years despite the obstacles and challenges they faced. They still had youthful energies despite their advanced age, which allowed them to construct a success story that served as an inspiration for perseverance and patience despite the dire circumstances that the entire Yemeni population faces.

The success of this farmer shows that it is possible to overcome obstacles, and it also serves as a reminder that any goal is achievable with persistence, hard effort, creativity, and a strong will to succeed.

Resilient Fragility: An Intimate Glimpse into a Farmer's Journey from the Heart of the Yemeni Countryside

By: Afrah Borji
 Women in Development and Peace

Nima Ahmed Haidar (42 years old) hails from the village of Al-Ghaish in the Bura District, located in the eastern part of Al-Hodeidah Governorate. As a mother of three sons and one daughter, with the youngest not yet reaching five years of age, Nima shoulders the responsibilities of both a farmer and a caretaker. Her days commence even before the break of dawn, enduring ceaselessly until nightfall, bearing witness to a story etched upon her face, where wrinkles trace the passage of time and vitality gradually fades away.

Nima's arduous journey unfolds against the backdrop of early morning rays and the gentle transition from darkness to light. Her daily routine encompasses tending to her flock of sheep and cows, procuring water and firewood, managing household affairs, and nurturing her children.

However, her tribulations manifest themselves as the day progresses, compounded by the persistent agony in her knees and the swelling of her feet.

Pre-dawn

Nima's day begins before the break of dawn as she rises to fulfill her family's food requirements. She initiates the process by preparing dough, allowing it to rest until after the dawn prayer. Despite her eyes being swollen from the wood smoke, she perseveres, commencing the preparation of bread in the traditional mufa, followed by breakfast.

In Yemen, numerous rural women continue to rely on firewood for cooking, primarily due to the scarcity and exorbitant prices of gas. This preference for firewood over gas is prevalent among most Yemeni families. The mufa, a pottery craft tool, is frequently employed by women for bread preparation, while rural women employ various other methods for these culinary tasks.

After ensuring her children are fed and ready for school, Nima endeavors to expedite her tasks, aware that she still has a substantial workload to complete before noon. Once she has reassured herself about her children's well-being, she hastens

towards the valleys and mountains to gather firewood or fodder, sometimes both. During this time, she entrusts her child Zainab to the care of her elderly grandmother until her return from work.

Increased Responsibilities

Nima explains her routine, stating, "I make it a point to venture into the valley or desert to gather the necessary fodder and firewood. Both commodities are essential and must be readily available in our compound. Once we have an adequate supply of firewood and fodder, I join my husband in cultivating our land."

Nima's responsibilities extend beyond childcare; she is also actively involved in livestock rearing. Their livestock comprises seven sheep and one cow, and it is her duty to ensure they are properly cared for, providing them with the necessary fodder and water.

Various Tasks

After enduring a challenging morning commute, Nima is determined to return home before noon, as she still has the responsibility of preparing lunch for her family. However, if she has committed to cultivating the land, she must remember to carry a 20-liter water bottle with her. This water is sourced from nearby springs or puddles and is meant to serve as a supply for her household upon her return from the cultivation work.

Nima's family is the proud owner of a series of agricultural terraces dedicated to cultivating coffee crops. Alongside her husband, they must diligently tend to and nurture these terraces. With a voice filled with distress and a visibly exhausted, slender frame, Nima continues to recount her daily hardships, stating, "Once I ensure that my children have had their lunch, I take a brief respite from my responsibilities and visit either my mother or my friends. I find solace in their company for a short while, just until late afternoon approaches. Then, I resume my work on the land, for the land does not reward those who neglect it."

Pre-evening

Right after the afternoon, Nima embarks on her task of tilling the land. However, she must not for-



get to bring along a barrel (a gallon of 20 liters) or two or three empty tanks. These containers are essential for her to collect water from the nearby pond, which is approximately a 20-minute walk from her house. She diligently fills the containers and transports them back and forth, ensuring she completes this task half an hour to an hour before sunset. This is done immediately after she finishes her work of cultivating the land.

In the Yemeni countryside, particularly in mountainous regions like the Bura district in Hodeidah, reliance on rainwater and ponds for water storage is the norm. Many individuals have their own private ponds, some of which are conveniently located near their homes. However, others have ponds situated closer to their lands, which can be hours away from their residences. During times of drought, when the water supply near their homes is depleted, they are left with no choice but to gather water from springs or those tanks located far from their place of residence.

An Unfinished Journey

As the darkness of the night sets in, Nima's journey is far from over. Despite the challenges, she diligently continues her responsibilities. She prepares dinner for her children, tends to their needs, resolves their quarrels, and arranges their bedding for a good night's sleep.

Nima shares her daily routine, explaining, "I ensure that my children are fed and taken care of, and I only find respite when they are all peacefully asleep. It is then that I engage in night prayers and Witr prayers, striving to retire early as there are still numerous tasks awaiting me before dawn breaks."

Pregnancy Pains & Farming Hardships

In the midst of her farming duties, Nima, like any resilient mother, endures the hardships of life, all while masking her pain with a radiant smile. She candidly speaks about her struggles, encompassing the challenges of both pregnancy and tending to the land. "I am the one carrying

out these tasks, even while pregnant. Occasionally, my husband assists me in fetching water, granting me some respite from work during the final months of pregnancy. However, I am solely responsible for other household chores, such as logging, gathering fodder, and fetching water."

Nima's life revolves around these responsibilities, whether she is expecting a child or not. She responded to my inquiry with unwavering determination, a smile adorning her face. It was as if she anticipated my surprise and sought to dispel it by stating, "I am alone in this journey. I take care of my children, my husband, my family, and everything else. Even my sheep and cows receive my utmost attention and care in every possible way."

A Day Off

On Fridays, considered a day of rest, Nima's tasks are relatively lighter. She dedicates this day to washing the accumulated family laundry from the past week. Additionally, she fetches water from various sources and prepares a variety of food dishes. However, if circumstances demand her presence on the land, she works tirelessly from the afternoon until sunset. These challenges persist even on her designated "rest" day, as Nima refers to it.

Indelible Memories

The life of Nima mirrors that of countless women in the Yemeni countryside. She embodies the roles of educator, farmer, and devoted family caretaker. Her resilience and unwavering determination make her a brave warrior amidst adversity. The image of Nima, burdened with bundles of firewood and fodder on her back, remains etched in one's memory. It is a sight that evokes empathy from any compassionate soul. Despite her acceptance and contentment with this life, her emaciated frame, weathered facial features, red eyes from the smoke of burning firewood, calloused hands devoid of tenderness, and the concealed emotions behind her smile all tell tales of countless tragedies and immense suffering.

Yemeni Women's Agricultural Participation Hindered by Insufficient Support from Local and International Organizations

Yemeni women play a crucial role in the country's agricultural and economic growth. Despite having limited and conventional agricultural skills, they have made significant advancements in the production of food and crops, animal care, and natural resources. Moreover, Yemeni female farmers experienced numerous challenges following the outbreak of the conflict, which resulted in a lack of food security. Thus, in order to achieve sustainable development in Yemen, they require extensive support from both local and international organizations.



