

# Women in Civil Society in Yemen

## Empowering Women in Civil Society Organizations: A Vital Requirement for Societal Development

### Achieving Equality and Empowerment: Key Factors for Women's Success in Civil Society

# WDP

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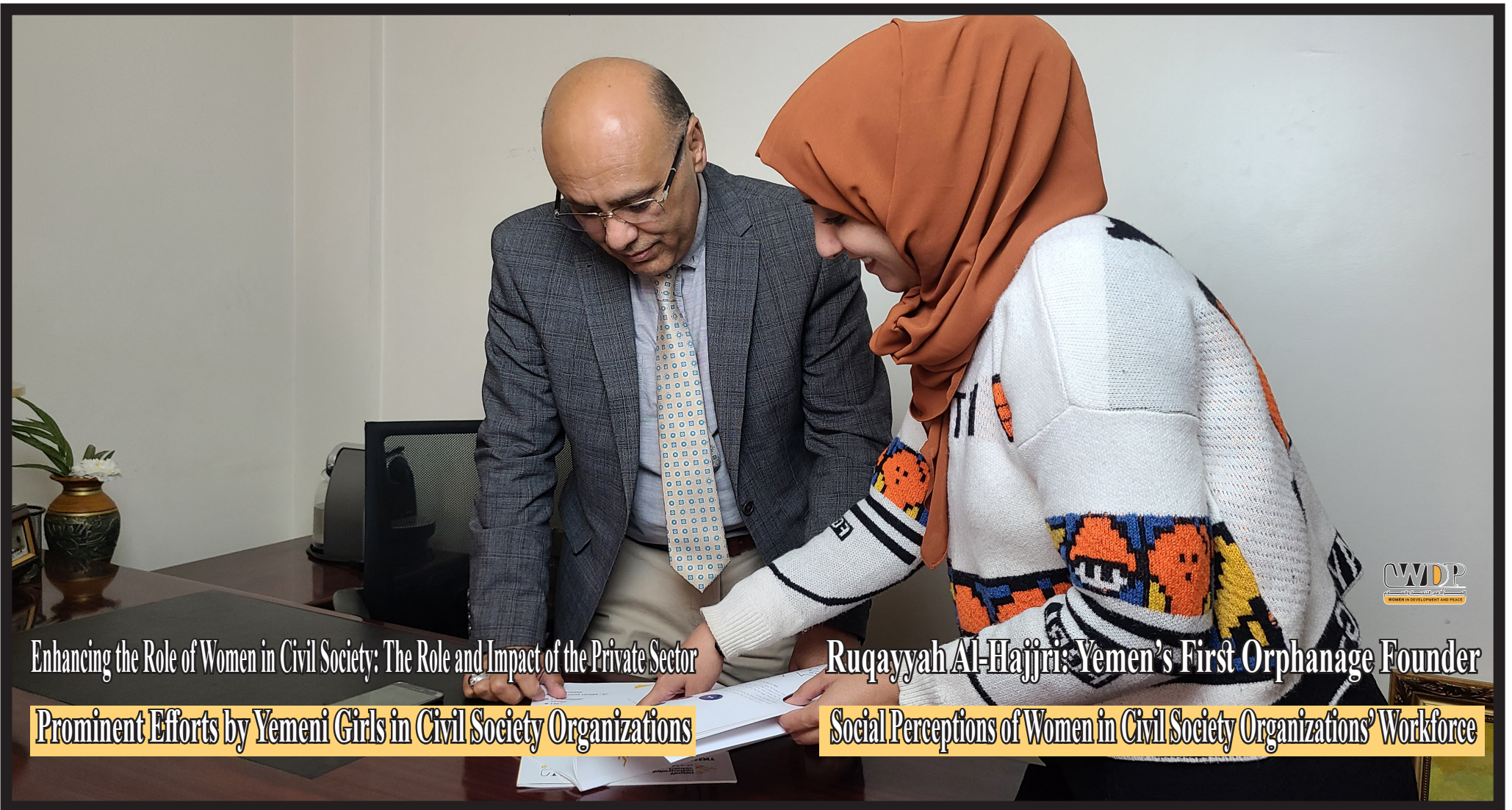
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## Significant Contributions of Yemeni Women to Civil Society Organizations

*Yemeni women are actively seeking to participate in Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), making continuous efforts to serve the community through these diverse institutions. They have even established their own associations and institutions, with their own resources, which they manage themselves.*

By: Yasmine Abdulhafeez  
Women in Development and Peace

These organizations have successfully implemented numerous projects and meaningful activities that have benefited citizens - women, men, and children alike. They have also focused on empowering women through workshops, programs,

seminars, and various other purposeful events.

In addition to these efforts, Yemeni women have played a significant role in various CSOs, whether it be in centers, unions, initiatives, different forms of media (print, visual, and auditory), institutes, universities, or other institutions created by individuals aiming to advocate for spe-

cific causes.

### Significant Role

Regarding the role played by women in CSOs, Afaf Abdullah No'man (a human rights and social activist) explains that women in Yemen have played a significant role by contributing to various activities and undertaking tasks that benefit the community.

"Yemeni women have contributed to alleviating the suffering of citizens due to the conflict and the current state of society. This includes their participation alongside their male counterparts in some medical camps, providing assistance and help in providing the necessary food and relief supplies to the affected individuals," she adds.

Afaf emphasizes that Yemeni women have worked in challenging conditions,

demonstrating their competence and resilience through their various activities in different CSOs. They have faced and overcome difficulties despite limited resources and risking their lives to extend a helping hand to all members of society, without exception.

### Date of Existence

Regarding the date of their existence in these organizations, Nadia Naji Saleh, a member of the "Southern Women for Peace" group, says: "In the mid-1990s, civil organizations emerged and became active in various fields - political, social, economic, and cultural. However, their effectiveness was limited and confined to urban centers, while they were almost absent in rural areas."

She confirms that women's representa-

tion in most associations was minimal due to a lack of understanding of the goals of these associations, in addition to societal negativity towards volunteer work and a lack of understanding that work is a partnership between men and women.

Naji adds that despite the existing obstacles leading to the closure of many institutions, there are numerous human rights, humanitarian, relief, protection, and women empowerment organizations. She emphasizes, "Women play their role despite the circumstances, such as improving livelihoods, social awareness, and other crucial efforts in serving humanity and society."

Mona Saleh, a consultant at Ramz Development Foundation, agrees with her, stating, "Based on my personal experience, I can say that *continue ....page2*



Yemeni women have set remarkable examples since the 1990s in their involvement and adoption of societal issues despite the difficulties and challenges they face.”

She affirms, “There are many CSOs founded by women that specifically address women and children’s issues, as well as societal concerns in general.”

She believes that the culture of volunteer work, as the cornerstone of CSOs, is more deeply rooted and embraced by women compared to men. Women, by nature, are more giving, devoted, and responsible than men.

She adds, “Undoubtedly, there is a significant importance to the role of women in CSOs and in the overall development process, as women are partners and supporters of men. Moreover, CSOs are essential partners to governmental and private entities in building and developing society.”

On the other hand, Dina Ahmed Abdulbari, an activist, says, “Women are active members in any society they exist in. However, sometimes opportunities do not allow them to showcase their efforts, talents, and capabilities, especially in conflict-affected situations or their aftermath. CSOs often operate through community committees supervised by male individuals in greater numbers than females. Therefore, their opportunities are not equal

to those of males. Nevertheless, their voice and presence are always notable.”

### Relevance & Importance

The presence of Yemeni women in various Yemeni CSOs has become essential, especially as they play a crucial role through the many tasks of these organizations. Notably, they have emerged prominently in recent years, witnessing the establishment of numerous institutions, organizations, unions, and more.

Sabah Farhan, a human rights activist, states that women have invested their time, thoughts, and capabilities in serving their country. They have managed to significantly influence society and bring their various issues to decision-makers, successfully making an impact.

She adds in her interview with “Women in Development and Peace” newspaper, “Through their participation in the work of CSOs, women have gained confidence in themselves and overcome the fear of society’s view towards women’s work in general. They have also entered fields that were previously exclusive to men and not accessible to women.”

On the other hand, Shakib Al-Amiri, the Executive Director of the Future Social and Development Association, emphasizes the significance of women’s work in CSOs in terms of their inclusion to ensure



their access to leadership positions, especially considering that women face marginalization in decision-making centers. One of the goals of CSOs is to raise awareness among women about their rights and the laws that guarantee their right to live as human beings.

Continuing his statement, he states, “Moreover, the importance of their work in civil society lies in contributing to the achievement of sustainable development for women and striving for their rights and the rights of women as a whole. If a woman does not know her rights and pur-

sue them, justice will be absent, and the absence of justice is one of the factors that hinder the possibility of achieving developmental plans for women.”

According to Al-Amiri, joining CSOs does not expose women to danger. Instead, it propels them forward to protect themselves and make their voices heard internationally. Their work in civil society is important for pooling efforts and promoting common interests through collective action.

He emphasizes that the presence of women in CSOs creates a democratic

transformation and grants them the right to power and decision-making. Their presence in these institutions is a crucial and fundamental pillar of their progress, especially since many CSOs adopt women’s issues. Thus, women are at the forefront of addressing their struggles and problems for the sake of finding solutions.

He believes that women are classified among the most vulnerable groups, especially in conflict areas, which makes it the responsibility of non-governmental and non-profit organizations to address their needs. One of the most important needs that organizations work on is providing employment by supporting productive households through courses and programs that support families supported by women.

Furthermore, efforts are made to qualify and train many women so that they are able to enter the job market and attract many of them to work in CSOs after qualification. Yemeni women have become the mainstay on which Yemeni families rely, being both the family unit and the nurturer. Through this pivotal role, their work has become even more crucial.

Almost all CSOs have the presence of women, and female workers outnumber males. Their role and efforts in the issues embraced by these institutions continue despite the current situation in the country.

## Empowering Women for Access to Effective Opportunities and Reducing Gender Disparities in the Workplace

التنمية والتعليم

Yemeni women play a pivotal role in sustainable development and hold a significant position within civil society. It is therefore imperative to focus on their training and empowerment, allowing them to enter labor market and secure sustainable income for themselves and their families. However, they encounter notable obstacles when it comes to accessing educational and training opportunities essential for their professional and personal growth. To address these challenges, local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) actively engage in training and empowering Yemeni women. They execute programs and training initiatives designed to enhance women’s skills and generate employment prospects across diverse fields and sectors.

By: Ahmed Bajoaim  
Women in Development and Peace

These organizations prioritize the establishment of secure learning environments that facilitate the acquisition of necessary competencies. Furthermore, local entities and developmental institutions advocate for increased awareness regarding the importance of women’s participation and presence in decision-making processes spanning all industries. They also uphold women’s rights and work to prevent their infringement.

### Training & Qualification

Director of All Girls Foundation for Development in Hadhramout Governorate, Engineer Mohammed Qahran, stated, “The foundation, through its offices across the republic, has taken on the task of women’s development in various sectors through training courses and economic empowerment, particularly through YES Project. This project has conducted numerous training and qualification courses in handicrafts, pottery, and sewing, aimed at improving livelihoods. These courses have been held in most Yemeni governorates with the goal of increasing women’s participation in the labor market, enhancing their economic status, and protecting them from poverty and unemployment.”

Engineer Qahran added in an exclusive statement to “Women in Development and Peace” that “the foundation organized a training program in Al-Mukalla city on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 last year, funded by the Swedish organization. This program benefited around 400 girls in various districts of Hadhramout and some beneficiaries from Aden Governorate. The program aims to involve women in peace-building and conflict resolution processes, as well as empower women’s leadership within society and enable them to become

successful leaders in both public and private sectors.”

In a related context, Mona Baqutayan, Director of Al-Amal Center for Entrepreneurship at Al-Amal Socio-cultural Feminism Foundation, explained that one of the foundation’s main objectives is to enhance women’s capacities through training in various fields and capacity building. She stated, “We have implemented training programs in Al-Mukalla that align with women’s needs, sharpening their skills and capabilities in the workplace. Special training sessions were conducted on artificial intelligence, livelihoods, vocational learning, political empowerment, and decision-making participation in all community issues.”

Baqutayan continued, saying, “Al-Amal Foundation has trained peace mediators who contribute to promoting social cohesion and reducing conflicts within their communities. We have also conducted development courses for women in the field of coordination and case management, and assigned several specialists to schools to provide psychological support and assess student behavior. Additionally, we have implemented various specialized training programs, including a respiratory care diploma for nursing staff to create a female workforce in intensive care units in hospitals. Moreover, we have conducted training and qualification courses to enhance the capabilities of women consultants in the field of transvaginal ultrasound, a modern diagnostic technique for early detection of cervical cancer.”

In addition, Fatima Ba Othman, President of Sama Association for Development, stated, “Training and empowering



Mohammed Qahran

women for the labor market require significant efforts, especially given the conditions caused by the ongoing conflict in Yemen for nearly nine years. Therefore, the association has implemented numerous training programs and development projects aimed at improving women’s capacities and enhancing their skills. We strive to empower them in both the public and private sectors, as well as the labor market. Sama Association has adopted ‘My Skills, My Profession’ program, which targets girls in professional and vocational fields, including courses on first aid, education, and other vocational training.”

Ba Othman further added that the association has signed agreements with other institutions to support qualified girls with the necessary resources and tools to estab-

lish their own projects and present them to the labor market and society as businesswomen. The first aid training conducted by the foundation in the rural areas of Al-Mukalla has provided opportunities for trainees to work in private clinics and dispensaries or serve as paramedics in rural villages. This initiative has greatly benefited and received wide acclaim in rural areas and isolated communities due to the significant contributions of these women in the healthcare field.

### Creating Job Opportunities

Mohammed Qahran, Director of All Girls Foundation for Development in Hadhramout, emphasized that the foundation believes women are essential partners in the advancement of societies. He stated that training and equipping women alone are not sufficient; therefore, the foundation works on marketing women in the fields they have been trained in. Additionally, the foundation adopts marketing strategies for the products and creations made by these women, both locally and internationally. This approach aims to ensure the success of their projects and create competitiveness in the labor market. The foundation’s marketing campaign extends not only to qualified women but also to girls with their own projects who aspire to achieve higher sales for their products.

Mona Baqutayan affirmed that there have been significant success stories in providing employment opportunities for women, presented by Al-Amal Foundation. These stories include empowering women economically through artisanal work, developing their skills, and creating office jobs within

local CSOs or international organizations operating in Hadhramout. After receiving training in sewing, 20 women are currently working from their homes for various commercial outlets.

Baqutayan added that the vision of Al-Amal Socio-cultural Feminism Foundation is to build women’s capacities and empower them to become highly competent and effective contributors to the community’s development and construction processes. By doing so, the foundation aims to reduce conflict intensity. Furthermore, the foundation works with graduates from the artisanal sector, productive families, and women entrepreneurs in seasonal bazaars. These events aim to introduce the community to women’s products and their significance, while overcoming challenges related to product accessibility for consumers. This approach reflects the status of working women and their determination to improve their economic conditions.

### Figures & Statistics

According to statistics obtained by “Women in Development and Peace” newspaper, the number of girls who benefited from Al-Amal Socio-cultural Feminism Foundation in establishing their own projects in various fields reached 175 girls in 2021-2022. The foundation provided training in diverse areas to economically and professionally empower women, with 2,500 trainees in Hadhramout Governorate in 2022.

Mohammed Qahran, the Director of All Girls Foundation for Development in Hadhramout, mentioned in a statistical report on the foundation’s courses implemented across Yemen’s governorates from 2020 to the first half of 2023, the following statistics were recorded: 490 women benefited from cooking courses, 1,760 in traditional crafts, 1,526 in vocational and administrative training, and 664 women in sewing and embroidery courses. Recently, the foundation’s branch organized several courses in Hadhramout, including 120 trainees on Security Council Resolution 1325 and a knowledge transfer training course benefiting 40 women. Additionally, 22 beneficiaries received training on violence in the protection department.

In conclusion, the training and qualification initiatives undertaken by CSOs and institutions are instrumental in enhancing the capabilities of Yemeni women, providing employment opportunities, and allowing them to engage in institutional experiences that offer greater knowledge and expertise. This enables their active participation in all fields with competence. Moreover, training contributes to the creation of individual projects for many girls, granting them financial independence and making them influential and active members of their communities.



# Enhancing the Role of Women in Civil Society: The Role and Impact of the Private Sector

Given the prevailing social, economic, and political circumstances in Yemen, Yemeni women have made significant strides across various fields, actively engaging in civil society organizations to promote peace, safeguard rights, and raise concerns with relevant authorities. Their efforts aim to empower women not only in decision-making positions but also beyond. Notably, the private sector plays a crucial role in supporting women's empowerment within civil society organizations. In this report, we focus on how the private sector enhances the role of women in such organizations.

By: **Hebah Mohammed**  
 Women in Development and Peace

## The Role of the Private Sector in Enhancing Women in Civil Society

The partnership between the private sector and civil society organizations should be strategically aligned to promote the role of women through collaborative efforts. The objective is to achieve tangible progress, foster gender equality, empower women in civil society, and cultivate a more inclusive and advanced society.

Naseem Al-Ma'amari, the leader of the Social Association for Widows and Divorcees in Ibb Governorate, highlights the pivotal role played by civil society organizations in providing social safety nets, maintaining stability, and preserving social cohesion. Yemen has witnessed developmental interventions due to the persistent conflict, resulting in the collapse of basic services and the emergence of the world's largest humanitarian crisis. In response, the World Bank has intervened through the Emergency Crisis Response Project implemented by the Social Development Fund. Numerous projects and initiatives have been undertaken in collaboration with civil society organizations to support the most vulnerable populations.

When considering the significance of the private sector in promoting women's engagement in civil society, Al-Ma'amari emphasizes its important and effective role in enhancing women's participation and elevating their status within these organizations. The private sector can contribute to bolstering the role of women by forming partnerships and collaborating with civil society organizations to increase women's presence and involvement in decision-making processes. Financial, technical, and administrative support can be provided to civil society organizations focused on women's issues. The private sector can also offer training and development opportunities to women working in these organizations.

Al-Ma'amari further asserts that the private sector can enhance women's economic empowerment by providing employment opportunities, vocational education, entrepreneurship training, and support. Moreover, it can ensure fair employment opportunities, equal pay, and promote career advancement for women in civil society organizations. The private sector can provide institutional support to women's rights organizations and offer managerial expertise, consultations, and funding to strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of these organizations.

Muna Rabat, the head of the Agricultural Association, acknowledges that the ongoing conflicts in Yemen over the past nine years have shifted the priorities of both the state and the private sector. While enhancing the role of women was previously a priority, attention has



now been redirected towards relief work and addressing displacement issues. Consequently, there appears to be limited involvement from the private sector in enhancing the role of women in civil society organizations.

### Shortcomings in Private Sector Support

Harbia Al-Sharmani, the leader of the Yaman Development Association in Ibb, sheds light on the role of the private sector in supporting the presence of women in civil society organizations. She states, "Currently, the private sector contributes 5% to enhancing the role of women in civil society organizations. It sponsors certain projects, such as the breastfeeding and pregnant women project implemented by the Social Fund for Development, the teacher support project, and the annual cash assistance project provided by some companies to the most impoverished families."

Al-Sharmani highlights that the Yaman Development Association has not received any support from the private sector or donor agencies. Most of the association's community service activities have relied on personal support and the efforts of its members. The association has only received assistance from one private hospital in the sewing education project for women in Al-Qafr District, Ibb Governorate, which is still ongoing. Up until now, 110 women have benefited from the sewing education project in Al-Himyar and Al-Ahkoom areas in Al-Qafr District.

Al-Sharmani believes that the private sector plays a significant role in supporting and assisting women by backing civil society organizations. In terms of economic empowerment, enhancing women's role in civil society is closely linked to their economic empowerment. The private sector can provide gender-inclusive employment opportunities, promote career advancement and training for women in civil society organizations, support women's entrepreneurship, and allocate necessary funding and resources to establish and develop their own projects.

Karima Al-Hakim, a representative of the United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNCHR), acknowledges that the private sector has offered numerous work opportunities for women through various support projects. Additionally, it has encouraged their self-development by providing incentives for learning English and computer skills. Some women have gone beyond secondary education and pursued academic studies at the university or postgraduate level with the support of the private sector's collaboration with educational institutions.

She believes that it is necessary for companies and institutions in the private sector to activate their developmental work by organizing training programs and specialized workshops for women working in civil society organizations. These programs can cover a wide range of topics, such as leadership, organization, management, and personal and professional skills development.

