

Yemen Roadmap on Youth, Peace and Security

February 2020

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Acronyms

AA	Ansar Allah
ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
AQAP	Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EU	European Union
FCDF	Family Counselling and Development Foundation
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GNA	Government of National Accord
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
INGO	International Non-Government Organization
IRG	Internationally Recognized Government
IS	Islamic State
KII	Key Informant Interview
LDA	Local Development Association
MOSAL	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor
NDC	National Dialogue Conference
NGO	Non-Government Organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PDRY	People's Democratic Republic of Yemen
ROY	Republic of Yemen
RUAWFD	Rural and Urban Advocates Working for Development
SFD	Social Fund for Development
SLC	Saudi-Led Coalition
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNSG	United Nations Secretary-General
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
YAR	Yemen Arab Republic
YER	Yemeni Rial
YPS	Youth, Peace and Security
YWU	Yemeni Women's Union

Executive Summary

The political situation in Yemen has dramatically deteriorated with the outbreak of conflict in September 2014. It has significantly affected Yemeni youth and their ability to participate in decision-making. The vicissitudes of this war have witnessed periods of intense fighting, on-going conflict, a deterioration of the economy and weak rule of law, with a massive diaspora of highly qualified Yemenis to other countries. Key informants to this research noted that the impact of the situation has deeply affected the functioning of the state services and structure, with political, civil and security institutions have collapsed and been replaced by extremist, religious and ethnic. War has left Yemen in a fragile state with a damaged social fabric, a crisis in national culture, and a generation that has nearly lost its civil culture of coexistence and peace.

Young people today in Yemen are impacted by a range of forces, some which are driving conflict and violence and others which are mitigating factors contributing to cohesion, conflict management and mutual support. Within traditional Yemeni society women and young people are relegated to positions of significant disadvantage, contributing to inequalities and disempowerment and exacerbating conflict dynamics. Despite Yemen's youth bulge demographic, 30 percent between the ages of 15-29, and the inclusion of young people in the political transition starting in 2011 and the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) era, the needs and vision of young people in the country have remained largely invisible during the last five years of conflict. However, it must be noted that many factors impact both the role of young people and women in the family and community. This includes not only conflict dynamics, but also such factors as the attitudes of the male head of family, social class, economic status and the geographic area of Yemen where they are from.

UNFPA-Yemen strongly believes that in the Yemeni context, young people across the country are too often prevented from fulfilling their potential as agents of change. The context indicates that at all levels there is an urgent need to address exclusion against youth, meet their multi-sector needs, mainstream them in all aspects of development and the peace and transition process, and work with them as advocates and equal partners for positive change.

UNFPA-Yemen also understands that the inclusion of youth in decision making will require efforts to empower them with skills and expertise, as well as to develop youth-sensitive policies. The needs of young women, too, require special attention in the context of high levels of adolescent fertility, maternal mortality and prevalence of GBV. In addition, the youth-led political transition launched in January 2011 illustrates the frustrations of young people and their desperate cry for change.

The proposed Youth Road Map on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) presents a golden opportunity to campaign against the exclusion of the youth from political, social, cultural and economic life (which in itself is a form of structural and psychological violence) and to engage them in the peace-building and political transition process. This proposed document also presents a number of effective strategies that would help in the political, economic and social inclusion of youth as well as in conflict and post-conflict peace-building processes in Yemen. The strategies include persuading inclusive and systematic participation, transformative and economic development, protective and enabling environment, reformed and holistic education, genderized disengagement and reintegration and committed and connective localization, while suggested measurements- for example- include:

1. Participation: Providing support to the fair participation of the youth in a gender-sensitive manner in central and local policy structures in order to enable them to reach decision-making circles
2. Protection: eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against young men and women, whether such discrimination is political, social, economic, cultural, or gender-based.

3. Prevention: Adopting policies to combat gender-based violence and discrimination against the youth, supporting the cultural role to fight the practices of hatred, violence and discrimination and improving the quality of education.
4. Demobilization and reintegration: discouraging the participation of the youth in acts of violence, terrorism, hatred, and all forms of discrimination; instead implement economic and educational programs in addition to psychological, social and professional rehabilitation and integration into the labor market.
5. Partnership: building an effective and inclusive action plan in partnership with the youth and civil society organizations to reduce and address the factors behind conflict, including social, economic, political, cultural and religious forms of discrimination, exclusion, intolerance and extremism.

I. Introduction

Yemen has been experiencing a devolution of conditions at all levels with the destruction of a domestic war, that has regional dimensions,¹ and an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. In July 2015, the United Nations declared Yemen a Level 3 emergency, and which is now categorized as world's largest humanitarian crisis. According to the UN, approximately 75% of the population (22.2 million people) requires humanitarian assistance, with children and youth constituting a vulnerable demographic group, with children under the age of 15 constituting 39% of the population and youth aged 15-24 comprising 21% of the population, with a further 9% of Yemeni youth aged 25-29.²

Over three million people have been forced to flee from their homes, 2 million remain Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Yemen's public institutions are struggling with service delivery at even the most basic level, a situation that has been further exacerbated by the suspension, or only partial payment, of civil servant salaries in most of the country since 2016.³ Moreover, the economy has been devastated by the prolonged conflict, depriving millions of livelihoods and jobs and driving poverty levels to over 80%.⁴ Furthermore, inflation, fluctuating prices and the periodic blockade of food, fuel and basic commodities, has put families under severe pressure. According to research in 2017 by the Yemen Polling Center, 10% of Yemeni youth between the age of 15 and 25 generate an income to contribute to support their families: 2% are employed full-time and 8% are working as day laborers.⁵

Thousands of civilians, including young people, have been subjected to multiple acts of violence, physical and psychological pressure. In parallel with the worsening humanitarian situation has been the deteriorating security situation. The weak rule of law has left the door open to many acts of murder, violence, robberies, kidnappings, assassinations and forced disappearances.⁶ Many civilians, including young people, have experienced torture and other abuses, including arbitrary arrest and detention, and repression of freedoms of; expression, the press, assembly, and association. The security situation and the violations against human rights of expression and assembly in particular, have put many restrictions on youth activism and mobilization.

With the conflict there has been an increase in gender-based violence (GBV), including forced marriages,⁷ intimate-partner violence, harassment, and rape of boys. Female child marriage rates have also soared as a negative coping strategy for families in dire economic straits and a misplaced way to protect young girls in a conflict setting.⁸ Between 2017 and 2018, child marriage rates increased threefold for girls under 18.⁹ A recent assessment noted that particularly at-risk of GBV groups in Yemen are adolescent girls (especially those living in rural areas), marginalized women, and female-headed households.¹⁰ A December 2019

¹ Members of the Saudi-Led Coalition (SLC) include the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Qatar, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates.

² <https://www.Wworldometers.info/demographics/yemen-demographics/>.

³ OCHA. 2019 Yemen HNO. December 2018.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Transfeld, Mareika. "Coming of Age in a Fragmented State: Everyday Struggles of Yemeni Youth. Yemen Polling Center. December 2017. http://www.yemenpolling.org/advocacy/upfiles/YPCPublications_Coming-of-Age-in-a-Fragmented-State-Everyday-Struggles-and-Perspectives-of-Yemeni-Youth---December-2017.pdf

⁶ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2018 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices Report, U.S. Department of State, 2018.

⁷ There is antidotal evidence that forced marriage of widows of men killed while fighting is a serious issue and contributes to the increase in polygamy. On the increase in polygamous marriage see: Haneef, Christina. CARE Gender and Conflict Analysis Taiz and Aden Governorates. September 2019.

⁸ UNFPA (2016). "Families increasingly resort to child marriage as Yemen's conflict grinds on."

⁹ OCHA. 2019 Yemen HNO. December 2018.

¹⁰ Valette, D. Protection, Participation and Potential Women and Girls in Yemen's War. International Rescue Committee,

Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies study looking at the war's impact on women in the Hadramaut, Sana'a, Aden, and Taiz documented a number of trends, including the nearly universal increase in reports of early marriage, and in Aden there is a general feeling of insecurity, with reports of the rape of girls and boys, organ trafficking, and a new phenomenon of using school girls to sell drugs because it is said if they are caught nothing will happen to them.¹¹ In the Hadramaut, sexual violence was more-commonly reported against boys than women. In the 2019 HNO, there was a 70% increase in the use of services provided by humanitarian partners to GBV survivors compared with the previous year.¹² In 2018, services provided were for the following types of GBV: 46 percent were for incidents of physical assault; 22 percent addressed psychological abuse; 11 percent for child marriage; 3 percent for sexual abuse; and 1 percent for rape.¹³

The political situation in Yemen has dramatically deteriorated with the outbreak of conflict in September 2014. It has significantly affected Yemeni youth and their ability to participate in decision-making. The vicissitudes of this war have witnessed periods of intense fighting, on-going conflict, a deterioration of the economy and weak rule of law, with a massive diaspora of highly qualified Yemenis to other countries, and leaders of the Internationally Recognized Government (IRG) led by President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi governing in exile much of the last five year. Key informants to this research noted that the impact of the situation has deeply affected the functioning of the state services and structure, with political, civil and security institutions have collapsed and been replaced by extremist, religious and ethnic. War has left Yemen in a fragile state with a damaged social fabric, a crisis in national culture, and a generation that has nearly lost its civil culture of coexistence and peace.

UNFPA-Yemen strongly believes that in the Yemeni context, young people across the country are too often prevented from fulfilling their potential as agents of change. The context indicates that at all levels there is an urgent need to address exclusion against youth, meet their multi-sector needs, mainstream them in all aspects of development and the peace and transition process, and work with them as advocates and equal partners for positive change.

UNFPA-Yemen also understands that the inclusion of youth in decision making will require efforts to empower them with skills and expertise, as well as to develop youth-sensitive policies. The needs of young women, too, require special attention in the context of high levels of adolescent fertility, maternal mortality and prevalence of GBV. In addition, the youth-led political transition launched in January 2011 illustrates the frustrations of young people and their desperate cry for change. The proposed Youth Road Map on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) presents a golden opportunity to engage them in the peace-building and political transition process.

Therefore, UNFPA-Yemen has begun working to eliminate the exclusion of youth, empowering them and ensuring their political participation and engagement in peace-building processes. In July 2017, UNFPA convened a consultation meeting on YPS to roll out the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 in Yemen with over 50 participants including youth civil society leaders and organizations. Carrying out the recommendations put forward in the meeting, UNFPA is currently working to establish a YPS inter-agency working group to serve as a platform for knowledge exchange, joint programming, advocacy and coordination among local organizations, supported by international organizations, working in the area of youth and peace-building.

January 2019.