By: Hebah Mohammed
Women in Development and Peace

Constraints & Conventional Tools

Yemen is known for its agricultural areas distributed across most of its governorates, and Ibb is the most famous Yemeni agricultural city due to the heavy rains and fertile soil. However, it suffers from a lack of agricultural resources and aid, in addition to the absence of local and international interest in the development of agriculture. Furthermore, most of the workers in its agricultural lands are women due to the conflict and the displacement of most males.

According to Nima Al-Othmani, a female farmer who owns agricultural fields in Wadi Al-Sahul, Ibb Governorate, "I work in agriculture in our three valleys here in Al-Sahul region with my four daughters. In light of the challenging living conditions and climate changes that have impacted agriculture, our work is quite challenging. We suffer from a lack of support and services from the competent authorities or private organizations. I have been working as a farmer since my childhood, I grew up on these fields. In the last thirty years, we have not had much support, whether it be in the form of money, seeds, or modern agricultural equipment. Therefore, we work independently."

The conflict's repercussions prevent the female farmers from pursuing their passion of agriculture. In addition to the lack of agricultural initiatives that allow women to continue agricultural growth, there is also a lack of a real role for international and local organizations in providing the most basic resources.

"Although Al-Sahul area is a top agricultural region known for cultivating a wide variety of crops and has the potential to address the majority of the food security issues in Ibb Governorate, the majority of development projects were not focused on farmers, particularly Yemeni female farmers, since they make up the majority of those who work in these valleys. They therefore need the required funding to develop their agricultural projects and raise agricultural production. In addition, most of the women here need training and empowerment in a way that keeps pace with the development in the agricultural sector," Al-Othmani said.

Al-Othmani stated that she had heard that some organizations provide development programs to aid rural women who work in agricultural fields in the majority of the nearby villages, but these projects do not actually benefit female farmers. Additionally, not all of them receive the support, and it is not as comprehensive as they require. Rather, it is distributed to a certain number of women, while others are deprived of it.

According to Eng. Mohammed Abu-Huliaqa, director of the Agriculture Office in Hubaish district of Ibb Governorate, the

role of organizations in assisting rural female farmers falls short of the intended objectives of agricultural development. Organizations, particularly global ones, do not offer sustainable assistance to female farmers to help them become food self-sufficient. Therefore, they are unable to make any progress with the interventions that we hear about, because rural female farmers lack even the most basic requirements, such as encouragement, awareness and guidance. Accordingly, the government, represented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, extension offices, and regional agricultural organizations, must assist female farmers.

He suggested that in order for rural female farmers to achieve agricultural self-sufficiency, they must be given attention by including them in agricultural extension awareness campaigns, including them in agricultural associations, and having a presence and a share in everything related to them.

Underachieving Interventions

There are unremitting efforts being made by some organizations for a number of development projects that gave farmers of both sexes full support in order to increase productivity and raise the standard of living for many Yemeni households. However, it does not meet the objective of eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development by including all farming families in rural areas, including women.

According to Mohamed Naji, an engineer who worked for a number of organizations specializing in agricultural projects, "I have worked on food security, livelihood restoration, and cash for work projects with several humanitarian organizations. In most of the projects I worked on, women received 20–30% of the funding, and some were even given to families led by women. Among the projects that were offered were home gardens and home breeding of livestock. These projects undoubtedly contribute to improving the food and income of rural people as well as those who have benefitted from and used them effectively. As we all know, organizations work hard to direct support, but the government is meant to provide direction and coordination."

According to Eng. Mona Ali, head of Rural Women Agricultural Cooperative Association, "We respectfully acknowledge the significant role that most international and local organizations have played in assisting farmers in the majority of Yemen's rural areas by offering financial support for female farmers in the form of equipment, improved seeds, etc., in addition to hosting workshops and awareness programs in agricultural extension and coping with climate change."

"Despite the challenging living conditions that we are experiencing throughout the conflict, many rural agricultural families—primarily women—leave agriculture



Nima Al-Othmani

and land. As a result, families fall into a state of despair and frustration, as they are unable to return to agricultural land and revive it again under the pretext of poverty and the high prices of agricultural seeds and fertilizers. Therefore, women today need psychological and educational support more than anything else," she added.

"There are significant efforts being made by some authorities to improve the agricultural sector for women working in it. Construction of water storage tanks and ground basins was carried out in Amran Governorate by the United Nations Development Program in 2022 with funding from the International Development Association. This helped to increase food production and agricultural production while also providing female farmers with modern agricultural equipment," Mona added.

According to Eng. Ahmed Al-Sharkasi, director of the Agriculture Office in Al-Sayani District in Ibb Governorate, "Al-Sayani is one of the agricultural areas that is famous for growing wheat, maize, and legumes, and most of those working in agriculture are women. Everyone works on their own; neither the appropriate authorities nor even international organizations provide any assistance to these agricultural field workers. Since the beginning of the conflict in Yemen, the agricultural industry has almost completely collapsed due to the challenges and difficulties it has faced. There has been a lack of funding and support directed to agricultural offices and farmers, both women and men."

Al-Sharkasi pointed out that, before the conflict, one of the organizations had intervened by providing agricultural supplies and a temporary irrigation system for some agricultural regions. However, some male and female farmers sold those agricultural supplies.

"The current state of agriculture requires intervention by the government to meet the

needs of farmers by providing them with support, agricultural requirements, and addressing the needs of women, such as home gardens. Additionally, there is a need for providing training courses in the field of developing rural women in agricultural sectors," he concluded.

Developmental Projects

In several rural areas of Yemen, a number of organizations have presented developmental projects that support women in the agricultural field, targeting a certain number of households each rural community. Eng. Mona Ali mentioned some of these interventions, saying, "Some organizations play an active and constructive role in assisting women in the agricultural sector, especially when it comes to assisting in the support of productive assets produced by agricultural crops. Among these projects is the implementation of field surveys of the local market to assess the economic obstacles and opportunities for women in the agricultural value chains to empower women in this sector. Additionally, the financial support to enable women to create income through loans or grants for female farmers to help them develop their agricultural projects and to purchase the essential agricultural equipment and supplies is another project that is offered to women."

"The organizations provide training courses and workshops for female farmers to improve their skills in several areas, including preserving the germplasm of local seeds, dealing with climate change and managing farms, modern irrigation techniques, and methods of preparing natural local fertilizers. Some organizations provide advice and technical support to female farmers in terms of improving farming methods, effective use of available resources, and dealing with plant pests and diseases. In addition, the organizations work to enhance the economic empowerment of female farmers by providing suitable job opportunities, increasing their income, achieving food security, and enhancing their ability to make administrative, financial and social decisions," she added.

Neglecting Farmlands

According to Mona, we need to share agricultural knowledge and pass it on from our grandparents to modern women, because we are witnessing a great failure in agriculture and animal husbandry. Indeed, most girls do not realize the importance of agricultural land in improving the income of the family and society. As a result, we require a comprehensive agricultural renaissance in collaboration with all governmental and business institutions as well as civil, local, and global organizations. We also need to direct the media to agricultural extension and educate female farmers about addressing climate change, modern farming methods, and paying attention to old seeds, which are almost non-existent among many

farmers today. Accordingly, organizations cannot eliminate poverty and achieve food security or fulfill their lofty goals on their own.

Amal Abdulkarim Al-Eryani, Food Security and Livelihoods Project Officer at the National Foundation for Development and Humanitarian Response, emphasized that civil society organizations played, and continue to play, the following roles for female farmers:

1. Spreading awareness of the value of women's contributions to projects and suggestions that affect the community as a whole, incorporating them into the selection of community committees, even if they only represent 10% of the votes, and enhancing their effective role in society.

