

# Women In Development and Peace



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## The United Nations Affirms its Support for Yemeni Women's Participation in Peacebuilding

The UN affirmed its full and serious support for Yemeni women's meaningful participation and gender inclusion in political and peacebuilding processes. During the opening of the consultations organized by the UN along with Peace Women Partners in Yemen, Dina Zorba, the representative of UN Women for Iraq and Yemen, said that the UN will work with women to enhance their presence in society and support their participation in political processes.

In the same context, Zorba commended those women in leadership and decision-making positions and their effective role in public and political life. They reflect their highly effective role in political decision-making and peacebuilding.

During the consultations held in the Jordanian capital, Amman, a number of members of Peace Women Partners Council in Yemen reviewed the challenges they encounter, including women's inclusion in any government formation or change in the future, and the opportunities they obtain.

The consultations also highlighted the reality of Yemeni women's participation in the fields of peace, and presented a vision for supporting women in the peace process, especially within the scope of the current UN truce.



## The Executive Director of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), "Yemeni women and girls face the devastating consequences of the conflict"

Seven devastating years of fighting have left 23.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in Yemen, a country that is struggling with a dire economic crisis, damaged infrastructure, and a shattered health system. The war in Ukraine has cast a shadow over the ongoing conflict in Yemen.

"Yemeni women and girls face devastating consequences when they lack access to reproductive health and protection services, including death in pregnancy and childbirth and life-threatening violence," said Dr. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director, UNFPA. "We must not let the crisis in Yemen slip down the global humanitarian agenda. UNFPA calls on governments and partners to increase their funding for Yemen's women and girls," she added.

UNFPA, as a UN reproductive health agency, is facing difficult choices, because



global financial and political commitments fail to keep pace with increasing needs. The consequences of these choices will be grave: Over 1.3 million women will lose access to lifesaving reproductive health care, and an estimated 17,000 could die during pregnancy and childbirth – many of them from preventable causes.

“A recent increase in tensions has resulted in new waves of internally displaced persons, more than half of them women and girls,” said UNFPA Representative in Yemen, Nestor Owomuhangi.

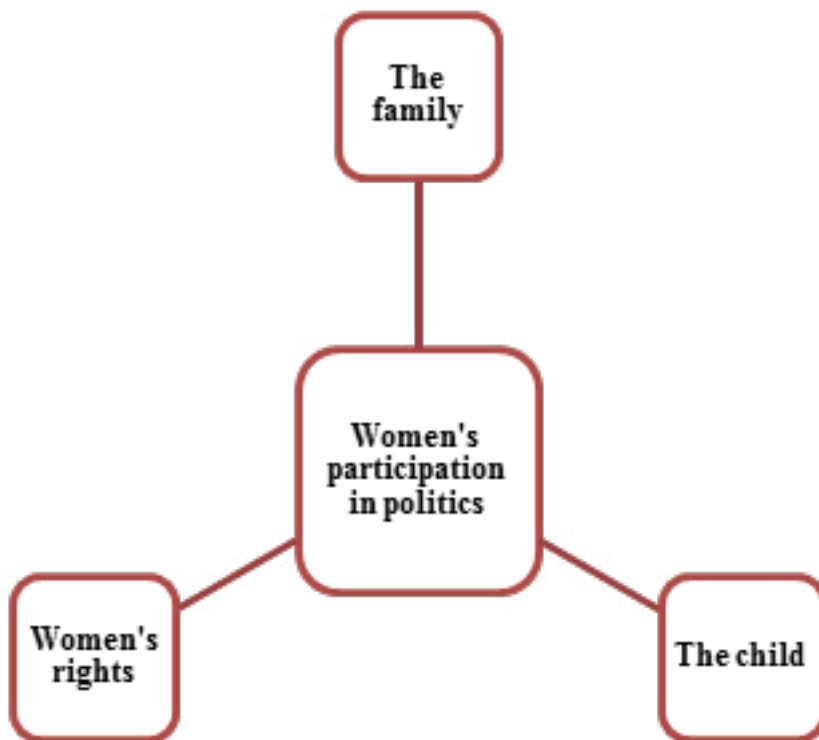
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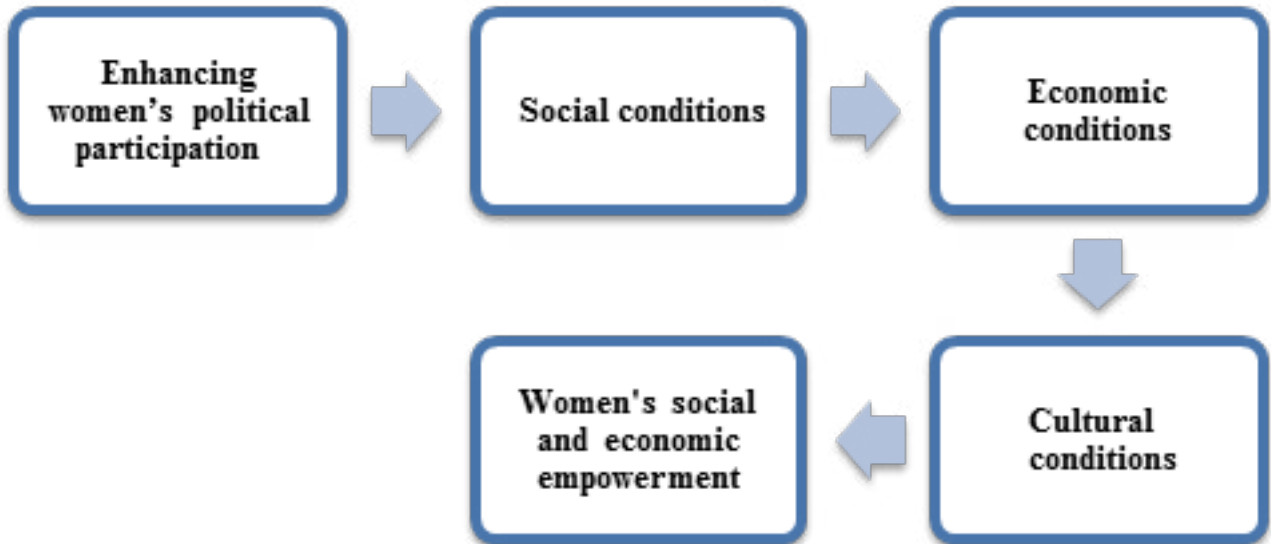
## Women and Political Empowerment:

