



WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE



**Specialized Information Bulletin
In humanitarian issues**

**Issue One
7 July - 2022**

- **Women between peace and development.**
- **Yemeni women and education.**
- **Displaced Yemeni women and the stage of conflict.**
- **A Yemeni lady of peace.**

**Yemen Information Center 2022
www.yemeninformation.org**



Editorial Board:

- Dr. Mohammed Hadi Al-Akhrash.
- Yasmine Abdel Hafeez.
- Mohammed Bawazir.
- Dr. Hajar Al-Sami'i.

Yemen's Women are at the Forefront of the Humanitarian Response

Yemeni women represent a reliable support in the difficult situation before the war, which then got worse. Although they suffer from society's rejection, exclusion and marginalization of a number of their rights, women help reduce the human suffering caused by the remnants of war, distribute food to the needy, and contribute to the release of detainees and the return of the abductees to their mothers' arms. They also participate in efforts to bring peace and end war.

At an event focused on the "Role & Responsibility of Men and Boys in Eliminating Gender-Based Violence", the UN Secretary-General explained, "violence against women and girls may be the world's longest, deadliest pandemic."

Inclusion of Women in Economic Recovery

Sima Bahous, Executive Director of UN Women, explained the importance of "women's inclusion in economic recovery as an essential element in our pursuit of peace." She mentioned that there are a number of studies showed, "investing in women's economic empowerment yields enormous dividends for both peace and prosperity, and that countries where women are economically marginalized and shut out of the workforce are much more likely to go to war." She also pointed out, "instead of spending money on weapons we would invest in science, health, and social protection for all, especially for women and girls."¹

"We know that women are more likely to spend their incomes on family needs and make a larger contribution to recovery. And yet, large-scale reconstruction and investments after conflict are dominated by men and overwhelmingly benefit men, while exclusion, discrimination, and antiquated gender norms keep women away from employment, land, property, inheritance, credit, and technology," she further stated.



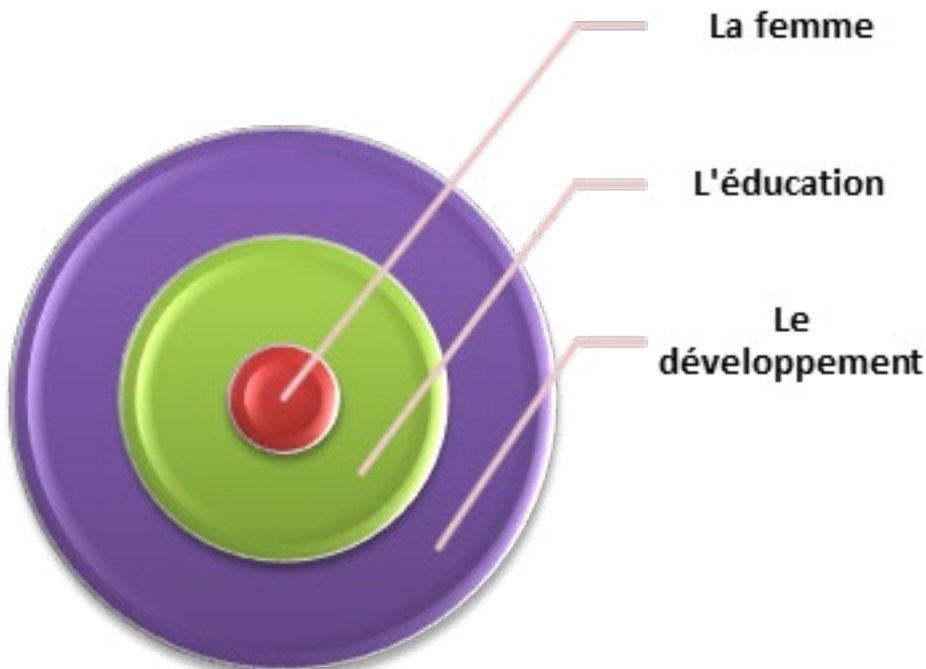
1- Source: UN News, March 2022

Yemeni Women and Education:

Women and development in the field of education is one of the most important issues for many researchers and scientific institutions. It has received great attention and was covered by a number of international conferences and forums. Improving women's status and enabling them to participate have become a very important matter. After experiences have proven that marginalization and exclusion of women disrupt and impede the comprehensive development process and postpone the progress of society, women's issues, especially education, have become a priority which should be given great attention worldwide.

Certainly, women are an integral part of the social forces targeted by development policies. Their socioeconomic status is considered a measure of the society in which they live and by which they are affected.¹

Depriving women of education ultimately deprives society of the desired development. According to the UN Human Development Report 2004, the illiteracy rate among females in Arab countries is estimated at 50%, which is a high percentage that threatens the desired role of women in various areas of life.²



Education plays a prominent role in changing women's roles and developing their social status. This was confirmed by many international agreements, including 1995 Beijing Platform for Action which ensures that women education was one of its critical areas of concern, and the CEDAW Convention which stipulated that States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women to guarantee them just and equal rights to men.

1- Women in Yemen

2- حنان شمالوي، ونهيل اسماعيل، محددات تمكين المرأة في الدول العربية، دراسات، مجلد 46، 2019

The results of reports³ from the Ministry of Education in Yemen showed the numbers of students enrolled and not enrolled in public education for both sexes (males and females) aged (6-17 years). When reflecting on the results of the reports, it was noted that the number of primary-secondary-school-age girls out of school exceeds one million (i.e., 32.6%), which is a worrying indicator. It requires careful research into the reasons and obstacles for girls not enrolling in education and finding appropriate solutions.

Educational Institutions:

There are many Yemeni attempts and efforts, which have been made to achieve the desired goals in education, especially female education as an important human development investment. However, evaluating the reality of women's education in Yemen reveals a wide disparity between males and females- in favor of males- in enrollment rate in education at its various stages. There is still a large gender gap that narrows slightly. This disparity may be due to the predominance and prevalence of some traditional cultural aspects that differentiate between the two sexes and isolate females from public life. The predominance of these aspects is more often found in rural than urban areas. Economic factors in society also play a role in enhancing and giving preference to male education over females when balancing priorities for low-income families.⁴