¹¹ Al-Ammar, Fawziah, Patchett, Hannah, and Shamsan, Shams. "A Gendered Crisis: Understanding the Experiences of Yemen's War." Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, December 2019.

¹² OCHA. 2019 Yemen HNO. December 2018.

¹³ Being a girl in Yemen: Jehan and Hamamah's story. May 2019, <https://www.unocha.org/story/being-girl-yemen-jehan-and-hamamah%E2%80%99s-story>

Within this context and with the support of the FCO, UNFPA implemented the project, *Localizing UNSCR 2250 in Yemen* from January to June 2018. The project sought to enhance young people's capacity to contribute to UNSCR 2250 and further its operationalization in the country. Towards this goal, a national electronic campaign in support of UNSCR 2250 was conducted, including training 40 youth activists in the development and implementation of a contextualized YPS policy. In addition, the project has accomplished the following objectives: i) Access to information about UNSCR 2250 was increased at the national level; ii) Guidelines/roadmap on UNSCR 2250 localization was developed; iii) Local YPS initiatives were supported; and iv) Existing issues expected to cause future conflicts within the local communities of the two target districts in Taizz were identified and addressed.

In Yemen Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and young activists have a relatively long and intensive experience in localizing UNSCR 2250. Many activities have been carried out, such as awareness sessions, community and public campaigns and advocacy efforts. Yet, meaningful impact has yet to be seen. Despite the fact that many Yemeni CSOs have the genuine commitment to implement UNSCR 2250, there is a need for YPS strategic expertise to leverage the desired impact of such efforts. For this reason, UNFPA-YPS seeks to create an effective instrument based on an innovative approach to offer young people, as well as national and international actors, contextualized guidelines that meet international standard to implement the YPS Framework based on UNSCR 2250 and other relevant resolutions.

At the request of UNFPA from April to June 2018, the YPS Yemen Roadmap was developed as a part of the Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO)-funded *Localizing UNSCR 2250 in Yemen* project activities through participatory qualitative research. The methodology included a literature review and consultations with young people were convened through ten Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with 91 youth (49% female) in Sana'a, Taizz, Aden, Dhamar and Hodeidah. In addition, eight Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducting with seven national actors and one international interviewee. Moreover, four in-depth interviews were conducted with young community leaders from different regions who had led successful initiatives on peace and security. Finally, the roadmap draft was presented to various stakeholders in two consultative meetings in Sana'a and Aden to validate the main findings.

This following Yemen Roadmap on YPS presents the main findings of the research. It also includes information and insights from success stories, consultative meetings, literature review and political, social and human rights analysis. It attempts to fill the information gap in the literature on the impact of war on the youth demographic, focusing on documenting increasing discrimination and its consequences in sections II, III and IV of the report. The report also recommends the implementation of a number of YPS measures and practices in Yemen to prevent youth exclusion from political, economic and social arenas (section V). Section VI presents the roadmap developed with broad input from various stakeholders, following the model of the Kosovo 2017 roadmap on YPS. Finally, in section VII, a two-year action plan is proposed, consisting of seven areas of interventions that aim to enhance the implementation of the roadmap which attempts to build a grassroots driven peace system. The emphasis has been on fostering the UN-Government-Youth partnership. Each area of intervention has an outcome, four outputs and a number of indicative activities.

II. Youth and Conflict Analysis

Young people today in Yemen are impacted by a range of forces, some which are driving conflict and violence and others which are mitigating factors contributing to cohesion, conflict management and mutual support. Within traditional Yemeni society women and young people are relegated to positions of significant disadvantage, contributing to inequalities and disempowerment and exacerbating conflict dynamics. Despite Yemen's youth bulge demographic, 30 percent between the ages of 15-29, and the inclusion of young people in the political transition starting in 2011 and the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) era, the needs and vision of young people in the country have remained largely invisible during the last five years of conflict. However, it must be noted that many factors impact both the role of young people and women in the family and community. This includes not only conflict dynamics, but also such factors as the attitudes of the male head of family, social class, economic status and the geographic area of Yemen where they are from. The following section looks at factors driving conflict and promoting peace and security at three layers of analysis – the enabling environment, the community, and the individual levels. An important caveat is that conflict dynamics vary significantly between different areas of the country and with the time frame, so when possible in the following sections specify geography and chronology are noted.

A. Enabling Environment Level¹⁴: Conflict Drivers

The current war escalated in March 2015 when the SLC intervened on behalf of the IRG against Ansar Allah (AA)¹⁵, who were at that point aligned with former President Ali Abdullah Saleh. However, the roots of this conflict pre-date the outbreak with salient events including: the 2001 border agreement between Yemen and Saudi Arabia; the series of six distinct rounds of conflict between AA and the Yemeni government between 2004-2009; events of the Arab Spring starting in February 2011 and the NDC era concluding in January 2014; and the September 2014 AA takeover of Sana'a. Regional dynamics have also contributed to the conflict, with tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran, GCC dynamic, and domestic power struggles within GCC countries playing out in Yemen. According to Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project (ACLED), the death toll from 2015 through October 2019 is over 100,000, including over 12,000 civilian fatalities killed in direct attack.¹⁶

The conflict has exacerbated existing poverty and development challenges and propelled a spiral of hunger and conflict, with civilians trapped in what the United Nations has labelled the world's worst humanitarian disaster (see introduction for further details). The humanitarian crisis is a key driver of the conflict on a number of levels including contributing to recruitment of men of all ages, with a particularly high number of young men, by various armed forces as a result of economic desperation as a way to earn income, rather than joining for ideological reasons. Young women have been forced to take on responsibilities in the home, particularly among internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host community families where an estimated 30 percent of displaced women are now heading their families, and among these nearly 21 percent are headed by females below the age of 18.¹⁷ Furthermore, the crisis in Yemen has complicated a range of governance challenges, which prior to 2015 were significant, by fracturing authority, weakening the rule

¹⁴ This level of analysis refers to factors in the national context which impact development, governance, private sector and state fragility.

¹⁵ Commonly referred to as the Houthis.

¹⁶ ACLED (2019). Press Release: Yemen War Death Toll Exceeds 90,000, According to New ACLED Data for 2015.

¹⁷ OCHA. Humanitarian Needs Overview for 2019. December 2018.

of law, proliferating citizen insecurity, decimating basic service delivery and contributing to state fragility. In 2019, unsurprisingly, Yemen was ranked by the Fragile State's Index as the most fragile state globally.¹⁸

“War has become intolerable for the hungry and the desperate members of the Yemeni community. Poverty has forced many young men and women into questionable

A further conflict factor at the national level is the presence of Islamists forces in the country including Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Islamic State (IS) in Yemen, with hot spots in Al-Bayda, Al-Dhale', Al-Jawf, Marib, Shebwa and Taizz.¹⁹ The presence of such actors in Yemen pre-dates the current phase of the conflict, with salient events on this timeline including, but not limited to: the May 2011 takeover and subsequent governance for more than a year by Ansar Allah Al-Sharia' (AAS), a local affiliate of AQAP of parts of Abyan Governorate in the South; the entrance of AQAP militants in Rada'a, Al-Baydha Governorate, the presence of Salafi militias whose long-term base at Dar Al-Hadith in Dammaj, in Sa'adah Governorate, which ended in the Houthi victory and expulsion in January 2014; the AQAP invasion and control of Mukulla, the coastal eastern capital of Hadramaut, for a year. While there are many factors which limit the impact of such extremist agendas in Yemen, including the lack of broad local support, their presence has clearly benefited by the civil conflict and chaos of the current context of conflict in Yemen. According to the International Crisis Group, “AQAP and, later and to a much lesser extent, a new outcrop of IS, emerged arguably as the biggest winners of the failed political transition and civil war that followed.”²⁰

A casualty of the current conflict is the near collapse of the economy,²¹ with the private sector devastated. This has had a direct impact on household incomes and been a key factor contributing to the humanitarian crisis. Since the onset of the conflict in 2015, three nationwide government systems providing regular income to families have been interrupted: the Social Welfare Fund's quarterly unconditional cash payments to 1.5 million Yemenis; 1.2 million public-sector employees who have received inconsistent, partial, or no wages since October 2016; and social-security payments to 123,000 pensioners.²² Those three sources alone account for more than 15.5 million Yemeni family members who have lost a key source of income and have contributed to the destruction of the middle class.²³ Many young men have been forced to seek to earn income in a disintegrated,²⁴ with one of the few options to earn money for men of all ages is taking up arms in the conflict. The crisis has also fuelled a war economy characterized by: relative ease of basic goods (including food and fuel) crossing internal borders; trading of arms and illicit goods widely with prices for guns and ammunition falling nationwide since the war began; and evidence that key political and

¹⁸ The index's ranks are based on twelve indicators of state vulnerability, grouped by the categories of cohesion, economic, political, social factors, based on quantitative data and qualitative review. <https://fundforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/9511904-fragilestatesindex.pdf>

¹⁹ For an in-depth analysis of the complex relationships between AQAP and Yemeni tribes see: Al-Dawsari, Nadwa. “Foe not Friend. Yemeni Tribes and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.” Project on Middle East Democracy, 2018.

²⁰ International Crisis Group. “Yemen's al-Qaeda: Expanding the Base.” **Report 174**, February 2017.

²¹ The 2019 Yemen Humanitarian Needs Overview states: “The Yemeni economy is on the verge of collapse. The economy has contracted by about 50 per cent since conflict escalated in March 2015. Employment and income opportunities have significantly diminished. Exchange rate volatility – including unprecedented depreciation of the Yemeni Rial (YER) between August and October 2018 – further undermined households' purchasing power.”

²² Al-Bashiri, Mohammed Ali. “Economic Confidence Building Measures – Civil Servant Salaries.” Rethinking Yemen's Economy. March 2019.

²³ $2,323,000 \times 6.7$ (average family size from the DHS from 2013) = 15,564,100.

²⁴ In 2018, an estimated 10 percent of the young Yemenis aged 15 and 25 generate an income in support of their families – 2 percent are employed full-time and 8 percent work as day laborers. Transfeld, Mareike. 2018. “Yemen's education system at a tipping point: Youth between their future and present survival.” Middle East Project for Political Science.

armed actors are benefiting from the war economy, thus entrenching economic interests in the continued conflict.²⁵

The absence of a functioning state has led to mounting social, political and economic injustices and an absence of mechanisms to address grievances. Human rights abuses by a wide range of armed actors contribute to instability, insecurity and an environment of impunity for criminal activities.²⁶ Such developments are a key factor contributing to youth radicalization globally. A study by Mercy Corps in 2015 found, “The drivers of political violence are rooted in the social fabric of weak states: routine injustice, corruption and normalized violence animate, for many youth, legitimate narratives of grievance. Armed groups preying on the youth, meanwhile, are able to capitalize on the failure of the state to offer alternative sources of meaning.”²⁷ As with all conflicts, this conflict has generated injustices and grievances which hold the potential to contribute to sectarianism, regionalism and the recruitment of young men and women to take up arms or join various armed actors.