Women's growing participation in politics represents a key basis for gender equality and women's empowerment. Women's political participation often revolves around defending the rights of women, children, and the family. Although electoral quotas have been adopted- among other policy measures- to bring more women into politics and facilitate access to national and local parliaments in the vast majority of countries, they are still insufficient to address gender-based differences. This is attributed to how seats allocation for women is viewed; whether it is seen as a measure aimed at completing constitutional arrangements only or as a step within the framework of a comprehensive vision for gender equality. The latter would require identifying the challenges and obstacle related to the economic and social conditions of women.

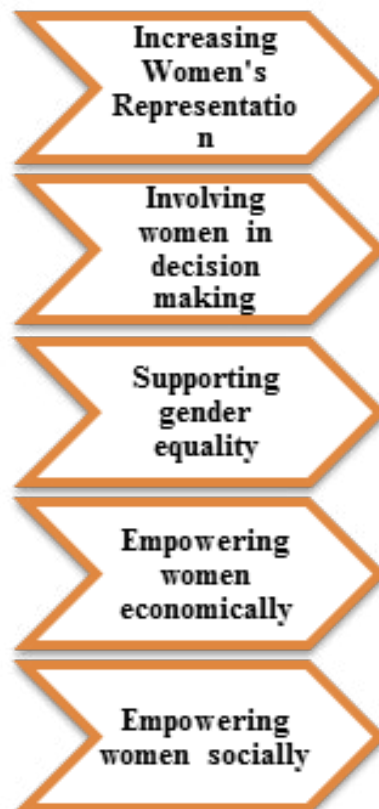


Lessons learned from other countries' experiences have highlighted that women's political participation faces a major challenge, related to how to change the essential patriarchal nature of political and economic institutions and organizations. In Burundi, the adoption of quota system and women's inclusion in national and local decision-making institutions did not eliminate gender inequalities or translate into effective representation of women. The quota system was not accompanied by a shift in the political and institutional systems that still reflect patriarchal values, and did not seek to promote gender equality. African countries showed that creating a political and security environment conducive to women's full and effective participation and decision-making in political public life is of high importance, not

only because the process of enhancing women’s political participation has legal and political dimensions, but it is also a reflection of the economic, social and cultural conditions. Furthermore, its relationship with socio-economic empowerment indicators is close and interactive, especially since empowering women is linked to public policies in the areas of education, health, employment, and progressive family-related laws.



The expansion of women’s representation in decision-making institutions has an impact on the adoption of policies that support gender equality and on the promotion of women’s economic and social status in many countries of the world. This indicates the importance of women’s role in state institutions, participating in decision-making commensurate with different social groups.



The United Nations indicates, “Gender equality, besides being a fundamental human right, is essential to achieve peaceful societies, with full human potential and sustainable development. Moreover, it has been shown that empowering women spurs productivity and economic growth.” Among the objectives of the United Nations declared in Article No. 1 of its Charter was, “promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, religion, or gender.”

Globally, although forty to 50% of party members are women, women hold only about 10% of the leadership positions within those parties. Ensuring women’s equal participation in the decision-making structures of parties is essential for promoting gender equality within them— and, ultimately, within society as a whole.

Women’s political participation has become remarkably low and limited during the conflict, not at the level required in formal negotiations. It was noted that women’s participation in the field of security, which is essential for achieving peace and justice, is almost absent. The United Nations, the different parties to the conflict, the government, and civil society should take great interest in women’s role in truce and reconciliation commissions during peace talks and negotiations, promote their political and human rights role at all levels, and ensure their inclusion in all peace negotiations and agreements.

The lack of coordination between all programs and efforts to enhance the role of women in peacebuilding will affect the outcomes of these efforts and programs, and will also marginalize women’s role within post-conflict agenda and reconstruction process. Hence, prior strategic planning, through conducting studies and collecting data, is essential for women’s inclusion in the reconstruction process and the implementation of local and international commitments. Women’s exclusion from peace processes and reconstruction phases would be thus major concerns.

Seventh and Eighth Periodic Reports on the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women indicated the low participation of women in leadership positions until 2009. In field studies on women’s participation in political parties, partisan women explained that political parties are not an effective tool for empowering women to participate in politics and reach decision-making positions, and not serious about providing channels of access to political power, representing women’s issues or including them in their structure. They made it clear that women’s inclusion in political parties is a mere formality.

The United Nations Development Program and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs identified 20 Cases studied over a period of 18 months. The case studies generally focus on particular political parties among others, looking at concrete actions aiming to promote women’s political participation.