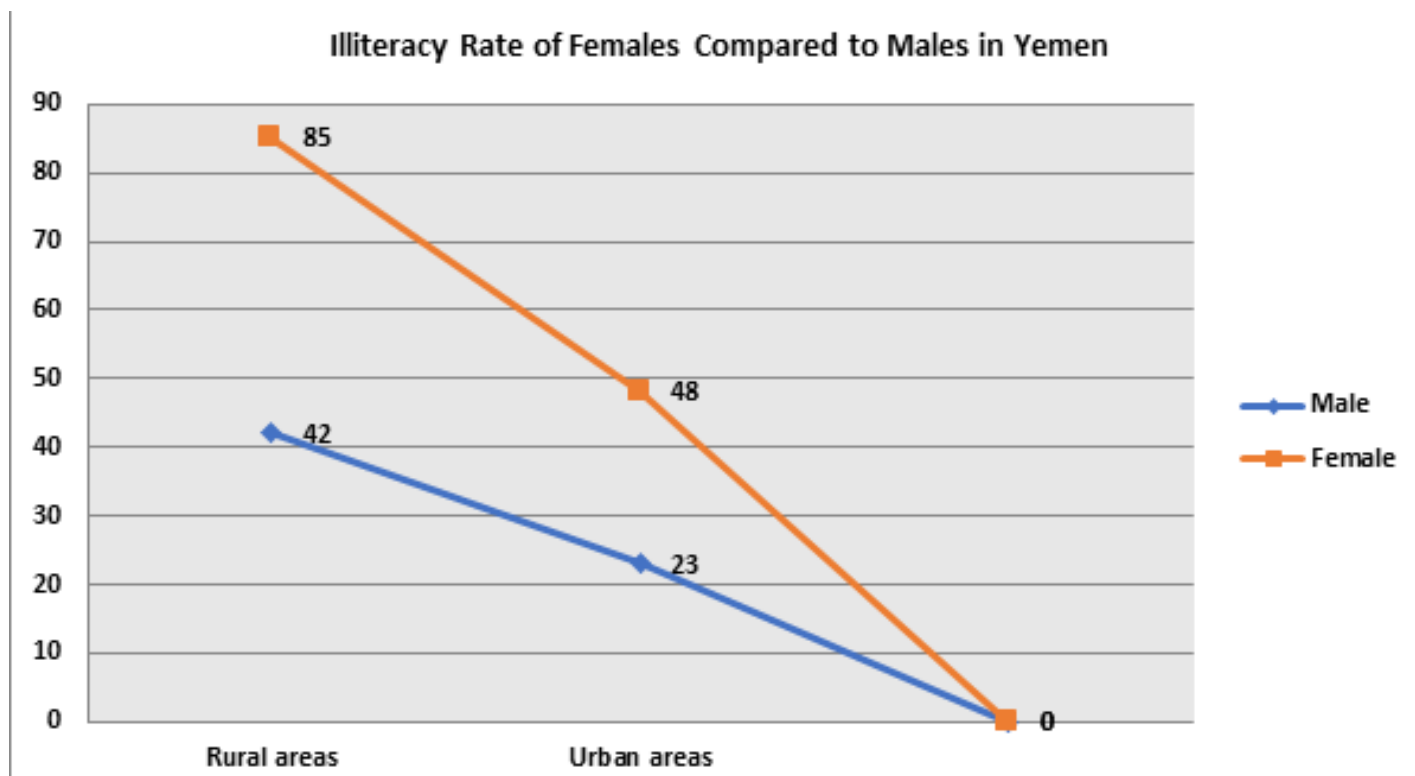
Despite the remarkable development in the field of women's education and its positive impact on women's contribution to development as a workforce and on their achievement of limited progress in various social and political positions. There are a number of negative indicators related to the current educational status of women, which can be summarized as follows:

It was noted that illiteracy rate among females was high. According to the results of the poverty survey conducted in 1999, illiteracy rate among the total population decreased from (62.7%) in 1994 to (55.7%) in 1999, with a difference of (6.5%). Although it was noticed a decrease in the illiteracy rate among females from (82.8%) in 1994 to (74.1%) in 1999-2000, with a difference of (8.7%), the illiteracy rate is still high, especially in rural areas. These percentages indicate that female literacy rate has reached (25.9%) only, which implies that a large number of females suffer from illiteracy and will continue to suffer due to the continuous increase in their numbers, especially since their enrollment rate in basic education is still low, and illiteracy is widespread among females. In rural areas, the illiteracy rate was 42% for males and 85% for females. In urban areas,

3- وزارة التربية والتعليم، الجمهورية اليمنية، العام الدراسي 2015-2016

4- حقوق المرأة اليمنية في التنمية، مرصد البرلمان اليمني، صنعاء، 2005

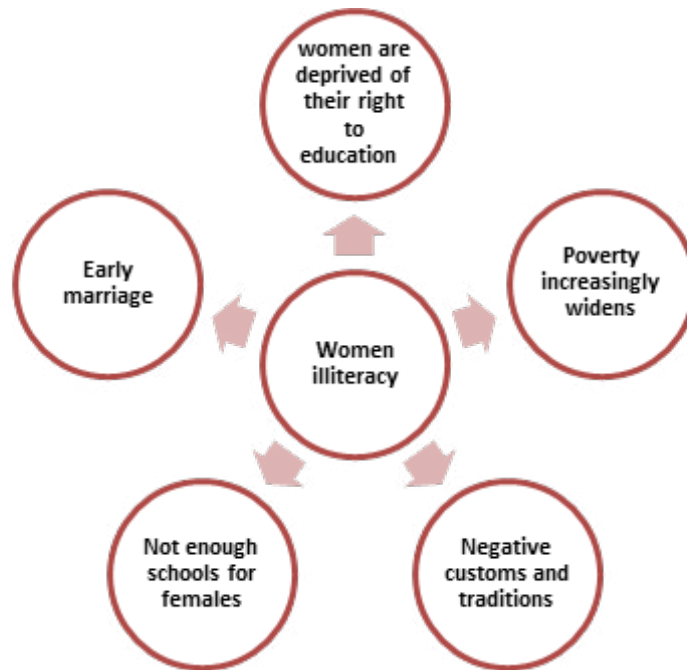
this percentage decreases, but it remains high among females, which amounted to (48%) compared to (23%) for males.



It was also noted that illiteracy rate between females and males varied at the level of the Yemeni governorates in terms of the level of development of these governorates, the spread of education and the extent of social awareness. While the highest illiteracy rate among females was in Al-Jawf, which was estimated at (56.9%), and its lowest rate was in Aden, which was estimated at (17.7%).

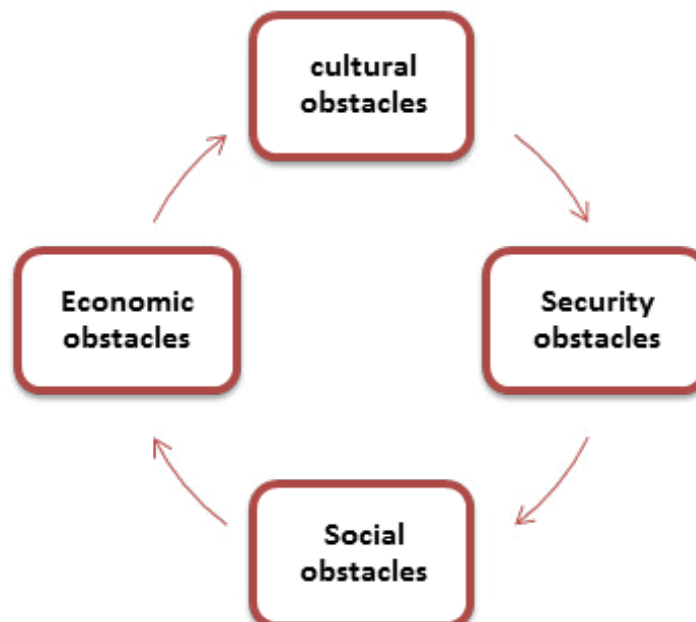
The high rate of illiteracy among females can be attributed to the following factors:

1. Women were deprived of many rights, including the right to education in past eras.
2. Poverty has been increasingly widened and is more concentrated in rural areas, especially among women, which causes poor families to refrain from educating their daughters.
3. Certain traditions and social norms govern women's advancement and empowerment.
4. Early marriage of girls and the amount of household chores contributed to depriving women of education, especially in the rural areas.
5. There are not enough schools for females.