Human rights activist Amat Al-Rahman Ali wonders why support from the private sector is limited to simple financial and food aid to some civil society organizations, and why we do not see its role in supporting women's leadership capabilities in civil society organizations. This can be achieved by providing training and leadership development opportunities, offering specialized training programs to enhance leadership and management skills and decision-making for women, and encouraging women to take on leadership positions in civil society organizations by promoting equal opportunities and removing barriers that hinder their progress!

### Difficulties

In Yemen, the private sector encounters numerous challenges and obstacles that hinder its support to civil society organizations. Nasim

Al-Ma'amari emphasizes, "The difficulties impeding the private sector from supporting civil society organizations stem from the business and investment environment in Yemen, and these challenges have intensified with the ongoing conflict."

She further elaborates, "Yemen has been grappling with armed conflict for years, which has had a detrimental impact on overall stability and security. This challenging situation hampers companies' ability to implement development projects and effectively support civil society organizations."

Al-Ma'amari explains that many companies and private institutions that used to offer support to civil society organizations before the conflict have refrained from doing so due to the economic deterioration in Yemen. This deterioration has affected the private sector's capacity to allocate financial and human resources to support civil society organizations. Companies may struggle to meet their basic needs and maintain sustainability, which ultimately diminishes their ability to provide support.

Muna Rabat points out that the private sector in Yemen is primarily driven by profit, so civil society organizations need to convince the private sector of the benefits they would gain from supporting them. In the past, there were numerous civil society organizations established for various purposes, including personal interests, and many of them failed to establish trust with the private sector.

Many heads of civil society organizations concur that some companies may encounter difficulties in understanding the significance of supporting civil society and the potential for achieving positive social change. This stems from a lack of awareness and a prevailing social culture regarding the importance of contributing to community development and enhancing social life in Yemen. Additionally, the imposition of high taxes and levies on the private sector makes it challenging to provide financial support to civil organizations due to capital shortages.

Recognizing the role of the private sector in enhancing women's participation in civil society organizations is a crucial step towards building a more equitable and just society. Women have the right to full participation in decision-making and to contribute to positive change, and the private sector can serve as an important partner in this journey.

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### 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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# Ruqayyah Al-Hajjri: Yemen's First Orphanage Founder

*In the realm of civil society, women play a vital role across various sectors, with charitable organizations serving as key contributors. Within this dynamic landscape, notable individuals stand out for their exceptional achievements. One such organization is Dar Al Rahma (House of Mercy), which owes its success and growth to the exemplary leadership of Ruqayyah Al-Hajjri. Revered as a mother to orphans and a trailblazer in humanitarian endeavors in Yemen, she holds the distinction of establishing the first comprehensive care center for girls across the nation.*

By: Hanan Hussein  
Women in Development and Peace

Ruqayyah Abdullah Al-Hajjri earned her Bachelor's degree in Islamic Studies in 1993. As a dedicated mother, she cherishes her four children—two sons and two daughters. Previously, she served as a social specialist at Khadijah School in Sana'a and took on the role of supervisor at the Ministry of Education. In this capacity, she oversaw a team of psychological specialists in government schools and diligently supervised the implementation of various school programs and activities. Additionally, she contributed her expertise as an educational counselor.

#### The Media Aspect

Venturing into the realm of media, Ruqayyah found her passion in journalism, propelling her to embark on a successful career in this field. Her foray commenced by contributing articles to numerous newspapers and magazines. Recognizing her talent and dedication, she earned valuable memberships in prestigious professional associations such as the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate and the Arab Journalists Syndicate. Additionally, Ruqayyah extended her involvement by actively participating in other esteemed organizations. As a founding member of a prominent human rights organization and a member of the Yemeni Women's Union, she continues to champion crucial causes within her community.

#### Charitable Work

Ruqayyah Al-Hajjri, a dedicated humanitarian and champion of orphan welfare, shares her lifelong passion for charitable work. This deep-rooted love and concern, particularly for orphan sponsorship, have been the driving force behind her diligent efforts.

Ruqayyah's journey began by addressing the tragic plight of orphans within her own family. She unveiled a multitude of harsh realities and bore witness to various forms of suffering. According to her, "The very least an orphan girl endures within her own family is being treated as a servant, responsible for their affairs, yet receiving no gratitude or recognition for her individuality. This includes being denied the right to education, proper upbringing, social support, healthcare, and more. By meeting these basic needs, we can empower orphans to become productive and well-rounded individuals, fostering their love for their homeland and contributing positively to society."

Reflecting on her experiences, Ruqayyah shares, "Throughout my journey, I have encountered parents who force their daughters to beg on the streets and exploit false narratives to obtain illicit funds. I have witnessed cases where orphans are coerced into theft to meet their daily expenses, while others have resorted to compromising their values, sacrificing their dignity, and abandoning their principles. These unscrupulous individuals view these vulnerable orphans as commodities, engaging in unethical and illegal practices that blatantly disregard societal values and customs."

Driven by these observations, Ruqayyah took the initiative to establish the Al-Rahma Foundation for Human Development. Its primary goal is to alleviate the suffering of orphans and put an end to physical, psychological, and sexual violence against these innocent children.

Elaborating on the foundation's purpose,



Ruqayyah asserts, "Our organization collaborates with international initiatives dedicated to preventing violence against children. We implement various scientific approaches aimed at eradicating all forms of violence within this group. Our mission is to empower children with knowledge and skills to protect themselves from violence, oppression, and deprivation. By prioritizing their rights and well-being, we aim to ensure that they can lead fulfilling lives, on par with their peers who grow up in nurturing environments that uphold their values and customs, thus fostering their overall happiness and balance."

#### Project Initiation

During Ruqayyah's dedicated pursuit of philanthropic efforts, she discovered her aspiration to provide housing for orphaned girls, ignited by an encounter with a young girl named Maryam. Tragically, due to the challenges she faced, Maryam's life came to a sorrowful end, leaving Ruqayyah overwhelmed with grief and a deep longing to do more. It was during this poignant moment that she realized the dire need for shelter among orphaned girls.

With unwavering determination, Ruqayyah embarked on a heartfelt mission to rally support for the establishment of a project aimed at housing, caring for, and safeguarding these vulnerable girls. Recounting the origins of the shelter, Ruqayyah shares, "Initially, I searched tirelessly for a single apartment that could serve as a sanctuary for orphaned girls. However, I encountered several obstacles as our society holds conservative views that do not readily accept the existence of shelters for girls. Nonetheless, I remained undeterred by these perspectives and pressed on in my search."

She adds, "During this quest, a generous philanthropist graciously donated three adjacent buildings to the cause, relinquishing half of his own properties. Furthermore, two other buildings were personally offered for sale, and two compassionate merchants stepped forward, purchasing them and then donating them to the orphans. As a result, we now possess a cluster of five adjacent buildings, providing a safe haven for over 500 orphaned boys and girls."

#### Establishment of Rahma Foundation

On October 23, 2001, Ruqayyah Al-Hajjri embarked on her mission to establish Dar Al-Rahma, an institution dedicated to the care of orphaned girls. Over time, this establishment evolved and

transformed into Al-Rahma Foundation for Human Development, with Ruqayyah assuming the role of chairperson on the board of directors. Notably, this foundation holds the honor of being the first of its kind in the Republic, focused on addressing the needs of orphaned girls.

The Al-Rahma Foundation for Human Development currently operates three branches, with its main headquarters situated in Sana'a, while the other two branches are located in the governorates of Taiz and Aden.

Since 2005, the foundation has undertaken extensive expansions in Sana'a, incorporating additional floors dedicated to the housing and support of both orphaned boys and girls. Presently, the organization boasts a wide range of departments, including:

An all-inclusive private school that provides education for orphaned boys and girls, catering to students from kindergarten through high school.

A specialized institute offering comprehensive English language instruction.

A fully-equipped sewing workshop and other supporting units designed to foster self-reliance, self-production, and economic empowerment.

A health unit equipped with a state-of-the-art laboratory, a dental clinic, a dedicated psychological chamber, an isolation facility, and a pharmacy.

A nursery and daycare center catering to children from birth to the age of four, comprising educational activities that emphasize values, while facilitating engagement in play, art, sports, and other recreational endeavors.

Within the foundation, 55 fully furnished residential rooms are available to cater to the needs of the children. Additionally, a specially designated building for training and rehabilitation purposes is currently in the final stages of preparation and will be inaugurated in the near future, God willing.

#### Women's Excellence in the Workplace

Ruqayyah Al-Hajjri underscores the remarkable achievements and contributions of women across various fields, asserting, "We consistently witness women holding key roles in administration and secretarial positions due to their exceptional qualifications and performance. Their ability to shoulder responsibilities and their precision in executing tasks sets them apart, making them the most deserving and competent individuals in their respective domains."

She further explains, "From the inception of the institution 22 years ago, I intentionally designed the entire staff to be exclusively female, even exten-

ding this decision to include the gardener, driven by these very reasons."

Highlighting the efficiency and accuracy that women bring to their work, she emphasizes, "Arwa Al-Sulayhi's ascent to power in Yemen's history was solely attributed to her wise leadership and adeptness in shouldering responsibilities. She established a thriving state with its army, leaders, men, and financial resources. This exceptional woman dedicated all her efforts towards fostering industrial growth, facilitating trade, irrigating fields, and constructing roads leading to Mecca. Consequently, she transitioned from merely being a lady to earning the revered title of Arwa."

Continuing her narrative, she asserts, "One influential woman has the power to bring about significant change, instill belief in her message, and elevate the status of accomplished female leaders."

#### Difficulties & Achievements

Ruqayyah Al-Hajjri highlights the lack of support and encouragement given to women in Yemeni society, asserting that women often face conflicts with their families when expressing their desire to join the workforce. These conflicts arise due to differing interpretations of principles and values and the presence of extremism, among other factors. Insufficient societal support and these obstacles hinder many women from pursuing their goals across various fields and impede their progress in society.

She emphasizes that despite the challenges and frustrations women may encounter in their work, those with a purpose in life cannot simply give up, especially when they witness their families' pride in their achievements.

Ruqayyah stresses the presence of cumulative accomplishments that serve as motivators to give even more. She adds, "The most significant instances that have motivated me to excel and strive further in this field are witnessing the outcomes of my work, such as orphaned individuals graduating from universities in diverse fields, the success of our daughters who have established homes, gotten married, and had children, as well as the expansion of our initiatives."

She further elaborates, "More than 40 girls have been wedded through the organization, and we, as their families, are delighted by the success they have achieved in their lives with their spouses and children."

Additionally, she asserts, "These achievements are the most remarkable and compelling evidence

of the status of women, proving that they are capable of succeeding in their chosen fields if they wholeheartedly dedicate themselves to their work and consistently uphold high levels of trust and responsibility."

Ruqayyah clarifies by stating, "A woman proves her worth when others entrust her with responsibilities, projects, and assets. She demonstrates her capability to handle such trust and improve upon it."

When discussing the achievements of "Mom Ruqayyah," as termed by the children in the organization, she considers her greatest accomplishments to be her relentless pursuit of fulfilling her humanitarian and charitable mission in the most suitable manner, ensuring care and protection for all individuals within the organization. She explains, "For girls, being orphaned is a tragedy. Orphaned girls often experience oppression and marginalization from certain members of society or even their own families, unlike boys who have another space. However, due to social reasons, girls are unable to access this space."

Moreover, she adds, "One challenge faced by some orphaned girls is dealing with familial issues following the death of their fathers. The reluctance to admit them into the organization often stems from their brothers or families supporting them, as society perceives it as abandonment. Within our Yemeni tribal society, finding common ground and fostering understanding with them becomes the most effective approach."

She acknowledges that the primary challenges she encountered revolved around the acquired buildings, which entailed rehabilitation, construction of additional floors, furnishing, and necessary partitioning. Emphasizing her role as the organization's leader, she asserts, "As the head of the institution, I consistently strive to enhance and advance it, requiring continual extra effort on my part to fulfill the expected tasks and more. Consequently, I perceive challenges arising anew with each phase I undertake."

Furthermore, she states, "Despite all the obstacles I faced, I persevered in my project with optimism and hope, to the extent that it stands before you today. However, I still aspire for further improvement and progress."

#### Women Empowering Each Other in Civil Society

Ruqayyah firmly believes in the importance of women proving themselves through their actions. As women demonstrate success in various domains, they contribute to empowering and uplifting the status of fellow women. Beyond supporting and assisting others, she vehemently rejects the notion that "women are enemies to each other."

She asserts, "The more we unify as women, respecting our diverse perspectives, the more we achieve collective success. We share a common country and interest, and the more we foster sincere interactions, the greater the project we establish for ourselves as women. Women themselves embody a project, and thus, everyone should strive to enhance their societal roles."

In her concluding message to women across all fields, Ruqayyah Al-Hajjri directly addresses them, proclaiming, "Women are my sisters, daughters, and mothers, constituting half of society. They should wholeheartedly pursue success in all spheres, enabling us to accomplish even greater feats and mutually level in accomplishments on a broader scale."





## Special Selection Criteria for Both Genders in Business and Projects in Organizations

# Is There Equal Employment Representation for Women and Men or a Specific Gender-based Framework in Place?

*Sara Al-Fa'iq, the Executive Director of the Civil Coalition for Peace, clarified that there are mechanisms in place to support women's participation, with each project having specific selection criteria. Additionally, there is a commitment to maintain a participation rate of no less than 50% for both females and males. Gender considerations are taken into account during the preparation of projects and in addressing the specific needs of each gender before, during, and after project implementation.*

By: Haneesh Al-Wahsh  
Women in Development and Peace



*The key programs supporting women primarily focus on women's economic empowerment, thereby bolstering their role in civil society.*

### Brief Overview of the Organization's Work in Yemen?

The Civil Coalition for Peace is a societal entity composed of a membership of Yemeni civil society organizations active in the field of peacebuilding, youth, and women's issues. It operates within the geographical framework of the Republic of Yemen and seeks to have a positive impact in the field of peacebuilding in Yemen through interventions aimed at reducing the reality of societal and political conflicts and promoting a culture of tolerance, coexistence, and development.

### What are the Most Important Programs and Activities Implemented by the Organization, Especially for Women?

The Civil Coalition for Peace implements its project for the third consecutive year, which aims to enhance the role of women through capacity building of civil society organizations in advocacy, and thus implementing national advocacy campaigns that promote the role of women in civil space or community mediation.

### Regarding the Work of Youth Initiatives Specifically for Women, is there Cooperation Targeting those Initiatives?

There is no specific focus on directly supporting women's initiatives only, but there is support for youth initiatives in general.

### What is the Mechanism Followed When

### Selecting Training and Qualification Programs for Both Genders?

The Civil Coalition follows supportive mechanisms for women's participation, as each project has specific criteria for selection. However, there is a commitment to a participation rate of no less than 50% for females and 50% for males. Gender considerations are taken into account in project preparation and in meeting the specific needs of gender before, during, and after project implementation.

### Is there Equality in Work and Employment Between Women and Men, or Is there Targeting of a Specific Group?

There is equality in work and employment, and there are other important criteria such as competencies and experiences. However, sometimes we may be confused, as we focus on ensuring gender diversity in employment for girls or boys, and sometimes the priority and need and experience are for women, so we have to commit and choose what is appropriate. Currently, the employment of girls is greater than boys, due to their diligence and competency.

### Has Yemeni Women Made a Difference While Working in Various Fields in Local and International Organizations?

Yes, Yemeni women have made a difference in their work, and this is tangible through quality indicators in job applications, then the

ability to pass interviews, and then prove themselves, perseverance, flexibility, ability to handle pressure, loyalty, and self-control. All these skills and abilities had a great impact and role for women in their work in organizations. For example, in the last process of selecting volunteers for the coalition, I was focusing on the importance of employing a young man to balance the coalition team, but competencies and experiences were in favor of girls, which forced me to contract with a girl instead of a boy.

### How Does the Working Yemeni Woman in the Field of Community Organizations Face the Challenges and Difficulties she Goes Through?

There are many difficulties that women face in civil society, starting from the male-dominated culture, extending to the commitments and responsibilities inside and outside the house, and reaching the public policies of the government and the general direction to support women and the percentage of women's

presence in the government. Women try to face the challenges and difficulties by proving themselves in terms of commitment to work and giving their best, despite the difficulty of what they are doing. Yemeni women have truly proven their worth in community work and in local and international organizations.

### In your Opinion, Why has a Negative Perception Formed Among Some Members of Society Towards Women Working in Organizations?

A negative perception has formed about women working in organizations due to certain factors. Some entities have used the media to spread the wrong culture about women working, and have disseminated many videos that oppose women working in organizations in a negative way and defame them. In addition, some misleading ideas have been circulated, spreading a mindset that makes them seem inferior and disregarding the social and humanitarian work they provide. Fake accounts have also been created using women's names to spread false and derogatory information.

### What is the Role of Women in peacebuilding, Especially in This Exceptional Stage that our Country is Going Through?

The role of women during this period and since the beginning of conflicts has been diverse. They have been supporters of peace in their homes and during the conflict, intervening as mediators to cease fire during clashes. They have also played a role in the transportation of bodies and the exchange of prisoners. While men went to the battlefields, women focused on providing food and drink for their families. They emphasized economic empowerment activities and acted as providers for their families. Women's participation continued until they became community mediators in various provinces, influencing prisoner exchange and ceasefire negotiations.

### In your Opinion, What are the Most Important Programs that Contribute to Developing Women's Capacities for Empowerment in Institutional Work?

The most important programs that support women first and foremost include economic empowerment for women, followed by supporting women's roles in civil society, promoting women's participation as community mediators, and finally supporting women's presence in ceasefire negotiations and conflict resolution initiatives.

# Samira Siyoud: Positive Impact on the Lives of Marginalized People in Yemen

By: Alia Mohammed  
Women in Development and Peace

Samira Siyoud is a flourisher of success, and the voice of the most disadvantaged individuals and groups (verbally marginalized in Yemen). She is an influential leader who has effectively amplified the voices of this neglected group. Born in 1965 in the city of Aden and raised in the embrace of a simple rural family in the governorate of Lahij.

Samira Siyoud possesses a wide range of skills that have empowered her to become a leader and a catalyst for change. She has shone in her work in the civil society sector and has contributed significantly and effectively across all social and humanitarian spheres.

Siyoud was unable to pursue further education and settled for a basic certificate. She joined the military in the 1980s and worked in the photography department of the Air Force.

### Painful Reality

With determination, willpower, resilience, and a firm belief in her role in community development, Siyoud has managed to bring about a positive change in the lives of the marginalized in Yemen. She has made a remarkable impact within the community and has exerted clear efforts to convey their suffering

in local and international forums.

Siyoud expresses, "I have witnessed the suffering experienced by dark-skinned women in the community and chose to work in this field to amplify their voices and advocate for the demands of a group that lacks even the most basic rights."

She further adds, "The marginalized encompass numerous of the most impoverished groups, including children, women, displaced individuals, and the unemployed, as well as the illiterate. This minority is living in a distressing reality and dire economic conditions that have exacerbated their suffering."

### Conflict & Marginalization

No one was spared from the wreckage of suffering, on the contrary, the conflict was akin to the jaws of death for those who have endured injustice and weakness for many years, as it transformed a state of prosperity into a situation of destruction, thus adding an extra burden on the marginalized group. The harsh conditions have deeply affected their livelihoods, resulting in a lack of basic living opportunities such as food, water, healthcare, and education.

Siyoud recounts her journey, stating, "In 2007, I assumed the position of head of the women's sector, and I worked for 15 years as a social activist serving the most disadvantaged

and impoverished groups."

She continues, "In 2019, I founded the Aman Association for the marginalized groups with the aim of providing support to this segment. Through this association, I have actively engaged in various vital areas that serve the marginalized in the city of Aden."

### Numerous Participations

Samira had prominent contributions in women's summits, numerous programs, training workshops, seminars, and developmental projects for women and youth. She played a role in shaping the shadow and CEDAW reports at the peace conference, primarily focusing her activities on supporting marginalized women and integrating them into training and educational courses that empower them in society.

Among her engagements, she also worked with the SOS Foundation For Development, organizing sports activities for children and youth, in addition to supporting initiatives and plays that advocate for the issues of this group.

### Challenges & Difficulties

Siyoud emphasized in her speech that the marginalized in Yemen face numerous challenges and difficulties due to the color of their skin, making them in urgent need of support and assistance. The obstacles also included opposition and resistance from individuals

who do not value social work.