“The number of people who have disappeared is on the rise. We are even afraid of our friends reporting about us to other parties, and, likewise our friends are afraid of us”

B. Community Level: Factors Driving Conflict

Youth in Yemen face a variety of factors contributing to conflict at the community level. Political, social and economic exclusion have traditionally and continue through the present to play a central role in the silencing of youth voice. Factors which systematically marginalize young men and women include:

- A key source of such exclusion for young men and women is the concept of *jahl*, which means ignorance, thus their ideas and opinions are not well reasoned nor listened to (evident in the word for child in Arabic, *jahil* singular and *juhal* plural), which conjugates into *Jahiliyya*, referring to pre-Islamic Arabia when there was "ignorance of divine guidance." The age when young men and women are seen as rational adults is 18 when Yemenis legally qualify for a national ID card.
- For young men, an additional source of exclusion is that until he contributes financially to the family and militarily as a tribesman, he is able to marry and begin his own family and his opinion and ideas are generally ignored. For young men and women, the principle that rights and privileges emanate from responsibilities, contributes to dynamics of inequality. Thus, as long as young people are unable to find work, which is increasingly the case due to the conflict, they are relegated to silence in decisions about their lives.
- For young women there are additional layers of discrimination as a result of gender inequalities and cultural concepts including the idea that they are *du'afa*, or weak, which means that in the public sphere where their opinions, ideas and voice do not carry the same weight men.²⁸ Gender dynamics lead to systemic,

“We have been unable to travel to work because they classify us as belonging to a certain group. I have lost two opportunities to travel out of country because of this.”

²⁵ Salisbury, Peter. “Yemen National Chaos, Local Order.” Chatham House. Middle East and North Africa Programme. December 2017.

²⁶ For details on human rights abuses see: various reports of the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen at Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (www.ohchr.org); Amnesty International (www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/yemen); and Human Rights Watch (www.hrw.org/middle-east/n-africa/yemen).

²⁷ Mercy Corps. Youth and Consequences: Unemployment, Injustice and Violence – Afghanistan, Colombia, Somalia. February 2015.

²⁸ In the tribal lexicon the term *du'afa* (the weak - singular *da'if*) has women, Jews and others under tribal protection due to their unarmed status.

structural and institutional discrimination against young women in Yemen, with young women from vulnerable groups such as IDPs, *muhamasheen*,²⁹ *muwaladeen*³⁰ and the disabled³¹ suffering from additional prejudices and racism.

- Yemen's social stratification and systemic discrimination against Yemenis with darker skin, such as *muhamasheen* and *muwaladeen* is a further aspect of exclusion for young men and women; racism rooted in the history of conflict, conquest, slavery, migration, and intermarriage with Africans. War often exacerbates inequalities, as space for inclusive consultative processes shrink, and cultures reel under the weight of violence and conflict. Fault lines become more apparent and drivers of exclusion increase.

While youth exclusion is a significant challenge in Yemen, it is also important to note that such a phenomenon varies widely across regions, with gender dimensions, with rural youth and women exhibiting the most severe signs of exclusion.

A serious challenge faced by young men in Yemen is recruitment by various armed actors in Yemen. The UN Office of the Special Representative to the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict verified between April 2013 and December 2018 the recruitment and use of 3,034 children (3,018 boys and 16 girls) by parties to the conflict in Yemen the vast majority (83 per cent) were boys between the ages of 15 and 17, although the UN has verified the recruitment and use of children as young as 10 by the Houthis and the popular committees.³²

However, it is clear that the numbers of young men recruited to fight is much higher than the figures documented.³³ As noted above, many young men join

"I am no longer able to travel to my village, which is under the control of the Houthis, because they have a list of wanted suspects and my name, as well as the names of my

armed forces to contribute to family income, as with the near collapse of the economy such opportunities remain one of the few options. It is noteworthy that compensation has varied between different parties and shifting over time, with the non-payment of promised wages a serious issue for many Yemenis struggling to survive.

Currently in Yemen, new armed actors have emerged and although indigenous conflict management practices continue, escalating violence and humanitarian needs are contributing to new manifestations of conflict. Yemenis have always been a heavily armed population, with the most accurate pre-conflict estimating between 6–9 million small arms in the country.³⁴ However, over the past decade there has been a spread of the availability of small arms and the spread of their use into less tribal areas where they were traditionally less accessible and where social norms controlling usage are weaker, such as Ibb, Taizz and Aden. Tensions over even a minor issue can spiral out of control with fatal consequences, as arms are readily available.

²⁹ Literally meaning "marginalized," a highly discriminated group who were traditional servants of African origin occupying the lowest rungs of the social stratification hierarchy in Yemen prior to the 1960s revolutions in North and South Yemen.

³⁰ A derogatory categorization of Yemenis of mixed ancestry, with African and Indian mixture most negatively viewed.

³¹ For details on the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in Yemen see: Amnesty International. "Excluded: Living with Disabilities in Yemen's Armed Conflict." December 2019.

³² Office of the Special Representative to the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict. "Children and armed conflict in Yemen: Report of the Secretary-General," June 2019.

³³ Associated Press, "Children as young as 10 fight, kill and die in Yemen's war." December 2018.

³⁴ Miller, Derek. "Demand, Stockpiles, and Social Controls: Small Arms in Yemen." Small Arms Survey, Occasional Paper No. 9. May 2003.

Historically Yemen has been known for its religious tolerance; as G. Wyman Bury wrote in the early 20th century “The Yemeni is not fanatical. He has his own religious views, but realizes, from the sects into which his own people are divided, that there are at least two sides to every religious question.”³⁵ However, the current conflict has fueled sectarian sentiments which also have a long tradition in Yemen. The parties to the ongoing war in Yemen have been involved, to varying degrees, in inciting violence and disseminating a culture of hatred within the context of sectarian and inter-communal conflict. This incitement is linked to the rise of sectarian groups and regional fanaticism, and fueled a binary public discourse about “us” versus “them,” with descriptive terms such as ‘northerner’ and ‘southerner,’ or Zaydi³⁶ and Shafa’i³⁷ being hurled accusingly, or the common pejorative ‘*dahbash*’³⁸ categorization of northerners by southerners. Sectarianism and fanaticism have, unprecedentedly, torn the social fabric apart leading to the fragmentation of community, the weakening of national identity. Within families and communities, where pre-conflict marriage between Zaydi and Shafa’i were not uncommon in many parts of the country, divisions have grown and sectarian language, behavior, and violence have proliferated. Furthermore, voices promoting neutrality and combating sectarianism have largely been silenced, and a long tradition of freedom of expression has been nearly lost in a few short years. This era in Yemeni history is changing traditions of tolerance fueled by increasing human-rights violations.³⁹

“We Yemenis have never been sectarian. We were a tolerant society before the current conflict. But now many actors want to create conflict between us based on sectarianism like

...”

In addition, the war engulfing Yemen has devastated the country’s already fragile education system. One factor that currently puts severe stress on the educational system is the lack of salaries for teachers.⁴⁰ The UN’s Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) 2019 estimated that 2,000 schools are unfit for use due to the conflict including: 256 that have been destroyed by air strikes or shelling; 1,520 that have been damaged; 167 that are sheltering IDPs; and 23 that are still occupied by armed groups. The shrinking of educational opportunities for young people has been compounded by the halting of the limited initiatives targeting youth, such as clubs and sports activities, reflected in research from 2017 which found that 26 percent of youth between 15-25 years old spend more time at home as a result of the war.⁴¹

Insecurity and community-level conflict and violence have increased as a result of the crisis, with battle lines sometimes rapidly shifting and fear and mistrust characterizing interactions. Recent research conducted by UNFPA found that the escalation of hostilities and the absence of a political settlement have made young women and men desperate for educational and economic opportunities, as many had their education interrupted or small business destroyed. Additionally, war has frozen democratic processes in the country, including political pluralism and freedom of expression. Prior to the conflict the government’s

³⁵ Wyman, Bury G. *Arabia Infelix: Or the Turks in Yamen*. Reading, Garnet Publishing, 1915/1998.

³⁶ A reference to the followers of the Zaydi sect (Zaydism) - a branch of Shi’ah Islam established in Yemen by Al-Hadi ila Al-Haqq Yahya ibn Husayn in 896 AD, who was invited to Yemen as an arbitrator by local tribes. Al-Hadi’s 14 years of leadership in Yemen inaugurated nearly 1,000 years of the Zaydi Imamate, which ruled various parts of Yemen until the 1962 Revolution. The Zaydi School of jurisprudence was established by Zayd ibn Ali, a grandson of Husayn, the fifth Imam.

³⁷ One of the four Sunni (Orthodox) schools of Islamic jurisprudence. It first appeared in the central highlands of Yemen in 912-13 AD, now dominant in the southern highlands, coastal areas and most of the former People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY).

³⁸ A term used to describe a stereotyped corrupt and coercive Northerners. The term emerged from the “Dahbash” Yemeni television series first aired in Ramadan 1990. Day, Stephen. *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen: A Troubled National Union*. Cambridge University Press. 2012.

³⁹ Sharif, N. “The War in Yemen has Destroyed Us.” D.W, August 2019.

⁴⁰ According to the HNO 2019, 51 percent of teachers have not received their salaries since October 2016.

⁴¹ Ibid

Yemen's National Youth Strategy 2006-2015 sought to address issues of the country's youth bulge, and the Ministry of Youth and Sports was responsible for youth affairs.⁴² The Yemeni Youth General Union, established in 2003 had approximately 500,000 members, and served as a nationwide platform implementing a range of activities including Radio Net Shabab. With the conflict opportunities such limited opportunities for young people evaporated and youth are left with few options for peer interactions other than afternoon qat sessions, if they can afford it.

Young men are vulnerable to extrajudicial killings, abductions, arbitrary detention and forced disappearances, torture and abuse, and young women face movement restrictions by their families and increased risk of GBV (including sexual exploitation). Youth are prevented from

attending or organizing open gatherings and activities and are unable to their opinions whether by word, rallies, demonstrations or other civic activities. At times even local youth initiatives and small projects are prevented. The context of conflict also means that there is no protection for youth who raise their voices to demand political freedom and their rights. This situation has contributed to youth alienation and sense of hopelessness out of fear of being arrested or unfairly detained for their opinions, as well contribute to a sense of injustice.