- **Women's inclusion in politics:**

Modalities of women's inclusion:

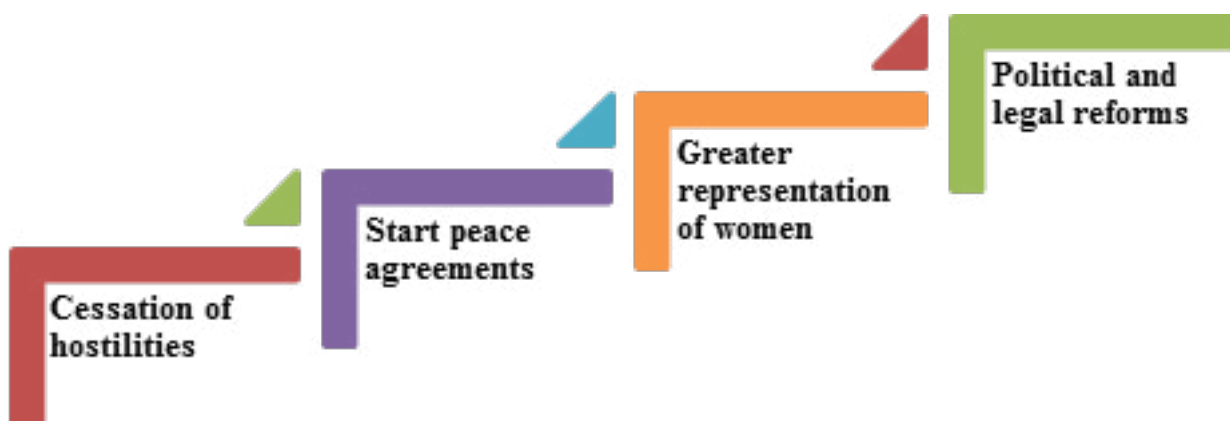
1. Direct representation at the negotiation table.
2. Observer status.
3. Representation in consultations (Official, non or semi-official, and public consultations).
4. Representation in inclusive commissions (Post-agreement commissions, Commissions preparing/conducting peace processes and permanent Commissions).
5. Participation in high-level problem-solving workshops.
6. Participation in public decision-making (i.e. referendum).
7. Engagement in mass action.



When women were found to be influential in a particular multi-stakeholder negotiation process, it was often because they pushed for more concrete and fundamental reforms. Four issues were commonly pushed by women's organizations in the different peace processes analyzed:

- Cessation of hostilities and agreements on long-term ceasefires.
- Pressure to start new or continue signing peace agreements.

- Greater representation of women in the ongoing peace process, as well as in the political structure of the post-conflict state.
- Additional gender-sensitive political and legal reforms (e.g. demanding changes to laws governing land ownership, inheritance, or healthcare), transitional justice issues (e.g. addressing any gender-based violence and human rights violations that occurred during the conflict, or demanding truce and reconciliation commissions), and post-conflict reconstruction concerns (e.g. equal access to disarmament).



It appears that women's poor participation is due to their underrepresentation in political state institutions, such as the government, parliament, unions, and political parties. There are many challenges standing in the way of women's full and effective participation, such as social and political upbringing which influence women's perception of themselves that they are unable to engage in politics and assume decision-making positions, given that they are less rational than men.

In addition, most political parties do not trust women to assume leadership positions, such as party secretaries or party leaders. In countries adopting the quota system, political parties found themselves obliged to qualify women leaders who would best represent them in parliament and parliament.

The stereotypical image of women in Arab society is not limited to the position of men only. At the same time, it is noted that women themselves have more trust on men's decision-making than women's and for this they may not vote for the women. Therefore, men are the most fortunate to obtain electoral votes and reach decision-making positions within the state.

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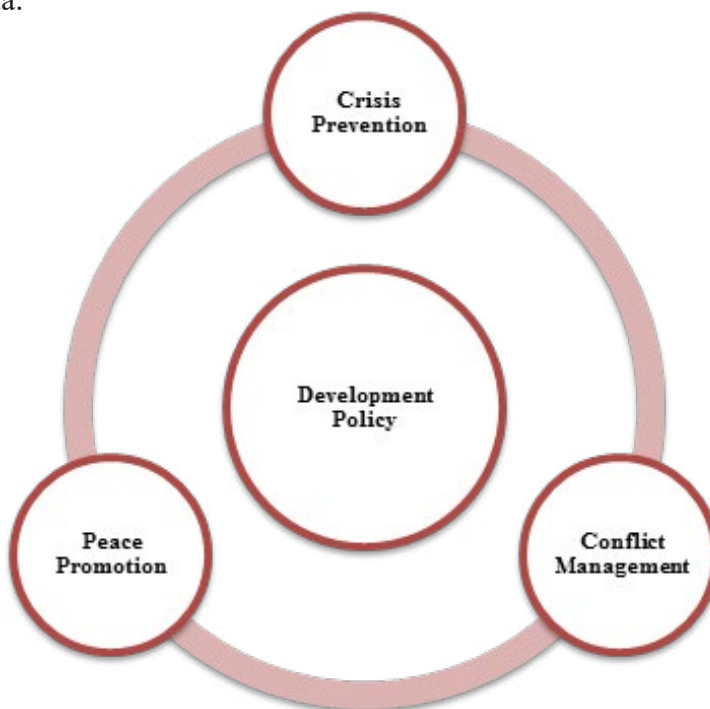
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## The Conflict and its Negative Consequences on Women in Development and Peace Path

Crises and conflicts threaten the lives of millions of people, cause them great suffering, and deprive them of their right to live freely and safely. They also destroy economic and social infrastructure, as well as important government and private institutions. The development of conflict-affected countries is also greatly affected. The impact of violent conflicts is not usually limited to where they occur, but often pose regional or even global threats, such as conflict-induced displacement and creation of illegal hiding-areas for criminals and terrorists. In countries destabilized by violence and conflict, populations are at increased risk of poverty.