She affirmed that the marginalized group has been greatly affected by racism and discrimination, leading to a situation of inequality, as well as the condescending attitude with which society views them.

She pointed out that solving the issue of the marginalized in Yemen relies on comprehensive interventions by the government, international organizations, and civil society to enhance their economic activity, reduce poverty, and provide social protection for them. "The current situation of the marginalized requires international cooperation and sustained efforts to alleviate the daily suffering experienced by these individuals," as stated by Siyoud.

### Skills

Samira Siyoud possesses a wide range of skills that have supported her work in the civil society sector. She has been able to convey her vision by engaging and integrating individuals from this group into society, diminishing color-based discrimination, as well as providing social security for marginalized women. She has also taken their hands towards skills development, raising awareness about their rights and responsibilities, as well as solving the problems that trouble the majority of women in this group and providing solutions to reduce violations.

Regarding the importance of the presence of women in civil society organizations, Siyoud says: "Civil society organizations play an important role in enhancing women's participation and highlighting their role in decision-making. Additionally, they work on providing opportunities for women's development and empowerment in various aspects of their lives, as well as achieving gender equality."

She adds, "Women working in civil society organizations acquire knowledge and skills in leadership, management, and communication. These acquired skills enable them to make decisions that affect their lives and their community, leading to significant professional and societal successes."

Samira considers the work of women in civil society organizations as an opportunity for development and effective contribution to society, resulting in a positive impact on the women themselves and the community as a whole.

Through her discussion of the milestones, she has passed and the goals she has worked to achieve, Samira has made her journey a success story in humanitarian and community work, despite the challenges and difficulties she has faced. Today, she feels satisfied with what she has been able to achieve for women in marginalized communities during her years of community work.



# Razan: From Accountant to a Specialist in Women's Issues and their Deprived Rights

*Yemen has been grappling with deep-rooted sexism, exacerbated by the armed conflicts that have ravaged the country in recent years, impacting various aspects of life. Women, in particular, have borne the brunt of these challenges, enduring the denial of their rights, marginalization of their roles, and disregard for their vital contributions to peacebuilding and conflict resolution among Yemeni factions. Despite numerous UN resolutions, including the pivotal Security Council Resolution (1325) signed by Yemen on October 31, 2000, women continue to face significant hurdles in accessing employment opportunities, participating in decision-making processes, and actively contributing to peace efforts.*

By: Ahmed Bajoaim  
Women in Development and Peace

## Success Story

Our story unfolds in the city of Mukalla, the capital of Hadhramout Governorate in southern Yemen, with a resilient woman in her mid-forties. Despite the prevailing challenges and obstacles confronting women today, she embarks on a transformative journey, seeking to redefine the reality and elevate the status and impact of women in fostering stability within communities. This is a tale of success narrated by a tenacious and courageous woman who defied societal customs, traditions, and the often-narrow perspectives of certain segments of society. Her unwavering efforts and unyielding determination have propelled her towards achieving her ambitions and reshaping her reality, refusing to succumb to defeat.

## Who Is She?

Razan Mohammed, a dedicated wife and mother of three, embarked on her journey after graduating with a diploma in business administration from the National Institute in Mukalla in 2008. Dissatisfied with her financial accounting position, she ventured through various jobs in different institutions and civil society organizations, seeking a path that resonated with her passion for gender equality.

Driven by a deep desire to eliminate discrimination against women and secure their rights and dignity, Razan committed herself to effecting positive change for Yemeni women, who have long experienced marginalization, particularly exacerbated by the onset of the conflict in early 2015. Recognizing the potential of international decisions pertaining to women's rights, she realized that they could serve as powerful tools to transform the current situation for women in Yemen.

## Razan & Women's Advocacy

April 2022 witnessed Razan Mohammed, our central figure, sharing her journey with



Women in Development and Peace Newspaper. She revealed her active involvement in the Women's Empowerment and Peace Project, specifically centered around women's issues aligned with Resolution 1325. This initiative, organized by the "All Girls Foundation", brought together 33 young women. Spanning ten months, from April 2022 to January 2023, the comprehensive training project unfolded in three distinct stages.

The initial stage, lasting approximately three months, immersed the participants in office work, dedicated to advocating for women's issues, defending their rights, and establishing a protective network. Transitioning to the second stage, the focus shifted to fieldwork encompassing conducting surveys, gathering data, and collecting indicators related to women's empowerment, spanning another three months.

Razan continued, stating, "The third stage involved championing women's issues within institutions and civil society organizations across the governorates of Hadhramout, Aden, and Al-Mahra. This phase extended for approximately four months." Following the project's conclusion, the participants underwent

evaluation, and owing to her unwavering dedication and perseverance throughout the endeavor, Razan achieved the highest rating, surpassing her fellow participants. The evaluation propelled her towards a nomination for an administrative position in women's protection and empowerment.

## Razan and Achieving Goals

Razan Mohammed, in her statement to Women in Development and Peace Newspaper, revealed that her participation in the project led to a significant promotion. In February 2023, she transitioned from her role as an accountant to becoming the head of the Women's Protection Department at the branch of the "All Girls Foundation" in Hadhramout governorate. This advancement was made possible through collaboration and coordination with the United Nations Population Fund. Reflecting on her experience, Razan emphasized the newfound knowledge she gained about international decisions supporting women's rights, addressing gender disparities, and the crucial role of women in decision-making positions in Yemen, particularly during the cur-

rent stage of the country's development. She stressed the importance of women's involvement in peacebuilding and mitigating the impact of conflicts.

In her eight months as head of the Women's Protection Department, Razan dedicated herself to educating and raising awareness among women in Hadhramout and neighboring governorates. Her efforts focused on enlightening women about their rights in various fields and the significance of their active participation across sectors, including assuming leadership positions in government entities and civil society organizations. During this time, she worked diligently to challenge and dispel the stereotypical image Yemeni society often holds of women, aiming to address negative perceptions that hinder women's capabilities in society.

Razan further shared her engagement with over 30 human rights and development organizations in multiple governorates. Collaborating with these entities, she advocated for women's issues, encouraged their training in diverse fields, enhanced their capacities, educated them about their rights as outlined in local and international laws and United Nations

resolutions, and fostered a culture of their involvement in negotiations, conflict resolutions, and the establishment of peace in Yemen. She emphasized that her current position is not the culmination of her aspirations and ambitions. Instead, she pledged to spare no effort in improving women's awareness through collaboration with relevant organizations, increasing women's participation in civil society and government sectors, and promoting their independence and economic empowerment.

Driven by an unwavering passion for resilience, strength, and courage, Razan's pursuit of education did not end with her diploma. In the current academic year, she enrolled in the first year of a business administration program at Hadhramout University, approaching her studies with optimism and determination, envisioning a brighter future. Razan's story serves as an inspiration for countless women in Yemen and worldwide, highlighting the significance of achieving equality and participation alongside men in all spheres of life. It also underscores the importance of women's involvement in civil society organizations, capacity development, and the refusal to succumb to challenging circumstances.

## Official Entities: Supportive Efforts to Enhance the Presence of Women in Civil Society Organizations

By: Alia Mohammed  
Women in Development and Peace

The Yemeni society has witnessed several changes since the conflict began, and women have chosen civil society organizations as a platform to make decisions and have expanded their efforts to achieve social justice and gender equality. Their vital roles vary according to social, economic, and cultural needs.

Yemeni women have been able to achieve their goal of having a positive impact on society, and have played an active role in mitigating the consequences of the conflict. Their efforts have focused on humanitarian, relief, cultural, health, and education fields.

These roles could not have been achieved without official supporting entities that enhance women's presence and activity in decision-making and enable them to hold positions. These entities have implemented a number of policies and procedures that enhance women's role and ensure their effective representation.

## Programs to Enhance Women's Participation

Governmental entities, legal bodies, and non-governmental organizations have played a vital role in empowering Yemeni women and enhancing their right to decision-making.

Dunya Muhammad, a social activist, emphasized the importance of the role played by official entities in enhancing women's participation and activating their role in decision-making and development.

During her speech, she said: "A large number of institutions have provided the necessary support and procedures that have contributed to helping civil society organizations implement programs and projects to support women's rights and participation."

She added: "These projects aim to improve women's role and increase their participation in various fields, and develop their abilities at the professional and community levels. Training and continuous education courses are valuable opportunities for women to develop their skills and acquire new qualifications."

She continued: "Women's empowerment programs contribute to changing the culture of society and achieving positive change. These programs are based on organizing cultural events and conferences that address gender issues and equality between genders." She pointed out what has been provided by a number of entities and institutions of workshops and educational training.

## Training and Support

Husam Abdullah, a social activist, sees training and support as essential tools for empowering women and increasing their pre-

sence in civil society organizations.

He states, "The training women receive plays a crucial role in enhancing their presence in civil society organizations. Providing women with suitable training opportunities enables them to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to contribute to sustainable community development."

Husam emphasizes that achieving gender balance, sustainable development, and social justice in Yemeni society depends on women's presence in civil society organizations and their participation in decision-making. He highlights the importance of a cooperative partnership between the government and organizations working in gender equality and women's rights.

Tahani Al-Mansari, a Yemeni youth activist in community work, has received specialized programs and training in planning, leadership, project management, information technology, communication skills, and negotiation. She affirms that these training programs have increased her efficiency, enhanced job opportunities, and enabled her to participate effectively in society. Al-Mansari believes that such programs equip women with technical and social skills, such as management, teamwork, self-development, confidence building, and communication skills, thereby helping to eliminate social constraints and achieve full integration of women in society.

## Funding Challenges

Civil society organizations face difficulties in securing the necessary funding to achieve their goals, as confirmed by Faiza Al-Qubati, the Women's Department official in community committees.

She emphasizes the role that official bodies, government, and institutions should play in providing financial support and necessary resources to empower and strengthen these organizations.

Al-Qubati adds that official bodies play a crucial role in providing funding to civil society organizations, enabling them to efficiently support women's issues and enhance their presence in various fields.

Al-Qubati emphasized the importance of allocating financial grants to civil society organizations focusing on women's issues, as well as facilitating access to funding. Simplifying the procedures for obtaining financial support contributes to enhancing the financial sustainability of these organizations, enabling them to carry out their work and programs effectively and successfully.

## Developing Laws

Women working in civil society organizations face many challenges in terms of their rights, participation in decision-making, and involvement in social, economic, and political fields. Reforms in civil society laws, such as enhancing women's rights and ensuring

their equal participation in decision-making and social structures, are essential steps towards rejecting traditional constraints and fully empowering Yemeni women.

"There must be a strict approach towards enhancing women's presence in society and encouraging their effective participation in decision-making," stated human rights activist Huda Nabil in her discussion about the legal support that official authorities should provide to enhance women's presence in civil society organizations.

She also stated: "The issue of developing laws for civil society organizations to enhance women's presence in Yemeni society is one of the most important issues that the Yemeni government is trying to address."

Furthermore, she added, "There should be an increase in the representation of women in local councils and the provision of laws to increase their presence, as well as providing equal opportunities for women in nomination, elections, and political participation."

She continued, "Laws on women's rights in the fields of education, health, and work should be strengthened, and Yemeni women should have the right to access high-quality education and equal employment opportunities. Additionally, labor laws should ensure women's rights in the public and private sectors, such as protecting labor rights and wage equality."



# Achieving Equality and Empowerment: Key Factors for Women's Success in Civil Society

*In recent decades, the role and participation of women in civil society have undergone a significant transformation. Women are no longer confined to traditional roles; rather, they have emerged as catalysts for change and progress in our societies. With their immense capabilities and potential, women can achieve remarkable success in civil society when provided with a conducive environment and necessary conditions. This report aims to illuminate the crucial factors that contribute to women's success in civil society.*

**By: Hebah Mohammed  
 Women in Development and Peace**

## Women's Empowerment Requirements

By empowering women across all fields and providing them with essential resources, women can attain success in civil society and enhance their role within it. It is crucial to support women at the societal, governmental, and institutional levels to enable their success and empower them to effectively participate in decision-making and societal development. According to Harbiya Al-Sharmani, President of the Yemeni Development Association, the key factors contributing to women's success include the presence of diverse and ample opportunities that allow women to engage in community development, develop their skills in various domains, access empowerment resources, and advocate for women's rights across sectors.

Al-Sharmani underscores the significance of quality education and equal access to education as crucial factors for women's success in civil society. Education equips women with knowledge and skills necessary for effective participation and decision-making. Moreover, she highlights the importance of women being well-informed about their rights and equal standing in civil society, empowering them to confidently express their opinions and aspirations. Additionally, awareness of pathways to success and available development opportunities contributes to their accomplishments.

Nasim Al-Maamari, head of the Social Association for Widows and Divorcees, emphasizes that one of the most critical prerequisites for empowering women is ensuring that they are fully aware of their rights and legally protected against discrimination or violations. The existence of a fair judicial system and legislation promoting gender equality and protecting women's rights is imperative.

Furthermore, effective participation and success in civil society demand strong leadership skills. Women must possess the ability to collaborate within teams, motivate others, make informed decisions, and think strategically. Mona Rabat, head of the Agricultural Association,



highlights the significance of improving the cultural and material standards of Yemeni women. Encouraging community and family support, providing advantages for women-led organizations through state support, and backing international initiatives for women's projects are among the pivotal factors required for Yemeni women.

Rabat further stresses that comprehensive support plays a crucial role in women's success in civil society. This support encompasses funding, resources, training, and necessary facilities to bolster women's activities and empower them to accomplish their goals. Women must also possess the ability to confront challenges and adapt to the ever-evolving changes within civil society. Flexibility and adaptability are indispensable qualities for achieving success.

According to journalist Fares Sharaf Al-Din, Yemeni women play a crucial role as essential partners in the nation's

development and its consequent benefits. Despite being half of society's human resources, their contributions have not been fully utilized or appreciated. Promoting the status of Yemeni women is an integral part of the national effort to overcome the difficult challenges facing the country.

Fares asserts that improving the status of Yemeni women necessitates more than just strategic plans. It requires political will for change, as well as financial, human, and legal resources to overcome the obstacles they encounter.

Moreover, he believes that advancing Yemeni women's position requires empowering the Arab Women's Organization as a regional mechanism under the umbrella of the Arab League. This step aims to achieve the organization's goals of enhancing Arab women's solidarity and considering it a fundamental pillar of overall Arab unity. This includes incorporating women's issues into comprehensive development plans and policies,

coordinating Arab positions in regional and international affairs, and fostering mutual cooperation and the exchange of experiences in promoting women's rights.

## Education & Awareness: the Path to Women's Success in Civil Society

Education plays a crucial role in achieving sustainable development and gender equality within civil society. It is an essential component for women's success. Karima Al-Hakim, a member of the United Nations Human Rights Commission, emphasizes the significance of education, stating that women cannot thrive in societies without learning. Education empowers women by strengthening their personality, providing knowledge and skills for personal and professional growth, and opening doors to higher-paying jobs and career advancement. It enables economic independence and financial autonomy.

To enhance women's rights in education, Khawla Al-Sharafi, the head of the National Women's Committee in Ibb Governorate, suggests that governments and civil society establish educational policies that prioritize women's rights. This includes a commitment to providing basic education for all, especially marginalized female groups.

Al-Sharafi further emphasizes the importance of strengthening and supporting laws on gender equality in education. These laws should prohibit gender discrimination and ensure women's access to education based on global standards. It is crucial for authorities to allocate sufficient budgets for the education sector, specifically targeting education for women and girls. These funds should be effectively utilized to improve educational infrastructure and hire qualified teachers.

Furthermore, Al-Sharafi highlights the significance of raising awareness among women about their rights within civil society. She suggests incorporating women's rights and gender equality topics into school curricula. Promoting awareness of freedom, equality, and encouraging critical

thinking about gender issues is essential.

To foster this awareness, non-governmental organizations and community institutions can organize educational and awareness programs on women's rights. Workshops, lectures, and seminars can serve as platforms for discussing gender issues and informing women about the challenges and opportunities available to them. Such initiatives are vital for women's success in society.

## Challenges in Empowering Women in Civil Society

Journalist Mohammed Al-Dahiya highlights the challenges faced in empowering women in civil society, including erroneous social customs, lack of resources, and insufficient financial support. The ongoing internal armed conflict in Yemen has destabilized the country, putting women's lives at risk and hindering their participation in civil society. The security situation poses obstacles to empowerment, while difficult economic conditions such as poverty, unemployment, and malnutrition further impact women's ability to engage in civil society and attain economic independence.

Mona Rabat emphasizes that non-governmental organizations and community institutions in Yemen struggle with limited resources and funding, making the effective implementation of women's empowerment programs challenging. The scarcity of resources acts as a barrier to achieving positive change for women.

Rabat also points out that low levels of girls' education, weak leadership capabilities, the absence of supportive programs for women, and adherence to social customs and traditions related to women's rights and equality within Yemeni families pose obstacles to women's empowerment. Overcoming these challenges requires integrated and sustainable efforts from all stakeholders, along with a shift in cultural and social concepts. This is essential to achieve significant progress in promoting women's role and contribution to building a more just and prosperous society.





## Triumphs of Yemeni Women in Pioneering Social Transformation

# Roma Al-Damasi: A Yemeni Woman Among the Top Six Influential Women Worldwide

*The success stories of Yemeni women are as diverse as the difficult economic and social conditions they face. However, what unites them is their unwavering determination to overcome challenges and forge ahead despite numerous obstacles. While each story is unique, there are valuable lessons to be learned from their struggles, serving as inspiration for future generations.*

By: **Hebah Mohammed**  
Women in Development and Peace

It is our humanitarian and media responsibility to shed light on these stories, as these women truly deserve recognition for their silent dedication in supporting the impoverished, disabled, and working towards conflict resolution and peace. One such remarkable woman is Umm Al-Maskeen, an educational and humanitarian activist, known as the caregiver of the disabled - Roma Muhammad Ismail Al-Damasi.

*Achieving peace, promoting coexistence, and combating poverty are fundamental goals pursued by women*

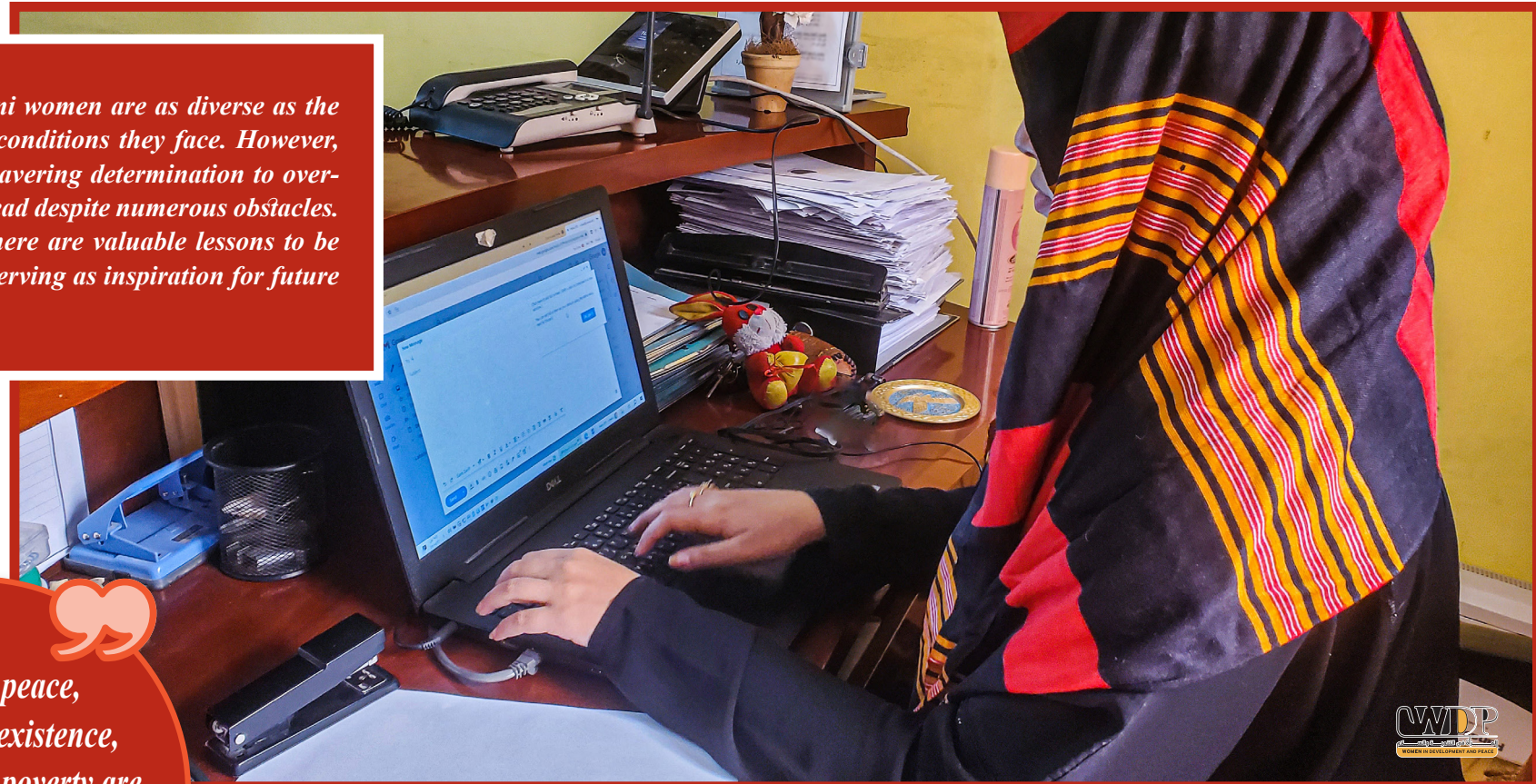
### Roma Al-Damasi: A Journey of Passion Towards Giving and Social Change

Roma Muhammad Ismail Al-Damasi, hailing from the Yareem Directorate in the Ibb Governorate, specifically Damas Village, has dedicated 25 years to social activism. From a young age, her dream has been to see Yemeni women receive fair and equitable treatment in society. She firmly believes that they possess the capabilities and deserve opportunities to showcase their abilities and skills, on par with men.