2. Supporting them with a number of sheep and goats or poultry, in addition to providing agricultural seedlings such as local coffee or ornamental plants, along with addressing other rural needs, will help them improve their standard of living for themselves and their families.

3. Training them on the use of agricultural tools or inputs that were obtained from donors, such as training them on modern methods of breeding, how to make model barns, and how to make complex, concentrated and nutritious diets for sheep or goats. They should also be trained on the mechanisms used in raising laying hens (meaning chickens that are raised for the purpose of producing eggs), or chickens that are raised for food, because the breeding methods are completely different in the two cases. They should also receive training on how to sell and market the product, as well as effective marketing strategies inside and outside of the local community. They should also learn how primary and rapid inoculations work for them.

4. Producing documentaries about successful women after providing them with support and assistance and reaching the stage of success and self-sufficiency, and sharing their success stories with others to inspire people to work and participate.

"We currently have a project that our organization is preparing, and it targets farmers and rural women in general in three governorates, namely Al-Mahweet, Al-Hodeidah, and Sa'ada. Training and awareness courses will be provided to them, and they will be supported by a number of sheep and goats," Al-Eryani added.

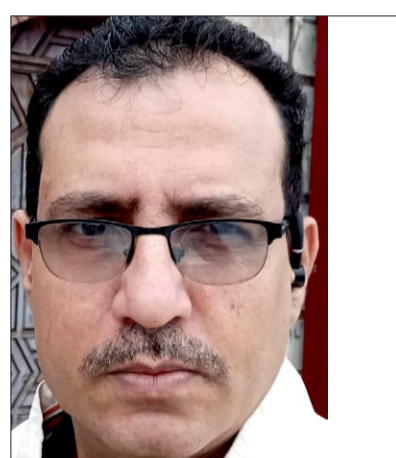
Yemeni women working in agricultural fields play an important role in maintaining food security and economic stability in Yemen, and they contribute to providing job and income opportunities and strengthening the role of women in society as a whole. Therefore, the government and the international community must work to provide the necessary support and protection for Yemeni women working in agriculture in order to improve their economic and social status.

Legitimate Rights Denied: Women Farmers Falling Short of Requirements

Since female farmers play an effective and important role in managing agricultural lands, have the ability to adapt to sudden climate changes, and ensure food security and good nutrition, we conducted a survey in order to take the opinions of a large segment of society and their point of view on this issue. Among the respondents to this survey are those specialized in the field of food engineering as well as female farmers who talk about their demands and needs in agricultural land.



Mustafa Al-Maqtari



Fawaz Al-Athri

By: Afrah Borji
Women in Development and Peace

According to Mustafa Al-Maqtari, an agricultural engineer and training consultant, “Yemeni rural women in the farming community make up 60% of the labor force in the agricultural production process, as well as in the duties and activities associated with agriculture, beginning with the processes of leveling and preparing the land, sowing, and then caring for the crops, whether they are grain crops or other crops. They also perform weeding and hoeing (stirring and removing the dry top layer of the agricultural land around and between the crop plants without damaging the plants in order to create the perfect environment for the plants’ healthy growth) until the harvest stage, when the crop is harvested, in addition to collecting fodder to feed the animals.”

Female Farmers’ Requirements

“Who are the women working in agriculture?” Al-Maqtari wondered in regard to the needs and requirements of female farmers. Are they the landowners who run the farm, the wives who work on their husbands’ properties, the daughters who work on their dads’ farms, or are they the women who work with others for pay, especially during the agricultural seasons?

“It is clear that women working in agriculture are divided into three categories, each category having different capabilities and requirements. To further illustrate and highlight the significance of this issue, it should be noted that Yemen’s rural agricultural community generally views women and the rest of the family—youth, children, and other women—as the primary workers on their farms. Unfortunately, their efforts in agriculture are not valued when determining the cost of production, and they are not given a clear and explicit compensation for their efforts,” Al-Maqtari answered the question he posed.

“Women who work in agriculture have demonstrated that they are knowledgeable, skilled, and experienced in the agricultural industry, but in a traditional way. Further-

more, women participate in the majority of agricultural processes, including sowing, along with other agricultural activities, and are just as important and productive as males, if not more so. However, the only operation that women do not perform on agricultural land is the plowing stage, as men perform this duty using a plow or traditional crafts,” Al-Maqtari noted.

Regarding the requirements that female farmers should receive, Al-Maqtari said, “As I mentioned above, all groups have agricultural needs, most importantly is awareness, followed by agricultural extension, and the implementation of training and rehabilitation programs for female farmers in the agricultural sector, especially in the field of combating agricultural diseases and insects. In addition, they must be made aware of how to deal with pesticides, including how to use them safely and correctly, because many women working in the agri-

cultural sector use pesticides in the wrong and unsafe way, which causes them many diseases.”

“More specifically, there are very few female farmers who own property and manage the agricultural process; instead, the majority of women working in the agricultural industry work on the properties owned by their husbands or fathers. Moreover, when their husbands pass away or depart in search of a job and a livelihood, whether it be for internal or external emigration, the majority of them take on responsibility for the family, children, as well as farm work. There are no women working in the agricultural sector who work with others for monetary compensation, except for a few simple cases in some governorates, such as the areas of the entire Tihama plains, or in Lahj Governorate, and some districts of Abyan, as most of them work during the reaping and harvesting seasons. There are only a few women employed by the Ministry of Agriculture and its branch offices as employees, agricultural engineers, or in the administrative, extension, and agricultural information fields,” Al-Maqtari added.

“One of the main requirements for female farmers is also to provide incentive loans and facilitate them for those who own the lands, are responsible for agricultural lands, and manage them to carry out small and medium businesses, activities, and projects in agricultural production. Additionally, providing support and free grants for the implementation of such projects is essential,” Al-Maqtari concluded.

He emphasized the significance of increasing awareness of the necessity of measuring the cost and value for the work that women perform on the land, regardless of whether the land belongs to them, their husbands, or their fathers in order to insure that it is counted for the entire worth of any crop or agricultural activity. Regarding those who work for wages on the lands of others, particularly in the regions of Lahj and Tihama, awareness should be raised and legislative frameworks for the rights of women working in this field should be created. Additionally, laws should be passed that forbid exploiting or abusing them by paying low wages due to their need for this work.

Women’s Significance in Agriculture

According to Engineer Fawaz Al-Athri, “Women are regarded as one of the active components in agricultural development because they naturally contribute through their involvement in the agricultural operations they carry out, such

as harvesting grain, vegetable and fruit crops, participating in municipal fertilization operations, and storing some crops at home.”

“The significance of their job arises when the fathers are absent, whether that absence is brought on by emigration, death, or the inability to carry out agricultural operations as a result of a specific ailment. As a result, the women commit to cultivating the family land for domestic use and to give the family members the necessary food security,” he continued.

“In addition, women perform a variety of other tasks, such as managing and raising livestock on a farm or in the home to help the family meet its material needs and providing food to the family members made of animal protein, milk, and its byproducts to ensure food security. Additionally, they manage water resources on a household level by getting water from locations outside the home, storing it, and using it to meet the needs of the family as well as domestic animals like sheep, cows, and goats. Additionally, women’s work in agriculture is crucial for providing domestic fuel since they collect firewood from nearby farms or from other locations to meet the household’s daily

fuel demands,” Al-Athri confirmed.