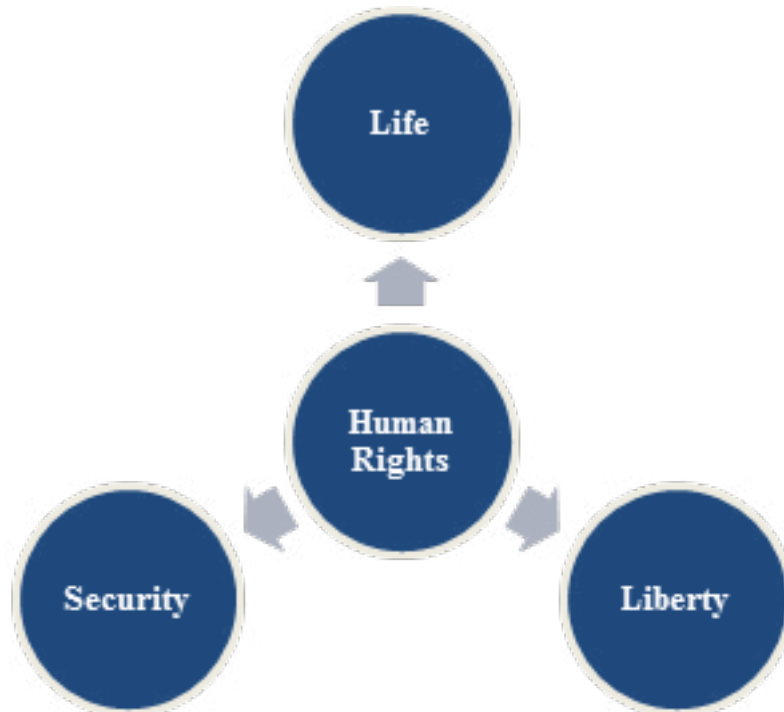
According to a recent joint World Bank-United Nations study, “Pathways for Peace”, from 2010 to 2016, the number of major violent conflicts tripled, and fighting in a growing number of lower intensity conflicts escalated. The number of civilian casualties and displaced people greatly increased due to violence.

As peace and stability are essential conditions for achieving sustainable development in any country, the international community has identified “promoting peace and justice” as central to the Preamble and the SDG 16 of 2030 Agenda.



The mission of development policy is to support states and their peoples to cooperate achieving peace through crisis prevention, conflict management,

and peace promotion. Everyone, both women or men, has the right to life, liberty, and security of person. These rights are guaranteed in all laws and legislations.



### **The Future of Conflict from Some Researchers' Perspective:**

Due to the seriousness and negative effects of the prolonged ongoing conflict on Yemeni society and its members, both men and women, many members of society are wondering about the future of this conflict, and towards where the current situation is heading?

To clarify, a set of opinions of a number of researchers can be presented in this regard: Political researcher Qadri Ahmed Haider pointed out to the BBC about the future of the conflict in Yemen, "I think we would have come to a better path than we have with external interventions." He further explained that external interventions tear up the social fabric of the country, and make all parties talk about aggression. As a result, the structure of political awareness at the internal level is torn between the parties, and political cards get shuffled.

As for the Yemeni academic, Mahmoud Al-Azani, in his opinion, the regional parties supporting the two parties of the conflict are still far from the peace process. There are complications related to specific files such as Iran's nuclear weapons program or regional crises in other countries, which contradict the resolution of the Yemeni conflict.

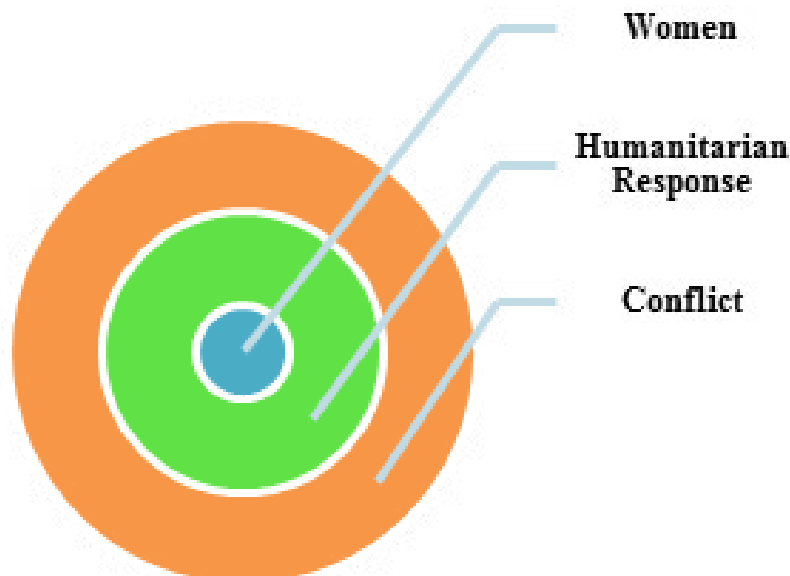
In addition, there are internal causes that many outsiders do not realize they further deepen the conflict. The difficult physical and historical geography and the regional, sectarian, and social differences in Yemen are part of many factors that influence the continuation of this conflict.

Political researcher Maysaa Shuja Al-Deen believes that after many years of war, the conflict

at the internal level is very complex, because there is a state of regional and sectarian division which is difficult to overcome. Such division goes beyond partnership in governance according to the international conception of conflict resolution.

### **The Situation of Yemeni Women in the Stage of Conflict:**

One of the female activists and human rights defenders explained the role of Yemeni women in this difficult stage inside Yemen, “Women have been on the front lines of the humanitarian response to raise awareness and work to stop the conflict between the parties to the conflict. In Yemen, we have many grievances, and many conflicts within one conflict.” She explained this by saying, “There are local disputes over water and land resources, and women played a key role in solving many issues of this kind; one of the Yemeni women was able to solve many important local issues.” They have contributed to the release of detainees and the return of the abductees, in addition to exerting pressure on the United Nations, international bodies, and the Security Council through periodic briefings, and informing the international community of the reality on the ground.