Reflecting on her educational journey, Al-Damasi shares, "I began my studies at Al-Khansa'a Model Complex in Yareem, progressing from elementary school to high school before eventually becoming the complex's director. Continuing my educational pursuits, I enrolled at the Community College in Dhamar, where I obtained a master's degree in local development. As students, my colleagues and I had aspirations, 25 years ago, of utilizing our education to benefit the community. The idea to establish an organization emerged through collaboration with my colleagues and the mothers' council within the complex."

Expanding on their motivation, she continues, "There was an immense passion within us to contribute to social change by supporting Yemeni women in areas such as awareness, women's education, literacy, sewing, training, and income-making. With a clear vision and well-defined developmental plans, we founded the institution with the aim of empowering the most vulnerable groups - both women and disabled individuals. There was a remarkable response from women who desired to acquire life skills and enhance their living standards."

Al-Damasi goes on to explain the ra-



tionale behind establishing the Khadija Foundation, emphasizing the importance of women's awareness of their rights and active engagement in community affairs, as they possess the potential and aptitude for learning. She shares, "The idea was born out of a need for a legal framework that focuses on working with women. Consequently, the Khadija Foundation was established by women, for women, and for the community at large. Through this institution, we successfully developed the capacities of thousands of women. Moreover, we collaborated to establish numerous associations within the directorate, setting a precedent with Khadija as the first institution in the Yareem Directorate. The institution has had a significant impact on women, the community, and the disabled population."

### Embarking on the Path of Progress & Development

Al-Damasi took on the responsibility of achieving many goals, including providing social services to all segments of society, especially women and people with special needs, and spreading the message of peace, love, and coexistence. She combined her love for educating the younger generation and her love for humanitarian work, despite the challenges she faced in a closed and rural community, she dedicated her life to serving the community.

Al-Damasi says, "We worked on opening Khadija centers in the institution, including a center for the disabled to train, rehabilitate, and empower them, and through it, free services are provided with support from the Disabled Fund, whether they are deaf and mute or have other disabilities. After training and rehabilitation, marketing is done for them to continue their university education. We employed 54 disabled individuals and integrated them into the community, and we also opened a special education center and a physical therapy center."

She explained that these centers do

not only provide their services to the Yareem directorate but also extend their services to include six directorates: Al-Qafir, Al-Nadira, Al-Sadda, Al-Radhma, Al-Makhadir, and Yareem. These centers are exemplary and effective in providing many services, and in the current situation, these centers cover 7,000 disabled individuals, both males and females.

She emphasized that the center provides direct and indirect services in training, rehabilitation, integrating them into schools, helping them to get free examinations and tests by coordinating with the Disabled Care and Rehabilitation Fund in Sana'a, Ibb, and marketing them for employment and empowerment. A large number of qualified disabled individuals graduate from the centers.

She explained that the institution worked hard to enable the disabled to have economic empowerment projects, through the Disabled Fund and other partners, and provided a lot of humanitarian and relief aid. It integrated approximately 500 students into the directorate's schools by supporting them in tuition fees and transportation from the Disabled Rehabilitation Fund, and there are currently 33 disabled individuals receiving their university education.

### The Institution's Dream & its Most Important Projects

The dream of the institution is very big, and it is to go beyond the local level to the regional level. The institution has presented special projects in building democratic peace, rights projects, and developmental and humanitarian projects in all governorates. The institution does not only work at the level of the Ibb governorate, but it provides its services to all governorates, especially for women and people with disabilities, who are the most deserving and in need of these services.

Al-Damasi emphasized her commitment to continuing in the path of social and humanitarian work, with women being present in all of the institution's programs. She takes pride in the large number of initiatives that the institution has presented, which have helped its existence, including more than 300 initiatives at the level of the Ibb governo-

rate, in addition to initiatives established in other governorates.

She added, "Many of the women who were trained in the institution have become leaders and activists in humanitarian work. The institution has worked on implementing many projects that have had a significant impact on development, rights, and peace. It has worked on renovating many girls' schools, rebuilding classrooms, and refurbishing them, which has helped many girls return to school and employed female teachers in the pre-conflict era."

She pointed out that the trust built by the institution between it and the members of the community has helped in delivering its services to the largest possible segment. The institution had clear visions beyond partisan or sectarian policies. It was founded by the community and for the community, working with complete neutrality, and gained the trust of many segments of society, most importantly the trust of women, as the institution was founded for women. Women are eager to follow all the new developments presented by the institution, and this is evidenced by their launching after being rehabilitated and trained in the institution to open their own institutions or development projects and to empower them in work.

The institution has adopted food baskets for poor families that support encouraging girls' education, and sitting with the parents' council to adopt a monthly incentive for teachers to continue the educational process. It also communicates with benefactors and donors to provide solar energy, laboratory equipment, cleaning tools, and operational expenses for the school. The institution has focused on implementing water and road projects with community participation, aiming to engage the community and establish social peace and meet the community's needs.

### Resolving Issues & Achieving Peace and Coexistence

Roma Al-Damasi is still walking confidently towards achieving her dream of bringing peace and promoting coexistence within the community, and combating poverty. She says, "The institution has participated in resolving many conflicts, and this has proven the

significant role of women. The institution enabled rural women to participate in resolving conflicts or solving their problems within the community, thus giving women a voice and power. We are proud to have truly created voices for women."

She explained that she has participated in peace projects and programs in Yemen, as well as training courses in advocacy campaigns in both external and internal advocacy, peace, and community safety.

The institution contributed to the establishment of centers for productive families and community development in the Yareem district of the Damas village. These centers operate under the auspices of the National Center for Productive Families and Community Development, under the supervision of the Social Affairs and Labor Office, and they include a large number of women in the field of women's training, rehabilitation, and empowerment for work.

### Awards & Honors Received

"In 2022, the educator and humanitarian activist Roma Al-Damasi, founder of the Khadija Centers for People with Special Needs in the Yareem district of Ibb governorate, was selected as one of six women activists and human rights advocates worldwide. She reached the final competition for the Woman and Peacebuilding Award, given annually by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP)."

Al-Damasi added, "The institution has received numerous awards and honors, whether at the local or international level. The most important of these awards were from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, the local authority, the Ministry of Education in the district and the governorate. The institution is an active member of many women's networks and heads civil society organizations in Yareem and Nadira."

She continued, "The Khadija institution is also a founding active member in networks of civil society organizations at the governorate level, and a supervisory member in civil society organizations for women's leadership, and a founding member of the Civil Peace Coalition."



# Organizations Operating in Yemen: Employment Terms and Restrictions

*Women in Yemen endure long hours and endure unfavorable conditions in their pursuit of opportunities within organizations, which are highly regarded for their competitive wages, despite the unfair circumstances.*

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

Aziza Khalid, a successful consultant at the World Food Program (WFP), reflects on her experience, stating, "It is undeniable that international organizations play a significant role in providing desirable job prospects, offering attractive salaries in foreign currencies, which both women and men aspire to, particularly in our challenging national context. Though conditions may occasionally be arduous, I consider them normal since organizations, especially those on an international level, have the right to establish their own recruitment standards and conditions."

She further elaborates on the topic, noting that job stability can be challenging, as organizations often prioritize rotation or re-contracting to maximize workforce potential. Recognizing women's discipline and commitment, many organizations request daily progress reports, ensuring optimal organization of tasks and preventing wasted efforts.

Comparatively, Aziza affirms, "It is widely believed that women enjoy greater employment opportunities within organizations. From my perspective, this can be attributed to a specific work condition: providing continuous support for women, both psychologically and financially, through enhanced prospects for professional development, training, skill-building, and active engagement. This enables women to contribute to collaborative endeavors and become vital members of our society."

Highlighting the significance of



women's role and their impact on society, as well as organizations' pivotal support in bolstering this role, Aziza emphasizes that women have demonstrated their competence in various fields, even assuming leadership positions. Local and international organizations alike are strongly committed to involving women across all sectors of development, recognizing their trustworthiness and dedication to delivering their best.

### Difficulties at Work

Nada Al-Salahi, the Head of "In-san for Development" in Abyan governorate, sheds light on the numerous obstacles encountered by women working in organizations, highlighting their prevalence across various professions. These challenges stem from a lack of knowledge regarding labor laws that safeguard women's rights, particularly in the private sector. Consequently, women are denied numerous benefits

and subjected to longer working hours. Moreover, they may be enticed into volunteering under false pretenses, only to be contracted later. Within the organizational work structure, women may face violations with the options of remaining silent or risking their livelihood by being laid off.

Al-Salahi emphasizes, "Working for organizations involves traveling to different locations without a male guardian. Moreover, as most organizations are foreign, they often overlook the community's privacy and customs in their work systems. Many women turn to organizations due to the suspension of government employment. However, their customs and traditions create barriers, as their families refuse to allow them to travel unaccompanied or remove their veils while at work. These are just a few of the obstacles faced by women working in organizations."

Additionally, Aziza Khalid shares an anecdote that exemplifies the

difficulties encountered by women in any organization or institution. She recounts the story of a colleague who experienced a miscarriage during a field assignment in one of the villages in Dhali, which was attributed to the challenging road conditions. The incident highlights how financial necessity drives women to take risks in precarious living situations shared by the community.

Furthermore, Rawiya Abdallah shares her personal work experience, stating, "I worked in an organization on a daily wage in the archive department, and later, they expressed interest in hiring me on a more permanent basis. However, I was taken aback by the conditions they imposed, specifically the requirement to remove my face covering veil. I rejected this condition as I had been

working with them previously on a daily wage while maintaining my veil. It is unjustifiable that conditions suddenly change when becoming part of their core staff, disregarding personal freedom and women's principles. These conditions represent a violation of our freedom."

### Perspectives & Solutions

Aziza proposes several solutions for women's role in organizations, drawing from her personal perspective. She emphasizes the importance of respecting privacy and the nature of civil society, as well as assigning tasks that align with women's abilities, avoiding unnecessary burden and ensuring smooth workflow. Additionally, Aziza advocates for providing ample opportunities for women to access employment and strengthen their collaboration with men, promoting practical harmony.

She further explains, "Working in organizations demands extra effort, alongside the physical challenges faced by women. Many female workers leave their positions due to marriage or pregnancy. Moreover, during the hiring process, organizations often discriminate against married women, which is a significant injustice. This unfair condition deprives women of their natural right to become mothers and wives, and they should have equal opportunities to pursue their goals, just like men."

On the other hand, N.A., a former employee of the "Care Organization," highlights that organizations actively seek female staff, creating a perception that women hold greater influence in contemporary times. He remarks, "In various practical settings, we witness women leading the way, even in situations where male presence is expected, especially during travel or in rural areas. I do not oppose their inclusion; in fact, women should be prioritized for their dedication and commitment. However, equal opportunities must prevail within organizational work."

Journalist Abdul-Razzaq Al-A'za'zi, known for his advocacy of human rights, expresses disappointment at the voices that reject women's participation in civil society institutions and incite against female workers. He strongly condemns such views and calls for media confrontation. Al-A'za'zi laments the endangerment of women's right to a safe work environment. Instead of focusing on gender pay equality and women's need for top administrative positions, society should address the discourse that opposes women's involvement in civil society institutions. He considers this stance abnormal and reflective of women's limited access to the leadership positions they rightfully deserve.

*Women prioritize their work and commitment, but equal opportunities must be ensured in organizations*





# Empowering Women in Civil Society Organizations: A Vital Requirement for Societal Development



*CSOs have collaborated to support and enhance the active participation of Yemeni women in daily life*

**By: Hebah Mohammed**  
 Women in Development and Peace

Throughout the years, Yemeni women have been instrumental in the construction of society and have made significant contributions to its overall advancement. Regrettably, Yemeni women encounter numerous obstacles that hinder their empowerment and impede the realization of their rights. In recent times, there has been a growing collaboration among civil society organizations in Yemen to support women and enhance their active involvement in public affairs.

The initiatives undertaken by civil society organizations exemplify their unwavering dedication to the promotion of women's role and empowerment within Yemeni society. These initiatives encompass a wide array of activities aimed at driving positive change, including raising awareness, providing education, extending financial and technical assistance, and bolstering women's political and social engagement.

## Women in Civil Society Organizations' Programs

"Women have occupied a significant position in the agendas of those institutions that were primarily established for women, their issues, defending them, advocating for their rights, and empowering them economically, socially, and politically. This has enhanced their presence and influence in the Yemeni scene after their qualification and training," stated journalist Saddam Hasan. He added, "Civil society organizations interested in women have diversified their programs to include celebratory awareness programs, protection programs, economic, social, and political empowerment programs, training and qualification programs, as well as humanitarian, developmental, and emergency programs. They aim to enhance women's political participation in decision-making processes and promote their involvement in humanitarian and relief work. Women have taken over the programs of civil society organizations, including those aimed at the general public."

He continued, "These organizations have contributed to changing the reality for many women in Yemen. Women have constituted a significant proportion of the concerns of these organizations, making them a priority in their missions. This has had a profound impact on their qualification, training, awareness, and capacity development in all fields, bolstering their presence and status in society. Looking at the current reality, we find that women are now present and strong, occupying leadership positions and high-ranking positions in organizations. They are the ones shaping the roadmap for the work of these organizations, and we have many successful, commendable, and

effective models in society."

According to Nasim Al Ma'amari (Head of the Social Association for Widows and Divorcees), "Civil society organizations have played a significant role in empowering Yemeni women through various programs and projects that focus on women's activities, empowerment, and development. They have also supported women in decision-making and activating their supervisory role in the political and developmental processes, encouraging their participation in development and providing social, economic, cultural, and political support."

Al Ma'amari explains that civil society organizations aim to empower Yemeni women by training them in various professional skills and providing courses and training programs in areas such as sewing, embroidery, confectionery, and other handicrafts. This is aimed at enabling women to secure their own income and improve their living conditions.

Muna Rabat, Head of the Agricultural Association, Ibb Governorate, says, "Some international organizations support women-led organizations, but in a limited way. There are obstacles, the most important of which are the lack of funding and the relief nature of interventions that primarily focus on food distribution and shelter. We find that women have presence and empowerment in women's organizations, while in mixed organizations, women's presence is symbolic and their authority is lacking. Women can play significant roles at all levels, starting from active members in organizations to the position of president, and there are successful models in Yemen."

Roma Al Damasi, Head of the Khadija Development Foundation, says, "Most of the programs, activities, or projects offered by civil society organizations, whether funded locally or externally, prioritize the integration of the concept of gender equality in these plans and programs. It is difficult to implement any programs without involving women in health, education, and social protection projects, as they are priorities for us, as they align with the goals and vision of the foundation."

## The Role of Organizations in Women's Empowerment in the midst of Poverty and Conflict

Fatima Al Zahiri, Head of the Saba Foundation, says, "In Yemen, due to poverty, conflict, and the limited resources of the state, some organizations and associations have taken on the burdens of Yemeni women. They have worked on their vocational, religious, and ethical training. Many associations, organizations, and institutions have been established to train and educate women in various handicrafts and provide financial and relief assistance, both within and outside of Yemen. These charitable associations have taken on the responsibility of nurturing women with principles of dignity, ethics, religious observance, love of work, and scientific and practical development."

Al Zahiri emphasizes that the Saba Foundation, a social and charitable feminist organization, has focused on the religious, ethical, and vocational training of women. They have implemented programs for women to memorize the Quran and learn various vocational skills such as sewing, engraving, hairdressing, in-

crease making, and first aid. This has enabled women to become self-reliant.

She expressed her criticism towards the deficiencies in the work of international organizations in addressing humanitarian relief in conflict-affected areas. These deficiencies include the persistence of poverty and the disruption of salaries. She emphasized the need for increased efforts to improve and strengthen the work of organizations in providing relief assistance.

Roma Al Damasi emphasizes that the role of organizations in promoting women is fundamental and essential. The civil society sector and its organizations have shown great interest in women and worked to improve their situation, whether in adopting policies and programs, leading advocacy campaigns for rights, or participating in decision-making and peace committees. Women-led civil society organizations have contributed more to improving the situation of women, and many women have obtained influential positions locally and internationally.

Fawzia Al Ba'dani, Director of the Human Rights Office in Ibb Governorate, highlights the importance of supporting collaboration between organizations and exchanging experiences in promoting women. She emphasizes the need to integrate women's issues into the priorities of comprehensive development plans and policies, as well as developing their

capabilities and building their capacities as individuals and citizens. This will enable them to actively contribute to societal institutions and participate in decision-making.

She emphasizes that most programs for women in civil society organizations focus on political empowerment, education and literacy programs, and programs for protection against violence against women. She also highlights that Yemeni women play a pivotal role in the development of both ancient and modern societies, and through this role, they have proven their ability to bring about positive change in these societies, such as Queen Bilqis and Queen Arwa Ahmad Al-Sulayhi. She affirms that women have full eligibility to hold public positions and perform all public functions in accordance with Islamic law and national legislation.

Regarding the role of organizations in promoting women, Karima Al-Hakim, a worker at the United Nations Human Rights Commission, says, "Organizations have greatly contributed to the empowerment of women, whether by working with them as individuals or by economically empowering them and opening up new areas for their training. Most civil society organizations have focused on projects that attract or target women, due to their success and rapid impact, such as empowerment projects. There are many examples of women who have emerged in the local market and even dominated it with their products after receiving training and empowerment from organizations within a period of no more than four months of training, empowerment, and marketing."

She points out that the programs provided by the Human Rights of Women include promoting and protecting their rights through monitoring, documenting, and following up on violations against them, referring these violations to service providers from other organizations, providing training and qualification courses in the field of human rights, and advocating for women's issues.

She explains that women participate in civil society programs related to humanitarian work and humanitarian aid, and contribute to providing assistance and care to the needy and communities affected by disasters and conflicts, including the distribution of food supplies, medical aid, and providing shelter and care for displaced people and refugees.

The participation of women in civil society programs enhances their role and contributes to promoting their rights and empowering them. Women work to achieve social change and sustainable development through their active contributions to civil society programs.





## Women's Leadership in Civil Society Organizations

# Effective Collaborations for Justice and Development in Yemen's Future

*Women's leadership plays a pivotal and indispensable role in Yemen's civil society organizations. These dedicated leaders tirelessly advocate for women's inclusion and active participation across all sectors of civil society, while concurrently empowering and amplifying their vital societal contributions. Their unwavering commitment encompasses raising awareness about women's public rights, providing crucial protection, and offering guidance and support. Moreover, they diligently strive to advance gender equality and elevate women's decision-making roles within society.*



By: Hanan Hussien  
 Women in Development and Peace

Prominent female leaders within Yemen's civil society organizations, such as Intilaq Al-Mutawakkil, Chairperson of the Board of Trustees at the Young Leaders Development Foundation; Asia Al-Mashriqi, Chairperson of the Board of Trustees at the Sustainable Development Foundation; Radhia Al-Mutawakkil, Chairperson of the Citizen Organization Foundation; Sabah Al-Dhafri, Chairperson of the Yemeni Midwives Association; and Angela Abu Isba', Chairperson of Angela for Development and Humanitarian Response, to name a few, notably epitomize the exemplary and influential female faces within the civil society sphere.