Al-Athri believes that women make a big financial contribution since they save money and effort for the entire family, which improves living standards. Therefore, building women’s capacities through empowerment projects of their own is one of the most crucial requirements and capabilities that must be available in order to achieve sustainable development in agricultural land and support female farmers. Thus, they must exercise their right to use their agricultural resources away from the decisions made by men. Additionally, they require projects that enable rural girls and women to get the necessary skills for agricultural marketing and decision-making by enhancing their capacity for leadership and enrolling them in agricultural associations.

According to Eng. Yassin Al-Absi, a horticultural specialist in the Agriculture Office in Taiz, and an agricultural consultant with Al-Awn Foundation for Response and Development (ARD), “Yemeni women are farmers by nature, especially in the rural areas of our country, so they require encouragement and assistance in the agricultural sector, particularly when it comes to creating the home gardens for all Yemeni families, whether they live in rural or urban areas.”

“We, along with local and international organizations and institutions, always implement projects for home gardens, and we usually target women. Thus, small greenhouses should be provided for them in order to ensure the continuation of such kind of agriculture. They also need simple financial support, agricultural inputs, and manual agricultural tools in order to continue working in such gardens, and thus we can overcome malnutrition for children and pregnant and lactating women,” Al-Absi said.

Public Opinions

According to Iman Hadi, “The first and most crucial prerequisite for female farmers is the support and gratitude of their relatives, especially their male partners—husbands, dads, brothers—with whom they collaborate closely in the agricultural industry. There are other important demands that women want, including the availability of agricultural capabilities and tools that facilitate their work and save them time and effort. Therefore, due to the nature of our country, as the vast majority of the population is rural, and the fact that many rural areas depend entirely on the profession of agriculture, in which rural women have a greater share in it, the government should also pay attention to the field of agriculture, which holds the first place in the field of economy in our nation.”

Women have the right to work in agriculture if they so choose, particularly in our country where the rural to urban population ratio is higher and where agriculture is the primary occupation of the rural population, the majority of whom are wholly dependent on women in the industry either because of the absence of men or because of their preoccupation. Moreover, there are some rural areas where males do not work in agriculture and instead depend on women to perform all agricultural work, even when men are present, due to the availability of some cultures and traditions that view these tasks as among the responsibilities of women.

“Female farmers are doing great work because, in addition to household and family responsibilities, they work very hard outside the home. “This is how Munira Al-Tayyar, a journalist, started her talk about female farmers. Regarding their needs and requirements, she said, “Female farmers need training, qualification and more knowledge about agriculture to keep up with new developments in agriculture, especially with climate changes. When they have knowledgeable about contemporary technology, the changes that occur, and how to confront and overcome them, they will need modern machinery and better seeds and fertilizers.”

Women are of great importance, whether in the agricultural sector or in other sectors, as they are effective in all institutions and undertake many tasks just like their male partners.

In the Yemeni countryside, women do not engage in traditional plowing, which is the only agricultural process they do not participate in



Young Women Drive Tangible Progress in the Agriculture Sector

We have always been familiar with the saying, "Homelands are built by its youth," and this truth resonates with us in our daily lives. Just as young people play a crucial role in shaping and advancing society, young women are making tangible efforts to support Yemen's agriculture sector. They are emerging as key drivers in various agricultural disciplines, bringing strength and vitality to rural life.

By: Hanan Hussein
Women in Development and Peace

The potential contribution of young women in boosting agricultural production is immense. Their dedication to improving agricultural techniques, adopting modern methods for crop and livestock management, and enhancing overall productivity is noteworthy. Unlike the elderly, their youthful energy allows them to effectively care for agricultural crops at every stage, resulting in the production of high-quality yields.

Young female farmers had the opportunity to participate in online training workshops where they learned the latest farming techniques and sustainable farming methods, and how to apply them to their agricultural areas to get the greatest results. They were also able to use modern irrigation techniques and new agricultural methods, including greenhouses, which contributed to saving water and energy and improved the efficiency of agricultural resources used.

This can be evidenced by the success story of the farmer Ahlam Ulayah, a woman from Hamedan district of Sana'a Governorate, who owns a farm using a greenhouse system that has allowed her to conserve a lot of resources. The outcomes produced by employing this methodology were better than those produced by traditional farming methods, so she views her project as successful and noteworthy.

Women can play an important role in raising awareness and education about the importance of sustainable agriculture and environmental protection. For example, Amina Abu-Talib, an environmental activist, promoted the value of agriculture and the provision of healthy food in a suitable setting through awareness-raising initiatives in the environmental field. "Agriculture contributes to the spread of green spaces, and promotes the culture cultivation of crops with a focus on environmental sustainability and food security, all of which are beneficial to society as a whole. Along with sustaining the environment, it also contributes to survival of humanity, because it helps to achieve strategic goals on many levels, including combating climate change, as we can reduce its risks through agriculture," she said.

The agricultural sector is a great entrepreneurial opportunity in Yemen, allowing many young women to be entrepreneurs in this sector by setting up small agricultural projects or running crop trading companies, and this is what Umm Yusef did, as she successfully succeeded in this field with the help of her father.

Umm Youssef, a medicinal herb seller from Taiz Governorate, talked about her project with passion, as she considered it a good source of income that also benefits the community. She also saw it as a significant source of economy, as she uses this herb to offer health and medical solutions. "The idea of growing the moringa herb came when I was searching for successful projects, so my father had consulted a person in Al-Hodeidah Governorate about importing the seeds of this herb from China. He told us that he knows a doctor who has a farm where this plant is grown, so we went to him and he gave us its seeds. Then, we planted it in Al-Zaydiyah and Al-Qanawes areas. The outcome was incredible, as within three months the plant had grown quickly and we had begun to reap its benefits," she said.

"This project is currently regarded as a household project because we were unable to expand it, and production is still low due to our inability to develop it. Many people are



Umm Youssef



Khalid Muhammad Al-Dubai



Amina Abu-Talib



Iman Bazraa

unaware of the herb's existence, benefits, and general importance. However, we are trying to educate the Yemeni public about this plant that treats more than 300 diseases, including diabetes and high blood pressure. It is also considered a natural food supplement that contains many natural vitamins and minerals such as zinc, calcium, potassium, copper, iron and protein, in addition to other vitamins including E, A, B6 and B12 in large quantities," she added.

"We are now working to educate farmers about the benefits of this plant and its significance. If they live in hot climates, we want to encourage them to plant this tree in front of their homes or in their community to promote everyone's health and to replace unhealthy drinks with this beneficial plant," she continued.

In terms of financial benefit from this project, she said, "Even though we are making good money, we wish the conflicts would end so that development could proceed more quickly and we could increase the rate of production and export it abroad in the future."

According to her father, Khalid Muhammad Al-Dubai, a researcher in medicinal herbs and nutritional supplements and a geological engineer, Umm Youssef's investment of this herb is one of the pioneering projects. Ancient Yemeni civilizations were heavily involved in the operations of producing and exploring medicinal plants. The geological and environmental diversity of the soil in Yemen helped them achieve great success in cultivating some medicinal herbs, which benefits the farmer and the consumer alike. For instance, certain climatic conditions are required for the growth of some medicinal herbs, including, the black seed herb, turmeric, ginger, and thyme.