Obstacles to Girls' Education in Yemen:

There are many reasons and obstacles that work to impede or stop Yemeni girls from continuing their education, whether in rural or urban areas of Yemen. According to UNICEF reports, there are many important factors related to girls' enrollment in education, which are more prominent in rural areas than in urban areas. Girls often enroll in education at a later age, and this is due to personal reasons related to the nature of the rural family and how far school are from home. Since the educational curricula are designed to develop the child in the psychological and social aspects, it does not fit the age stage of the girls who lag behind in education. Through this topic, obstacles that prevent girls from continuing the educational process can be classified- according to the opinions of the local community and education experts- as follows:



Cultural Obstacles:

There is a prevailing culture in rural areas among parents that there is no point in educating girls. This is due to the heavy burdens on women in rural areas, lack of job opportunities for girls after graduating from high school or even university, and their preoccupation with raising children, household chores, farming, and raising livestock. Adel Mohammed confirmed, “I will let my daughters complete their basic education, i.e., until the sixth grade.” The problem may lie in girls themselves in terms of their lack of awareness of the importance of education. Girls may become convinced of the futility of their access to education, or become satisfied with the first stages of education and then drop out. Although there was no objection from the families to continue their education, sometimes girls get negative reinforcement towards education, especially when their male brothers drop out of school to practice some handicrafts or do business, etc.

Social and Family Obstacles:

The field of Yemeni girls’ education faces many obstacles on the social and family level, the most prominent of these is early marriage, which is a phenomenon that is clearly widespread in the Yemeni society, particularly in rural areas. Girls’ early marriage entails taking responsibility at an early age for family affairs, childbearing, and child rearing, which deprive her of continuing education. Sometimes a girl is prevented from continuing her education by her husband. Many parents are also afraid of mixing girls’ and boys’ education in schools. Many parents oppose the idea of girls continuing to study in mixed schools for girls and boys, considering this, as they think, a danger to the girl. Rarely are those who let their daughter continue studying in mixed schools at the secondary level. In urban areas, there are public and private schools for girls, to which many parents resorted to enroll their daughters to complete their education.

Economic Obstacles:

- There are many economic obstacles to women’s education in Yemen, most notably:

Poverty: The majority of Yemeni society suffers from difficult economic conditions in light of the political situation in Yemen. Yemen has been suffering from the brunt of the war for nearly seven years. It had a significant impact on the economic aspects, which led to the reluctance of a large number of Yemeni families to educate their children and push them to engage in various businesses to make a living. Some Yemeni families are interested in educating males only, not females due to the costs of the educational process, including tuition fees, school uniforms, daily expenses, transportation, school supplies and books.

Economic collapse and the high cost of living:

As a result, the decline in the Yemeni economy led to a significant decline in the income of Yemeni families and to a high increase in unemployment and living expenses. The price of one dollar exceeded 470 Yemeni riyals in 2017, compared to 215 riyals at the beginning of 2014.

Security Obstacles:

They negatively affect the education of Yemeni women, the most prominent of security obstacles are war and displacement: Conflict and war have a great impact on education in general, and the education of girls in particular. Statistics of the Ministry of Education indicate that the total number of displaced male students in the primary stage is 49,862 males, and 39,466 female students. However, displaced families do not have opportunities to settle, and therefore the issue of continuing education for boys and girls is postponed. Both, as a result of the displacement conditions they suffer from.

Efforts to support girls' enrollment in public education:

In cooperation and coordination with the concerned authorities in the field of education, a number of international organizations interested in education in Yemen, such as UNICEF, the Yemeni-German Program for Supporting Education GTZ, the Social Fund for Development SFD, and the Basic Education Development Project (BEDP) support activities aimed at promoting girls' enrollment, the most important of which is the expansion of the number of female schools in rural areas with the contribution of the local community, contracting with rural teachers, carrying out community awareness campaigns, a child development project, school furnishing, book printing, and other activities that include some rural areas in Yemen, as the World Food Program intervened (WFP) In distributing food rations to families in rural governorates through the General Department of School Feeding in the Ministry, for the purpose of paying girls for education.



Yemeni Women - Between Peace and Development:

In recent years, the markets of Al-Hodeidah governorate are witnessing an unprecedented presence of women. In light of the conflict, activists indicate that she went out to work in order to participate with men for improving family income. Moreover, she has transcended the societal flaw and the barrier of customs and traditions to prove to the world that the Tihama woman is able to face the conflict and its scourge, and that the situation in her reality requires her presence to support her male partner in fighting poverty and providing the family's requirements. She has also proven her presence in public facilities, institutions, companies and centers that encourage women's work by supporting projects and programs that encourage productive women, to overcome the reality imposed by the conflict. Furthermore, the obstacles have not defeated Yemeni women, no matter how long were they nor have they besieged their aspirations and desire to bring about change in an exceptional stage experienced by their country.

Ataa Um Zahra... The Area of Poverty in the Governorate Exceeds 80%

Since 2015, Umm Zahra, a woman from Al-Hodeidah governorate, has been struggling to provide a livelihood for her and her two children, Zahra and Ahmed. She tried to support her husband, who had lost his job after the destruction of the facility where he was working. As a result, he found himself looking for a suitable job in light of the ravages of the conflict that has been going on in the country for more than seven years. Umm Zahra also acquired sewing and embroidery training at one of the training centers, aiming to improving her family's living situation, due to her husband's inability to meet all the family's needs. This is owing to the unprecedented wave of high prices witnessed in the city, as well as the city's widening poverty circle, as international organizations indicate that it exceeded 80%.



Activists in the Peace and Development Path:

Women's activism in the development and peace side has expanded in recent years. Yemeni women are living in one of the poor and fragile countries that suffer from poor services and the exacerbation of many of the problems and phenomena that they have been suffering from for a long time. However, these circumstances, which led to the displacement of women and the increasing of their suffering, have turned into an opportunity for Yemeni women to prove that they are fighters and adherents to survival since a long time in all circumstances." It is very important for every child to receive full care and obtain all his rights from the family and society."

Accordingly, Amatullah Abdullah, a midwife, decided to carry out her voluntary initiative to educate the women of her village, which lacks medical centers and facilities, and where there is little awareness of the need for family planning and for the child to obtain full rights and care. Amatullah lives in one of the countryside of Taiz governorate, after she received her education in the city. She noticed the women's suffering in her village due to having many children for several years, as a result, many of these women are deprived of attention and care due to lack of awareness. Thus, she decided to go to the homes of her village to raise awareness of the dangers of family planning failure on the mother and children. Amatullah says, "Many women do not know how to use family planning methods, and many of them have a wrong idea about these methods, which may lead to negative complications when using them. At that time, I was keen to advise and guide many of them to the necessity of family planning, and how to use all means. Owing to her own efforts, she felt that many women accepted the idea and understood the need for adequate space between births, in addition to learning the correct ways to use different methods of family planning.

Amatullah was keen to instill peace in her village, which suffers from ignorance and deprivation. She was also keen to spread awareness and educate many of the women of her village, whether by going to their homes or by educating women who were gathering at the mosque of the village to learn Holy Qur'an, and eradicate illiteracy.