*Women constitute a significant popular base in Yemeni civil society*

person of Angela for Development and Humanitarian Response, views leading a civil society organization as a valuable addition to her life. Reflecting on the matter, she articulates, "Managing an organization focused on development and charity work has been a transformative experience that greatly enriched my professional life. My passion for humanitarian work and development has always driven me."

Angela further illustrates, "Through previous initiatives I undertook before establishing the foundation, I garnered extensive practical experience in setting up an organization in the optimal manner."

Concluding her remarks, Abu Isba' emphasizes, "Despite the numerous tragedies and challenges that our country, Yemen, is currently grappling with, such as poverty, conflicts, and salary reductions, I firmly believe that I am in the right place to extend a helping hand to the entire community."

### The Obstacles

Women leaders in civil society organizations encounter numerous challenges that can impede their success, as highlighted by Intilaq Al-Mutawakkil. She emphasizes, "There are several difficulties that women leaders in civil society face, including limited mobility. Women often face challenges, especially amidst the conflict, and the requirement of having a male guardian (Mahram) from their family." Al-Mutawakkil continues, "Additionally, organizations with female leadership often lack support compared to those led by men. Registration procedures and acquiring the necessary licenses can be arduous, with the added requirement of a male guardian."

Angela echoes the existence of various obstacles faced by women leaders in civil society, asserting, "One of the significant challenges is our restricted access to certain areas for aid distribution or conducting surveys, predominantly in conflict zones." She further emphasizes that the lack of support plays a pivotal role, stating, "Insufficient support has resulted in a decline in annual donor funding. Donors may shift their focus to supporting other

countries, leaving us unable to cover operational expenses and employee salaries. This disruption affects project continuity, posing the greatest hindrance we encounter as leaders of civil society organizations."

Angela explains that many of her colleagues have had to either freeze or completely close their institutions, even resorting to selling off furniture. Some have been compelled to cease operations and stay at home, while others have resorted to traveling outside of Yemen.

Abu Isba' adds, "Female leaders, in general, face difficulties such as limited smooth movement between governorates and the requirement of a male guardian for travel outside of Yemen. This is a major obstacle, as international organizations offering specific projects to these women must cover their transportation, accommodation, travel allowances, and male guardian expenses. This necessitates an increase in project budgets, often resulting in the selection of male candidates over women."

A young leader in civil society explains that there are many challenges that women may face in leadership positions, saying: "Women represent a large popular base in Yemeni civil society, and they have active roles in relief, development, and peacebuilding in their communities. However, they face difficulties and obstacles, including:

- Difficulty in communicating with stakeholders and decision-makers, resulting in the actual needs of women, their communities, and their perspectives not being adequately and sustainably represented.

- Weak representation of women in decision-making positions, limited to what is known as elite women, often disconnected from the reality of Yemeni society.

- Weak communication of women with donor agencies and international organizations, due to their inability to travel and move smoothly and unconditionally.

- Inability to communicate with decision-makers from organizations and government entities, as most decisions concerning civil society are made in male-dominated gatherings, often outside official working hours and in "Qat" councils.

- Limited opportunities for women to travel for attending trainings and meetings related to civil society, due to the requirement of having a male guardian (Mahram). This condition is one of the

main obstacles to women's work in civil society, causing the loss of many job opportunities in decision-making positions for highly competent women. It hinders their ability to move and supervise humanitarian and development work in the field.

Another female leader in civil society organizations adds that there are a number of challenges that women may face, which she classified as challenges that must be addressed. She says, "There are challenges related to women themselves, including:

- Weakness in certain skills such as personal skills (self-confidence), communication skills, and leadership skills (technical capacity weaknesses) related to the field (language).

- External challenges that have also affected women's personal skills, including:

- Stereotypical image of women, seeing them only in the household.

- Lack of trust in the abilities and potential of women by society and authorities.

- Environment that does not consider social challenges that hinder women's participation.

- Women are still obligated to play different roles, being a mother, housewife, worker, neighbor, etc.

- Lack of programs that strategically support women's participation in influencing society and policies.

- Limited opportunities for gender-sensitive support, which provide women with broader spaces for competition and access to funding.

- Unjustified restrictions imposed on working women, restricting their movements unless accompanied by a male guardian."

### Solutions & Suggestions

Just as there are difficulties and obstacles, there are certainly a set of solutions and recommendations to push the development wheel forward and promote women leaders to higher and better positions. This is what Intilaq Al-Mutawakkil spoke about, saying: "First, we must work on changing the stereotypical image of women and their role in civil society, and several parties must be targeted, including:

- Government entities and local decision-makers: there must be pressure sessions and awareness-raising about the important role of women in civil society, and these meetings should be led by agreed-upon competent and honest women who are known for their knowledge and ef-

fective role. Pressure must be exerted in three areas: First, including women's programs in national plans and strategies and pushing for their implementation on the ground. Second, ensuring real representation of women, and hearing community voices and actual needs from the community and popular base. Third, facilitating the movement of women's work simply.

Supporters and international and local organizations: women's priorities and needs must be included and represented in the strategies and plans of the community, and ensuring actual representation of women in the base, not just elite women. This is one aspect of ensuring localization. Also, allocating financial grants to build the capacities of women as individuals, leaders, and women in civil society, as well as individuals in their institutions and organizations, to ensure the sustainability of programs and outcomes.

Women themselves and women in civil society: educating them on how to capitalize on opportunities to represent women in the optimal way for their gender, and emphasizing the principle of localization in representing actual needs in the popular base and the community."

In the same context, Angela Abu Isba' spoke about the main recommendations or solutions from her perspective, saying: "I see it as difficult to find a solution to the situation, and we are still in a phase of conflict until today. It is true that we are currently in a ceasefire, but we are still facing the same previous suffering. However, we must spread awareness of the importance of women's work and enhance their role in civil society like other fields, and not underestimate their importance as they are half of society."

She adds: "Women must also strive to enhance their role and clarify the importance of this role, so that it becomes clear to everyone that they are an indispensable element in civil society with its institutions."

Asia Al-Mashriqi, the head of the Sustainable Development Foundation, spoke about the main solutions in her speech: "During this period, there has been an increasing wave of awareness about the importance of empowering and supporting women, but most of it remains theoretical and not practical on the ground, whether in projects or in capacity building, decision-making and power. However, there are clear measures and activities that can be said to have been allocated to women, whether in civil society or in other fields."



## Women in Decision-Making Positions :

# The Role of Official Authorities in Promoting Women's Role and Presence in Society

*According to statistics from the UN Women's website, Yemen ranked second to last (151 out of 152 countries) in women's political empowerment and other gender-related indicators such as economic participation, education, health, and survival in 2019. Yemeni women have emerged as key contributors to civil society, serving as first responders to peace and unofficial peacebuilders at the local level.*

By : **Hanan Hussein**  
 Women in Development and Peace

However, the lack of representation and limited opportunities for women in decision-making positions, particularly in politics, stems from societal beliefs that women lack the necessary qualifications due to perceived emotional traits. What measures have official authorities taken to promote the role of working women in civil society? And what notable advancements have been made to empower women in decision-making positions?

### Prominent Laws

According to Mu'een Al-U'baidi, a human rights activist and lawyer, there are several laws in place in Yemeni society intended to support women. However, there are certain details that remain unclear in these legal provisions. Al-U'baidi points out that there are no specific laws that actively encourage women in this field. Nonetheless, women are increasingly involved due to their qualifications and practical experience, which motivate them to participate and assume leadership roles. However, women may encounter difficulties such as insufficient qualifications and inadequate practical standards required by organizations, particularly international ones.

Additionally, language proficiency,

such as English, can pose a barrier for some women. Al-U'baidi suggests that women in organizations can still engage in various roles, including activism, training, facilitation, awareness campaigns, and project implementation. She emphasizes the importance of gaining experience through working in organizations to enhance women's status. However, financial constraints contribute to the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions within organizations, as most leadership roles are held by men.

### Involvement in Decision-making

One of the leaders in a civil society organization in Yemen - who preferred not to mention her name - explained that there are many challenges that women may face in civil society organizations, saying: "One of the main difficulties facing women is the lack of their involve-

ment in decision-making, due to the lack of conviction by decision-makers of the role of women in civil society as partners in community development."

She added: "Political differences may lead to categorizing some women in civil society based on specific components, without considering other opinions, which is a way of not giving them space to make decisions."

She emphasized that many decisions are made in "Qat sessions" that gather men, which is unjust towards women, as they are unable to attend and participate in making some decisions or giving their opinions.

### Key Support and Assistance from Official Authorities

Women in a civil society have many needs that contribute to highlighting their role, pushing them forward to become effective, productive, and qualified. This

is what Asia Al-Mashraqi (President of the Sustainable Development Foundation Council) spoke about, saying: "Most official entities have not contributed to supporting or enhancing the role of women, and all that happens is that projects are presented according to conditions or needs, so civil society organizations officially apply according to the type of program and the organization's specialization. This means that official entities deal neutrally with organizations and do not distinguish whether this organization or institution is led by a man or a woman."

Al-Mashraqi added: "There is a lot of reservation in protection programs, or in topics related to women. I believe this is due to a lack of understanding of the importance of these projects for women."

Women are still absent in many important roles, and their role is often limited in the eyes of most members of society

to being a mother who raises and nurtures her children, a daughter who takes care of the house and its chores, and a wife who takes care of the household in all its aspects. Many members of society still have this limited view, and they exaggerate her role in the household. However, some of them may encourage their daughters to complete their education and work in professions to support themselves and their families, and may qualify them to make decisions and lead sustainable development in society, ensuring a decent and happy life for their family and community. But this will only happen by recognizing the importance of the woman's opinion alongside her male partner, as she is half of society, as the saying goes, and she is the one who gives birth and raises the other half. The presence of women and the recognition of the importance of their role in civil society is a must.

## Yemeni Women Empower Social Peace and Foster a Culture of Tolerance

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

Women have played an important role in all areas of life for centuries and have been a significant contributor to social, political, and cultural life. They have contributed to peace-building, and Arab women have had a prominent role in shaping many events and transformations in the field of peace. This is also the case with Yemeni women, who have made significant contributions in this field and have made great progress in recent decades through their participation in the National Dialogue Conference, such as Sabah Al-Shar'abi and many other women.

In this regard, Professor Sabah Al-Shar'abi (one of the participants in the National Dialogue Conference) says: "Women have a fundamental and prominent role in Yemen, especially in Taiz Governorate in the field of humanitarian response since the outbreak of the conflict in the governorate. They have contributed voluntarily to providing many services and aid to the conflict-affected within the governorate, striving to provide food, medicine, and shelter. They have also worked in environmental protection by maintaining the cleanliness of the city, reducing waste accumulation in the streets, and controlling the spread of epidemics and diseases."

In the same context, Dr. Hooria Mashhoor says: "Yemeni women have been present and continue to raise the banner of peace in every

cycle of violence and conflict because, by their human nature, they understand the catastrophic nature of conflict. They are the first and most affected losers, as they lose their children, husbands, brothers, or all of them, bearing the burden of responsibility for the loss of their families, and they perform this difficult role in the face of limited resources and opportunities. They may also be direct victims of these conflicts, either through injuries or other means, which may turn them into disabled individuals while working in the fields or farms, unaware that the land has been planted with harmful materials (mines). They may be vulnerable to arrest or blackmail, and they may be subjected to moral harm through defamation and abuse. For all these reasons and more, and due to the sense of moral and national responsibility, they have devoted themselves, provided their time and effort, and called for an end to the conflict and the building of peace."

### Prominent Contributions

Sabah Al-Shar'abi pointed out: "Women have made significant contributions to the healing of the wounded and the assistance of patients in Yemen in general, and in Taiz Governorate in particular, due to the shortage of medical staff and their displacement outside the city. Women took the initiative to open roads and provide humanitarian assistance to the citizens in the city. This contribution was manifested in demanding the opening of roads and organizing



Dr. Hooria Mashhoor

awareness campaigns about the suffering of Taiz and its people from the conflict. Women held meetings and interviews with all parties in the governorate and the UN envoy to raise the issue of road closures and the suffering of the citizens. They also organized online campaigns to spread this suffering worldwide."

Al-Shar'abi believes that there are many women working in the field of humanitarian response in Taiz in various areas, including opening humanitarian corridors, prisoner and

kidnapped exchange, monitoring and documenting violations, environmental protection, city cleaning, disease prevention, as well as in the fields of health, providing food, medicine, and water.

She continues, saying: "Women participants in the field of humanitarian response in Taiz face many challenges and difficulties that hinder their presence and participation in leadership positions at various levels, in addition to their exclusion from participating in peace negotiations. An example of this is the exclusion of women from leadership positions in humanitarian response at the local level and the unfair treatment of international organizations towards female humanitarian workers in Yemen. It is worth mentioning that Sabah Al-Shar'abi is a painful example of the exclusion of women from participating in peace negotiations."

In general, Al-Shar'abi regrets that women play a decisive role in improving the humanitarian situation and contributing to the development of society in Yemen. They face many challenges and difficulties, but thanks to their perseverance and determination, they continue to help others and raise awareness about the suffering of the city to the world.

### Yemeni Women's Movement: Striving for Justice and Peace

Dr. Hooria explained: "Yemen has witnessed a strong women's movement aimed at promoting peace and building the future after years of

conflicts. Women have formed organizations, networks, and alliances in support of peace, and have worked on developing a 'Women's Peace Map' that outlines the necessary path to emerge from the disaster and start the process of reconstruction and development."

Hooria added: "Women's activities in the peace process continue to this day. They spare no effort in supporting and promoting it, actively participating at national, regional, and international levels. They are not only advocating for a return to the political track and peacebuilding, but also actively contributing to peacebuilding, promotion, consolidation, and reaffirmation when parties reach a peace agreement that ends the conflict and begins the process of peace, security, stability, development, and reconstruction."

Mashhoor hopes that this will be achieved in the near future so that the world does not overlook Yemen in light of the ongoing developments in the region. The attention of regional and international players should be directed towards this new challenge, which deserves top priority from the international community. Otherwise, the situation in Yemen may deteriorate and fall off their list of concerns.

The role of Yemeni women is of utmost importance in working towards achieving peace and justice in the country, ensuring that Yemeni conflicts give way to a new era of security, stability, and development.



# Challenges and Ambitions: Rural Women's Job Opportunities in Organizations

*Rural women play a vital role in rural communities, extending beyond their household responsibilities. They actively contribute to the development and advancement of their communities, showcasing distinct qualities in their collaboration with civil society organizations.*

By: Afrah Borji  
Women in Development and Peace

Agricultural work and the prevailing rural culture constitute significant factors in the involvement of rural women. They often engage in farming and animal husbandry, possessing profound knowledge in these domains. As a result, they play a crucial role in food production and sustaining rural livelihoods. Furthermore, they diligently preserve regional traditions and culture, passing them down to future generations.

Apart from their agricultural contributions, rural women undertake various community roles in education, healthcare, and sustainable development through civil society organizations. They actively participate in local development projects, generating employment opportunities and enhancing living standards as fundamental pillars of their communities. These women possess leadership abilities, skills, and the power to drive change and have a positive impact on society. They also play a pivotal role in preparing rural youth and future generations, alongside their fellow rural women.

## Participation of Rural Women

Ola Al-Saqqaf, President of the "Peace Environment for Development Organization," highlights the relatively low participation of rural women in decision-making positions within civil society organizations. She emphasizes that while the presence of women in these organizations is generally commendable, with the percentage sometimes reaching up to half, their representation in leadership roles, such as organization presidencies and leading units, is limited at both local and international levels.

According to Al-Saqqaf, the number of civil society organizations operating in rural areas is often limited, and the involvement of rural women is typically confined to specific activities such as awareness-raising, humanitarian aid distribution,



*Rural women must have safe spaces to work in CSOs, with necessary facilities provided.*

and fieldwork. However, they are not extensively represented in key areas such as leadership, training, document preparation, scientific research, and project design. Consequently, their overall role is restricted, and their presence remains relatively weak compared to the number of civil society organizations in rural areas, despite the percentage being considered satisfactory.

## Rural Women in Organizations

Zilaba Hassan Fares, President of the "Rural Women Today Association in Al-Lahiya," expresses concern about the limited participation of rural women in the organization's activities. She notes that organizations often assume that women trained in urban areas possess better skills, leading to minimal involvement of rural women. However, she emphasizes that rural women's participation in community organizations contributes to their overall development, enhancing

their capabilities in household work and improving their psychological and professional capacities. Some organizations provide assistance to rural women after training in various fields, such as providing sewing machines and necessary materials.

Al-Saqqaf adds that rural women play significant roles in civil society organization programs, including fieldwork, data collection, and awareness-raising. However, she observes that their participation in decision-making and project design is limited, with few women assuming leadership positions within organizations.

Professor Samaah Halakoum, Head of Women's Media Management at the Ministry of Information, laments the marginalization of women's presence in civil society organizations, despite the extensive promotion of rural women. She criticizes the male-dominated nature of society and the exploitation of the term "rural women" for advertising purposes, while the real beneficiaries are often men. Halakoum acknowledges the multifaceted roles of rural women in rural development,

such as farming, livestock care, beekeeping, and shepherding. She highlights their economic support to men and their sacrifices, including selling their own jewelry to purchase agricultural necessities.

Halakoum argues that civil society organizations often fail to take appropriate measures that benefit rural women, relying on pre-existing information sources that may not suit the target group. She stresses the importance of conducting field surveys and feasibility studies tailored to the specific needs of rural women in each region. Collaboration with specialized entities knowledgeable about these needs is crucial for effective support and empowerment.

## Challenges Confronting Rural Women

In the face of increasing obstacles and challenges, rural women encounter numerous difficulties, as highlighted by Al-Saqqaf. She notes that civil society organizations existed legally and operated prior to the conflict in Yemen. While these organizations were widespread and received funding, rural women faced several obstacles in working

with them, primarily due to their limited capacities and skills resulting from a lack of capacity building initiatives in rural areas.

Al-Saqqaf believes that rural women are capable of managing organizations, designing projects that cater to their needs, and securing support and communication with donors. However, even with capacity building, there remain significant limitations in areas such as writing project proposals, marketing projects, and effectively communicating with donors.

One of the challenges mentioned by Al-Saqqaf is the limited involvement of rural women in international conferences where influential figures are present. Instead, their representation is often restricted to a few activists who have long been involved in this field, hindering rural women's access to meaningful engagement.

Rural women face difficulties and challenges associated with their extensive responsibilities and obligations. In rural areas, women are responsible for agricultural work, fetching water, and caring for livestock. These demanding tasks make it challenging for them to find time to engage in civil society organizations. Moreover, remote locations pose transportation and communication challenges, further impeding their participation. Limited access to reliable internet and poor coverage exacerbate communication difficulties in these areas.

Al-Saqqaf also highlights a few specific challenges faced by rural women, including the reluctance of guardians to allow women to work, environmental factors such as rough terrain and distance from workplaces, and the lack of trust from some organizations in the efficiency of rural women, which diminishes their presence in civil society organizations.

## Solutions & Recommendations

Al-Saqqaf provided her insights on the required solutions, emphasizing the need for real and effective empowerment programs. She stated, "We must establish empowerment programs that are practical and impactful. These programs should not only focus on teaching participants how to write project proposals but also take responsibility for identifying the genuine needs of the community, documenting them, and effectively conveying them to potential donors."

In addition, Al-Saqqaf highlighted the importance of networking and engagement with international organizations and actors. She believes that such connections can provide valuable support and resources to rural women. Furthermore, she emphasized the necessity of creating safe workspaces within civil society organizations for rural women. These spaces should be equipped with essential facilities, including reliable internet access, to enable effective communication with the outside world.



*Media and Working Women in Organizations: Empowering and Exemplary Roles*

**Is Women's Role in Civil Society Adequately Reflected in Media Coverage? What Space is Devoted to Their Voices?**

*The media assumes a central and pivotal role in disseminating accurate information and events across various platforms and formats. It has proven instrumental in showcasing the active and influential contributions of women within institutions and organizations.*

**By: Hanan Hussein  
Women in Development and Peace**

Ali Al-Mushki, the director of Yemen Times Radio, highlights the crucial contributions of the media in portraying women in a comprehensive, positive, and impactful manner. He emphasizes its role in highlighting the status of women and their successful and effective execution of tasks. Al-Mushki asserts, "The media holds great significance in shaping either a positive or negative perception of women working within civil society organizations. It serves as the true reflection of women's endeavors, especially in this domain."