Al-Dubai explained that in order for the moringa herb to grow quickly and produce as expected, it must be grown in hot, coastal areas with high temperatures, such as the regions of Tihama, Al-Hodeidah, the coasts of

Hadramout and Abyan, as well as any other area where the temperature rises. He believes that this plant and its advantages are starting to gain attention on a global scale.

This herb is called Al-Ban tree, or Al-Yuser tree. In Zabid, they call it Al-Full Al-Masri (the Egyptian jasmine) because its flowers are white. There are two types of this tree, the first has long leaves, and it is of Indian origin, which has spread in the world, and the second is the Arabic one that is devoid of leaves and oils are extracted from it.

Al-Dubai claimed that they had tried to grow this plant in Sana'a, but it only grew to a height of about half a meter, then its growth and production stops due to the cold weather of Sana'a. He confirmed that his daughter can extract medicines, cosmetics, and nutritional supplements from this plant, and provide the market with them. He called on the competent authorities to raise awareness of the importance of this plant and to provide support for projects that help in finding a local alternative to many of the products that we import in huge amounts. This is because we have individuals who have projects through which they try to succeed, and they work from home with locally produced goods that are both cheaper and of superior quality.

Additional Skills

On the other hand, in addition to performing agricultural activities, women are more likely to learn about and improve their talents in sectors related to agriculture, such as beekeeping, which includes the production of cosmetics from bee dung and honey. While males tend to beehives and work in the production of honey, women are eager to take advantage of available resources for personal and commercial gain. This is according to Abdulsalam Al-Samawi, the bee official at Bunyan Foundation, stating that women have a major role in benefiting from bee waste, such as beeswax, and making optimal use of it in the production of various, useful and natural

industries, such as the production of cosmetics and a variety of creams and moisturizers for the skin. "Some women make better moisturizers than those imported and sold in markets. Additionally, women produce a variety of beneficial products, such as soaps for the skin and other items," he added.

"Our work primarily focuses on advising, counseling, and educating beekeepers on how to produce bees and create field schools. We also implement a number of counseling workshops and beekeeper training courses, as we have trained approximately 316 beekeepers in the marketing aspect," Abdulsalam added.

"We have activated and rehabilitated the role of development associations, and established beekeeping units within them due to our inability to reach all beekeepers. The work of these associations focused on gathering beekeepers in each region in order to inform us with everything they need in the future, so we were able to reach them and offer them assistance," he added.

According to Salwa Al-Ammari, owner of Nilover (an agricultural nursery), "Currently, young girls are playing a variety of significant responsibilities in the agriculture sector. For example, they can promote sustainable agricultural practices, such as using organic farming methods and reducing the use of pesticides. They can also contribute to the development and use of technology in the agricultural field, as they have the ability to use modern technologies. In general, they helped develop and improve the agricultural sector through their active and innovative participation in all aspects of agricultural and rural work."

Limited Assistance

Iman Bazraa, Director of the Women's Department at the Ministry of Agriculture, claimed that this sector was created to offer assistance, counsel, and guidance to female farmers who live in a conservative society that do not encourage mixing, and where some men do not value women. Therefore, this department was established and aims to

finance any female farmer with livestock. When we assist female farmers, a team from the Ministry pays them a visit together with a representative from the supporting organization. The organization pays for 60% of the assistance by supplying two heads of sheep (one male and one female) in order to enable them to start their projects, and the women contribute the remaining 40% of the assistance they pay in installments.

Iman confirmed that there were many organizations that supported the efforts of female farmers through cooperation with the Women's Department in the Ministry of Agriculture, including the Dutch Relief Alliance, FAO, CARDNE, the Arab Organization, among others, but this support ended in 2014.

Iman noted that the previous project was funded by the Japanese Aid Organization and carried out by the Ministry. She served as the project's director of the Women's Department and oversaw the project, which was in the beekeeping field. The project targeted 90 families, who were gathered in a school, as was the case in previous projects. Then, each family was given eight live hives with bees and boxes for breeding.

"There were indications that a project was developing in 2019, but for unidentified reasons it was not implemented. Women nowadays only make self-efforts and receive no support from any organizations," said Bazraa.

Young women in Yemen can play a crucial role in advancing the agricultural sector by contributing to increasing productivity, developing skills and implementing sustainable programs, in addition to conducting awareness campaigns, education and achieving agricultural entrepreneurship. They can also engage in a variety of activities that could help the local community as a whole by creating job opportunities, achieving economic development, and giving themselves the chance to succeed in society by proving that they can overcome the challenges alongside their male partners.

Agriculture serves as a vital foundation for economies and societal development in countries. The advancement of the human element, particularly women in rural areas, is of utmost importance, as they make up 67% of the workforce in the vegetable sector and approximately 95% in the animal sector. Recognizing this, government entities, as well as international and local organizations, have made it a priority to devise plans and programs aimed at empowering rural women and elevating their status.

Women in Agriculture

Following the Beijing conference, the Yemeni government took significant steps to establish several general departments for women across various sectors, including the Ministry of and Agriculture. In the year 2000, the General Administration for the Development of Rural Women was created under Prime Ministerial Resolution No. (62). This administration was the first of its kind, exclusively dedicated to addressing the issues and concerns of rural women. Consequently, departments and sections have been established in different governorates of the Republic, staffed by agricultural professionals and extension workers who possess the necessary expertise, academic qualifications, and practical experience. These departments provide awareness and extension programs to rural women and the wider rural community. Additionally, they implement programs and projects funded by international organizations.

The General Administration for Women's Development has undertaken various initiatives to enhance the skills and capabilities of professionals engaged in rural development across all governorates. These efforts include training, qualification programs, external exploratory visits, and institutional support in terms of office infrastructure and equipment. Moreover, the administration has facilitated the establishment of a center for marketing rural women's products, a library, and an information center for women, in collaboration with the Dutch embassy. The administration has also partnered with rural women on projects, such as the home gardens initiative on Socotra Island, which received funding from the French Embassy.

During that period, rural women greatly benefited from educational, extension, and training services offered to them in various fields

and programs. These included agriculture, both in crop cultivation and animal husbandry, food industries, modern technologies aimed at reducing time and effort, as well as handicrafts. Such initiatives helped rural women enhance their economic and social status by actively participating in the marketing of their diverse products at local and international centers and exhibitions, which garnered attention and support from donors within international organizations.

However, between 2011 and 2015, the country experienced significant changes that had a profound impact on the representation of rural women, including the General Administration of Rural Women and similar bodies at the governorate level. This was primarily due to the suspension of support from international organizations and the failure to secure the necessary operational budget to implement annual plans and programs aimed at benefiting rural women. Additionally, there was a lack of effective awareness-raising and guidance programs designed to equip staff members with the skills needed to stay updated and develop programs tailored to the specific needs of rural women. Despite these challenges, gradual recovery efforts were made, and emergency relief programs began to be implemented in liberated governorates to assist rural women, bypassing the need for women's departments or agricultural offices. These programs played a role in improving the status of rural women.