Then, her initiative was developed to visit the camps for the displaced in Taiz city, with self efforts willing to create a transformation in her geographical environment and in an exceptional situation in the country and women.



Yemeni Women in the Path of Peace:

Resolution No.1325 for women, peace and security was considered the first official and legal document issued by the Security Council, in which the parties to the conflict are required to respect the rights of women, support their participation in peace negotiations, as well as in rebuilding and reconstruction that follow the conflict stage. It is the first decision to link women's experience in armed conflicts to the issue of international peace and security.

Many women across Yemen have welcomed this decision, which represents fairness to women and give them the right to active participation in any peace negotiations as a partner for a man. They also have the desire to make a real peace at a period that is considered the most difficult in the history of Yemenis. They have contributed to peace creation through their activities and programs that they implement through initiatives and institutions, or alone as an active element within the community without media shedding.

The UN Special Envoy to Yemen, Griffiths, praised the ability of women to contribute to peace in his briefing before the Security Council, saying, and "I'm still inspired by the courage of women in Yemen and their determination to end the war and build peace, becoming the heroes of peace in Yemen.

* Taiz Women Team for Life:

This team represents a feminist team that includes a group of women's leaders in Taiz governorate, who had a prominent role during the last period at the local or national level in humanitarian and social issues. This team was formed by the Center for Studies and Economic Media in March 2018, as part of the project to enhance the role of Yemeni women in the process of peace, security, stability, and the transitional stage. Furthermore, several training courses were also held to qualify the team in the skills of settling conflict, negotiations, building advocacy campaigns and gaining support.

* "Al-Tawafuq" Feminist Group:

In 2015, through a cooperation between the Office of the Special Envoy and the United Nations Women, "Al-Tawafuq"-compatibility- group or the Yemeni Feminist Hungarian Group for Security and Peace was created as an advisory mechanism. The United Nations Women managed the group directly, as it included about 60 Yemeni women by late 2018.



* The Yemeni women's Technical Advisory Group:

In mid-2018, the Office of the Special Envoy established the Yemeni women's Technical Advisory Group with the support of UN Women and "Al Tawafuq" group. Today, the Specialized Yemeni women's Technical Advisory Group includes eight Yemeni women, three of them were chosen from "Al Tawafuq" group, and the other five were chosen from elsewhere. In mid-2020, five members of the Yemeni Women Professional Technical Advisory Group also became members of "Al Tawafuq" Feminist Group. The Specialized Yemeni women's Technical Advisory Group consists of women from various disciplines such as, economics, human rights, and governance, in addition to women who have experience in the political field.

Furthermore, members of the Specialized Yemeni women's Technical Advisory often participate in consultations on political issues based on their own experience.

The Women's Nine Group:

It is a group of feminist components that work together to support peace initiatives and unify efforts to activate the implementation of UN Resolution 1325. It seeks to create a local and international public opinion that supports the role of Yemeni women in decision-making and peace-building processes in Yemen. The Yemeni Women's Nine Group Network also seeks, through an advocacy campaign, to support the call of the United Nations Secretary-General and the appeal of the UN envoy to Yemen to stop the war and respond to Covid-19 pandemic.

The group includes the feminist group of "Al Tawafuq" for Peace and Security, the Yemeni Women's Summit, the Peace Partners Alliance, the Marib Girls Foundation - which is currently represented in the group as Peacemakers. The group also includes the Youth leaders Foundation represented by the Youth Advisory Council, Southern Women for Peace, the Women's Voices for Peace Network, and Women4Yemen.

A Distinguished Female Models in Peace Initiatives:

During the years of conflict, many problems have emerged within Yemeni society, in addition to thorny political issues that await multiply and continuous national efforts to solve them. In light of these complex and exceptional circumstances, many feminist names became famous for

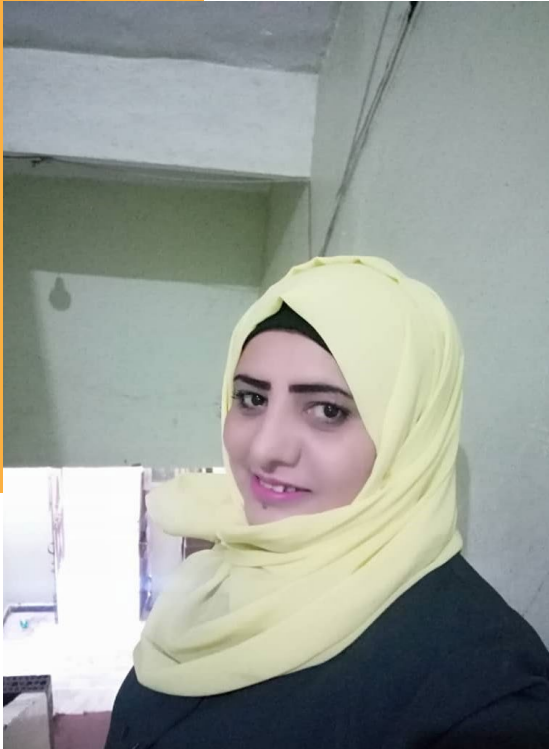


bringing peace to many issues and problems, whether through work in civil society organizations or self-initiatives. They played many societal roles such as resolving disputes that were confined to men in a society dominated by the patriarchal position. Over the past period, many media and press outlets have dealt with the story of a Yemeni woman who participated with the prisoner exchange process between the two sides of the conflict, with seven collective deals, in addition to a number of individual deals. Jawhara Qassem, in Al-Dhalea governorate, southern Yemen, played this leading role.

A press article published by Al-Ayyam newspaper mentions that Jawhara Qassem has extensive relations with the two parties to the conflict, and this relationship was harnessed by returning many prisoners from the two parties to their homes. This Yemeni woman succeeded in the first exchange deal, which consisted of 48 deceased and 12 captives from both parties. She indicated in her statement to Al-Ayyam newspaper that her efforts to exchange prisoners began to release her daughter's husband, who was detained with one of the parties to the conflict. She also mentioned that many families of prisoners came to her to follow up the files of their prisoners with the parties. Mrs. Qassem tells the media that she is very happy when she sees the families of the prisoners rejoicing of their sons' return.

Activists and academics believe that women are more sensitive and aware of the needs of society than men, especially during conflict and crisis. This is evident by the roles that many of them play in reality in these critical periods in which many societies live.





A Model of the Yemeni Women of Peace

• Shinaz Al Akhali

Ms. Shenaz Al-Akhali is a member of “Taiz Women for Life” initiative. She worked for a whole year in this initiative, especially by opening the main roads and crossings from and to Taiz city between the parties to the conflict. She was also a member of the official committee to open roads and crossings, and she contributed to cooperating with Taiz Police Department on the issue of houses that were seized by armed men affiliated with military brigades, which belong to civilians in Taiz who were taken out from three houses. In addition to acting as a coordinator for the Peacemaking Communities Initiative, she has

taken the initiative to resolve local community problems. She is currently working as a coordinator for the Active Communities Project at NODOS Yemen. In addition, she has participated with the teams she forms in any district that she is in to resolve conflicts in these areas. The project moves every year in the four districts in Taiz City, which targets different geographical areas in the same districts each time. She is also a member of Taiz Women Mediators Network, which she founded.