Al-Mushki further explains that society often remains unaware of the nature and significance of women's work in this field, compounded by the proliferation of rumors surrounding their activities. Thus, it is through the media that a positive and authentic portrayal of their roles and work is created, effectively conveying this information to the wider community. Consequently, individuals can discern the positive and negative aspects, as previously mentioned.

Mohammed Jassar, a media trainer, agrees, saying: "Media professionals have the most prominent role in giving women great importance by presenting success stories of women in general, especially those working in civil society organizations."

Jassar emphasizes: "Believing in the necessity of women's presence is a cornerstone in the development of societies, and an active element in building, development, and stability. This is what makes the media concerned with highlighting successful and creative female models in various fields, and their role in social development."

Sina Khalid, a program producer and presenter, and responsible for awareness campaigns at Yemen Times Radio, explains that audiovisual media may be the most accessible and can reach the largest number of people from various social classes and educational levels, and this is where the importance of media lies.

She adds: "Programs should be dedicated to women, supporting their role in civil society organizations, and working to correct the misconceptions that have spread unjustifiably



*Media plays a crucial role in promoting the role of women in Yemeni CSOs*

about working women in organizations, depicting them in a manner that contradicts Yemeni and Arab customs and traditions."

She continues: "We can highlight many examples of several women who have struggled to reach an important position in civil society organizations, and break the stereotypical image of the limited role of women in certain and traditional jobs in audiovisual media."

**Dedicated Spaces**

Ali Al-Mushki believes that the media has created a significant space for women in Yemen, including his radio station, Yemen Times, which launched a special unit for women. The radio station trained both male and female presenters to prepare and host programs specifically for women. Al-Mushki emphasizes, "We have a six-hour program dedicated to women each week, and half of the radio station's staff are women. Additionally, administrative positions are equally distributed between the genders."

He explains, "I cannot specify the total space in all media, but the available space for women's programs in our station is significant, with half of the programs dedicated to women, especially those working in civil society, whether as guests, project leaders, or advocates for specific issues in Yemeni society."

**Most Prominent Issues**

Ali Al-Mushki believes that in recent years, especially after 2020, the media has positively and significantly focused on discussing all topics related to women and their role in society, particularly those working in



*Ali Al-Mushki*



*Sina Khalid*

**Obstacles & Difficulties**

"The media is a double-edged sword, and in all directions, it may face a number of obstacles and difficulties that may hinder its role and prevent it from fulfilling its mission," as Jassar explained: "There are two parties that strongly contribute to creating difficulties in dealing positively with women's success stories socially. The most important party is women and some organizations that did not present women in a positive effective image, instead showing them with behaviors and programs that intersect with the society's culture, or flatten their role; they presented a negative image of women's presence in society. The second party is some who are extreme in dealing with the issue of women, believing and imposing the belief that Islamic religion prohibits women's work in society, or criminalizes the work of civil society organizations, while Islam is innocent of that; the basis is the content and methods of work and the environments, not work in itself."

**Solutions**

Regarding the treatments, Jassar emphasized the importance of highlighting women working in ci-

vil society organizations because it contributes to positive aspects. He says, "Shining the media spotlight on effective and successful female figures contributes to creating a positive image of women and their influential presence, as well as the contribution of civil society organizations in enriching development paths and countering campaigns aimed at distorting the image."

In the same context, Sina Khalid proposed some solutions that could improve the role of various media outlets, holding the media responsible for conveying the voices of women, portraying an accurate image of them, and allowing them to express their opinions directly without intermediaries.

Sina explained that this expression could be achieved through various means, including hosting women in various talk shows and radio programs, dedicating segments in different daily programs to reach the widest audience across different age groups, which she considers a prominent solution to support women in this sector.

She emphasized the importance of raising awareness and participating in events and activities related to women's issues, as well as supporting scientific research addressing the media discourse about women and encouraging it.

She concludes by saying, "We can say that the primary supporter of women's roles is the media in all its forms."

Finally, we find that the media plays a crucial role in promoting the role of women in civil society organizations in Yemen by spreading awareness in the community, promoting dialogue and discussion, and providing media representation by sharing exceptional success stories. This undoubtedly enhances women's empowerment and supports them in contributing to positive change in society.



# Female Volunteers Champion Women's Empowerment and Highlight Their Crucial Contributions to Society

*Women act as partners in success and progress, not as mere dependents. There have been discussions within council circles speculating that women view each other as equals. Despite varying degrees of personal hardships, women share similar life experiences and face similar challenges. In response to this shared suffering, many women have come together to form an association aimed at offering support and assistance to those who are vulnerable or in need, addressing their diverse requirements.*

By: Haneen Al-Wahsh  
 Women in Development and Peace

## Sanediha (Support Her)

"Sanediha" Initiative is a feminist coalition dedicated to supporting women in society. Regarding the start of the initiative, its president, Dunya Koka, says: "The idea for the initiative came about and crystallized from a culmination of ideas gathered in which the opinions and interests of the initiative's members were already involved. These ideas were translated and formed this initiative. Considering the passion of its members to work in it, you will find that "Sanediha" was made for them, and it emerged from their dreams and aspirations to support and empower women in our society, showing their readiness to positively and actively influence society."

Speaking about the reason behind the name "Sanediha," Koka explains that the name reflects the meanings associated with support, endorsement, and solidarity, which is the essence of the idea from which the name originated. Support represents one of the most important forms of community support, creating a connection that contributes to self-satisfaction and positive impact. This is further achieved through empowerment activities that the initiative will provide.

Koka continues, "The reality of "Sanediha" Initiative is that it is a newborn and recently established, founded in mid-2022, and it has already begun its work by launching its first campaign, which focused on psychological support as a starting point for repairing and organizing mental fragmentation. This will enable women to identify the obstacles hindering them and address them to the best of their abilities. The initiative also implemented its own project on climate change and its impact on gender, with support from "Generations without Qat" Organization and its funding."

Regarding future projects, Koka confirms the existence of specialized activities related to psychological support, including support for displaced and abused women, support for women in institutions and those facing blackmail, as well as economic and political



empowerment activities for women. The initiative will also provide trainers for female entrepreneurs. Additionally, there will be cultural activities encompassing various aspects, including the establishment of a women's library to enhance awareness among women, seminars providing them with a wide space to discuss their issues and come up with useful solutions, and other activities that develop women's skills, especially in fields such as computer engineering and telecommunications, which can protect them from blackmail incidents.

Regarding the ideal plans that should be implemented to activate the role of women, Koka believes that ideal plans, which involve effective women's involvement, must prioritize women's interests and go through several gradual stages to develop and enhance their capabilities. This will positively contribute to improving their productivity.

As for the impact of the initiative's work on community recovery, especially for women, Koka says: "Initiatives hold great importance for women at this time, as a large number of them have suffered from the consequences of conflicts in recent years and on all levels. Initiatives resemble a large vessel that holds within it the ability to accommodate their problems and address their general and specific issues that arise from them. By providing continuous support, the initiative contributes to mitigating the damages resulting from these conflicts and achieves tangible results in their recovery."

Regarding the discussion about the societal vision that "Sanediha" Initiative aims to achieve, Koka indicates that the initiative

possesses a clear vision. It sees women as the primary nucleus of peace in society and believes that they are fundamental to achieving the peace process in the country. Therefore, the initiative strives to promote a culture of awareness, peace, and coexistence among different Yemeni governorates. The initiative is dedicated to dedicating all its time and effort to addressing problems and issues related to women in our society across various economic, social, political, and cultural fields through support and empowerment. It believes that its vision will be realized through the increased ability of women to actively and influentially participate in society.

Regarding the significant presence of feminist coalitions in society at present, we asked about how to benefit from the initiative in addressing the problems that women face in various social, economic, and even psychological aspects. In this regard, Koka explains that the feminist initiative serves as a deep connection for women. Women in our society are the ones who understand and appreciate their own essential needs the most since they are the ones who experience them firsthand. They are closer to achieving sustainable effectiveness in addressing these needs.

She concludes her statement by saying, "The benefit of the initiative lies in harnessing the capabilities and awareness of its members regarding their rights and freedoms and the continuous voluntary and charitable impact they have had on multiple occasions in the past. Through the initiative, they have set out to bring about change that contributes to addressing women's issues. This will be accomplished through various empowerment



Wafa Ali

activities that support and assist women in addressing their diverse issues. "Sanediha" Initiative aspires to increase its active impact on a wide scale, covering all aspects related to women with a high degree of responsibility and concern from them.

## Funon Om Albanat (Funon, the Mother of Girls)

"Funon Om Albanat" Initiative is a voluntary initiative aimed at teaching women handicrafts. Wafa Ali, the head of the initiative, says, "Due to my study of a sewing diploma and gaining experience in this field, I started

thinking about helping women, especially after knowing that many of them do not have any profession."

She adds, "I started conducting training courses, such as handicrafts for visually impaired and nurses in cancer institutions, which were later turned into a center supported by the Skills Development Fund. Due to the difficult situation, it was returned to its previous status as an initiative, and I participated in several institutions in awareness campaigns, cultural activities, and events."

She continues, "The number of participants with me in the initiative is about 12 participants, and the support is either self-funded or from the Skills Development Fund. Currently, I am working on the Women, Will, and Empowerment program, which is affiliated with the "Generation Without Qat" Organization for the project "I Have the Right to Know 1325" about women, peace, and security. Networking has also been established with youth initiatives for the sign language project, and coordination has been made with "CARE" organization."

Regarding the challenges, Wafa confirms that power outages, price hikes, security situation, and bureaucratic procedures are the main obstacles affecting the progress of work and movement. In terms of solutions and measures, she says, "We collaborate with certain entities or cooperate with institutions that hold authority and decision-making power in society."

# Prominent Efforts by Yemeni Girls in Civil Society Organizations

By: Yasmine Abdulhafeez  
 Women in Development and Peace

Despite the numerous challenges faced by girls in Yemen, such as societal stigma, limited access to education, early marriages, and other obstacles preventing them from fulfilling their potential and shaping their own futures, they have remarkably embraced their roles in serving their society. In recent years, many young Yemeni girls have emerged as influential figures in various fields, actively working to change their fate and address the issues faced by their country. Through their unwavering determination and dedication, they have made significant contributions in different civil society organizations.

One such inspiring individual is Afaf Al-Yafei, a 23-year-old graduate from Taiz University (2021/2022) with a major in Business Administration, specializing in Human Resources. She chose this field because she believes it is the backbone of any institution and recognizes the critical importance of human resources. Unfortunately, she observed a scarcity of qualified professionals in this area, likely because of a lack of awareness regarding its significance.

In addition to her academic achievements, Afaf actively participates in charitable and volunteer work. In 2019, she established "Trace Footprint," a charitable initiative dedicated to assisting impoverished families. The initiative

provides clothing, food aid, dates, and funding for medical procedures, among other efforts. Through these endeavors, Afaf and her peers demonstrate their commitment to serving their nation and fellow citizens, bringing hope to Yemen's challenging times.

During her fieldwork with the initiative, Afaf recalls significant incidents encountered by her and her colleagues. Reflecting on one event, she shares, "We received news about a destitute family in an area called Al-Dimna. Despite being located near an active conflict zone, we decided to visit the family." The journey was challenging, with rough roads and rocky terrain. Eventually, they reached the family's home, where they met a young girl named Malimah and her mother, both injured during the conflict. Malimah urgently needed surgery. Determined to help, they publicized her case until they found a supporter through an organization, leading to a successful operation.

As Afaf and the team departed and traveled a distance, they found themselves caught in crossfire. One colleague was stranded on a nearby peak. Despite the intense gunfire, Afaf and another colleague attempted to reach her, ensuring she wasn't alone. However, due to escalating risks, the remaining team members had to take an alternative route.

Afaf emphasizes that the initiative's team ventures to perilous and inaccessible locations where other teams or institutions are unable to reach. She elaborates, "Our aim is to aid fa-

milies in dire circumstances, demonstrating our commitment to ensuring that help reaches those who need it most. Our recent endeavor involves raising awareness about hygiene in several schools within the city of Taiz, in collaboration with the Sharakah Foundation."

In addition to her involvement in the initiative, Afaf proudly mentions her membership in "For You" Development Forum. She actively participates in various activities organized by the forum, including arranging and distributing clothing for cancer patients on an annual basis, as well as organizing a trip for them during Eid al-Fitr festivities. Afaf acknowledges, "Despite a significant decrease in support recently, primarily due to the earthquake in Turkey and Syria, the forum remains dedicated to aiding cancer patients."

Two years after its establishment, Afaf became the president of the Ruqy Shabab Association, which was initiated during her university years. Initially centered around the college campus, the association's notable event was the grand ceremony for Flag Day, where the national flag was raised on campus.

Afaf's involvement in civil society organizations garnered recognition, revealing her strong commitment to giving back. Starting as a volunteer, she actively participated in workshops, training programs, and documented various meetings, workshops, training sessions, and seminars as a blogger. Her modest salary at the time remains the most substantial remuneration she has ever received.

Family members confirm Afaf's enduring dedication to volunteer work, which began in her childhood. Her sister, Maria, shares, "Since a young age, Afaf has been actively organizing diverse festivals and gathering neighbors to witness them. Throughout her university years, her drive to have a positive impact on society persisted, as demonstrated by the numerous activities she spearheaded."

Maria further adds, "Afaf is someone who wholeheartedly dedicates herself to serving her community and country, demonstrating an unwavering commitment to her beliefs and tirelessly working towards them, even without expecting financial gains. She is held in high regard and remembered fondly by all."

Throughout her university journey, Afaf assumed various responsibilities, starting as a blogger and subsequently taking up roles as a follower, evaluator, and coordinator in the numerous initiatives, seminars, workshops, and training programs she was involved in. She later transitioned into the role of an accountant, which she maintained until her graduation.

Afaf reflects on her journey, sharing, "I briefly paused my work to lead the preparatory committee for our graduation ceremony, all while managing a graduation project and final exams. Soon after, I took on the role of head of human resources at the 'Yemen Without Conflict' organization, marking a significant milestone in my professional success."

Key courses she participated in focused

on community peace, conflict resolution, and community mediation. Reflecting on her journey, she asserts, "I began my career with volunteer work, engaging in numerous initiatives and activities scattered throughout. Through these experiences, I acquired a diverse set of skills. My mother has been my primary supporter and advocate for education and work, paralleled by my father and sisters."

While balancing university studies and various programs and activities, Afaf encountered challenges. However, with her family's concerns in mind, she successfully managed her work and academic pursuits. This journey fostered personal growth, increased her confidence, and provided her with a diverse skillset and valuable experiences.

Further addressing the issue, Afaf highlights that despite increased societal awareness, negative perceptions and smear campaigns against civil society organizations still persist. This unfortunate reality instills fear and anxiety in women and their families, potentially leading to discouragement from pursuing such work.

In a message directed towards Yemeni women, Afaf asserts, "You possess incredible strength. In these difficult circumstances, every Yemeni woman must refuse to allow anyone to limit her dreams or stifle her ambitions. Do not wait for others to come and make your dreams a reality. The world will not pay attention unless you prove yourself and boldly declare, 'I am here.'"



# The Crucial Role of International Organizations in Advancing Women's Engagement in Civil Affairs

*Since their inception, international organizations have prioritized the advancement of women's presence in civil society organizations worldwide. Among the nations receiving significant attention from these organizations is Yemen, as it grapples with dire humanitarian and economic circumstances, compounded by the impact of armed conflict that has curtailed women's involvement in various spheres of life.*

By: Ahmed Bajoaim  
Women in Development and Peace

In pursuit of their objective to empower Yemeni women politically, socially, and economically, international organizations extend financial, technical, and training assistance. Such support stimulates women's participation in civil work and facilitates social development. Numerous international organizations actively contribute to this cause by documenting experiences and fostering capacity-building initiatives, thereby enhancing the prospects of Yemeni women's success across all domains, both domestically and internationally. This aid is projected to yield sustainable development in Yemen, bridging gender gaps in employment, capacity-building, and skills, while elevating the social and economic standing of women and girls. The impact of these efforts is expected to extend beyond urban centers to encompass rural and remote villages.

*International organizations strive to improve the status of women, especially in insecure and unstable communities like Yemen*

## The Role of International Organizations

Pragma Organization, the implementing partner of the American Agency, is actively engaged in coastal regions, particularly in the realm of women's empowerment and training. Their focus lies within the Economic Recovery and Livelihoods Project, which centers on the fishing sector and animal wealth. This initiative has been successfully implemented in the coastal governorates of Hadhramout, Al-Mahra, and Socotra Island. Additionally, the organization has launched the Business and Banking Project in Aden Governorate, as conveyed by Muhammad A'ydid, the monitoring and evaluation assistant at Pragma Organization, in a statement to the "Women in Development and Peace" newspaper.

A'ydid further highlighted that Pragma Organization has established a specialized department named "Coastal Woman" in conjunction with their existing projects. This department aims to address the specific needs of coastal women and strives to provide interventions that benefit women across various sectors. The focus is on empowering women to excel in fields where they feel capable and making a significant impact, while simultaneously enhancing their livelihoods to ensure sustained



economic contributions. For women engaged in productive activities, these interventions offer economic support through training programs, skill enhancement initiatives, and knowledge development.

In December 2019, the city of Mukalla in Hadhramout Governorate hosted the Women's Conference under the slogan "Women: Partners in Building, Development, Peace, and Stability," with generous support and funding from the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ). The conference witnessed the participation of 300 individuals representing all directorates of the governorate. The first day of the conference focused on three key themes: political, educational, and legal aspects. On the following day, discussions centered around four core areas: the role of women in promoting health services and indicators, women's contribution to coexistence and peace, women's economic empowerment, and combating corruption within society, with an emphasis on women's role in the fight against it, as detailed on the conference's Facebook page.

The Regional Director of GIZ, Ms. Mary Tasween, congratulated the success of the conference, which is considered the first of its kind, in protecting and empowering women in all governmental and private sectors amidst the deteriorating security situation in Yemen, according to the official page of the conference. She expressed her happiness through satellite communication about the Yemeni society's understanding of women's role and their participation in various aspects of public life, affirming that the agency will support women in order to achieve real access to all implemented measures and their defined goals.

In this regard, the Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee for the conference, Faiza Bamatarf, stated in an interview with "Women in Development and Peace" that the vision of the conference aims to build women in social



Dr. Muna Al-Amoodi

peace and enhance their role and participation in all national affairs by empowering them economically, socially, and politically. She mentioned that the conference held in 2019 resulted in highly important recommendations and issued decisions that enable women to maintain decision-making in society. The success of the conference is considered a significant milestone for women, enhancing their status, role, and impact on change and cooperation with all institutions and organizations concerned with women's rights, both in Hadhramout and Yemen as a whole.

In a related context, Dr. Muna Al-Amoodi, the Director of the Training and Institutional Support Unit at the Social Fund for Development (Hadhramout - Al-Mahra - Shabwa - Socotra branches), described the fund's significant role in empowering women in civil society organizations. This includes building women's capacities within their respective organizations in the field of sustainable financial management, training on strategic plans for associations or organizations, and other areas required by the organization itself to qualify working girls to enhance their capabilities and skills, making them more effective and capable of contributing within institutions.

Al-Amoodi explained that "the Social Fund for Development targeted its activities towards rural women and remote villages where women's opportunities in employment, educa-

tion, and involvement in civil society organizations are weak. Therefore, we intensified our work in this aspect to target the community in those areas, provided that women participate by 50%. They also have the right to vote on the needs required by the region and the right to accept or reject needs and priorities on an equal basis with men. Women are also targeted with programs that enable them to engage in institutional work, allowing them to hold important positions and be decision-makers in local organizations."

Dr. Muna Al-Amoodi continued, "Most of these projects were implemented in rural areas of Hadhramout Governorate, and we achieved complete success in them without any significant struggles or issues. On the contrary, despite the isolation and prevailing customs in rural communities, the residents encourage women towards qualification and training to obtain employment opportunities." She emphasized that the projects of the Social Fund for Development allow women to develop plans and programs within their communities and identify the needs that require intervention, unlike in the past, where men were allowed to draw up plans and other community-related topics without women's involvement. The Social Fund for Development's projects have contributed to correcting this issue.

