

# YPS Impact Assessment Report

## Furthering the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda in Yemen

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## Executive summary:

This report provides the findings of the impact assessment of the “Furthering the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda in Yemen” project. It is divided into four main sections. The first section is the introduction which provides background information and the project overview. The second section proceeds to explain the methodological design used in this assessment. The third section presents the assessment findings and discussions. The impact assessment centered around five main areas, viz. the opportunities which were created and/or fostered by the project, the peacebuilding initiatives which took place either as a direct result of the project or concurrently side by side to the project, the knowledge and awareness of the participants about the UNSCR 2250 as well as good governance and conflict resolution, the participation of youth and women and how the community leaders and community social organizations boosted such participation, and the partnership of women and youth with community leaders and international community.

The impact on equipping the participants with sufficient knowledge in conflict resolution seems to be less effective as the participants expressed that they needed more information in all the mechanisms of conflict resolution. The impact on the self-achieved skills in good governance is high, yet the impact on the participatory skills is less. The youth are seen more actively participating in the activities, though more frequently on a quarterly basis. Males had more positive attitudes towards women participation in peacebuilding and decision making than women. Younger age groups were noticed the highest in appreciating engaging women in the process. Community engagement and education is the most frequently used strategy by the community leaders in participating in the YPS agenda in Yemen. Roundtables, networks, and online dialogues are frequent.

the project and other existing initiatives have collectively contributed to creating more awareness on the importance of women and youth to participate in initiatives for the well-being of their communities (including peacebuilding and conflict transformation). Specifically, the project has been a build up to raising more awareness on key UN resolutions (UNSCR 2250, UNSCR 1325) that have been the basis for the YPS agenda in Yemen and have acted as a catalyst, at local level, to creating the necessary mind-shifts among key local stakeholders at centers of power on the importance of participatory and inclusive peacebuilding and reconciliation processes. However, the key consideration that needs more attention and focus is trying to integrate the positive aspects of existing tribal systems and structures (based on their social trust) and strengthening key government institutions (judiciary, local councils, and law enforcement) who have low visibility and social trust but very critical (alongside the department of social services) in creating an enabling environment and space for women and youth to meaningfully participate in local peace processes and inclusive governance.

## Introduction summary

### Background information

According to a report by OCHA, Yemen remains the world's largest humanitarian crisis and aid operation. The crisis is the result of a brutal armed conflict that escalated six years ago. It has killed and injured tens of thousands of civilians, causing immense suffering for the Yemeni people. In 2020, the conflict intensified, the number of frontlines increased from 33 to 49, and 172,000 people were displaced, bringing the number of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) to at least 4 million.<sup>1</sup> The UNICEF estimates that more than 24 million people – some 80 per cent of the population – in need of humanitarian assistance, including more than 12 million children.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the man-made disaster since 2015, Yemen was hit by several natural disasters in 2020 including locusts and floods as well as the COVID-19 pandemic. These added to the complications of the situation as millions of people experienced severe shortages in food, and the pockets of famines reemerged ground for the first time since 2018. In addition to the collapsing economy, the public health system has struggled to cope with outbreaks such as coronavirus and one of the worst cholera epidemics in recent history.<sup>3</sup> An estimated 83 per cent of the 3.6 million people displaced are women and children. UNFPA estimates around 20 per cent of these displaced are households headed by a woman.<sup>4</sup> A report by UNFPA enumerated the challenges facing Yemen as of December 2020 as follows:<sup>5</sup>

- A non-permissive operating environment with limited humanitarian access and shrinking humanitarian space.
- Limited funding available for the continued provision of humanitarian services up to the end of the year.
- Lack of national resources for the provision of basic social services.
- Lack of health workers in severely conflict-affected areas. Increasing restrictions imposed on implementing partners to undertake humanitarian operations in conflict-affected areas.