• Al-Souri water

“A dispute regarding Sabr Al-Muwadam lasted for thirty-three years, and it began between three villages, namely, Amiqah, Al-Adouf, and Al-Sha`b,” Al-Akhali says. In addition to the previous existing conflict between the three villages, the problem was also divided into two disputes between Al-Sha`b and Al-Adouf over the amount of water that each region deserves. There were previous court rulings aimed to resolve this dispute, but they were not implemented. Amiqah is the village where Al-Souri water is located, and it was given this name because Al-Souri trees surround the waterhole from all sides. In addition, this village has an extremely difficult path, as children and women were facing hardship and struggle to go long distances to obtain water from the well.

The idea of conflict resolution came when the organization of NODOS Yemen, which I am working with as a coordinator in Sabr, formed a team of ten young women and ten young men under my supervision and leadership. I also formed an advisory board of notables in the region, consisting of five women and five men. After we conducted an integrated study of the conflict and met the parties to the conflict, we prepared various activities to bring the viewpoints closer between

the parties. Thus, we held dialogue sessions between Al-Sha'b and Al-Adouf villages at first, and we came out with a memorandum of reconciliation between them. Accordingly, the amount of water for each village was determined, within the record signed by both sheikhs of the two villages and us, in addition to the entire team, as well as the director of the Sabr district and a number of district authorities. Hence, in a second session, we formed a committee to support the situation, which was formed from several authorities, including the director of Sabr Police Department, other notables as well as sheikhs of Sabr. The task of this committee was to negotiate with the other party in Amiqah, and a dialogue session was held there in the village, which included notables from the region, headed by the sheikh of Amiqah village. Then, we came out with an agreement that they have no objection to solving the problem at all, and that they are ready for any solutions we propose. Thus, a report was made and signed, and then there were women's and men's community meetings in the three villages to calm the situation and bring views closer to obtain community support from the people in order to put more pressure on sheikhs to speed up the resolution of the conflict.

Then, the last dialogue session came, in which the sheikhs of the three villages were gathered to reach a final agreement on the solution, and minutes were prepared and attended by almost all the sheikhs of Sabr, the director of the district and the director of security. An official memorandum was issued by the district administration to end the dispute and resolve it. All this included cleaning the water channels of the waterhole, which supply the well with water, because the water level decreased during the conflict period due to the failure of cleaning the water channels, and because only the people of Al-Adouf village can master this task from ancient times. Through the sessions, it was agreed that they would attend the area to clean the water channels, without being subjected to any objections from the people of Amiqah or its sheikhs. Thus, the conflict was resolved, and the only obstacle is to extend the pipes again to the villages of Al-Sha'b and Al-Adouf, because during the conflict period, it was completely broken, and they are now looking for supporters to fix them and complete the work.

Feeling Happy

Naturally, after resolving this conflict, I felt a sense of joy and pride for myself and the other women of the team who had engaged in resolving such conflicts for the first time. Of course, in every dialogue session held, we received praise from the sheikhs and the director of the district, because of our successful role. We often participated in most of these sessions, which I chaired and directed, and I am still proud of myself for this achievement. Despite the fact that I moved my work from Sabr to another district, everyone still praises my work and my role in forming the team. The majority of those team members are still cooperating through initiatives or teams that they formed later, such as Aswar for Peace and Development Initiative, which I founded with a large group of the same previous team that I form to resolve the dispute.

• Motivation and Reasons

The role of women in establishing peace is very important, because she is the one who has borne the burden of this war and lost her only breadwinner. She is also the one who bears the hardships of her family, and she is the most affected one by the troubles of this war. Moreover, she has also lost everything she holds dear, and she has become very scared and insecure. Every day she awaits news of the death of one of her relatives and dearest to her, while men are the greatest beneficiaries of this war, because they have only one concern: how to benefit from this war, as war merchants. They also benefit greatly from war continuing. I do not mean here the young men on the front lines, rather, the men of the parties, the political and military leaders.

I was motivated to work as a peace mediator due to the outcome of this war, in addition to my desire for peace to come to Yemen. The most important reason for my engagement in this work is the martyrdom of my brother Raydan, who was more than a brother and a supporter for me. This was the greatest motivation for me to work in this field, because I am not ready for other losses, and I have a brother who was also wounded because of this war.

• Her Message to Women

“My message to Yemeni women is to play an active role in establishing peace and to work together with women abroad to end this war, as well as to stop politicians and military leaders from exploiting women. I also want to send a message to women, telling them that now is the moment to get involved in organized activities aimed at getting their voices heard by all those who are affected by the Yemeni war, as well as those who benefit from it. Therefore, they should consider that what is happening now is a great opportunity for them to fulfill their roles entrusted to them during the current stage, and they should be aware that there is societal and international acceptance and encouragement for their presence and participation.” Al-Akhali concluded.

Networks of Women's Participation in the Peacebuilding Process:

These new networks seek women's participation in peace negotiations and peacebuilding, and to raise Yemeni women's voices on international platforms. Other aims include addressing gender-based violence, mitigating the suffering of civilians, supporting prisoners and detainees and providing humanitarian relief. As well as forming new networks, Yemeni women have established initiatives, organizations and foundations during the war to foster peace and support their communities¹.

Previous studies in this field have shown that in GCC countries, there is a narrow gap between men and women in human resources development, namely in health and education, and in decent life. However, this gap widens in the rest of the Arab countries with medium and low human development, specifically in Djibouti, Somalia and Yemen. They also demonstrated that a large gap between men and women exists in the field of human development, which is based on economic and political participation and decision-making in all Arab countries in which women's empowerment guide data is available.



In addition, political and cultural factors still pose a challenge to women's participation, especially in the economic and political fields. Ultimately, future aspirations for women's contribution and participation in comprehensive development are linked to the success that Arab countries will achieve in areas of comprehensive development with its social, economic and political dimensions at the level of society in general and women in particular, by establishing standards of justice and equality among people, expanding life opportunities for all, and promoting and enhancing the economic and political participation of men and women.²

1- <https://sanaacenter.org/ar/publications->

2- Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Mansoura University, 2020, Arab Women's Participation in Comprehensive Development: Reality, Obstacles and Future Prospects

In collaboration with UN Women and the World Food Programme, UNDP Yemen is undertaking a nationwide study of conflict in Yemen, its impact on women and girls, and potential entry points for intervention. Connecting humanitarian efforts to political, social and economic analysis, the study presents comprehensive information and promotes a more holistic approach to addressing the needs of women and girls, reducing negative effects that interventions may have on women, narrowing the gender gap in Yemen, and contributing to humanitarian efforts. The study can also be used to inform academic research and to influence donor orientation and public policy.

Gender Equality Seal Program

UNDP supports public and private organizations to implement the Gender Seal Program to bridge gender gaps in workplace. For participating organizations, the Gender Seal supports a more efficient and equitable workplace and contributes to the advancement of gender equality and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals.