## Main Programs

Muhammad A'ydid, the Monitoring and Evaluation Assistant at "Pragma" organization, mentioned that there are many programs that the organization is working on in terms of capacity building for women in the coastal areas of the eastern governorates, with the most prominent being the "Small and Smaller Enterprises" program. This program aims to economically empower trainees by providing them with equipment and tools that facilitate the establishment of their own projects, as well as professional and capacity development programs, in addition to training and development programs, whether in institutions or private projects. The organization continues to monitor and evaluate all these programs through a specialized team on a regular basis and provides studies on their needs and how to develop them.

On her part, the Director of the Training and Institutional Support Unit at the Social



Muhammad A'ydid

Fund for Development mentioned that the most important programs that the fund has worked on include the Women Empowerment Program in obtaining institutional employment opportunities in civil society organizations after training and qualification. There are also administrative programs that target the leadership of associations and development institutions in how to formulate vision and goals to improve the quality of administrative work in line with the present time and international organization mechanisms. Additionally, there is a program on financial sustainability for targeted institutions and civil society organizations, aiming to find stable financial resources to keep them operating for a longer period of time, even if international grants are discontinued. There are also programs for the development of women's institutional work in various government or private sectors and pushing them towards career advancement.

International implementing or donor organizations have played a significant role in qualifying Yemeni women, enhancing their participation in work, developing their skills, abilities, and discovering their talents. This comes as part of the efforts of international organizations to improve the status of women, especially in unsafe and unstable societies like Yemen, and they have achieved clear successes in this regard.



# Support Needed for Women in Civil Society Organizations in Various Fields and Competencies

*Yemeni women actively engage in civil society organizations, their involvement escalating in recent years due to ongoing conflict and the emergence of various issues that these organizations address. Their endeavors encompass advocating for marginalized groups, empowering women, and tackling challenges faced by conflict-affected communities. This includes providing assistance to the population, documenting violations, reporting them, and undertaking other initiatives.*

By: Yasmine Abdulhafeez  
Women in Development and Peace

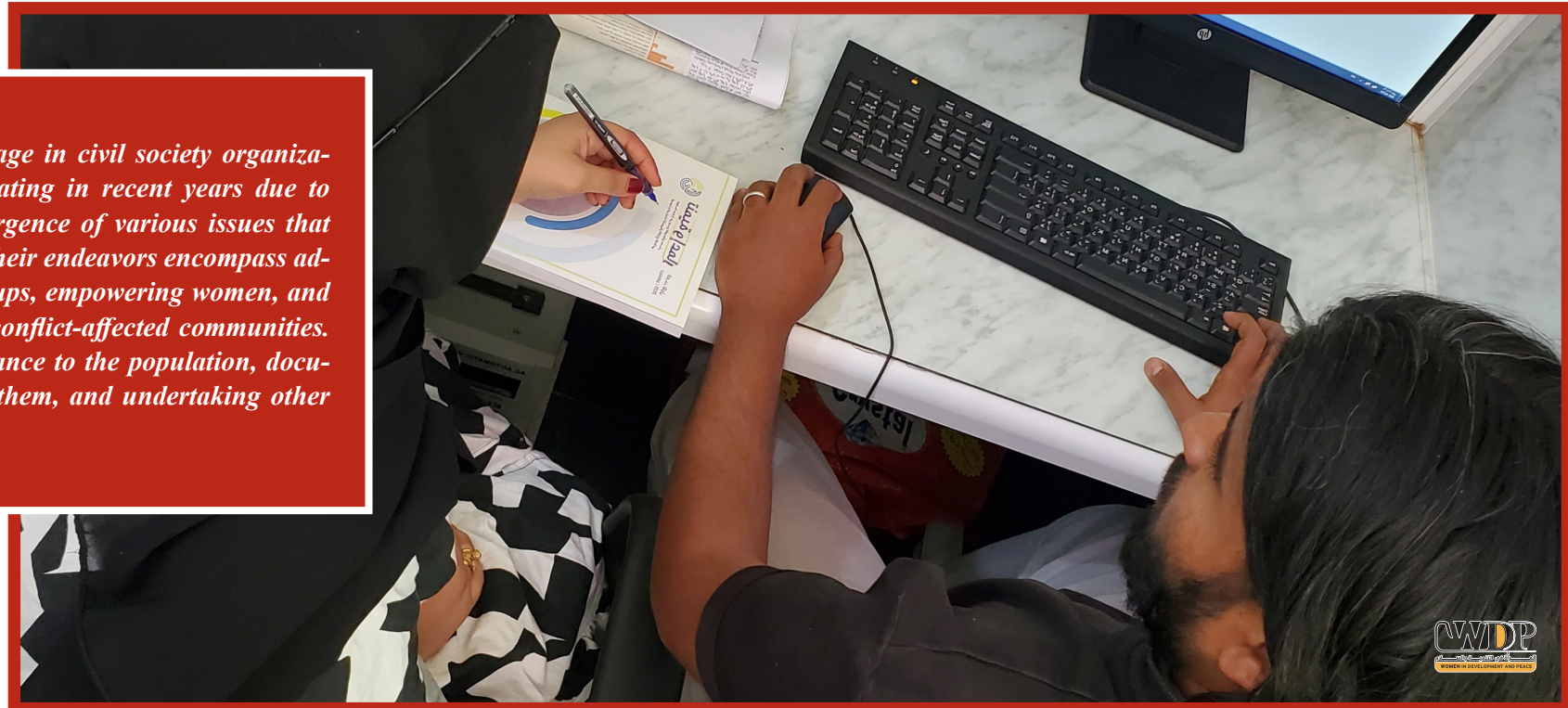
The significant presence of women within civil society organizations has resulted in their involvement across multiple fields, serving individuals and communities. They play a pivotal role in promoting progress, raising awareness, protecting rights, and fostering improvement and development in various aspects of life.

"Women for Development and Peace" newspaper features insights from activists and experts within the community, shedding light on the key areas where Yemeni women contribute within civil society organizations.

Nadia Mohammed Najji Saleh, a member of the group South Women for Peace, highlights the diverse roles played by women in various areas. They support impoverished families, provide health and reproductive services, organize family units, care for the disabled and elderly, promote education and literacy, and focus on marginalized groups, particularly women.

Saleh further notes that women engage in capacity building, develop small-scale projects for impoverished families, raise awareness about human rights and political participation, support female candidates in elections, deliver training and educational programs on rights and freedoms, train journalists on human rights concepts, and participate in associations dedicated to environmental protection, consumer rights, heritage preservation, and antiquities.

Majid Al-Khalidi, President of the Youth Without Borders Organization, emphasizes that women contribute significantly to civil society organizations in various areas, including project management, financial aspects,



employee affairs, and monitoring and evaluation. He attributes their engagement to their qualifications and experiences.

Sabah Al-Sharabi, an activist, acknowledges the vital roles played by Yemeni women in civil society organizations since the onset of the conflict. They engage in volunteer work, provide food and medical support through initiatives, and participate in monitoring and documenting violations against civilians. Women also work in shelter-related efforts, conduct awareness-raising activities, and focus on economic empowerment projects, enabling many to support their families independently amid the challenging economic situation.

Al-Sharabi emphasizes that women have been actively involved in raising awareness, rehabilitation, and training for peacebuilding. They have excelled in various development aspects, mediating to establish safe humanitarian routes, restore water networks, and provide essential services. Additionally, women contribute to the fields of education, health, and infrastructure.

Asmaa Al-Jaadi, President of the "I Am Here" Initiative, highlights the diverse fields where Yemeni women work, particularly in humanitarian areas such as field surveys, research, administration, medical care, and nursing. She further notes that women have recently taken on leadership roles in youth organizations and initiatives, focusing on training and economic empowerment.

## Other Fields

Samah Mohammed Ben Ali, the Head of the Economy and Investment Sector at the Arab Union for Specialized Women, highlights the significant contributions of Yemeni women to peacebuilding efforts at local, national, and international levels. Their contributions range from evacuating civilians and the injured from conflict-affected areas to negotiating access for humanitarian aid, facilitating road openings and crossings, securing prisoner releases and exchanges, and advocating for a nationwide ceasefire.

Ben Ali emphasizes that Yemeni women have established themselves as first responders and informal peacemakers at the grassroots level, providing an opportunity for them to represent themselves in front of male leaders. However, she notes that they face barriers to participating in political leadership due to misconceptions, such as portraying women as emotionally weak and incapable of holding decision-making roles in society.

She further asserts that despite being marginalized and excluded from official political work and institutions, Yemeni women actively participate in peace, security, and governance issues. Their participation increased during the National Dialogue Conference and has continued amid the ongoing conflict.

Ben Ali highlights that Yemeni women's contributions extend beyond peacebuilding to include their foundational roles in sustain-

ing families and communities amidst the collapse and destruction of vital services and infrastructure caused by the conflict.

She emphasizes that women have a fundamental right to shape the future of their countries and communities. Ben Ali asserts that purposeful women's participation in peace processes enhances the quality and sustainability of peace, and consultations with women's organizations and representatives are crucial for the work of civil society organizations.

In an interview with "Women in Development and Peace" newspaper, she explains their efforts to integrate gender analysis and considerations into activities, planning, and engagement. This includes ensuring that women are represented by at least 30% in all meetings and initiatives conducted by organizations operating in Yemen.

## Ongoing Efforts

Adila Al-Khadar, Secretary-General of the Yemeni Women's Union in Abyan, emphasizes the prominent role played by Yemeni women since their engagement in civil society organizations. Their work aims to bring about radical change by lifting women out of poverty and ignorance. This is achieved through various awareness-raising activities that enhance their understanding of legal rights, emphasize the importance of education, promote participation in schooling and literacy programs, and improve their standard of living through income-generating projects.

me-generating projects.

Al-Khadar highlights the particular focus of civil society organizations on women and their relentless efforts to enable them to reach decision-making positions, which have yielded positive results. She notes that these organizations continue to work tirelessly to reduce gender-based violence, with approximately 80% of them being led by women.

Furthermore, civil society organizations provide support to women in Abyan, playing a tangible and clear role in cultural, economic, political, and social fields. Women have their own projects and civil associations that they manage, and many success stories have emerged, demonstrating their ability to create positive change within themselves and their communities.

Yemeni women are actively involved in serving their communities through numerous local organizations and institutions established in recent years. They have made significant contributions to community development and assistance. Notable examples of women-led organizations in Yemen include the Al-Hodeidah Girls Foundation for Social Development, the Foundation of Girls in Marib, Women of Aden Development Foundation in Aden, the Foundation for Young Leadership Development, and various other local organizations. These organizations, led by women, are dedicated to improving the community and serving its members.

# Siham Abbas: An Inspiring Role Model for Rural Women

By: Afrah Borji  
Women in Development and Peace

Contrary to prevailing notions that perceive women's role as weak in the workforce, reality defies such beliefs. Numerous women have showcased their capabilities and played prominent roles in various fields of work.

One exemplary figure is Siham Abbas, a rural woman who has demonstrated her exceptional value within civil society organizations to the extent of becoming a decision-maker in her current organization. Siham Abbas's story is not unique; there are countless women who have proven their competence across scientific, political, and economic domains.

This confirms that women possess the capacity to contribute to societal development and achieve comprehensive progress, given that they are provided with opportunities and space to showcase their abilities.

## The Beginning

Siham Abbas, a Yemeni rural woman hailing from the Abbs district in Hajjah Governorate, embodies kindness and a strong desire to assist others since her childhood. Driven by her dreams and a commitment to improving life in her community, Siham sought a career that would enable her to fulfill these aspirations.

Siham commenced her professional journey as a volunteer with the Abbs Women's Association,

actively engaging in diverse development and social projects. Subsequently, she secured a position as an Assistant Monitor and Evaluator at the Abbs Development Organization, where she assessed the organization's activities and their impact on the community. In 2023, she was promoted to the role of Monitor and Evaluation Officer at the organization's headquarters in Sana'a.

Throughout her tenure within civil society organizations, Siham has accomplished numerous feats. These include enhancing the quality of life for women and girls in her community through awareness campaigns, training initiatives, and health projects. Additionally, she has fostered community participation in the development process by organizing seminars, workshops, and innovative endeavors. Siham has also played a pivotal role in improving the performance of civil society organizations by ensuring adherence to humanitarian standards, transparency, and accountability. Her exemplary dedication and spirit of community work have made her a revered figure and a source of inspiration for many in her village, encouraging numerous individuals to share her passion and commitment.

## Her Career

When Siham graduated from community college with a Bachelor's degree in Medical Laboratories, she applied to work in one of the civil society organizations in her country. She believed in the importance of organizations

and their non-governmental role in community development and improving people's lives. She found an opportunity in this organization to work in the field of social justice and improving the lives of individuals and communities.

However, she faced many challenges at the beginning of her work, especially since she was working with displaced people in camps. The environment was difficult, the needs were many, and the conditions were harsh. But Siham did not give up. She participated in many trainings, especially in the humanitarian and technical fields, and gained experience from the lessons learned during the implementation of activities.

Siham says with a smile on her face, "Thanks to the efforts made by me and the organization, I was able to achieve many accomplishments, including providing humanitarian assistance to the displaced in the camps, improving the health and education conditions for the displaced, and empowering women and girls to participate in society."

During her work in the organization, Siham realized that social problems are a result of the lack of opportunities and resources for individuals and communities. Therefore, Siham decided not only to provide assistance but also to strive for social justice.

## The Role of Women in Civil Society Organizations

Siham says, "Civil society organizations in Yemen have witnessed significant develop-

ment in recent years, with women playing a pivotal role in these organizations. This participation has contributed to enhancing the role of women in Yemeni society and achieving numerous accomplishments in the fields of development, rights, and freedoms. The role of women in civil society organizations can be summarized through their participation in programs and activities. Women in Yemen participate in a diverse range of programs and activities, including awareness, education, social and economic development. Yemeni women have also been able to reach leadership positions in civil society organizations, becoming presidents of organizations and members of boards of directors. Additionally, Yemeni women represent their organizations effectively before government entities and international institutions."

Siham added, "Let's not forget the role of rural women, as some of them have become decision-makers in certain civil society organizations. Dr. Aisha Thawab, the president of Abbs Development Organization, is one of the prominent examples of rural women in civil society organizations. She established this organization in the Yemeni countryside to serve women, children, and youth, and it has contributed to training and educating many women and girls in rural areas."

## Challenges & Difficulties

Siham Abbas explains that the most prominent difficulties and challenges facing wo-

men in working in civil society organizations are factors related to the women themselves, such as their economic situation. Many women suffer from difficult economic conditions, which limits their ability to participate in civil society work. On the other hand, the level of education for women is another challenge. Many women have low levels of education, which hinders their chances of obtaining jobs in civil society organizations. Additionally, skills and experience are factors associated with women. Many women lack the necessary skills and experience to work in civil society organizations.

Siham further adds, "There are difficulties and challenges associated with the organization itself, including the organizational structure. In some civil society organizations, the organizational structure may not be suitable for women, which limits their ability to participate in decision-making."

In the same context, Siham continues, "The culture of some civil society organizations may not be supportive of women, making it difficult for them to advance professionally. This affects human resource management, as some civil society organizations are unable to provide the appropriate support and guidance for women."

Specifically, Siham says, "There are factors related to society and its prevailing culture that pose challenges and difficulties. One of these factors that hinders women's participation in civil society work is customs and traditions, as well as social values."



# Social Perceptions of Women in Civil Society Organizations' Workforce

*Women possess the right to engage in employment on equal footing with men across all sectors, be it civil society organizations, government institutions, or any other field. They possess the capability to make autonomous decisions regarding their career choices. This survey aims to delve into the perceptions of Yemeni society towards women who strive to meet the fundamental needs of their families amidst the challenging economic circumstances prevalent in Yemen.*

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

During the discussion, presenter Fahmi Al-Buraihi emphasized that "a woman's work within civil society organizations or any other field is a testament to her self-reliance and commitment to supporting her family during these trying times. Previously, it may have been deemed dishonorable for a woman to pursue employment as providing for the family was solely perceived as the man's responsibility. However, we witness a shift in societal attitudes today. Men and women can work side by side, even as life partners, as the prevailing circumstances necessitate the collective effort of all individuals. Therefore, the involvement of women in civil society organizations, despite occasional resistance from conservative families citing concerns of gender mixing or travel, serves as an imperative for the present phase. Several organizations specifically require female input, especially those dedicated to women's rights."

*Changing society's perception of working women in civil society organizations for the better requires educational and awareness efforts.*

On the other hand, lawyer Nagat Al-Marwa'i asserts that women hold a crucial role across diverse professional domains. They constitute the majority of the labor force and exhibit the greatest dedication to their work. Women are no longer confined to domestic roles; the progress of society hinges upon their advancement, and its downfall mirrors their decline. They excel as educators, engineers, lawyers, and nurses,

while even abroad, they competently perform tasks traditionally associated with men, such as automotive engineering, which demands physical strength, as described by Al-Marwa'i.

Al-Marwa'i further elaborates, stating, "The role of women within civil society has expanded in response to escalating demands. Women are not merely half of society; they embody society itself. They have become more prominent than men and are now relied upon extensively by decision-makers, as they possess the ability to accomplish tasks on par with their male counterparts. Hence, working women within civil society organizations play a pivotal and significant role, serving as the bedrock for numerous organizations in driving and facilitating their work."

#### Positive Perception

Journalist Rami Al-Buraihi conveys his perspective, acknowledging the potential disagreement from certain segments of society,

particularly within conservative communities, where the notion of a working woman in any field is often perceived unfavorably. However, Al-Buraihi asserts that women continually prove themselves across diverse professional domains. In his view, they possess the competence and worthiness to excel in any field, regardless of the circumstances.

Moreover, Al-Buraihi emphasizes the need to respect and appreciate the contributions of working women in civil society organizations towards their communities. He believes they deserve recognition for successfully navigating and surmounting social challenges and obstacles. Furthermore, he emphasizes that these women should be acknowledged and applauded, as they demonstrate their commitment to serve their community, even amidst the numerous difficulties they encounter.

Al-Buraihi highlights some of the significant challenges that working women may face. These include societal misconceptions and prejudices surrounding their chosen careers. Additionally, he acknowledges the potential for exploitation by some individuals within civil society organizations, including instances of harassment or blackmail. Al-Buraihi arrives at these conclusions based on conversations with female acquaintances employed in various civil society organizations.

#### Her Right to Work Enhances her Presence

Journalist Aasim Al-Khudhmi stresses that the perception of working women in civil society organizations should be no different

from their male counterparts. They possess the fundamental right to pursue a career in any field of their choosing. Al-Khudhmi personally observes that women excel in their work, exhibiting tremendous dedication and achieving remarkable results in whatever tasks they undertake.

Furthermore, Al-Khudhmi acknowledges the significant roles played by many working women in civil society organizations as they serve and contribute to their communities. He dispels any notion of their absence in this field, highlighting the strength and presence of women who have defied societal customs and traditions in Yemen, serving as valuable assets in various civil society organizations.

Journalist Reem Al-Fadhli asserts that a woman's work in organizations is no different from her contribution in other sectors, whether in government or private institutions. Each individual fulfills a vital role in their workplace, regardless of gender. Given the current importance of organizations in Yemen, it becomes essential to have personnel from both genders to ensure flexibility and effectiveness in their operations.

Professor Safaa Shamsan further emphasizes that a working woman in civil society organizations represents the embodiment of a progressive and ambitious woman. Such individuals possess valuable skills and experiences that contribute to the development of civil society. They prioritize the concerns of marginalized and disadvantaged communities and actively work towards enhancing civil

rights and freedoms.

The perception of working women in civil society organizations is far from uniform across different countries, cultures, and customs. Societies vary in how they accept and perceive women in such roles, creating significant challenges for women along their professional paths.

In the same vein, Haifa Al-Udaini, an employee in a civil society organization, expresses her positive perception of working women in these organizations. She believes that every successful working woman overcomes the obstacles imposed by customs and traditions, showing remarkable resilience. Al-Udaini highlights the misconception that falsely portrays women working in organizations as detrimental, while she believes they are, in fact, the complete opposite.

Furthermore, Al-Udaini emphasizes the struggles faced by Yemeni women who strive to provide for their families, support themselves, and actively contribute to community development.