"I go out to work in the morning and I can't go back home because of the clashes."

- A young woman in Taizz

Many highly qualified Yemenis, including young men and women, for various reasons have been forced to relocate to other parts of the country, or to join the diaspora for higher education, to work, or simply to escape recruitment or seek protection. For some it is due to opportunities which arose, while for others it is a forced exodus from their homeland due to their political or social activism, family or tribal connections, or lifestyle choices, such as liberal young women who fear living under repressive authorities. This brain drain as a consequence of the conflict has some positive and negative impacts on communities and families, with remittance flows a key factor averting further economic challenges in households and maintaining foreign-currency supplies in the country,⁴³ as well as mitigating family dependencies on relief assistance, which is an increasing challenge in the country. A further dimension of this issue is the potential radicalization of youth in the diaspora. A 2019 study conducted by Norwegian Refugee Council in Jordan noted high numbers of young Yemeni men in the country are suffering from the lack of opportunities and who are not viewed as a priority by refugee-serving organizations, opening the door to radicalization.⁴⁴

C. Individual Level: Factors Driving Conflict

The final level of analysis is at the individual level, with a range of factor contributing to conflict in Yemen, depending on the location, circumstances and background of each individual. Some young people have more voice in their families, and have less, depending on numerous factors including their gender, their position vis-à-vis siblings (e.g., oldest or youngest), their family circumstances, and parental education levels and dynamics. Young people in some families have earned respect in the family and for others they are only able to indirectly influence decisions impacting their lives. Circumstances for youth can also shape

⁴² The Ministry operated youth hostels, youth centres, a youth employment project, youth welfare fund, Scouts and Girl Guides association and the Youth Advisory Committee. In 2008, the "Yemen Cross-Sectoral Youth Assessment: Final Report" was compiled. www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/yemen/.

⁴³ For further information on remittances see Al-Awlaqi, Wadhah, Al-Hada, Saleh, and Al-Shawthabi, Yousef (2019). The Essential Role of Remittances in Mitigating Economic Collapse. Rethinking Yemen's Economy.

⁴⁴ Johnston, Rochelle, Baslan, Dina, and Kvittingen, Anna (2019). Realizing the Rights of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Jordan from Countries Other Than Syria With a Focus on Yemenis and Sudanese. Norwegian Refugee Council.

their role in the conflict, as combatants, contributors to intolerance and division or as peacemakers in their home and community.

The lack of education and employment opportunities has a particularly devastating impact on young people, many of whom may have few outlets to socialize with their peers and who struggle to support their families and communities during the crisis. Young women and men face quite different challenges as a result of the conflict, with young women's mobility constrained and at vulnerability to early marriage and GBV particularly high. Young men are at risk of recruitment by armed groups, are pressured to contribute financially to their families and are also vulnerable to sexual violence. Protection issues in a context of insecurity, conflict, violence and crisis are complex, with many youth falling victim to the disastrous consequences of the war and the security situation.⁴⁵ Yemeni youth cannot go about their lives normally. They are fearful and anxious even in their own homes. Many homes have been subjected to raids and armed incursions, resulting in killings, looting and arrests. In active conflict zones and battlefronts, protection risks for young men and women have been magnified by the conflict – death, injury, displacement, human rights abuses – contributing to injustices and grievances which are a driving force for violence and radicalization of youth.

“There is no security; nor is there any inner peace, because of the many fears and pressures we experience”

“I always feel that death is closer to me”

- A young woman Taizz

The lack of household income has had predictable results, including increasing indebtedness, with an estimated 80 percent of Yemenis in debt and more than half of all households having had to buy food on credit.⁴⁶ This situation has had a direct impact on the lives of young women – increased risk of early marriage – and for young men has forced them to delay marriage for of *mahr*,⁴⁷ wedding costs, and money for household maintenance after marriage. Prior to the conflict the age of marriage for both young men and young women, in urban and rural settings had been rising, with urban males.⁴⁸ Currently, many young men have no hope to marry, and many young women are at risk of earlier and earlier marriage to much older men, or even as a second wife in a polygamous marriage. These dire prospects can contribute to depression, hopelessness and to radicalization.

“I could hardly say anything clever enough to convince my father to let me continue my education.”

- A young woman from Aden

Young Yemenis, men and women, struggle with mental-health issues related to stresses, shocks, and traumatic events including: the loss of parents, siblings, children, husbands/wives, and other family members to conflict or disease; financial pressures in the home; displacement due to fighting, shelling, or air strikes; experiences of multiple forms of GBV; heightened stress and worry over money; lack of services and safety; and loss of community due to displacement and increasing social divisions. Such experiences

⁴⁵ The circumstances in Yemen reaffirm the preamble to UN resolution 2250 that “young civilians constitute a large number of those adversely affected by armed conflict, including refugees and internally displaced persons.”

⁴⁶ OCHA. Yemen: Humanitarian Fund helps Displaced Families Survive the Harsh Winter, March 2018.

⁴⁷ Various translated as dowry, bridal payment or bride-wealth, is a payment from the groom to the bride at the time of the marriage contract.

⁴⁸ The average age of marriage for urban males born in 1960 was 22 years of age, rising 26 for cohorts born in 1977 and 1978. Ragui Assaad, Ghada Barsoum, Emily Cupito and Daniel Egel. “*Youth Exclusion in Yemen: Tackling the Twin Deficits of Human Development and Natural Resources.*” Wolfensohn Center for Development and Dubai School of Government. 2009.

impact youth feelings of hopelessness and depression, insomnia, increasing suicide rates, a concern commonly reiterated by Yemeni youth who participated in a recent study conducted by Saferworld who shared that they “were very worried about the increasing rates of trauma, anxiety, depression, self-harm and even suicide among youth, especially among youth activists involved in community and peace-oriented initiatives and Yemeni youth in exile or studying abroad.”⁴⁹

The conflict has impacted the mental-health of a broad sector of the population, with a particularly heavy impact on children, vulnerable women and youth. A recent study by Dr. Fawziah Al-Ammar, a Senior Research Fellow with the Sana’a Center for Strategic Studies, found that 79 percent of the 902 children surveyed reported experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms, with girls reporting them more frequently than boys.⁵⁰ Mental-health professionals in Yemen noted that the number of suicidal callers to the Family Counselling and Development Foundation’s (FCDF) mental health hotline had nearly doubled in 2019, with 92 percent of them female.⁵¹ Prior to the conflict the cadre of mental-health professionals in Yemen was limited with only 40 psychiatrists in the country and four specialized hospitals (in Aden, Sana’a, Al-Hodeidah, and Taizz). A December 2019 study by Saferworld on youth contributions to peacebuilding, included a key recommendation to support the mental health of youth and support organisations’ capacity to provide mental health support. One interviewee for the Saferworld study noted, “We did eight sessions of psycho-support for youth, and men were crying more than women. Men are under a lot of pressure to provide and the society doesn’t understand that they are also victims”⁵²

“The current situation has made me depressed for three months”

III. Youth Contributions to Peace

Youth are not just victims, but also architects of their own destinies and key actors in building a better future for Yemen. Over the past decade in Yemen violence during the political transition and the context of war are but one side of the narrative of the conflict, with other equally important, but often unrecognized, efforts of Yemenis including young men and women tirelessly working to support those who are suffering and bridge divisions. This section will highlight such efforts, traditions and achievements.

A. Enabling Environment Level: Contributors to Resilience and Social Cohesion

Yemeni history is rich in Islamic and tribal practices of mediation, negotiation, conflict management and resolution and peacebuilding including:

- The protection of non-combatants in the ‘sacred enclave,’ variously called *hijrah*, *haram* and *hawtah*, is a common tribal and Islamic practice found in urban areas throughout Yemen where various tribes and protected parties can safely interact. Many settlements in Yemen have *hijrah* status – Sana’a, Sa’adah, Amran, Khamir, Kawkaban and Manakha, as well as Shibam and Tarim in the Hadramaut. These cities and market towns functioned as neutral territory and home to many religious elites, scholars, judges and service providers.
- Tribal law has very clear principles to safeguard non-combatants or protected groups, such as those

⁴⁹ Nevens, Kate, Baabbad. Marwa and Padda, Jatinder (2019). “The situation needs us to be active” Youth contributions to peacebuilding in Yemen.”

⁵⁰ Al-Ammar, Fawziah (2018). Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Among Yemeni Children as a Consequence of the Ongoing War. Center for Applied Research in Partnership with the Orient.

⁵¹ Of the 780 suicidal callers to the FCDF hotline in 2019, 150 stated it was because of forced marriage and another 160 because of domestic violence. 100 had tried to kill themselves on more than three occasions. Interview with FCDF.

⁵² Kate Nevens, Marwa Baabbad and Jatinder Padda (2019). “The situation needs us to be active: Youth contributions to peacebuilding in Yemen.” Saferworld.

from higher social categories such as descendants of the Prophet Mohammed or judges⁵³ or those who are seen as *du'afa*, or weak. For tribesmen it is a great dishonor to harm the protected and amends for such an offence can be up to eleven times the normal *diya* (blood money).⁵⁴

- Such traditions have enabled a heavily-armed society such as tribal Yemen to function economically and provide clearly understood rules to minimize the impact of conflict. Tribe members are aware of how conflict can disrupt society and the cost of violence to the individual, their family and tribe. This is not to say that tribal conflicts are always peacefully resolved, but Yemeni tribal society has traditional mechanisms for containing and minimizing the impact of violence. When a conflict develops among members of a tribe, or between different tribes, over boundaries, land, inheritance or honor, there are carefully prescribed methods for its resolution.