Although some local institutions and external organizations introduced poverty reduction programs, these initiatives were often presented without coordination with the representatives of rural women within public administration or agricultural offices at the governorate level. As a result, there was a lack of follow-up and evaluation regarding the effectiveness and impact of these programs. This represents one of the key challenges faced when compiling reliable technical reports to identify needs and propose programs aimed at empowering rural women economically and socially, as well as enhancing the overall well-being of rural families.

Despite the directives from the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Undersecretary of the Agricultural Production Development Sector to support the General Administration for the Development of Rural Women, we continue to face numerous challenges in implementing and resolving even the simplest issues. As a result, the department lags behind other ministry departments in terms of its activities. Some of the significant difficulties encountered by the General Administration for the Development of Rural Women and its branches in the governorates include:

Task overlap with other departments concerning the provision of services to rural women. Exclusion of rural women from awareness programs, guidance, and veterinary services. Neglecting the role of the General Administration for Rural Women's Development as a representative and partner in rural development. While this article does not cover all the difficulties, if we genuinely seek assistance, support, and benefit from grants and aid meant for the development of rural women, the following measures should be taken:

Evaluating the fundamental needs of rural women in the governorates.

Involving representatives of rural women in the Ministry's office or agricultural offices and collaborate with them to propose programs and projects for rural development.

Engaging relevant authorities in discussion regarding the provision and implementation of programs and projects.

Evaluating all programs and projects offered to rural women between 2018 and 2022, determine their effectiveness, acknowledge the positives, address the negatives, and strive for improvement.

Enhancing the efficiency and capacity building of personnel engaged in the development of rural women, aligning their skills with the goals outlined in the National Strategy for Agriculture, the advancement of rural women, and the betterment of their conditions.

Encouraging organizations and entities concerned with women's development to prioritize the development of targeted projects and programs for rural women.

Allocating a dedicated budget within the Ministry's financial plan to implement the proposed plan by the General Administration for the Development of Rural Women.

We have full confidence in the abilities of His Excellency the Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Fisheries, Major General Salem Abdullah Al-Soqotri, to promptly address and resolve the majority of these problems and difficulties. His commitment to facilitating the administration's work, along with the unwavering moral support provided by the Undersecretary of the Agricultural Production Development Sector to all personnel involved in the development of rural women, reinforces our optimism. Under His Excellency's directives, women employed in the agricultural, irrigation, and fisheries sectors have been honored on International Women's Day for two consecutive years. Furthermore, their contributions have been acknowledged during the celebration of Rural Women's Day

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By: Eng. Nadia Hameed Sultan
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and World Food Day.

Nevertheless, our aspirations extend beyond these achievements. We seek substantial support and assistance to propel the General Administration for the Development of Rural Women forward. This includes presenting proposals, training programs, projects, as well as awareness and guidance initiatives for rural women to potential donors and financiers who are interested in supporting such proposals.

Women in Agriculture: A Key Driver for Local Economic Growth

By: Dr. Suzanne Mofteh
Women in Development and Peace

Agriculture serves as the foundation of the national economy, serving as a pillar of economic growth, development, and cultural advancement for civilizations and nations. In Yemen's rich history, it was the expertise and ingenuity of its people that allowed them to thrive. They excelled in constructing dams, cisterns, and agricultural terraces, harnessing the mountainous terrain and transforming it into lush green gardens. Even the desert was cultivated, turning it into flourishing agricultural meadows. These achievements earned Yemen the name "Arabia Felix" in the past, and it was recognized as "the good land" in the Quran.

Spanning across governorates, Yemen boasts expansive and fertile agricultural areas peppered throughout its diverse regions. Each region possesses a distinct climate, resulting in a wide range of agricultural crops. For instance, the eastern and central regions specialize in wheat cultivation, whereas legumes, vegetables, and fruits thrive in the remaining regions. This diversity of crops is truly a blessing bestowed upon this land by God.

According to reports, the agricultural and livestock sectors in Yemen contribute 23% to the country's GDP and employ half of the working population. However, despite these statistics, the agriculture industry remains outdated. It heavily relies on small-scale farms that prioritize self-sufficiency, leading to various challenges faced by the farmers themselves. Consequently, agricultural productivity continues to be low. In comparison to countries like Ethiopia (1.7 tons/Hectare) with similar agricultural and environmental conditions, Yemen's grain production stands at a mere 1 ton/Hectare. Additionally, it falls below the grain production levels of several Middle Eastern and North African countries, including Jordan (1.2 tons/Hectare), Morocco (1.3 tons/Hectare), and Tunisia (1.6 tons/Hectare).

The agriculture sector in Yemen encounters significant challenges that hinder its productivity, primarily the excessive utilization of water resources. A staggering 90% of the available water is consumed by agriculture. While there has been a notable surge in demand for high-value agricultural products over the past three decades, resulting in growth and employment opportunities in the sector, productivity levels have failed to improve. Moreover, the situation is exacerbated by the continuous decline in available water resources. Groundwater, which currently supports over half of agricultural

production, is being nearly exhausted, leading to a rapid depletion of reserves.

Why Women?

Hundreds of women work in rural Yemen in agriculture, especially following the demographic transformation caused by the devastating war. Yemeni women emerged as key players in the development and sustainability of the agricultural sector. This shift was a response to the increasing absence of Yemeni men, either due to their migration abroad or their involvement in the fighting fronts. Consequently, women were compelled to invest in and manage the land, assuming the caretaker role in the absence of their sponsors—the men who abandoned them and went into exile in search of livelihoods.

However, Yemeni women faced numerous challenges due to the limited availability of political, economic, and social opportunities. Their participation in agriculture aimed to reclaim their lost role in development, particularly in rural areas. Nonetheless, their potential remained constrained by legal, economic, and cultural barriers. While women contribute to 60% of the labor force in crop cultivation and over 90% in livestock grazing, they possess limited rights over agricultural land and lack the freedom to make decisions regarding its use.

Moreover, in addition to fetching water from distant wells, women assume the crucial responsibility of tending to the crops to ensure a bountiful harvest that can sustain the family's needs for months. Consequently, rural communities have become heavily reliant on women for agricultural work. Women shoulder the burden of caring for fields and agricultural lands, often becoming the primary breadwinners for their families.

Female Farmers & the Conflict

The agricultural sector in Yemen has endured numerous crises as a result of the prolonged conflict that has plagued the country and its various sectors for the past nine years. This conflict has had a significant impact on the livelihoods of farmers, particularly those in rural areas, as 73% of the population residing in these regions rely on agriculture for their sustenance. Women farmers, in particular, have faced tremendous challenges, as 87% of women in rural areas engage in agricultural production. The involvement of men in the fighting fronts has further burdened women with the responsibilities of earning a living.

Despite the ongoing conflict, women farmers have shown remarkable resilience. The agricultural

sector's contribution to Yemen's GDP has risen from 10.4% in 2012 to 13.4% in 2020. These figures underscore the crucial role of the agricultural sector in Yemen and highlight the importance of investing in it to integrate humanitarian efforts with sustainable, long-term interventions that benefit women farmers.

However, these figures alone are insufficient to meet local needs, and achieving self-sufficiency remains unattainable due to the persistent damages inflicted upon the agricultural sector in Yemen. Consequently, women farmers continue to bear the brunt of these challenges, which subsequently affect food security in the country.

Female Farmers & the National Economy

Women play a pivotal role in the success of Yemen's annual agricultural season. They are actively engaged in farming, plowing, harvesting, and gathering fodder for livestock, which they store for the rainless periods during the year. This is especially crucial for the governorates situated in central Yemen, where agriculture is scarce during the winter season after grain harvest.