In conclusion, fostering a positive transformation in society's perception of working women in civil society organizations necessitates educational initiatives and increased awareness. It is crucial to emphasize the significant role that working women play in developing communities and advocating for social justice. Their involvement in community and political decision-making processes should be strengthened, and their empowerment within civil society organizations should be enhanced and recognized.



## Ambassador of Humanitarian Affairs

# Dr. Angela Abu Isba': A Journey of Dedication to Community Work

By: **Hebah Mohammed**  
Women in Development and Peace

As crises in Yemen continue to pose immense challenges for affected communities, the story of Dr. Angela Abu Isba' - as a source of inspiration and hope - stands out. Her life story is a journey of giving and dedication to serving others, and improving humanitarian conditions in Yemen.

Dr. Angela Abu Isba' is an assistant professor at Sana'a University, where she shares her expertise and knowledge in research and education. However, her contributions go beyond the academic aspects, as she founded Angela for Development and Humanitarian Response as an embodiment of her vision and dedication to serving the community.

Angela for Development and Humanitarian Response was established in 2016, and since then, the organization has successfully implemented numerous projects



and activities aimed at improving living conditions for the needy in Yemen. These projects cover vital areas such as education, health, water and sanitation, food security, protection and shelter, and livelihood improvement.

Thanks to Dr. Angela Abu Isba's vision and relentless efforts, the foundation has implemented over 110 different projects across Yemen. Through hard work and fruitful collaboration with local partners and relevant organizations, the foundation

has been able to provide assistance and rapid response to affected communities and meet their urgent needs.

Dr. Angela Abu Isba' also recognizes the importance of sustainable development and environmental conservation. She has been involved in projects aimed at promoting renewable energy solutions, water resource management, and sustainable agricultural practices. These initiatives not only address immediate needs but also contribute to building resilience and reducing the long-term impact of crises on the environment.

In addition to her direct humanitarian work, Dr. Angela actively participates in advocating for peace and raising awareness of the humanitarian situation in Yemen. She seeks to amplify the voices of the Yemeni people and draw attention to their urgent needs, both at the local and international levels.

However, Dr. Angela and her foundation face numerous challenges in achieving their humanitarian goals. These

challenges include difficulty accessing remote and conflict-affected areas, as well as insufficient funding and support to fully implement projects due to limited support and decreased funding from donors.

Donors often redirect support to other conflict-affected countries such as Ukraine, Sudan, and Palestine, causing significant problems for organizations and interrupting projects. Additionally, there are difficulties for female leaders to travel due to laws restricting women from traveling without a male guardian and permission, hindering humanitarian work. It is important for humanitarian organizations to persevere and address these challenges. There needs to be a change in resource mobilization strategies, and organizations should continue to seek alternative ways of funding and support, including exploring collaboration with other institutions and engaging potential donors. There may also be a need to develop new strategies for project implementation and goal achievement within the existing constraints.



*Women and girls in Yemen suffer from negative effects due to the ongoing conflict in the country. Yemeni women face challenges in accessing basic services such as healthcare and education, and they are also subjected to sexual and domestic violence. However, Yemeni women are strong and capable of contributing, and they strive to overcome these challenges and achieve personal and public progress.*

## Yemeni Women in CSOs: Resilient Determination and Contributions that Surpass All Obstacles

**Mawadah Khalid Qidar**  
CEO of "Wogood for Human Security (WHS) Foundation"  
Advisor of "Women in Civil Society in Yemen" Issue

Organizations and human rights have played an important role in supporting and empowering Yemeni women in various fields, including legal, psychological, and financial support. They also work to raise awareness in society about the importance of women's rights and their active and influential role, especially in terms of their participation in peacebuilding processes, decision-making, and negotiations, as well as enhancing their presence in the political and economic domains.

The role of women in organizations varies greatly depending on the type of organization and its field of work. Over the past decades, organizations have witnessed significant changes in their perspectives and practices regarding the role of women, recognizing the importance of empowering and promoting their participation in all aspects of professional life. In many organizations, women also work in diverse fields such as human resources, marketing, sales, finance, information technology, research and development, law, public relations, communications, and others. In addition, women play an important role in promoting diver-

sity and inclusion in organizations, and efforts are being made to ensure the presence of women in fields such as information technology, science, and engineering, which often have low representation of women.

Furthermore, organizations also work to provide work environments that encourage equality and empower women, including flexible work policies, maternity leave, collective collaboration, and training and development programs. Despite all of this, women's work in civil society organizations faces some difficulties and obstacles that hinder their presence and effectiveness in civil society activities.

Some of these challenges include cultural, sexual, and social discrimination, customs and traditions that limit their freedom and define their roles in certain ways, and the existence of some hate campaigns that target women in general, and activists in particular.

In more detail, some of the challenges are as follows:

**Cultural and traditional challenges:** Yemen is a society based on traditions and traditional social values, which can lead to the non-acceptance of women in leadership roles or roles associated with decision-making in organizations. The role of women in organizations may contradict traditional social expectations of their roles in family and society.

**Educational Challenges:** Women in Yemen suffer from low education rates compared to men, which can affect their opportunities to access high-level jobs and participate effectively in organizations.

**Legal challenges:** Despite legal developments aimed at promoting women's rights in Yemen, there are still challenges in implementing these laws in reality. Women may face difficulties in obtaining their legal rights in areas such as employment, promotions, and pay equality.

**Security challenges:** The armed conflict in Yemen and security disturbances pose an additional challenge for women in organizations. Women can be threatened, subjected to violence, and discrimination in the work environment, which can affect their freedom and ability to participate fully and effectively.

**The following are some recommendations to overcome such challenges:**

The entire society must work to change hurtful and discriminatory ideas that view women as weak or unqualified to participate in various fields.

Building the capacities of Yemeni girls from a young age in a way that encourages the development of their skills and the discovery of their full potential.

Promoting the role of women in organizations and Yemeni society requires collaboration and joint efforts from government institutions, civil society, and the private sector.

Providing equal opportunities for women to participate in work and decision-making, and creating a supportive environment that encourages them to achieve their aspirations and goals.

Promoting awareness and education about women's rights and their value in society, achieving change in their role requires continuous efforts from organizations and the entire community.

Organizations must work to promote gender equality and enhance the role of women in society through the following steps:

**Empowering Women:** Organizations should work to provide educational and training opportunities for women, and enhance their skills and capabilities. Financial and technical support can also be provided to women interested in starting their own businesses.

**Enhancing their political participation:** Women should be encouraged and supported in political participation and decision-making. Financial and technical support can be provided to women who wish to run for political positions, and efforts should be made to increase their representation in legislative and governmental bodies.

**Combating discrimination and violence:** Organizations should work to

combat gender-based discrimination and violence against women. Legal and psychological support can be provided to women who experience violence, and awareness of women's rights can be promoted along with the enhancement of legislation that protects them.

**Promoting awareness and education:** Organizations should work to increase awareness and education about women's issues and rights. Awareness campaigns, workshops, and seminars can be organized to enhance the community's understanding of women's issues and to change misconceptions and false beliefs.

**Enhancing cooperation and partnership:** Organizations should work to enhance cooperation and partnership between local and international institutions, government, and civil society. Efforts can be unified, and knowledge and expertise can be exchanged to achieve positive change in the role of women in society.

In summary, the role of women in organizations is an important part of promoting gender equality and achieving sustainable development. Empowering women, enhancing their political and economic participation, combating discrimination and gender-based violence, and raising awareness about women's issues and their role are the most effective ways to actually fulfill this role in reality, accelerating the development movement and facilitating faster societal recovery.

## Working Woman in Civil Society Organizations.. Cultural Biases and Lack of Opportunities and Resources

By: Alia Mohammed  
Women in Development and Peace

Women working in civil society organizations in Yemen confront significant obstacles, and Yemeni women struggle to access the skills and competencies that help them carry out their community activities. Cultural and professional biases are among the most impactful challenges facing women's work in civil society organizations. From this perspective, Khadija Ali Hussein, a doctor of sociology and institutional management at the University of Aden, sees one of the most significant difficulties women encounter is the lack of equal employment opportunities compared to men, due to gender biases and discrimination.

She adds, "Women working in civil organizations may be restricted to traditional roles such as administrative work, while men hold leadership positions, leading to inequality in employment opportunities, promotion, and unequal pay between genders."

She emphasizes the existence of wage gaps between men and women and that working women confront difficulties in achieving equality in this aspect, hindering their ability to improve their financial situation. She continues,

"A number of civil society organizations do not place women in decision-making and leadership positions, limiting their ability to create a positive impact on societal agendas."

"The working woman in civil society organizations encounters difficulty in accessing networks and financial resources, and may struggle to build important social relationships to develop her professional skills due to social biases and cultural restrictions. Access to funding and financial resources may be even more challenging for women in non-governmental organizations," as Dr. Khadija pointed out.

She emphasizes that these challenges reinforce the need for change and equality in civil society organizations, leading to support and enhancement of the role of working women and emphasizing their importance in society.

### Customs and Traditions

Yemeni customs and traditions are an essen-



tial part of the cultural identity of Yemeni women and one of the most important components that determine the role of women in society. Many families prefer to marry off their daughters at an early age before they have the opportunity to receive education or develop social and professional skills, leading to a lack of suitable job opportunities and financial independence.

Hanan Abdullah is one of the girls who had the opportunity to work in a civil society organization, but her family refused to let her join because of the stereotypical image of working in civil society organizations and the description of female workers in civil society organizations as being too open.

In a related context, Azal Wadhah, one of the female workers in civil society organizations, emphasizes that many women working in civil society organizations face social restrictions imposed by their communities, limiting their participation in community work.

She adds: "The society categorizes our Yemeni customs and traditions by limiting women's roles to household chores and responsibilities within the home."

Some believe that there is a problem with balancing professional and family life, especially for women working in civil society organizations that require them to perform many tasks, which puts a lot of responsibilities on them and can

lead to psychological pressure that affects their personal lives.

She continued, "There is a narrow stereotypical image in society that civil society organizations are a way to mix genders, and many families do not allow women to be employed in mixed places and prefer professions that are separate from men. This view is a major obstacle for women to access job opportunities and make real professional progress."

She reported that there has been a qualitative leap in recent times, and despite the customs and traditions imposed on some women, some of them were able to raise awareness among their families about the importance of education and the importance of the social role that women play to improve their situation in society.

### Lack of Support and Opportunities

Fayza Abdo Abdullah, the women's coordinator in the community committees in the Al-Tawahi district, works with 175 voluntary businesswomen to serve citizens in the field of awareness-raising, education, and conflict resolution in the community in a friendly manner to reduce the burden on police stations in resolving disputes.

Fayza said, "Jobs for women are often limited and unsuitable, and some prefer to employ men

over women, despite having the same experience and qualifications."

She adds, "One of the most difficult challenges encountering women working in civil society organizations, hindering their progress and stability in the job market, is the lack of financial and funding resources available to support their projects and work, which negatively affects their ability to develop and succeed in their work."

She continues, "At the beginning of our community work, my team and I suffered from the lack of financial, moral, and psychological support, which hindered our progress due to our need for meeting centers and complaint monitoring, in addition to our need for operational funds to carry out community projects and initiatives, the most prominent of which was cleaning schools and residential neighborhoods, and organizing events with financial returns given to the poorest groups."

### Security Challenges

The ongoing conflict in Yemen is one of the most important challenges confronting civil society organizations, and its impact has reached women working in this sector. The unstable security situation has hindered the work and performance of women in civil society organizations.

Regarding the challenges, Arwa Saleh, a wor-

ker in a civil society organization for monitoring and documenting violations, points out that the current situation in which women work has made them vulnerable to violence, threats, physical and verbal harassment, abductions, and arbitrary arrests as a result of their active work in the community field, which has affected their movement, threatening their safety and lives.

She adds, "Community work requires going to a number of remote and rural areas, and in the current situation, traveling from one governorate to another has become dangerous for women due to the lack of security stability."

She explains that these challenges have been a major obstacle to achieving civil society development due to the lack of protection and the absence of a safe and stable environment for women working in civil society organizations.

### Solutions and Treatments

Regarding the solutions, Dr. Khadija emphasized the importance of concerted efforts to provide effective solutions that enhance the role of women working in civil society organizations and raise awareness about women's rights and their effective participation in society.

She adds, "It is important to provide a safe and stable working environment and suitable job opportunities for women, in addition to providing equal opportunities to achieve gender equality."

In the same context, she points to the necessity of establishing training and educational programs that equip women with organizational and leadership skills, as well as providing opportunities for training and professional development in areas such as planning, management, and communication.

In the same context, Arwa Saleh emphasizes that providing support, protection, and enhancing personal and collective security is a necessary and urgent need for the continued work of women in civil society organizations. She continues, "Government agencies, international and local organizations must cooperate to establish a partnership that ensures the improvement of the working conditions of women in civil society organizations and guarantees their effective participation, enhancing their role in achieving sustainable development."





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# 85.2% Believe Women-Led CSOs Excel in Promoting Participation and Problem-Solving

By: Yomna Ahmed  
Women in Development and Peace

Civil society comprises non-governmental organizations dedicated to advancing rights, fostering community engagement, and promoting sustainable development. These organizations play a vital role in addressing women's issues, empowering them to actively participate in society, exercise their rights, and combat gender discrimination. Their presence within these organizations ensures heightened attention to matters like gender-based violence, rural women's empowerment, and equal opportunities.

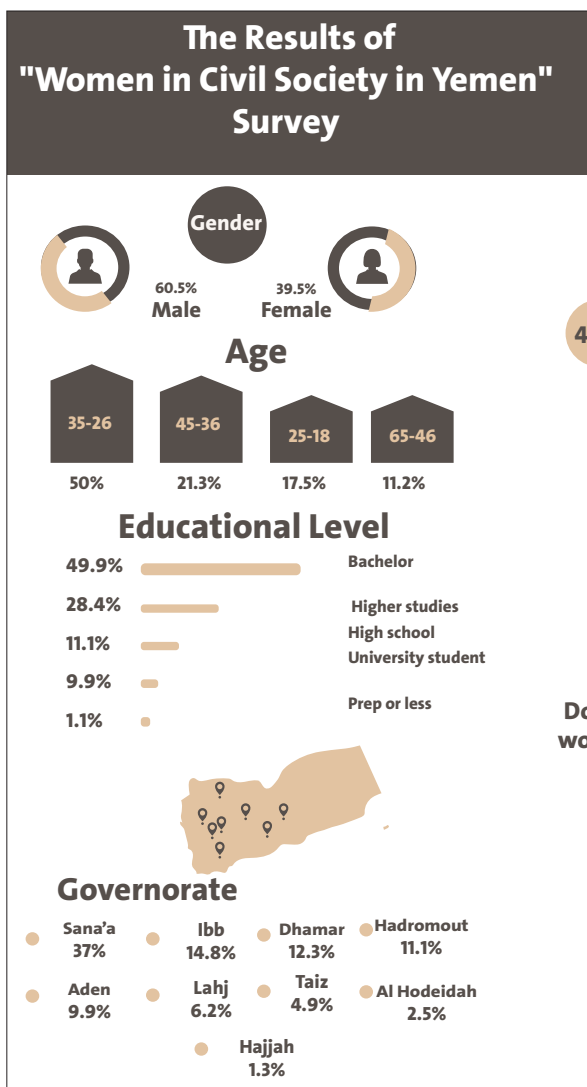
In Yemen, women hold a critical and influential position within civil society, particularly given the immense challenges faced by the country. Yemen ranks among the nations most affected by conflicts, exposing its society to numerous social, economic, and humanitarian problems. Consequently, Yemeni women actively contribute to civil society organizations (CSOs) to raise awareness, drive social change, and foster community participation and sustainable development within local communities.

Based on this, the Information and Opinion Survey Unit at YIC conducted a comprehensive survey on the involvement of Yemeni women in Yemeni CSOs, yielding a range of insights and perspectives.

The survey encompassed a sample of 186 individuals, with 60.5% of participants identifying as male and 39.5% as female. The age distribution of the participants was diverse, with 50% falling within the 26-35 age range, 21.3% between 36-45, 17.5% between 18-25, and 11.2% between 46-65.

Regarding educational qualifications, the majority of participants held a bachelor's degree (49.4%), followed by those with higher degrees (28.4%), individuals with a high school diploma (11.1%), university students (9.9%), and a smaller percentage with a middle school certificate (1.2%).

The survey's geographical scope



spanned nine governorates, with the highest representation from Sana'a (37%), followed by Ibb (14.8%), Dhamar (12.3%), Hadramout (11.1%), Aden (9.9%), Lahj (6.2%), Taiz (4.9%), Al Hodeidah (2.5%), and the lowest percentage from Hajjah Governorate (1.2%).

#### Main Results

When we inquired about the participants' understanding of civil society and their familiarity with the work of CSOs, we discovered that 60% provided an inaccurate definition. They believed civil society encompassed government institutions, professional associations, and international development organizations. In contrast, 40% correctly identified civil society as a collection of non-governmental voluntary organizations.

In terms of gender dynamics

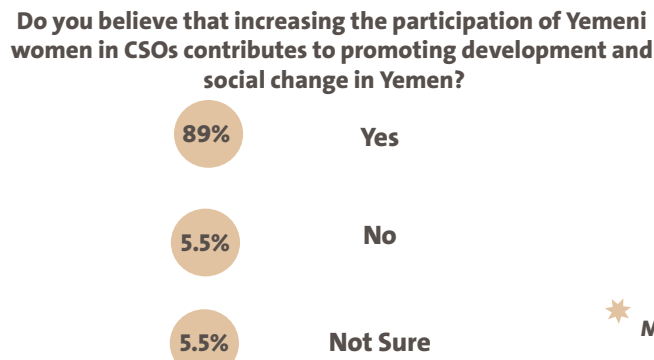
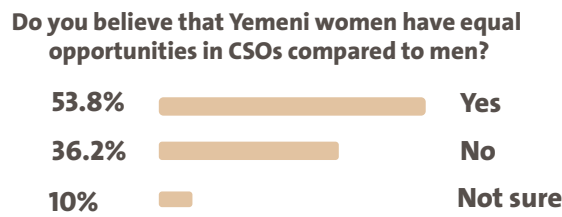
within CSOs, 53.8% of respondents believed that working for these organizations is crucial for women and that women have more job opportunities compared to men. Conversely, 36.2% held the opposite view, while the remaining 10% were unsure.

Furthermore, an overwhelming 85.2% of participants believed that CSOs led by women are better equipped to promote women's participation in society and find solutions to their problems. In contrast, 14.8% held the opposing perspective.

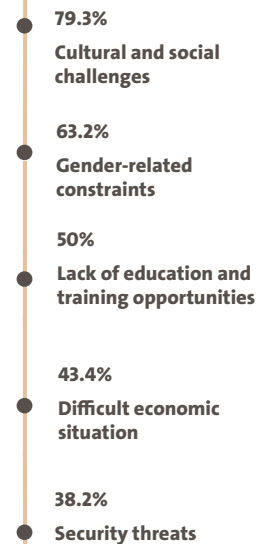
While a small fraction (8.8%) of participants denied the existence of challenges faced by women working in CSOs, the majority (91.2%) confirmed that women encounter numerous obstacles. These challenges may include, for instance\*:

Cultural and social challenges

85.2% of the participants believe that CSOs led by women are more adept at fostering their involvement in society and finding resolutions to their issues, whereas 14.8% hold a contrary viewpoint.



#### \* What are the main challenges facing the participation of Yemeni women in CSOs?



\* Multiple-choice question each answer analyzed separately at 100%

(79.3%); Gender-related constraints (63.2%); Lack of education and training opportunities (50%); Economic situation (43.4%); and Security threats (38.2%).

Furthermore, a significant majority (89%) of survey participants expressed the belief that the presence of women in CSOs plays a crucial role in promoting development and social change in Yemen. In contrast, 5.5% held the opposing view, and an additional 5.5% were uncertain about the importance of women's presence in these organizations.

Regarding the specific ways in which women's work contributes to promoting development and social change in Yemen, the participants' responses were as follows:

Providing equal employment opportunities (66.7%);

Awareness and education (64.2%); Investing in women-focused projects (63%); and Enhancing women's participation in decision-making (54.3%).

To achieve this, the participants believe that it is important to enhance the participation of CSOs in the following areas:

Education (97.5%); Health (95.1%); Agriculture (38.3%); and Security, at a rate of (29.6%).

In conclusion, the survey participants unanimously agree that women's work within CSOs is a vital and indispensable element for driving social change in Yemen. By actively participating in these organizations, women possess the power to make a positive impact on society, champion justice, equality, and foster sustainable development.