The youth-led political transition process variously referred to as the Arab Spring, Yemeni Uprising, Yemeni Revolution of Dignity or Youth Revolution, was a watershed point for young people in Yemen. Youth played a leadership role, putting their lives on the line, with young people using a variety of non-violent tactics in their efforts to promote positive political change in their country. Taking inspiration from other areas in the Arab World, as well as indigenous creative expressions, below are a few examples of non-violent actions of Yemeni youth during this phase:

- 15,000 students and activists formed a human wall at Sana'a University, many wearing pink ties on their heads in solidarity with the Jasmine revolution and designed to demonstrate their commitment to non-violent peaceful change.
- The use of various artistic media in non-violent protest was expressed creatively and movingly through music, poetry, film, graffiti, photography and other visual arts. One such expression was on 1 April 2011 when tens of thousands of protesters converged on Change Square in Sana'a and hung up posters of young men recently killed in demonstrations.
- The use of human and material obstruction techniques were used extensively including: 19 February in southern Yemen dozens of men used their cars in the town of Karish to block the main road between Taiz and Aden; 6 April when in Khormaskar, Aden, hundreds of students set up road blocks demanding the release of people detained earlier in the day; 13 May thousands of protesters moved from the sit-in epicenter in Crater District to Sera in downtown putting heavy chains around government offices and replacing locks on the main gates.
- Peaceful sit-ins were common throughout 2011, often evolving into long-term presence in tent camps that were well organized with few reports of trouble or injuries. Such sit-ins regularly attracted non-violent solidarity from traditionally heavily-armed tribesmen. One salient example was on 20 February when armed tribesmen in Al-Bayda left their weapons behind to join pro-democracy protests. Ahmed Aramaan a lawyer and activist at the National Organization for Defending Rights and Freedom stated, "I saw tribesmen handing in their guns and Kalashnikovs to security committees around the square and entering the protests without weapons." According to Dr. Mohamed Al-Qadi, a political analyst, "This is a huge shift for a Yemeni tribesman to leave his arms and demands his rights peacefully, even if hurt."⁵⁵ Such behavior has been observed not only in Al-Bayda, but among many tribesman nationwide as well.
- The non-violent commitment of many young people, even in the face of violence, led to many instances of conversions of soldiers to the cause of political change such as on 8 March 2011 when army troops joined demonstrators on a day when one million people staged a protest in southern Yemen and across

⁵³ Descendants of the Prophet Mohammed are held in high regard due to their respected religious which has contributed to the legitimacy of many historic leaders including the Zaydi Imamate, as well as the founders and leader of Ansar Allah. This group of Yemenis and judges often serve as arbiters and mediators in tribal conflicts.

⁵⁴ *Diya* is indemnity money paid to the victim, or his family, by the party that caused the bodily injury, an Islamic legal practice observed in many countries as a form of social insurance. In Yemen the rate of *diya* is periodically adjusted for inflation and the amount paid depends on the circumstances surround the death or injury.

⁵⁵ Sismil, Nicholas (2011). "Yemen's Youth Revolution: A Hope for Nonviolence." Metta Center for Nonviolence. 21 July 2011.

other cities in Yemen. There were also many examples of tribesmen and the military feed and protecting young Yemenis waging a non-violent war against corruption, violence and injustice.

Youth played a leadership role played in ending the over 30 years of rule by Ali Abdullah Saleh during events of 2011-2012. Many youth activists in events of 2011 felt that the GCC Initiative's transfer of power amounted to a hijacking of the revolution.⁵⁶ The 10-month National Dialogue Conference (NDC) process ushered in by the GCC Initiative concluding in early 2014 was a watershed point for the political involvement of youth and women and many refer to this period with nostalgia as a golden era in Yemen history. Youth and women played a significant role in the NDC⁵⁷ and there were significant gains for both groups in the nearly 1,400 outcomes, ensuing events of 2014 and the eruption of the conflict in 2015, such gains were largely erased and the needs and voices of youth have remained largely invisible.

Since 2015 despite structural, social and political exclusion, economic challenges, and the destruction of the war, young people have sought and been able to contribute to peace in their communities during the current crisis. Through a wide range of approaches, from human rights monitoring, to mediation and conflict resolution initiatives, young Yemenis throughout the conflict have sought ways to positively shape their world. Local and international organizations operating in Yemen have supported local initiatives working to build social cohesion and promote peace activism. Such initiatives build on indigenous Islamic and tribal practices of mediation, negotiation, conflict management and resolution, egalitarian social norms, peacebuilding and a number of "capacities for peace" such as a culture of dialogue, willingness to engage in mediation and arbitration, an openness to acknowledge others' grievances, a culture of empathy and charitable support for the vulnerable and a recognition of common concerns and aspirations.⁵⁸

Within the current context of conflict and humanitarian crisis, there are geographic areas in the country where some degree of autonomy and stability have emerged. Currently, in Marib, Al-Jawf and the Hadramaut, there are opportunities for young people to play a role in civil society and in contributing to peace building. While such areas struggle with high numbers of IDPs, ongoing conflict and humanitarian needs, youth are playing a role in promoting social cohesion and peacebuilding.

B. Community Level: Contributors to Resilience and Social Cohesion

While there is no doubt that the current conflict has fanned the flames of sectarianism, regional fanaticism, hatred and violence, underlying traditions in tolerance and peaceful coexistence have also continued during this divisive era. While young people have been embroiled in the violence, efforts responding to the crisis have often been led by young people, who have played a key role in events of the Arab Spring and the political transition, as well as in local and international efforts to respond to humanitarian needs.

Yemen has a long history of civil society and community activism.⁵⁹ With the adoption of legislation

⁵⁶ Al-Wazir, Atiaf Zaid (2016). "Yemen's enduring resistance: youth between politics and informal mobilization." [Mediterranean Politics](#). Volume 21 - Issue 1: Dynamics of Transformation, Elite Change and New Social Mobilization in the Arab World.

⁵⁷ Of the 565 delegates 27 percent were female and nearly 27 percent youth – 105 for youth affiliated with political parties and 40 unaffiliated young people.

⁵⁸ UNICEF. 2014. "Situation Analysis of Children in Yemen 2014." Republic of Yemen, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation and UNICEF. Page 272.

⁵⁹ There have been three distinct periods in the last fifty years when opportunities for political participation provided a climate conducive to the growth of civil society. The first period was in Aden during the British era from 1950-1960. The second period was in the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) in the 1970-1980 when popularly-elected Local Development Associations (LDAs) flourished, affording considerable latitude for community improvement schemes to schools, water projects, health facilities and roads. In 1976 the state implemented 1,877 largely rural infrastructure projects and the LDAs built 6,366. The third period was during the years immediately following Unification until the 1994 Civil War. Primarily based on Carapico (1998).

governing the sector in 2001 the *Law No. 1 Associations and Foundations* greatly facilitated establishing NGOs, becoming one of the least restrictive laws in the region. Since 2015 the conflict has had a devastating impact not only on the Yemeni people, but also on civil society. Prior to the crisis, Yemeni civil society was undergoing a significant flourishing as activism and political engagement were seen to play a salient role in positive change. This was particularly true for youth-led CSOs who emerged and flourished as they viewed engagement in civil society as a channel for their ideas and aspirations, which were often ignored in the home and with few opportunities for expression in broader society. A study in 2013 by the Yemen Polling Center found “Post-Arab Spring Yemen has been a fertile ground for CSO activity. Our surveys have shown that the majority, 54 percent of CSOs have sprung up since the start of the Arab Spring. Furthermore, the majority of CSOs focus on youth development and human rights, at 25 percent and 23 percent, respectively.”⁶⁰ The study goes on to note that 33 percent of youth activists felt that CSOs are the best framework for activity for young people.

A further opportunity for youth activism in development is a program of the Social Fund for Development (SFD)⁶¹ in youth employment and training entitled Rural and Urban Advocates Working for Development (RUAWFD). Since its launch in 2004 nearly 7,500 young Yemenis have benefited, with 45 percent of participants having been female.⁶² This nationwide program engages youth from around the country, with a particular focus on rural and disadvantaged urban young people. A 2019 evaluation of the program’s impact on participants found that in addition to aiding youth individually, the initiative contributed to stronger social capital. The evaluation’s results suggest “that reinforcing social ties across regions in Yemen is an important benefit of the SFD’s role as a national development agency and an achievable objective to consider in planning development interventions to contribute to future post-conflict reconstruction.”⁶³

The current conflict and humanitarian needs have placed tremendous stress on social capital and damaged the fabric of society in some parts of the country. However, despite such challenges Yemenis continue to support one another and pool resources throughout the conflict, and stories of personal heroism, sacrifice and voluntarism are common. Accounts proliferate of Yemenis, particularly women and young people, putting themselves at risk to open humanitarian corridors for families, to bring water and food across battle lines, and to volunteer in hospitals and schools. Yemenis have opened their homes to strangers displaced by the conflict, reported on human-rights violations, and shared food with their neighbors. Every Yemeni with a job, inside and outside the country, is contributing to the survival of dozens of family members, friends, and even strangers.

Though impossible to quantify, such stories are an important component of the war narrative, demonstrating that without such safety nets, the crisis in Yemen could be much worse. In 2015, six months after the start of the conflict, a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Voices of Yemen consultation in six governorates found that with incapacitated local authorities, community-based social support within and outside of families was considered more important. Better off Yemenis were helping poor relatives while communities were resolving tensions over the influx of IDPs.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Al-Eryani, Ayman (2013).

⁶¹ SFD is one of a number of quasi-governmental entities established by the World Bank in the late 1990s as part of the social safety net accompanying structural adjustments. Eventually evolving into largely donor-funded entity specifically designed to employ the poor, assist poor communities and target categories of poor such as women, the disabled and marginalized groups.

⁶² Al-Jawf had the highest number of RUAWFD graduates with 826, and Al-Mahra had the highest percentage of female graduates with 56 percent, followed by 55 percent in Al-Hodeidah. Shebawah had the lowest number of female graduates with only 30 percent, with Sa’adah slightly greater at 31 percent.

⁶³ Bertelli, O., Kurdi, S., Mahmoud, M., Al-Maweri, M. and Al-Bass, T. Impacts on Trust and Social Capital of a Youth Employment Program in Yemen Evaluation of the Rural and Urban Advocates Working for Development intervention for the SFD. IFPRI, October 2019.

⁶⁴ This exercise collected data at the household level in Abyan, Aden, Hajjah, Sa’adah, Sana’a, and Taiz (Carter, Becky. K4D

Since the oil boom in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf in the 1970s, remittances have continued to have a substantial economic role in Yemen. Today, remittances and charity from the Yemeni diaspora remains a key support system for many families. Unofficial sources estimate that annual remittances to Yemen could total as much as \$10 billion.⁶⁵

Despite the conflict young people have found channels to address needs and contribute to mutual self-help. Additionally, they have found spaces to gather and support one another, in virtual spaces and through social media outlets, as well as informal settings including weddings and *qat* sessions and in mosques. While there are many negative impacts of *qat* in Yemeni society, the *qat maqyal* (conversational gathering) or *jalsa* (gathering) fosters egalitarian practices in Yemeni society, providing a venue for drivers and their employers, farmers and *mashayikh*, to sit together exchanging opinions and ideas. Historically the *qat* session is a forum to gather and openly discuss many topics of relevance to daily life including politics, culture, business and poetry. Despite the conflict, young men and women continue to gather in gender segregated *qat* sessions to socialize and support one another.