Furthermore, women are instrumental in managing agricultural water resources, contributing to water and land conservation, rainwater collection, and watershed management. Their efforts aid in mitigating the risks of climate change by preparing for dry seasons and water scarcity. This is why women, particularly in rural areas, have played an integral part in ensuring food security and supporting their families in the absence of men, whether due to exile or participation in battle, as previously mentioned.

According to a World Bank report, women account for two-thirds of food production in most developing countries. Their role is pivotal in reducing dependency on food imports and reallocating the funds spent on imports to the development of other sectors. Furthermore, agriculture serves as a means to provide raw materials for the industrial sector.

However, agricultural production and food provision have become tools of pressure employed by exporting and producing countries against importing nations. This food war has emerged as a potent means for powerful nations to exert political leverage over vulnerable and underproductive populations. Countries reliant on food imports pay a high price for their lack of self-sufficiency, sacrificing their freedom, sovereignty, and independence. In essence, those who do not possess their own power cannot fully control their decisions.

Obstacles Facing Female Farmers

Throughout history, female farmers have en-

countered numerous challenges, whether stemming from their gender and social status, or from broader circumstances. Among the obstacles faced by women farmers, gender discrimination, particularly in rural areas, greatly influences their access to land ownership. Despite working tirelessly on the land all year round, women often do not receive wages or returns from their labor. In many cases, they are denied the right to own the land that is typically owned by men, such as their fathers or husbands. Consequently, numerous women farmers struggle to secure bank financing, which hampers their ability to develop agricultural land and enhance production quality.

Moreover, many parents hinder their daughters' educational pursuits, pressuring them to work in farming and livestock-raising instead. This has resulted in a higher illiteracy rate among rural women, making it challenging to provide them with training on agriculture, crop management, and other relevant practices. Disseminating information to these women has become increasingly arduous due to these constraints.

Conversely, there are obstacles that stem from the overall situation within the country, with the most significant being the conflict that has pushed farmers to the brink. The exorbitant prices of agricultural inputs have left many farmers unable to afford the necessary seeds and equipment for their farming activities. Moreover, the soaring costs of oil derivatives have hindered transportation between rural areas and cities, making it arduous to transport and sell crops. At the onset of the conflict, large quantities of agricultural produce were destroyed due to the unavailability of oil derivatives and the lack of reliable transportation to urban centers for sale. To cope with the high prices of chemical fertilizers, some women have turned to collecting livestock dung, which, once dried and fermented, becomes a natural fertilizer for enriching the soil.

Additional factors contributing to low agricultural productivity in Yemen include inefficient marketing systems, limited capacities of farmers—especially women—lack of infrastructure, and inadequate availability of high-yielding, nutrient-rich, and drought-tolerant seed varieties.

Climate change has also imposed severe damage on the agricultural sector in Yemen. Currently, more than 3.3 million Yemenis, many of whom are farmers, have been displaced due to ongoing conflict and the adverse effects of climate change rendering their lands unsuitable for cultivation. Water scarcity, intensified by prolonged conflict and recurrent drought, has resulted in restricted access to water.

As a result, a growing number of farmers have been compelled to abandon their profession.

Furthermore, recent floods have had devastating consequences for the agricultural sector. Crops have been destroyed, and remnants of war explosives have been transported to agricultural areas, compounding the existing challenges. Consequently, recurring droughts and floods have inflicted damage on farmlands across the country, reducing the amount of cultivable land available and severely impacting the livelihoods and food security of farmers.

Proposals for Improving the Situation of Female Farmers

There are several measures that can be implemented to improve the situation of rural women working in agriculture, thereby contributing to the overall enhancement and revitalization of the agricultural sector in Yemen. Given that women comprise the primary and most active workforce in the agricultural field, the following procedures can be considered:

Empowering women and enhancing their legal rights by granting them ownership of agricultural lands as an asset.

Alleviating the burden of unpaid labor associated with water collection, food production and processing, and caregiving responsibilities for women and girls. This can be achieved by introducing labor-saving technologies, implementing reforms to facilitate access to water, and specifically addressing the needs of female-headed households.

Providing appropriate training programs for women to develop their skills in various aspects of water management, irrigation techniques, and rainwater harvesting, enabling them to gain mastery in these relevant technologies.

Organizing training courses that focus on effective methods of protecting plants from pests and diseases. Furthermore, providing instructions on the correct usage of pesticides and training in the preparation of organic fertilizers.

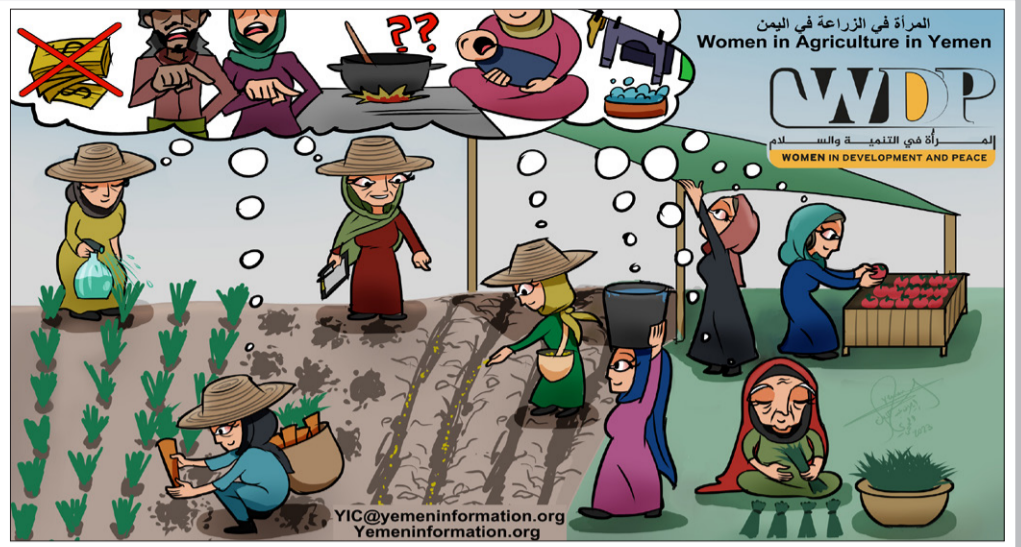
Encouraging civil society organizations and international institutions dedicated to agricultural development to support women farmers. This support can be extended through the provision of agricultural machinery, solar-powered water pumps to reduce fuel consumption, and assistance with the procurement of seeds, fertilizers, and agricultural seedlings.

Additionally, there exist numerous measures that can enhance the efficiency of agricultural production, which is reliant on the efforts of women and plays a vital role in supporting the national economy.