Key areas of the Gender Equality Seal Certification also include: eliminating gender pay gaps, increasing the role of women in decision-making, promoting work-life balance, supporting women's access to non-traditional jobs, eliminating sexual harassment at work, and using inclusive, gender-neutral communication

The UNDP in Yemen has also registered in the Gender Seal Program. To advance the implementation of the Action Plan, UNDP will provide tools, guidance and assessment criteria to ensure gender main-streaming.³

Yemeni women's participation in political dialogue_ achievements and gains:

Yemeni women have effectively contributed to many tracks and aspects of the political and human rights process. She had an active presence in these events and participations, regardless of the extent of that presence in reality. Many officials and experts of human rights organizations praised the participation of Yemeni women and their importance in advancing the comprehensive development process in Yemen. In the same vein, one of the prominent activists among women in the field of political work⁴and a member of Yemen's National Dialogue Conference (NDC), said that 161 women representatives are currently participating in the NDC. For Yemen, this is an unusually high number. Jamal Benomar, United Nations Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on Yemen, emphasized that to make the exchange of views and ideas meaningful, various factions— political, tribal and regional of both genders – should be involved in the NDC. So far, the NDC has managed to get Yemenis to talk to each other in a rather divided country by bringing the various factions to

3- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)Gender in Yemen, 2020
<https://sanaacenter.org/ar/publications>

4- Amat Al-Alim Al-Suswa, a Yemeni professor and journalist

the same table,⁵but this was not so easy. These contributions and participation of Yemeni women encountered many challenges, the most important of which were:

1. The lack of commitment by many parties and political factions to endorse quota for women in the lists of their representatives. The real percentage of representation within these parties ranged between 15% and 27%.
2. Weak networking between party women and independent women on women's issues, which made these issues scattered in the various axes of dialogue and the provisions approved in this regard weak and incomplete.
3. Some partisan women accept the directives of their party leaders, even on issues that oppose women's rights, because they view women's issues a marginal issue compared to other national issues, namely the Southern cause, the future shape of the state, Sa'ada issue, and transitional justice, and also because the religious character prevails over a number of influential parties and political forces participating.
4. Society's culture and traditions that may limit women's participation in political life, except within certain limits

Yemeni Women and their Experience in Drafting the Constitution:

The NDC in Yemen formed a founding conference, and its outcomes included decisions aiming to build a new, democratic, federal state of Yemen based on equal citizenship, equal opportunities, and social justice, as well as to form a 17-member committee to draft the new state constitution according to specific criteria, the most important of which is that women should be represented in the constitution drafting committee.

In implementation of a republican decision dated March 18, 2014, which stipulates the formation of the Constitution Drafting Committee and the nomination of its members, four women were appointed in the 17-member constitution drafting committee. The following remarks can be made here:⁶

1. Yemeni women participated for the first time in Yemen's modern history in drafting the country's constitution.
2. The percentage of women's representation in the Constitution Drafting Committee reached approximately 24%.
3. Two women were chosen from the list of independent women and two others from women parties and political organizations.
4. Women managed to gain members' trust. As a result, one of them was assigned the task of vice-chairman of the committee, to be the representative of women in the committee's presidency and a partner in managing its work.

⁵- World Bank Blogs, Yemen's women make their voices heard, Sana'a, 2013

⁶- [Nazra for Feminist Studies](#)

5. Representatives of Yemeni women on the committee were from various scientific backgrounds and different specialized fields, which resulted in a great deal of integration in the work.

Difficulties faced by women in the Constitution Drafting Committee:

The experience of Yemeni women in drafting the constitution faced many difficulties and challenges, most of which revolved around the following:

- ✓ The absence of complete conviction among most members of the rights obtained and gains achieved by women in the NDC, and their non-recognition of those rights, especially women's political participation, women's quota, the criminalization of underage marriage, and full equality between them and men, as well as considering childbearing as a social role.
- ✓ Postponing discussion of women's rights and looking for appropriate constitutional formulas for translating these rights on the ground, especially on the issue of quotas.
- ✓ Many of the committee's male members belonged to religious and traditional schools of thought, which contributed to the decline and weakness of advocacy for women's issues within the committee.
- ✓ Distrust of women's ability to work and innovate, especially in the field of politics.
- ✓ Some members undervalue women's quota, considering it a discriminatory measure that contradict the culture of Yemeni society, and is being imposed by international organization.
- ✓ The negative impact of the raging political conflict over power, wealth and influence on women's issues and rights.
- ✓ The turbulent security situation and its repercussions on women's psyche and on their strenuous efforts to constitutionalize their rights and the enshrining them.

Achievements and gains:

Despite these challenges, in the NDC, Yemen's women were able to obtain many of the rights and privileges, which Yemeni women have been demanding for decades through various bodies, organizations, and women's rights unions

The most important gains achieved for Yemeni women in the National Dialogue Conference can be addressed as follows:⁷

Political participation:

- The state is obligated to represent women by not less than 30%, to enable them to actively participate in bodies, state authorities, and elected and appointed councils.
- Like men, women, as citizens, have the right to participate in politics by voting and running in presidential, parliamentary, and local elections and referendums. The state is also obligated to include the name of every male and female citizen in the voter register when the election conditions are met.
- Political components are obligated to arrange their electoral lists to ensure that at least 30% of women reach electoral councils. Candidates, both males and females, shall be arranged

7- Nihal Al-Awlaki, The Role of Women in Political Transformation in the Republic of Yemen, Paper, September 2014

in electoral lists, as follows: At least one woman in three candidates. No electoral list will be accepted from political constituencies if they violate this rule.

Equal citizenship and non-discrimination:

- The state guarantees women all civil and political rights, and is committed to enabling them to exercise all equal citizenship rights.
- Citizens are equal before the law without prejudices. Any discrimination based on gender, race, language, color, origin, profession, social or economic status, creed, sect, thought, opinion, or disability is thus criminalized.
- Men and women are equal in diya (blood money for homicide) and arsh (compensation or indemnity for bodily injury)
- Woman is equal to man in human dignity, and has her own civil personality and financial autonomy.

Criminalization of all types and forms of violence against women.

Maternity and Child Protection:

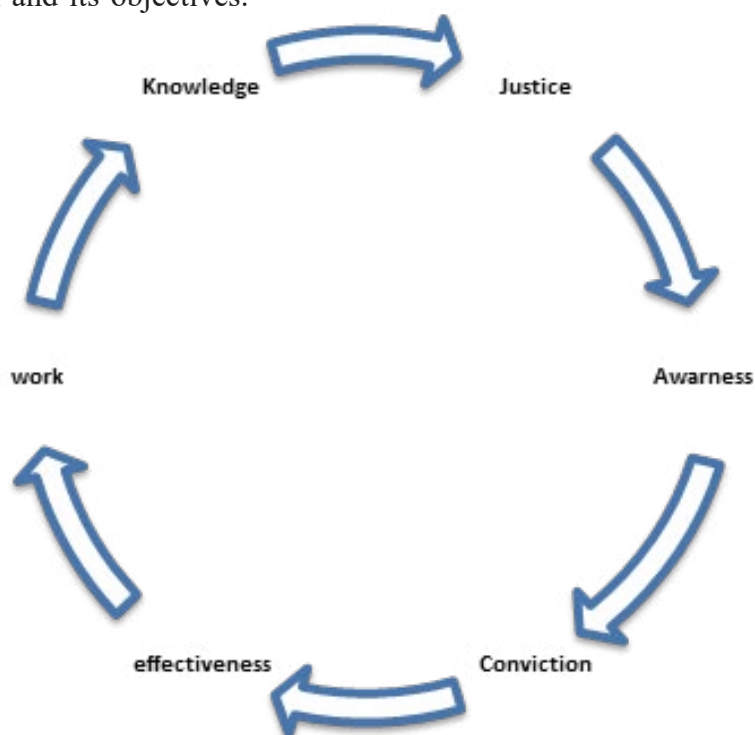
- The state is obliged to develop strategies to protect motherhood and childhood.
- A proper understanding of childbearing as a social function
- Extension of childhood age up to 18 years, and defining the minimum age of marriage is 18, for both men and women.
- Establishment of specialized courts to look into family and personal status cases. A special law shall regulate these courts, determine their type and jurisdiction, as well as the procedures to be followed.
- Criminalization of physical assault (female Circumcision), sexual harassment, commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking, which degrade women's dignity and respect.
- A woman working in any state institution has the right to voluntary retirement upon reaching 25 years of service.