C. Individual Level: Contributors to Resilience and Social Cohesion

During the NDC era the skills and capacities of many young Yemenis were built, many of who are now in the forefront of positive change in their communities. Additionally, since the political transition process began in 2011 young people have transformed their traditional roles in a myriad of ways, with many becoming humanitarian actors responding to the current crisis in Yemen through international and local efforts and gaining skills through formal trainings, as well as on-the-job mentoring and learning. Skills building efforts with youth have happened in a myriad of opportunities as beneficiaries of programs, but also as volunteers, and as managers or staff.

Conflict has presented opportunities for changing social dynamics and gender roles. For example, with the increased number of female-headed households due to displacement and men being absent working or fighting, women have taken on new responsibilities and embraced changing decision-making roles. Such social evolution contributes to individual resilience and builds the confidence of young people.

Over the past decades the entrepreneurship space in Yemen has evolved. However with the escalation of the conflict in 2015 the number of active microfinance borrowers plummeted (120,000 in 2014) initially and then gradually increased to 85,900 in June 2018.⁶⁶ A study in 2018 found that for 48 percent of microfinance clients in Yemen, it was their main source of income.⁶⁷ Pre-conflict Yemen had an emerging entrepreneurship ecosystem, including a number of business-incubator initiatives, however, with the conflict, nearly all such initiatives halted or were downsized. However, despite the lack of support for entrepreneurship, with the crisis, many Yemeni youth on their own have started micro- and small-businesses in order to contribute to family incomes. This entrepreneurial spirit in Yemen is a key source of resilience and contributes to social cohesion by providing income and promoting stability.

Religious traditions and practices are also a source of resilience and contribute to social cohesion. The conflict has also contributed to positive religious expressions of healing, forgiveness and reconciliation,

Helpdesk Report: Social Capital in Yemen. K4D, Knowledge, Evidence, Learning for Development, June 2017.

⁶⁵ Al-Awlaqi, W., Al-Hada, S. and Al-Shawthabi, Y. The Essential Role of Remittances in Mitigating Economic Collapse. Rethinking Yemen's Economy. Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, DeepRoot Consulting and CARPO. Co-Funded by the EU and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, May 2019.

⁶⁶ Republic of Yemen. Ministry of Planning. Yemen Socio-Economic Update: Microfinance Industry in Yemen – Status, Risks, Priorities, August 2018.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

with many youth rejecting the radicalization of their faith. Efforts to promote religious tolerance have been supported by various international and local organizations, with positive results in communities in conflict mitigation and resolution. Such expressions are reflected through individuals and their understanding of the personal and social benefits of such religious expressions.

A youth, peace and security baseline survey⁶⁸ revealed a great focus of the locals' views of young people in six Yemeni governorates of (Sana'a, Aden, Taiz, al-Houdaidah, Dhamar, Marib and Hadramout) on peace definition which includes social cohesion, young people point of view on peace is negotiation for ceasefire or end violence (81%), protection human rights (68%) and raise awareness on anti-division and social cohesion (61%). In addition, young people expressed more emphasis in supporting communication activities on social cohesion as community raising awareness.

IV. Youth Peacebuilding Stories

Ahmed Al-Haimi: A Young Man Helps School Girls in Marib to Engage in Peace

Two months ago, a 27-year-old Yemeni young man from the center of the Marib Governorate (in the eastern part of Yemen) launched an initiative to raise awareness about the contents of resolution 2250 and its implications for youth.

In a social and tribal environment with constrained gender roles for women, Ahmed Mohammed Mohsen Al-Haimi launched his initiative at Al-Noor Girls Secondary School in Al-Juba District. Al-Noor is the first secondary school for girls in Marib Governorate and it is now ranked the top among Marib schools when it comes to spreading awareness of the aims of the United Nations in peace-building.

“When the initiative about the UN resolution was introduced, it was quite a surprise among community members and students themselves but everyone wanted to hear everything they could about this topic, which was unusual,” says Al-Haimi. “After hearing all the details of the resolution, they welcomed it and us warmly.”

Al-Haimi holds a bachelor degree in computer sciences. He is from the same region where he began his initiative of peace building and security. Al-Juba is currently the center of the well-known Murad tribe. One of the challenges for such initiatives is the fact that the tribal community in Marib has a long history of tribal conflicts and acts of revenge and more recently has had an ongoing conflict with the Houthis. “We in Marib look forward to enjoying peace and feeling secure,” says Al-Haimi.

For his first step Al-Haimi said, “We dedicated a full day of school for raising awareness on this resolution, where we reached 36 students out of a total number of 200 students.” This was carried out in lecture format by Al-Haimi and a female teacher. Assisted by friends, Al-Haimi published and distributed a handout containing the definition of 2250 Resolution and summarized its five sections (participation, protection, prevention, partnership, demobilization and reintegration). Recognizing the capacities, timing and place, in which this was awareness activity carried out, it was an encouraging start. “I do consider it 80 percent successful,” Al-Haimi says. “First, it is an unsupported activity; second, within our community in Marib, these are considered top sensitive issues (women related issues), however, the discussions with students show that our Marib girls have proved to have high awareness towards gender-sensitive issues. We should be proud of that and we look forward to a prosperous safe future.”

⁶⁸ UNFPA, Baseline Study, Furthering the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda in Yemen Project, May 2019.

Rana Mohammed: How did Rana and her friends defeat the phenomenon of carrying weapons in Aden?

Six months ago, a group of 30 young men and women in Aden city informally launched a voluntary youth initiative to decrease weapons in the city.

The initiative was named “Be Human.” The first activity of the initiative was an awareness raising program. This allowed their voice to be heard throughout the city through social media, traditional media and community engagement and awareness. They were working in a program of specific and clear objectives: to raise awareness against the harms of weapons.

Rana Mohammed Ali, a 27-year-old young woman from Al-Mua’alla in Aden, works proactively as a member of the initiative team. She and her family were victims of the violence that erupted in Aden in the past three years. Their large family home that housed eight households was completely destroyed by the fighting. Though they were at home, Rana, her mother and sister miraculously survived.

The rest of the initiative team shares the same pain as the war has affected everyone. Some of these young men and women have lost their homes, others have lost their relatives, friends, and jobs. They rushed to launch their initiative feeling there was no time to lose in getting weaponry off the streets.

The idea was widely accepted among the civilians and won tremendous support by most of the populations in Aden. This included the Aden official authorities for security affairs, the Director of Security, Shallal Ali Shaya’, and the Southern Transitional Council itself.

“The initiative was a very good idea. After a few days we were invited to a massive festival, attended by a remarkable presence. The festival aimed at enhancing positive behaviors and mobilizing the youth to spread encouragement for the prohibition of carrying weapons in the streets, neighborhoods and markets of Aden,” Rana said.

The “Be Human” festival included a meaningful play that caught the attention of the audience. It focused on the kinds of damage that can be caused by celebratory wedding gunfire.

When we reviewed the concepts at the beginning of the initiative and discussed them, the majority of the group felt that carrying weapons was one of the worst post-war phenomena in their city alongside celebratory gunfire and increased drug use.

These youth efforts were not in vain. Two weeks later, the authorities in Aden issued a binding order to prevent carrying weapons in the city.

“We believed that the implementation and success of this order was our responsibility, and we formed a communication group to mobilize that order among the communities in Aden and the youth in all neighborhoods and districts of the city. The response was positive. Therefore, the youth were mobilized to report to the security authorities anyone firing at weddings or at any other occasion”, Rana said.

Thus, Rana and her friends succeeded in their effort to increase safety in Aden city. Rana, who is a photographer and supporter of the UN resolution 2250 for the youth, has participated in several youth civil initiatives. She mobilized the youth for the campaign on social services. The campaign was launched in April 2018 in Al-Mansoura district in Aden in collaboration with the Cleaning Fund in the district. In the coming days Rana, together with a number of her friends, are planning to announce a festival that aims at supporting cancer children patients.

Rana takes part in these activities voluntarily. “I have purchased a camera, in order to participate in filming and documenting activities that promote security and civilized values and support peace for all,” she said.

She holds a bachelor degree in the English language from Aden University, but she is among the legions of unemployed youth. Her family faces hard living situation, especially after losing their home and being forced to moving to a rental house. Rana’s family members depend for their living on their deceased father’s pension, the well-known artist Abu Bakr Takarid, who passed away 10 years ago.

Shorouk Al-Zubairi: Founding a group of 95 young women who seek political participation

“My colleagues and I in the team are very satisfied having ambitiously carried out a humanitarian activity,” Shorouk Ahmed Aziz Al-Zubairi said in the “Peace Fingerprint” event, which was held for three days starting 13 March 2018. This event was organized in order to promote the awareness of 95 young men and women on the role of youth in peace building.

Shorouk, who heads the six-member “Peace Fingerprint” team, speaks from Sana’a about these activities proudly and says she is very optimistic, despite the violence that is spread throughout his country. This activity had a positive impact upon her as well. She explained how participants were enthusiastic about the idea, and how the workshops and the high-profile discussions revived hope among them.

Their creative ideas are in line with the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on youth. During three consecutive days (from 11 to 13 March 2018), the “Youth Fingerprint” team conducted awareness sessions with the following common objectives:

- To promote youth participation in ways that increase youth representation in decision-making processes at all levels to prevent the breakout of conflicts.
- To educate the youth about the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 and its five sections.
- To know the differences between diversity and disagreement.
- To promote the role of youth in building peace.

The initiative was made known to the public via social media platforms. A few days later, about 200 young men and women were registered, but Shorouk and her team developed a set of criteria for the selection of participants. The most important criteria were as follows:

- Participants should be active;
- Participants must not be a member of a certain political party; and
- Participants should be between 18 and 40 years old.

The number was reduced to 95 participants (males and females).

The participants were introduced to the abovementioned UNSCR 2250. They learned to exercise respect for each other’s personalities and cultures. Among the bigger challenges faced during the event were the discussions on religion and politics by participants but the panel was able to resolve these issues explaining succinctly in the UNSCR in an effective manner. Shorouk and her team are waiting for more training and support. She said that they would continue in this way with determination, “So that the Yemeni youth can achieve the goals of participating in building peace and security.”

Fadel Salah: Helped 1,000 people in Lahj to own land and work instead of going to the battlefield

Fadel Ahmed Salah leaves his school every 15 days to travel 150 kilometers for a noble goal: to bring hundreds of young people from the frontline of the war back to their schools.

There are no jobs for thousands of young people. It is only war that has attracted their interests in the last three years.

“Despite the very limited capacities, in just in a period of two months we have managed to convince many people to give up the idea of going to the battlefields,” said Fadel. He is a 40-year-old distinguished teacher and social reformer who has a good reputation all over Lahj Governorate. “Most of those who went to war are children, 14 to 16 years old.” he says.