A Monthly Newspaper Specialized in Women's Affairs
Published by Yemen Information Center (YIC)

Issue: 15 - Pages: 20 - Price Free - 15 / 9 / 2023



79.1% Agree: Boosting Women's Involvement in Agriculture to Enhance their Economic and Social Status in Yemen

By: Yomna Ahmed
Women in Development and Peace

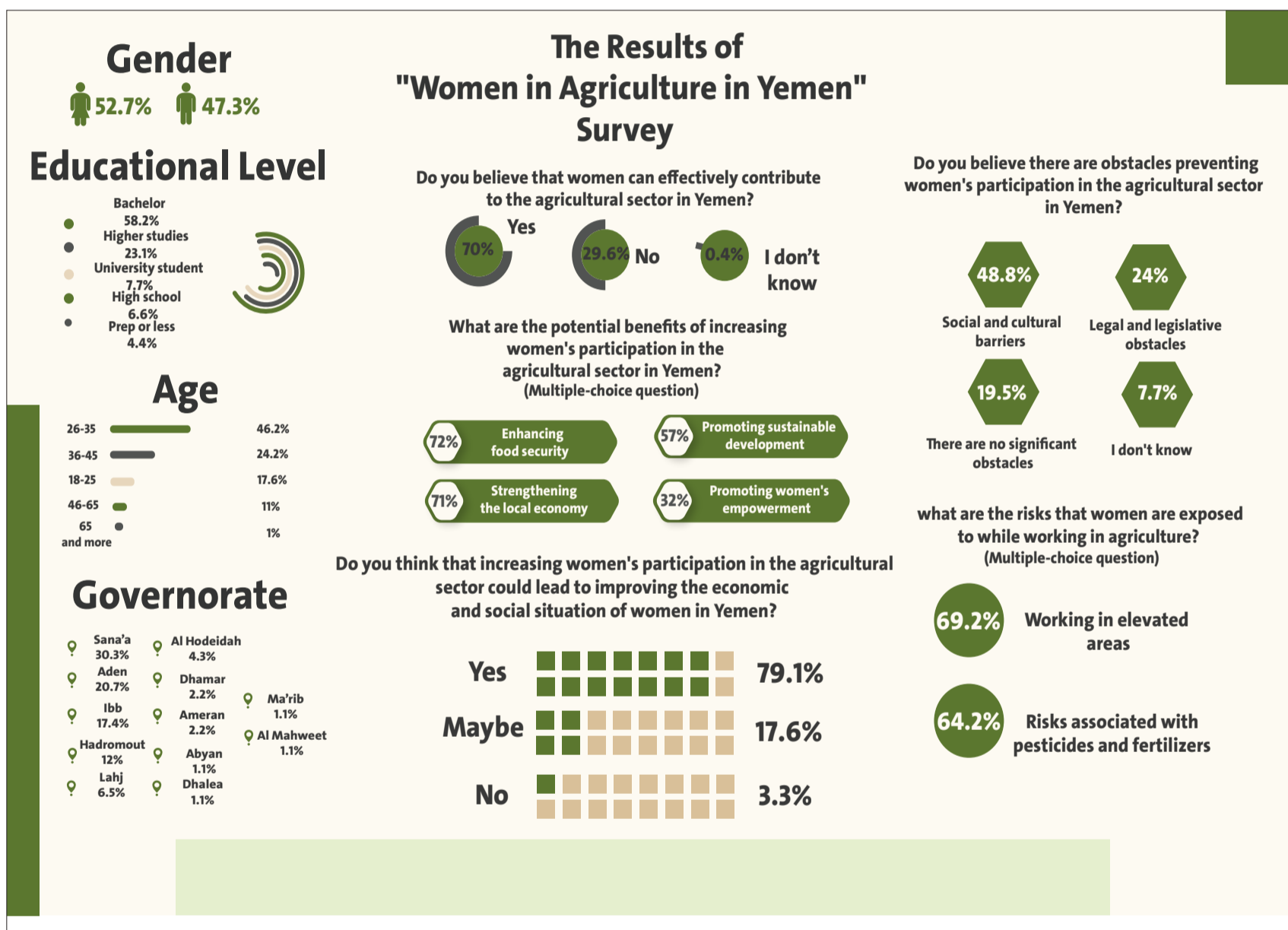
In the past, Yemen, known as "Happy Yemen," thrived due to its abundant wealth, strategic trade routes, and fertile agricultural regions with ample rainfall and water valleys. Yemeni women played a significant role in driving trade and agricultural prosperity. They actively engaged in agricultural work, including sowing, irrigation, and crop harvesting, contributing to Yemen's status as one of the wealthiest ancient civilizations.

Even today, Yemeni women continue to play a vital role in the agricultural sector. With nearly half of Yemen's population being women, they make substantial contributions, particularly in rural areas. Despite their crucial role, female farmers face neglect and encounter greater risks than their male counterparts due to various factors, such as lack of appropriate tools and working in hazardous environments.

To shed light on the opinions of Yemeni society regarding the participation of women in the agricultural sector, the Information and Opinion Survey Unit at Yemen Information Center conducted a comprehensive survey. The sample consisted of 223 individuals, with a majority of female participants at 52.7% compared to 47.3% male participants. The participants represented diverse age groups, with 46.2% aged between 26-35 years, 24.2% between 36-45 years, 17.6% between 18-25 years, 11% between 45-65 years, and only 1% aged 65 years or older.

Regarding educational levels, the majority of participants held a bachelor's degree at 58.2%, followed by postgraduate degree holders at 23.1%, university students at 7.7%, high school certificate holders at 6.6%, and middle school certificate holders at 4.4%.

The survey encompassed twelve Yemeni governorates out of twenty-one, including Sana'a



(30.3%), Aden (20.7%), Ibb (17.4%), Hadramout (12%), Lahj (6.5%), Al-Hodeidah (4.3%), and Dhamar and Amran (2.2% each). Abyan, Ma'rib, Al-Dhalea, and Al-Mahwit each represented only 1.1% of the participants in their respective governorates.

Main Results

Regarding the contribution of women in Yemen's agricultural sector, the survey revealed that 70% of respondents believe women contribute significantly, while 29.6% perceive their contribution as small and limited. A mere 0.4% believe that Yemeni women are unable to contribute.

When discussing the potential benefits of increasing women's participation in agriculture, the

participants' responses were as follows (each answer analyzed separately with an estimated rate of 100% as a multiple-choice question):

72.5% emphasized enhancing food security and increasing food production.

71.4% highlighted strengthening the local economy and improving income.

57.1% emphasized promoting women's empowerment and enhancing their societal role.

31.9% recognized the importance of sustainable development and preserving natural resources.

Additionally, 79.1% of respondents believed that increasing women's participation in the agricultural sector would lead to an improvement in the economic and social conditions of women in Yemen. However, 17.6%

agreed that while there would be some improvement, it might not be significant. On the other hand, 3.3% believed that increasing participation would not make any difference.

Regarding the obstacles preventing women from participating in the agricultural sector, 48.8% identified social and cultural barriers, while 24% pointed out legal and legislative obstacles. Surprisingly, 19.5% denied the existence of any obstacles, and only 7.7% claimed to have no idea about the barriers.

It is evident that women working in the agricultural sector face numerous risks. According to the survey, respondents identified the following risks (each answer analyzed separately with an estimated rate of 100% as a multiple-choice question):

69.2% mentioned working in elevated areas.

64.2% expressed concerns about the risks associated with pesticides and fertilizers.

In conclusion, the survey participants believe that Yemeni women's impact in agriculture lies in enhancing food security, achieving economic empowerment, promoting gender equality, and preserving agricultural heritage. Overcoming the challenges faced by women in this sector is deemed necessary, along with providing the necessary support and opportunities to enhance their participation and empowerment in agriculture. This approach will contribute to achieving sustainable development and comprehensive prosperity for Yemeni society.