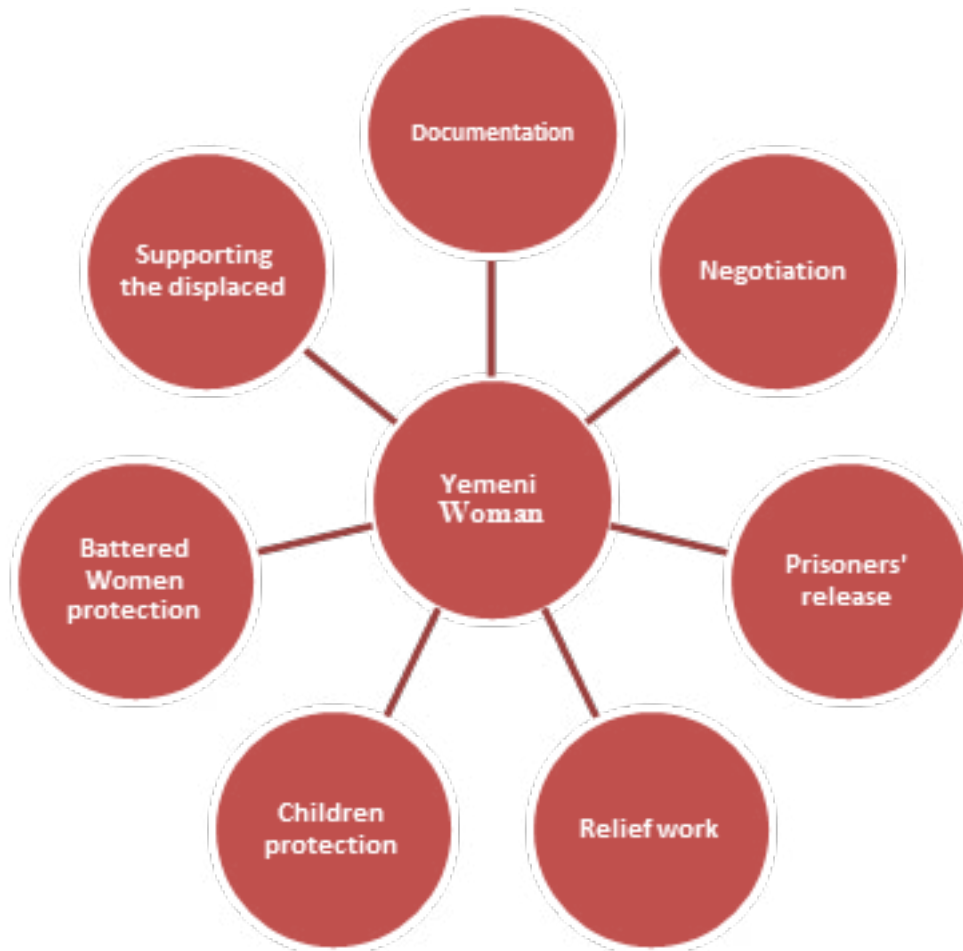


A number of female human rights defenders and activists agree that although everyone suffers, the Yemeni women suffer the most. So, they hope that the current truce will ease their suffering, even a little. Activist Huda Al-Sarari confirmed that women live in difficult and painful conditions as a result of war and conflict. They have been injured, killed, and become disabled by planting mines in villages and homes. She added that although women lack the simplest standards of protection and prevention, which spare them the scourge of war, they display courage in the face of harsh conditions.

Al-Sarari pointed out that despite all these circumstances, Yemeni women have played a major role in relief, monitoring, documentation, and providing support for the displaced and legal protection for battered women and children.



Media reporter Asia Thabet added that women in Yemen endure the scourge and pain of the conflict. The Yemeni woman has become a wife of a disabled person, a mother of a deceased, a captive, an abductee, or a family



The conflict-driven challenges to the labor market have had multifaceted impacts on women. Research and studies suggest that initially, the war affected a larger proportion of women in the labor force than men. In 2015, male employment had declined by 11%, while female employment had fallen by 28%. These figures varied nationally; 43% of the employment decline for women occurred in Sana'a, due to the heavily-hit private sector.

In 2015, women-owned businesses were harder hit than male-owned businesses, although in actual terms far fewer were affected as they accounted for just 4% of all businesses prior to the conflict. While 26% of businesses in the trade, services and industrial sectors had closed by 2015, this rate rose to 42% among female-owned businesses, usually due to physical damage, as well as loss of capital and shortages of electricity and fuel.

Female business owners found it more difficult than their male counterparts to access dollar bank accounts, according to a study by the UN Development Program (UNDP).

Human rights activists also confirmed that the damage affected women- especially in Yemen- is very great. This requires the implementation of a specialized gender analysis so that the response itself is in line with the needs and is not random. At the same time, it is important to support, formulate, and implement gender-sensitive policies that foster women's participation in developing solutions.

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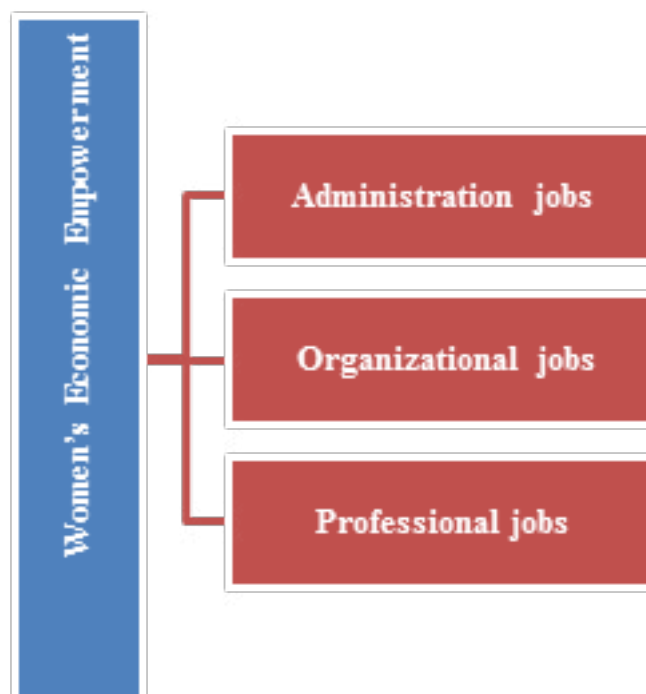
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## Women's Economic Empowerment and Factors Affecting their Participation:

The economic empowerment of women means that the relative distribution of men and women in administrative, organizational and professional positions, earned income, and wages by the economically active population of both sexes.