Two and a half months ago, Fadel announced his initiative: Youth participation in peace and security. In a poor social and cultural environment in which there are many conflicts including acts of revenge, and supporters of disunity, this teacher began his mission supported by six friends. The idea was inspired by UNSCR 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security.

Ras Al-Aara and Mudaraba and Tur Al-Baha are ranked at the top in Yemen in terms of the number of youth involved in the ongoing civil war in the country. In this impoverished community (Sabiha tribes), farming is limited due to the fact that it rarely rains. The only option for youth is going to war. “They have sent a lot of troops to the fronts,” says Fadel. “But we were able to convince about 30 percent of them to return back to school.” He added that parents appreciated his efforts.

In the beginning, the initiative started from schools, when students began to raise banners during the school’s morning activity. These banners displayed phrases such as “No to violence,” “No to Racism,” and “No to Intolerance.” At the same time, the mosques played an effective role in the same course and repeated these messages.

This individual initiative has expanded to districts centers, markets, secondary schools and remote villages. Fadel lives with his family in Tuban, where he works. This enables him to go every two weeks to Mudaraba and Ras Al-Ara districts, where he was born, and the Tur Al-Baha, where large numbers of young fighters can be found.

The biggest challenge Fadel and his friends face is not negative response from the community but rather a lack of resources. “The biggest difficulty we face is transportation,” he said.

Knowing that the biggest motivation for youth to go to war is poverty, Fadel and the residents of the sub-districts (sought to acquire land). Once obtained, formed councils and consulted with engineers. And, “they divided the land into blocks and distributed the blocks to about 1,000 cases of poor young people who (had been encouraged to) returned from the fronts.” Fadel said that this project has been a huge success.

V. Approaches to YPS Roadmap

A. Inclusive and Systematic Participation

The conflict impact on youth in Yemen tries to spotlight the young women and men's experiences of extra discrimination thus extra exclusion as a form of structural and psychological violence that is indivisible from their chronic political, social, cultural and economic disempowerment. In this regard, FGDs, awareness sessions' outputs and consultative meetings whose consulted young people demanded meaningful inclusive political participation (i.e., in political parties, the government institutions, the local authorities, and peace processes' structures and programs).

The UNSG Progress Study Report (2018) recognizes that young people can play important adaptive roles in cases where political participation is often narrowed in the context of conflict. Yet, transformative political roles should also be supported, and demand should be raised for greater youth participation in policymaking and decision-making at the local and national governments. The youth should be encouraged to participate in the negotiation, transitional, and peacebuilding processes through youth platforms, councils, assemblies and decision-making forums at the local, national and international levels.

The Regional Strategic Framework on Youth, Peace and Security in The Arab States (2018-2021) stressed in its guiding principles the need to provide youth policies with effective and permanent mechanisms to ensure the quality and sustainability of youth participation, and that participation should be systematic and provide them with opportunities to develop their full skills and assets.”

In this regard, it is recommended that stakeholders focus on development and capacity building programs as the key to ensure the empowerment and participation of young people. These programs should support youth initiatives, entrepreneurship and equal opportunities as well as create appropriate and stimulating situations. They should invest in training and capacity building to strengthen youth knowledge, attitudes, skills and competencies in areas such as leadership, mediation, negotiation, conflict resolution and communication.

B. Transformative and Economic Development

The interviews with youth indicate a key reason for unemployment is discrimination. It has a causal relationship of horizontal inequality and identity-based factors. However, their proposed solutions focused on providing job opportunities, livelihoods, small projects, which means focusing on microeconomics.

This vision reflects the UNSG Progress Study Report (2018) that calls for countering the “violence of exclusion” by advocating a meaningful inclusion of young people in political and economic development as equals. The UNSG Study also denies the link between youth unemployment and violence, “Instead, research suggests that violent conflict is more likely explained by experiences of horizontal inequality and identity-based factors, including stunted economic and social mobility, political exclusion, disillusionment with corrupt institutions, rigid intergenerational social structures that contribute to discrimination against youth, perceptions of injustice...”⁶⁹ Moreover, the UNSG Study⁷⁰ invites planners to think of what it calls it “beyond jobs”, which means the interventions that aim at improving young people's economy must take a transformative approach that supports youth participation in the economic sector through participating in local and national development policy processes and the implementation and monitoring of its programs.

⁶⁹ UNSG *Progress Study on Youth and Peace and Security*, A/72/761, 2 Mar 2018, Available from <https://undocs.org/A/72/761-S/2018/86>

⁷⁰ In its final published form, *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security*, 2018 Available from <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/youth/youth-web-english.pdf>

In addition, Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁷¹ stresses that “At the level of global policy, finance and measurement are major issues that need to be addressed as part of worldwide youth development efforts. At the national level, policy and programmatic responses to the Sustainable Development Goals have been slow and should be accelerated”. In addition, “successful programs are those that address the individual and socioeconomic contexts in which young people actually live, rather than simply repeating the skills-for-employability rhetoric which supposes that there are formal sector jobs available if only young people were not so unprepared. Equally, such programs view entrepreneurship practically, as a part of livelihood strategy, rather than through an ideological lens”. It is believed that economic development plays an important role in preventing violence and discrimination against young people and provides them with crucial protection from engaging in violence. Economic development is also strongly connected with the prevention of (and protection against) violence among young people.

C. Protective and Enabling Environment

The young people who were interviewed declared that they were victims of armed violence committed by different warring parties, non-state armed groups, terrorist groups, gangs and organized gender-based violence and violence against young IDPs. Yemeni young people suffer from being denied freedom of expression, civil assembly and freedom of mobility. This denial of rights and freedoms is considered the main grievance Yemeni young people suffer from as it has a deep psychological effect leaving them feeling useless. The interviewees suggested that, rather than just being provided protection, they have an active role in the protection field (i.e., monitoring and documenting human rights violations, building protection networks, supporting those who have been violated, and advocating for recognition and protection of the youth’s civic, political and socioeconomic rights).

The UNSG Study emphasizes the importance of activating and supporting the role of young men and women in the protection programs stating, “ it is equally important to acknowledge that young men and women are themselves active and creative protagonists in human rights protection and realization, from monitoring and documenting violations of human rights and humanitarian law, to supporting the design and implementation of protection measures, building networks and support structures for victims, and working as human rights defenders – including fighting for recognition of their civil, political and socioeconomic rights.”⁷²

The freedom of opinion and expression plays a pivotal role in the development of the political and cultural capacities of young people. Such freedom creates an indispensable environment for ensuring the empowerment and participation of young people. In promoting a democratic and supportive environment for the youth, ensuring the freedom of the press and the media is essential for activating youth initiatives and pre-integration projects to promote a culture of peace, coexistence and dialogue.

D. Reformed and Holistic Education

The interviewees summarized the state of education by noting that the educational processes in Yemen have badly deteriorated as these institutions have been victims of militant operations. In addition, the suspended salaries of schoolteachers and university professors affect the quantity and quality of education. Moreover, present schools and universities curriculums either indirectly promote extremism or ignore the current market needs. They also suggested that the post-conflict phase should adopt a comprehensive program to reform the education system in Yemen.

⁷¹ *UN World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2018, Available from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2018/12/WorldYouthReport-2030Agenda.pdf>

⁷² *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security*, 2018. Available from <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/youth/youth-web-english.pdf>

The Regional YPS Strategy emphasizes the integration of curricula on peace, human rights, education for global citizenship, gender equality, reproductive health, sexuality education and HIV prevention. Both formal and non-formal education opportunities should be supported as well as an updated Life Skill and Citizenship Education (LSCE) model.

Education plays a valuable role in preventing violence against the youth, therefore, engaging young people in an education reform program (by considering their inspirations, ambitions, interests and views in reforming basic, secondary and university education) is a potentially transformative activity that promotes building peace and conflict prevention.

E. Genderized Disengagement and Reintegration

Interestingly, the FGD inputs showed a greater interest by young women than young men in building disengagement and reintegration programs based on social cohesion and socio-psychological approach alongside economical and educational interventions. They explained that young combatants need to rebuild trust with the communities who see the employment program as privileging young combatants. Remarkably, the young men in the FGDs admitted that young women were oppressed in the Yemeni society as well as in the family and the State. They also demanded greater efforts to be paid by the state, authorities and international community for young women participation in political peacebuilding and economic programs. Young women put the elimination of social inferiority of women and gender-based violence as a prerequisite to a meaningful female participation and empowerment. In other words, young women were aware of violence-provoking aspects of male culture embedded in the state and the society's attitudes, roles and practices and the women seek to eliminate these behaviors.

The UNGS Study discussed the view that employment and vocational training opportunities in disengagement and reintegration may help in the short-term but cannot substitute longer-term psychosocial and economic support. Thus, the UNSG Study recommended that investing in youth peacebuilding work should focus on promoting positive, gender-equality and non-violent male roles and identities is an essential step towards fostering peaceful and inclusive societies. This means, gender mainstream should meaningfully include all conflict and post-conflict interventions and programs to obtain transformative peace building processes and sustainable peace. The Regional YPS Strategy this objective of supporting young people to participate and lead conflict transformation processes and advocate for nonviolence and a culture of peace.

Yemeni cultural habits consider women's participation in conflict resolution, mediation and mitigation as a traditional role of women at the community level, therefore, young women should be the main target for participation in planning, implementation and monitoring the disengagement and reintegration program at national and local levels.

F. Committed and Connective Localization

Regardless of the conflict context, violence, hardships and the denial of civil and political freedoms, young women and men never stopped their initiatives in helping their peers, families and communities. Their initiatives were the main seeds for peace and security as they were expressed in humanitarian activities, conflict resolution and mediation, awareness, peace and political engagement. Though the interviewees believed that their contribution to humanitarian and peacebuilding provided a tangible assistance to people, they felt it was not enough. They are eager to create a systematic approach that profitably uses their energy and passion to provide sustainable support to a wider population.

The UNSG study believes that young people's work on peace and security is the "connecting tissue" that bridges the gaps in development, human rights, humanitarian affairs and peace and security, from the local to the global level. Therefore, the governmental multilateral organizations should be committed to

partnerships with youth civil society on peace and security. These partnerships will need to demonstrate commitment to ensure that youth initiatives, organizations and individuals can operate in an environment that values and respects them, and to provide the youth with technical, financial and logistical support.

The youth in Yemen make up the largest portion of the population. They come from diverse social backgrounds yet they are unified by the ambition to set a precise and timely agenda for the localization of UN Resolution 2250 in their country, so they can effectively and constructively participate in decision-making, conflict resolution and sustainable peacebuilding processes. Young people need international and national support but, as the Regional YPS Strategy states, they also need to have support in developing the access, skills and leadership required for effective partnership with key stakeholders across the many sectors of concern to them.