Study Abstract on Consolidating and Promoting a Culture of Peace:

A study conducted by YIC team in Yemen concluded that women have a key role in the various fields of peace. However, women's full and active participation in peacebuilding activities requires broad social approval and acceptance of their roles. Women's exercise of their role and social acceptance of their participation in working life have gone through many stages, especially in the Arab countries. Their participation at the economic and political levels faces many obstacles that vary in terms of cultural formation and social development in different societies. Currently, great hopes are attached to the role of women in promoting and consolidating the culture of peace. However, attention must be paid to several matters:

- Determining the role that women are required to play in particular in promoting and consolidating a culture of peace. Determining what is required of women helps in identifying any obstacle standing in the way of fulfilling their role. This will contribute to identify the supporting factors for them to perform their role efficiently.
- Paying attention to obstacles that hinder the role of women in general. The prevailing intellectual and cultural climate in society and the level of education are factors that reveal to us the extent to which a society accepts or rejects this role or how willing it is to accept it. In addition, we will be able to contribute to paving the way for society to accept this role in an appropriate way.
- Focusing on awareness campaigns on two tracks: The first is a special track that focuses on woman themselves to familiarize them with their own roles, duties, and responsibilities; the second is a general track directed to society as a whole in all its categories to understand the importance of the culture of peace. Here, it should be noted the importance of the party/body responsible for conducting this campaign, whether it is governmental or private. Private parties may not be paid much attention and not given much importance, especially if they are women's parties, but if the party is governmental and adopts a national character in its activity, then it will gain more weight. In this case, capabilities are wider in a way that serves the awareness campaign and its objectives.



An illustration shows the steps of preparing a woman to be a positive personality in support of peace

The study concluded that Yemeni women or other women in the world can play an active role in supporting the fields of peace. If the factors that help them in this task are available, which can be summarized as follows:

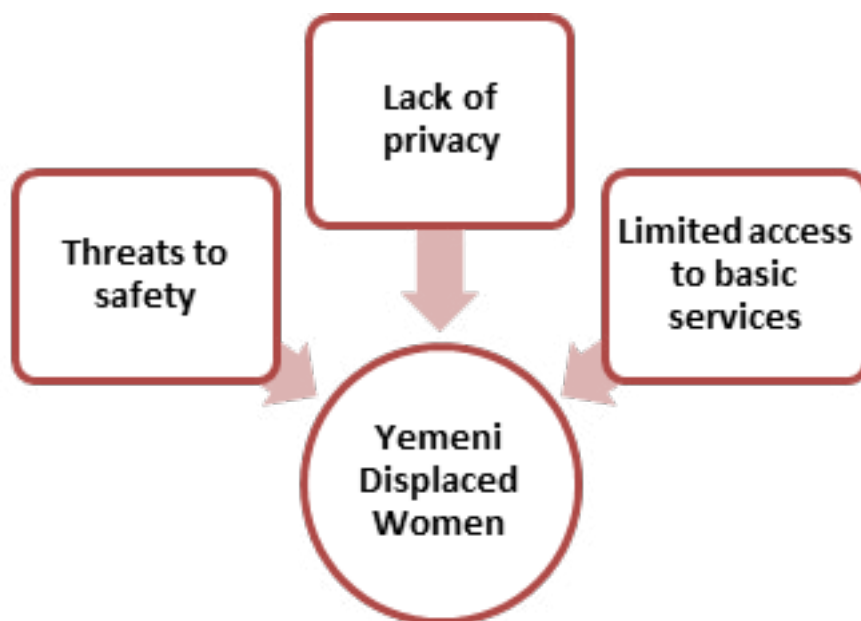
1. **Knowledge:** It is not possible for a woman or a man to perform their role to the fullest without accurate and correct knowledge of what is required from them.
2. **Awareness:** It is an important characteristic that helps make the right choice and contributes to objective decision making regarding particular issues. Moreover, awareness of matters significantly contributes to the proper assessment of them.
3. **Justice:** It is one of the most important and necessary elements that ensure good performance and effective integration of both sexes (women and men) in their tasks and functions, without compromising the rights of any of them.
4. **Conviction:** It is very important for a person to be convinced of the idea he espouses or the cause for which he sacrifices.
5. **Effectiveness:** Conviction is not enough on its own to achieve goals and reach success, but also active and serious work must be done, and strenuous effort must be made.

The results also showed that women excel men in human and social values. In the two groups (human and social), women achieved 33.3% of the total sample. Men excel women in cultural values represented by cooperation, solidarity, and acceptance of the other. While the percentage was 32.2% for men, it was 31.1% for women. This may be due to the fact that these values are more compatible with the nature of man and his tendencies in this direction.