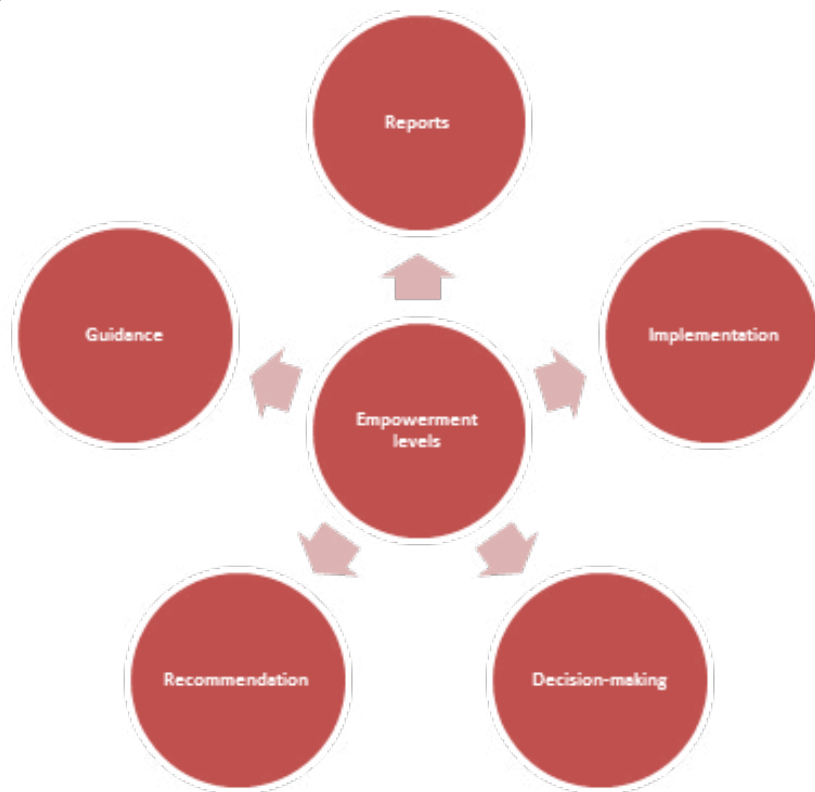
Advocates of women's economic empowerment stress that such empowerment cannot be achieved unless women have their own regular income. Hence, they use all means of moral pressure, such as the media, the press, drama, and educational curricula. In the first-grade curriculum in one of the Arab countries, the first lesson a child receives is entitled "My Family" through which the child learns to introduce his family. He says, for example, "My father is a teacher, and my mother is a doctor." Every child thinks deeply what he is going to say in order not to feel that his mother is inferior to other mothers. A mother, who performs the role of housewife and takes the responsibility of household affairs, is not satisfied with her role, albeit indirectly. However, taking advantage of school curricula to serve issues of concern to women is not new and is given in all international conventions, including Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.



- **Empowerment levels:**

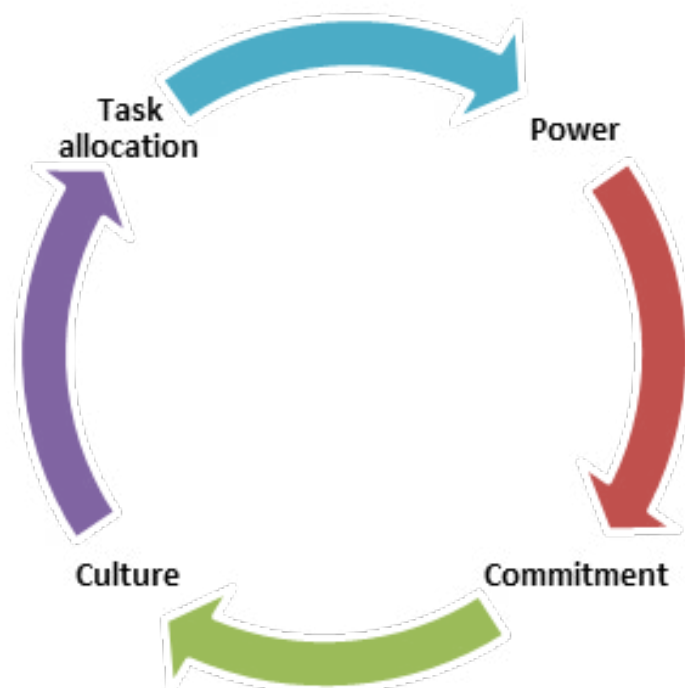
In today's reality, many organizations rely on implementing employee empowerment programs, but at varying levels. Empowerment levels come in an ascending order, starting with

making reports of the situation of the employee and ending with the level of implementation. The following chart shows these levels:



❖ **Dimensions of Empowerment:**

Empowering and enhancing women in different areas of life has many dimensions that must be taken into account. Lashley and McGoldrick (1994) identified four dimensions of empowerment through which to find a way to describe or identify the body of empowerment used by any organization or institution. These dimensions are as follows:



- **The first dimension, task allocation:**

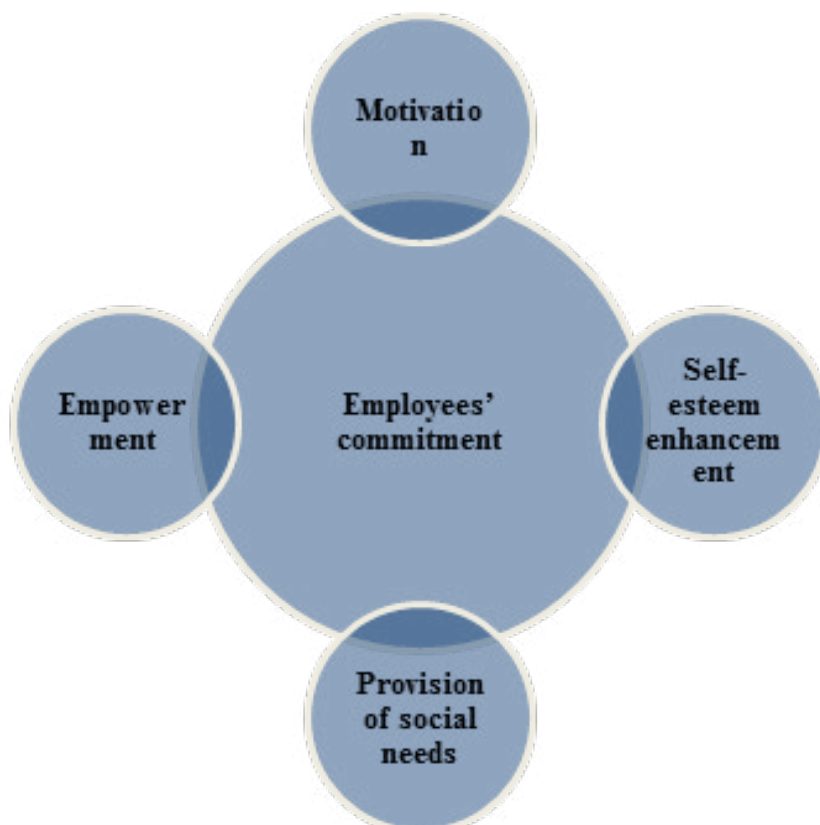
The individual performs his individual or collective tasks and duties with complete freedom and independence to achieve the objectives set by the institution.

- **The second dimension, power:**

This dimension is mainly concerned with personal power that individuals feel as a result of their empowerment. Here, it is necessary to answer a number of questions to define what is meant by this dimension, namely: What tasks do empowered people perform? To what extent is an individual's power defined in tasks? To what level does management make efforts to share power with employees and enhance their sense of empowerment?

- **The third dimension, commitment:**

Employees' commitment is closely associated with boosting their morale through motivating and empowering them, enhancing their self-esteem, and providing them with social needs



- **The fourth dimension, Culture:**

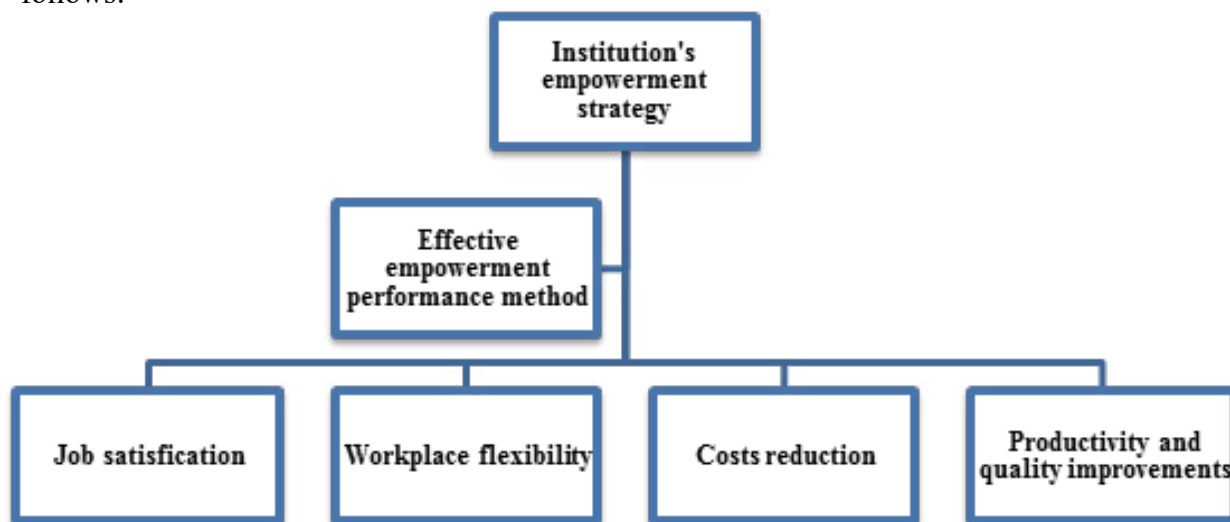
This dimension determines the method used by institutions to implement the empowerment process and the strategy it seeks to develop and implement. If the organization's environment and empowerment performance method are managed effectively, empowerment will enhance



productivity, improve equality, reduce costs, achieve workplace flexibility, and increase job satisfaction.

Hence, the institution or the organization that operates according to an effective and strong strategy will achieve the desired success in the process of empowering women in the intended work fields.

The following figure shows this dimension and the intended results of its implementation as follows:



❖ **Factors affecting women’s economic participation:**

There are many factors that affect women’s participation at the economic level; they are as follows:

❖ **Fertility:**

Women with more children are less likely to be employed compared to women with fewer ones.

❖ **Marital Status:**

It has been observed that women’s marital status has an impact on their economic empowerment rate and that the economic participation rate of married women is lower than that of widowed or divorced women. Analysis of the results of Population and Housing Census in 1994 proved that the economic participation rate of married women at the level of the Republic was about 17%, compared to (7.22%) for widowed and divorced women.