Yemen Roadmap on Youth, Peace and Security

Recognizing the Security Council's resolution on youth, peace and security and the effectiveness and feasibility of youth-led initiatives in long-term peace-building efforts, UNFPA calls on central and local governments and their institutions, political parties and powers, the United Nations, the supporting international organizations and civil society to adopt the following measures:

Participation

1. Provide financial support to ensure the empowerment and participation of youth, and the importance of the Yemeni authorities to support and ensure the participation of young people in a gender-balanced representation and the consolidation of youth efforts in Yemen as well as enrolling them in organized forums and community-based entities
2. Ensuring the setup of a sensitive budget for youth at all local and central levels and ensuring the actual and effective participation of young people in decision-making processes in all governmental bodies, institutions and mechanisms, in political parties and powers as well in Yemen.
3. Ensuring that the youth, especially young women, are; politically empowered within the political parties' institutions and act to create an enabling environment for them, supported by gender-sensitive policies and decisions, to enable young people to access decision-making centers, act and propose freely.
4. Integrating young people and representing them in appointments of all ministries and government institutions in Yemen in a balanced gender-sensitive approach.
5. Ensuring the serious and effective participation of the youth, in a gender-sensitive way, in conflict resolution efforts and the stages of sustainable peacebuilding and development.
6. Supporting the formation of local youth councils in an equal gender-sensitive approach in all constituencies throughout the governorates of the Republic of Yemen, and to provide a budget to ensure the completion of the structural, electoral and institutional setting up of these councils and linking them to central councils in each governorate within the organizational structure of these councils.
7. Building the capacities of young men and women alike to make them effective and influential community members in the political and community work, and supporting the implementation of specific programs to ensure their effective and intensive participation as candidates and voters in the forthcoming elections of local councils and the parliament.
8. Improving youth empowerment programs that are equally gender-balanced, which create enabling conditions for their participation in civil, economic and political life, with a strong focus on creating and promoting successful cooperation among young people in the governorates and various community configurations.

9. Supporting youth entrepreneurship and newly established youth companies for both females and males by providing them with financial, technical and logistical support or small loans with minimal profit and convenient repayment installments.
10. Ensuring that young men and women, especially those from rural areas, enjoy equal opportunities to participate in economic and social political processes.
11. In principle and at the time of conflict, supporting and protecting freedom of opinion and expression in Yemen through the establishment of United Nations platforms to ensure practicing this right safely, under the protection of the United Nations and the international community.
12. Financing the establishment of alternative youth media platforms to bridge the gap caused by the closure of independent Yemeni newspapers as a result of the war; financing the production of a common educational program for promoting peace, culture of dialogue and coexistence, renouncing violent extremism and combating terrorism (i.e., program on local public radio stations)
13. Supporting rehabilitation programs for the independent media affected by the war and lobbying on the conflict parties in Yemen to ensure freedom of opinion and expression for all.
14. Strengthening financial and institutional support for youth-led initiatives in Yemen, particularly those related to peacebuilding, which aim to promote the culture of peace and coexistence, renounce extremism and all forms of sedition to hatred and violent extremism that lead to terrorism.
15. Supporting programs aiming at educating young people in Yemen, building their own capacities, and financing projects to establish specialized vocational centers, cinemas, and institutes of music and arts, appropriate to the number of young people and the mapping of their existence.

Prevention

16. Integrating the youth in a balanced and gender-sensitive approach in local and central decision-making processes to improve policies of combating violence against the youth and gender-based violence.
17. Recognizing the work of informal youth groups in preventing violence against the youth, and supporting these initiatives by allocating certain spaces for their development in all districts and governorates.
18. Supporting the establishment of early warning systems to prevent extremism that leads to violence.
19. Supporting field education campaigns, sports and drama activities for the prevention of violence against the youth, and organizing field campaigns for the youth, including, but not limited to, informal school lectures, sports and cultural youth clubs, youth camping and exchange visits.
20. Conducting training courses on the prevention of extremism in partnership with experts, police officers, community leaders, gender experts and peace-building, creating community centers / friendly spaces, etc.
21. Reactivating the suspended sport and awareness activities, to activate the cultural movement in the country and support the formation of theater groups in a number of cities and urban areas in Yemen and to finance the “street theater” projects by selecting a distinct theater group and supporting it to perform plays in some areas.
22. Improving education by creating a mechanism to ensure the payment of salaries of education sector personnel and the capacities building of teachers and rehabilitation of educational institutions.
23. Updating curricula and incorporating materials that promote and enhance the values of patriotism, coexistence, peace and dialogue rather than extremism, sectarian and regional fanaticism, and the culture of hatred and incitement to violence.
24. Increasing the quality of education at all levels, including secondary and higher education, by investing in upgrading teaching methods and materials, and inviting international experts to teach specific subjects and improve assessment methods in schools in line with the best up-to-the-minute practices.

25. Enhancing the accountability of teachers by providing a system that allows students to evaluate the work and professionalism of teachers, and introducing a mechanism that can increase accountability and challenge corruption in higher education.
26. Ensuring that every educational institution in Yemen has a psychologist who is trained to provide appropriate consultation to cases of violence against / among young people.
27. Expanding national and international scholarships for outstanding students, and ending corruption in higher education.
28. Financing the establishment and processing of specialized research centers, and encouraging young people to carry out research in the fields of science and humanities.
29. Exerting more efforts to stop the war in Yemen and assist in rebuilding the country in a way to ensure the promotion of the principle of equal citizenship, rule of law and the activation of security and judicial institutions.
30. Ending the incitement to violence and hatred, and ceasing using young people and children as a fuel for war.
31. Exerting more pressure to combat terrorism in Yemen and to stop involving young men and women in it and to stop recruiting young people and children in armed groups outside the country.
32. Planning humanitarian and relief interventions for young people and engaging them in the planning, implementation and monitoring phases.
33. Developing an effective plan for the advancement of the economy and involving young people in the planning, implementation and monitoring stages.
34. Implementing economy development programs that support plans for improvement and early recovery; ensuring access to a modern and safe social environment, and identifying quantitative and qualitative indicators for empowering young men and women economically.
35. Developing a comprehensive environment for the youth to enhance their role in the reconstruction programs in Yemen, especially students of architecture, urban planning, public administration and informal sector workers.
36. Building a national strategy to address the problems of unemployment and poverty based on the concept of sensitivity to youth and gender to remove the political, social, cultural and gender inequalities in the plans of early recovery and sustainable development.
37. Creating economic, educational and vocational training opportunities for young people; keeping pace with the needs of the market and modern society; providing job opportunities for them; and encouraging investments and small enterprises.
38. Strengthening prevention mechanisms to reduce violence against young people; implementing programs that address the causes of gender inequality by empowering and educating young women and girls; and raising awareness of the rights of women and girls among wider populations throughout Yemen.

Protection

39. Ending all forms of sectarian, regional, sexual and other forms of discrimination; protecting the youth from all forms of violence and ensuring their access to social and security services and equal justice.
40. All parties involved in the conflict shall not target civilians and shall respect human rights for all individuals.
41. Stopping abuses of human rights and protecting the youth from all forms of violence, including gender-based violence.
42. Ensuring that young people and women are not subjected to further exploitation and gender-based violence.
43. Investigating crimes committed against young men and women and prosecuting those behind such attacks which may lead to an end to impunity if committed by people who think they are above the law.

44. Building government capacities to deal with acts of violence against young people, and activating the security and judicial institutions in order to control the security situation and prosecute the criminals.
45. Providing adequate and sustainable funding for programs or specialized units that monitor, document and report on a regular basis the violations against human rights, including acts of violence against young people.
46. Involving the youth in a gender-sensitive manner in formal and informal protection institutions and mechanisms, both central and local.
47. Involving civil society and local and central governments in efforts to prevent human rights violations and ensure justice, equity, and reparation for victims.
48. Involving the youth in a gender-sensitive approach in the work and programs of the Yemeni government and civil society organizations that aim at reform the security situation and mainstreaming gender and human rights programs.
49. Strengthening juvenile justice mechanisms in Yemen and providing appropriate training for police officers, prosecutors and social workers.
50. Recognizing “violence against the youth and children” as a punishable crime in Yemen, and taking effective measures to prevent violence at home as well as in educational institutions, the labor market, the whole society and the state.
51. Using innovative tools to raise awareness among young people on the risks, tools, methods and consequences of sexual exploitation of women, sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence.

Demobilization and reintegration

52. Including the marginalized youth and those involved in violence in economic, psychological, social and educational programs and skilled rehabilitation and integration into the labor market.
53. Developing incentive mechanisms and programs for economic recovery that lead to the creation of new and meaningful economic opportunities for young people, thereby discouraging the involvement of young people in acts of violence, terrorism, hatred, and all forms of discrimination, and preventing their access to illicit sources of income and joining extremist and terrorist groups.
54. Providing health, legal and shelter services, and psychosocial support for young people affected by war, leading to their psychological stability.
55. Adopting specific and effective measures to prevent child labor and developing programs that address school dropouts.

Partnership

56. Using new tools to study terrorism, its patterns, manifestations, spaces and the dynamics of its development and growth.
57. Setting up an effective and inclusive action plan in partnership with youth and civil society organizations to reduce the social, economic, political, cultural and religious forms of exclusion, intolerance and extremism that can lead to terrorism.
58. Supporting partnerships with youth on developing policies and programs that affect young people at all levels in Yemeni governmental institutions and international organizations, and recognizing them as effective stakeholders in the reintegration and stabilization processes.
59. Providing opportunities for paid internships in Yemeni institutions, media agencies and international organizations.
60. Supporting the establishment of local networks of youth, from diverse social backgrounds throughout Yemen, to proactively participate in the follow-up activities to the implementation of the Yemen Road Map and recommendations on youth, peace and security and to monitor progress

towards implementation of such recommendations, in cooperation with the United Nations, international organizations and governmental institutions in Yemen.

61. Including the recommendations of Yemen Road Map on Youth, Peace and Security in the implementation of the National Dialogue Outcomes, and developing a national law, strategy and action plan for the youth in Yemen.

Annex 1: Resources Consulted

Dr. Hamza al-Kamaly, Undersecretary, Ministry of Youth and Sports (IRG)

Mr. Suliman Oideen, Undersecretary, Ministry of Youth and Sports (AA)

Mr. Ahmed Saif, Head of Youth Sector, Islah Party

Mr. Salem al-Awlaqi, Head of Youth Sector, General Congress Party

Ms. Nour Sarbat, Head of Women and Youth Sector, Southern Peaceful Movement

Mr. Nizar Haythm, Head of Youth Sector, Southern Transitional Council

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