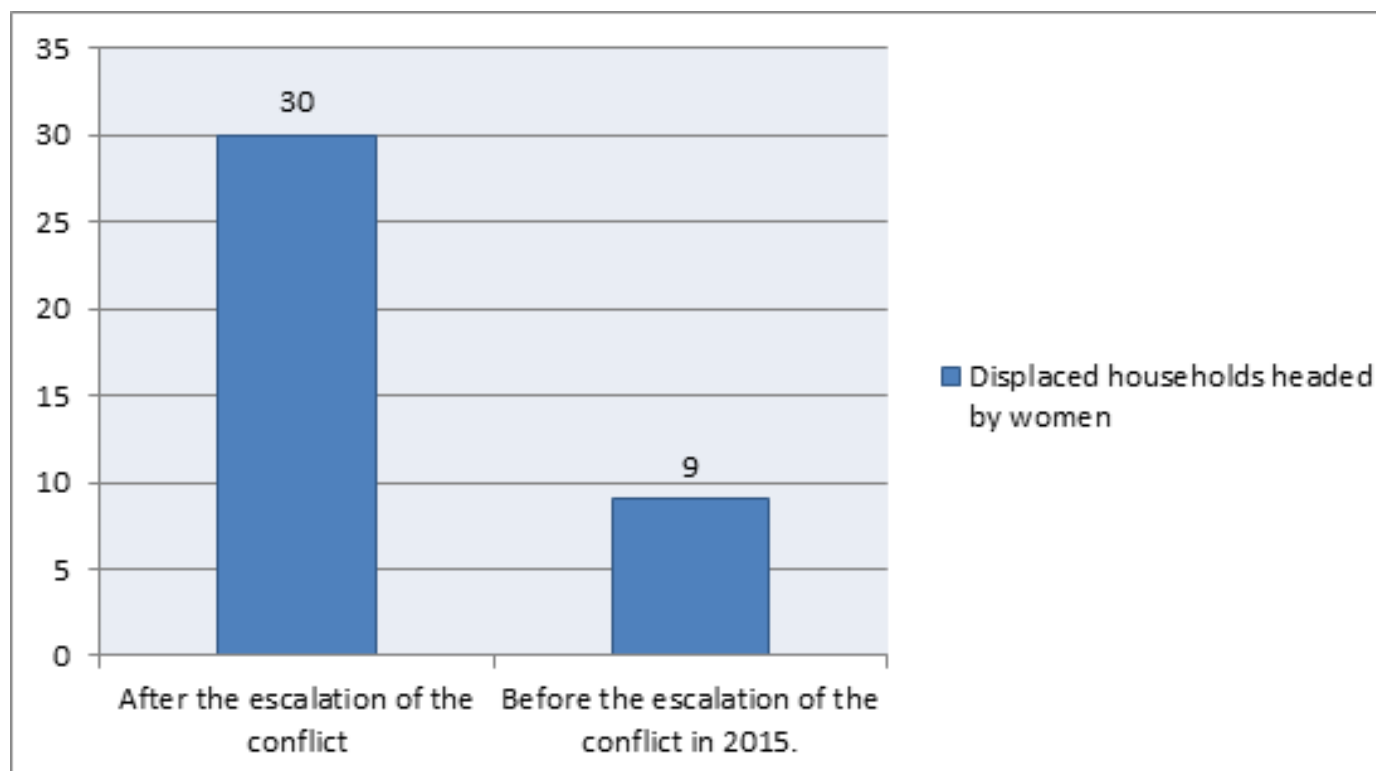
The Situation of Yemen's Displaced Women in the Current Conflict:

Women and girls are among the most vulnerable social groups in Yemen. Conflict and its aftermath have further exacerbated the dire situation of nearly 6.1 million women in Yemen. They are in urgent need of protection services.

The protection needs are even more severe for women and girls who are displaced. An estimated 73 per cent of the over 4 million internally displaced people (IDPs) in Yemen are women and children. With limited shelter options, displaced women and girls tend to suffer most from lack of privacy, threats to safety and limited access to basic services, making them even more vulnerable to violence and abuse.



The loss of a male breadwinner due to the conflict adds to the economic burden women face. Approximately 30 per cent of displaced households are now headed by women, compared to 9 per cent before the escalation of the conflict in 2015. The challenges are compounded by rising food prices, instigated by a sharp devaluation of the Yemeni riyal and a collapsing economy.



Recent trend analyses indicate an increasing number of women and girls engaging in negative coping mechanisms in order to survive. An increase in the incidence of violence among women and girls has also been reported, likely exacerbated by COVID-19. In 2020, despite severe under-reporting, demand for women protection services increased by 37 per cent.

A study by UNFPA Women's Refugee Commission and John Hopkins University across three governorates in Yemen provides evidence of an increase in child marriages among displaced populations; with 1 in 5 displaced girls aged 10 to 19 being married, compared to 1 in 8 girls in the host community.

Other possible negative coping mechanisms include coerced sex work, begging, child labour and human trafficking, and attempted suicide, among others.



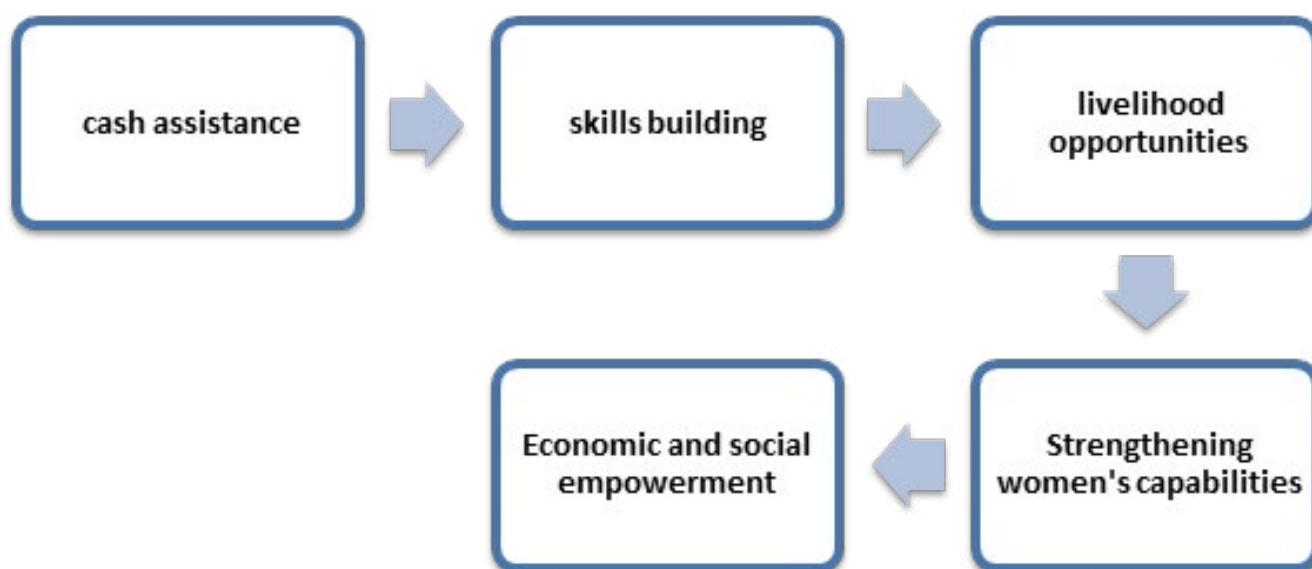
An illustration showing the negative coping mechanisms of some Yemeni displaced women

The collapse of public institutions, the legal system and informal protection mechanisms has translated into scarcity of support services for women and girls. Public services for survivors of violence such as shelter for those requiring protection, psychosocial support and emergency cash support for basic protection are almost non-existent. In addition, available services are not equipped logistically to accommodate the needs of women and girls with disabilities, who are at an even greater risk of gender-based violence in their communities.

A few humanitarian actors are providing women protection services in the country at present. They rely on donor funding to remain functional. Yet, women protection programs are among the most underfunded. In 2020, 350,000 women lost access to gender-based violence services following the closure of 12 women and girls' safe spaces due to the lack of funding. As of October 2021, only 54 per cent of the \$27 million required for women protection programs under the 2021 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan has been received.¹

1- United Nations, OCHA, Situation Report, Yemen, 2021

It remains urgent that services for women's protection- which include medical assistance, psychosocial support, emergency shelter, legal assistance and specialized psychosocial mental health - are up-scaled to meet growing needs, while expanding geographical coverage and strengthening capacities for service providers. In addition, supporting the social and economic empowerment of displaced women and girls, especially female-headed households through cash assistance, skills building and livelihood opportunities is also essential to reduce their vulnerabilities and engagement in negative coping mechanisms.





YIC@yemeninformation.org
yemeninformation.org