❖ **Age:**

It was noted that there is a correlation between women’s age and their level of economic par-

ticipation. The rate of women's economic participation starts low in young age groups (10-14), and then keeps on increasing in older age groups. This rate soon reaches a certain limit, and then begins to decline as it approaches the age group of (60-64) years. It was also noted that participation rates in 1994 decreased from what they were in 1988 in all age groups, and this may be due to the following reasons:

- In recent years, the percentage of females who have enrolled in education in the lower age groups has increased.
- The return of Yemeni immigrants to their country after the Gulf events contributed to reducing job opportunities available to females.
- The rate of enrollment in literacy and adult education programs of both sexes was high in 2002.
- The societal recognition of women's economic role was poor.
- The field of training and qualification is limited and weak.
- The effect of women's employment on the family:

Although there are no studies that address the effects of women's employment on the family in Yemen, it is possible to rely on the results of some studies conducted in other Arab societies of similar circumstances. They highlight the positive and negative aspects of women's employment and its effects on the family's quality of life. Among the positive effects of women's employment are the following:

- A working woman contributes directly to raising the family's material level by increasing its income.
- A working woman's awareness and treatment with her family is better than that of a non-working woman.
- A working woman has a positive role in containing her family members and guiding her children properly and better.

Based on a broader view of women's employment, it is believed that dependency ratio has increased due to the needs and changes of society. This has forced women to work side by side with men to meet the needs of the economic system.

It is easy to notice that the Yemeni society is going through a transformational period marked by confusion and struggle. Such transformation from traditional to modern society led to a remarkable transformation of the role of women from wives and mothers to working women.

However, women find themselves forced to play the two roles and to reconcile work outside their homes and their family duties.

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## Yemeni Women Positive Efforts in Awareness-Raising

As Yemeni women have embraced peace during the conflict, the importance of their role in peacebuilding have been recognized. During a briefing to the United Nations Security Council on November 11, 2020, the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Martin Griffiths, said, “I am one of those continually inspired by the courage and determination of women in Yemen to end the war and build peace, and indeed to be the primary champions of peace in Yemen.”

Amatallah, 27 years old and a mother of two children, was displaced in 2018 from Ho-deidah city, western Yemen, along with 600,000 civilians, according to a United Nations report. She moved with her family to Dhahban district in Taiz governorate. As women in those districts lacked sufficient knowledge of birth spacing, Amatallah decided to implement a self-initiative to help them.

She said, “In my village, I used to visit houses, creating awareness among women about the use of family planning/contraception methods, their importance, and benefits, and giving them advice on birth spacing. I believe that family planning methods help women raise their children, providing them with all their needs. Lack of spacing between children have adversely affected the health of mothers and the upbringing of their children.”

According to Amatallah, she took an advantage of being a student at one of the mosques, where she learned and memorized the Holy Qur’an, to raise women’s awareness of the importance of family planning methods. She also used to explain to women how to use contraceptive medicines and means.

## Severe Lack of Family Planning Awareness

Regarding the reasons that prompted her to raise women’s awareness about family planning, Amatallah said, “ In some of the remote villages I visited, women lacked sufficient knowledge-if any-of family planning methods. I encountered mothers who had given birth to and raised more than ten children, particularly in a gathering site for the displaced people from the “Al Shamatin area”.

I have seen families forcing their children to beg for them to earn a living due to poverty. Moreover, I myself witnessed children aged five and six being beaten and insulted while begging. I was deeply affected by these situations and decided to step up my efforts to raise public awareness, namely the displaced women.

## Poverty and Need

Amatallah encountered obstacles in implementing what she always aspired to by many families due to poverty or dire need. Many women did not have access to family planning services because of lack of money. She said, “Because of the poor financial conditions of many families, she bought family planning services at her own expense and gave them to women.”

She indicated that she contributed to raising awareness in the area to which she was displaced. Women’s situation there prompted her to expand her awareness-raising efforts to reach IDPs camps in Taiz governorate. Through a group on WhatsApp, which she called the “Health Magazine”, she was able to answer many women’s inquiries about the use of family planning methods.

## “Health Magazine” Group

“Through “Health Magazine” group, in which many women were included, I sought to raise awareness about family planning methods, such as contraceptive pills, coils, implants among other birth control means. I received a lot of questions from women and answered them privately. Many women were responsive and implemented what they have learnt. They used birth control means at a regular basis and spaced between births,” she has stated.

She said that she was keen on creating awareness among women and enhancing their effective role in raising other women’s awareness about family planning and birth spacing for the health and welfare of the child, mother, and the family.

## A Threatened Suspension of Life-Saving Reproductive Health Services in 140 Health Facilities

According to the United Nations, “One woman and six newborns die every two hours from complications during pregnancy or childbirth in Yemen.” This rate is increasing day by day in light of the ongoing conflict and its consequences on the life of the citizen in general, and on women and children in particular.

“A severe funding shortage will force UNFPA to halt the provision of lifesaving reproductive health services in 140 health facilities in Yemen. If these facilities close, an estimated 320,000 pregnant women will be cut off from reproductive health services and more than 48,000 women could die of emergency obstetric complications,” according to the United Nations population fund (UNFPA) in 2020.

The United Nations and other international organizations warn of the worsening health



situation in Yemen. This requires health activists to concert their efforts towards conducting awareness-raising activities as Amatallah did.

Community mobilization is critical to create public awareness of health care. With the spread of poverty and limited access to health care, women could die of emergency obstetric complications, amidst rising risks posed by COVID-19.

Amatallah did not stop raising awareness in the areas she visited or lived in. Rather, she expanded her activities to reach other areas. Along with a group of young people, both males and females, she created “For Her” initiative on March, 17, 2022. The initiative seeks to give voice to women and alleviate their suffering, as women and girls are among the most vulnerable groups to the devastating effects of the ongoing conflict. The initiative aims at spreading the culture of peace and coexistence, conducting electronic campaigns and community activities on women’s issues, and developing youth skills. It also seeks to build partnerships with local and international organizations in order to provide better human rights services and encourage volunteering for women and girls. The last electronic campaign carried out by initiative was about electronic blackmail.





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