Yemen was already a protracted crisis characterized by widespread poverty, conflict, poor governance, and weak rule of law, including widely reported human rights violations. The people of Yemen have suffered long enough, and no humanitarian response can meet the increasing needs that the war is causing. Only peace can end the suffering. The time has come for the warring parties to place the very people they claim to be fighting for at the center of their concerns and end the fighting.<sup>6</sup>

The year of 2020 began on a promising note with two peace agreements, but the progress did not last. In October, the violence surged in Hodeida, Marib and Al-Jawf governorates.<sup>7</sup> By the end of 2020, there were calls for peace and stability by the international community. Several initiatives were

<sup>1</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-humanitarian-needs-overview-2021-february-2021>

<sup>2</sup> <https://uni.cf/3rcBDAu>

<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/middle-east/yemen\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/middle-east/yemen_en)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.unfpa.org/news/after-years-conflict-yemen-remains-worlds-worst-humanitarian-crisis-unfpa-2021>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/UNFPA\\_Yemen\\_-\\_Monthly\\_SitRep\\_12\\_December.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/UNFPA_Yemen_-_Monthly_SitRep_12_December.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.unocha.org/yemen/crisis-overview>

<sup>7</sup> <https://disasterphilanthropy.org/disaster/yemen-humanitarian-crisis/>

introduced, including prisoner exchange between the Internationally Recognized Government and the De facto authorities, on the one hand, and the Riyadh Agreement 2 as well as the formation of the Unity Government in the south, on the other. In the early January 2021, the ex-president of the United States of America approved a designation of Ansar Allah as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) – a designation which was met with negative repercussions and condemnations by the international community and the aid agencies operating in Yemen. On February 10, 2021, the new American administration revoked the USA designation of Ansar Allah as an FTO. The logical expectation was that peace and stability would prevail. However, the violence surged in Marib like never before and the battles have been taking place up to the moment.

It is worth noting that women and young people have been marginalized from the peace and governance process. While women and young people were the mostly affected groups by the war, they received the least attention by the conflict dividends as well as the international community. As such, the UNFPA took the initiative to include the Yemeni women and young people in the peace and security agenda in Yemen. The outcomes of the project is a shared understanding by the Yemeni people that peace should come from the inside, and that no one should be above and over the rule of law. To achieve peace and stability in Yemen, the government institutions, in either parts of the country, have to adopt a more inclusive policy for the women and young people in peace, governance and decision-making. Further, the law enforcement institutions should receive more capacity building vis-à-vis with increasing the awareness between Yemenis that for peace to prevail, the order of law must be upheld at high esteemed and implemented in daily life.

### The project:

*Furthering the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda in Yemen* is a project that is implemented by the Peace-Building Fund (PBF) project grant recipients comprised of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) in Yemen between January 2019 and December 2020.

The project sought to operationalize UNSCR 2250 in Yemen, through three levels of impact (individual, institutional and enabling environment), thus contributing to the overall objective of the project that, Young women and men are empowered to participate in and influence the peacebuilding process in Yemen and further the YPS (Youth Peace and Security) agenda and the overall outcome of the project at the enabling environment level. To contribute to the achievement for young women and men to participate actively and influence the peacebuilding process in Yemen, the project focused on four Outputs, for which specific activities were carried out during the inception or implementation phase have been identified. The project outputs mentioned below addressed the needs of individual young people, strengthen youth-led institutions and improve the strategic engagement of their efforts in peacebuilding. Individual level activities are focused on strengthening knowledge, skills and capacities of young men and women who are active in civil society. This level utilized TOT modality to cascade relevant skills to maximize impact and efficiently utilize funding.

### Specific objectives (outputs):

#### Output 1:

- Young men and women are equipped to engage and participate actively in Track II dialogues, including in online dialogues. Under this output, the project will: (1) Contextualize existing TOT gender-sensitivity, conflict-sensitivity, advocacy and communications, consensus building and facilitation training materials for the political engagement of Yemeni youth; (2) Conduct TOT on UNSCR 2250; (3) Conduct, through the trained trainers, training for young women and men on UNSCR 2250 building their relevant skills in advocacy and communications, consensus building and facilitation skills while applying conflict-sensitive and gender-sensitive approaches; (4) Conduct an online survey, and activate dialogue fora in existing internet cafes for female-only spaces in targeted governorates for a monthly moderated discussion on YPS issues.
- Institutional and community level outputs are designed to build on assets of Yemeni civil society as a critical mechanism to mobilize and communicate with broader Yemeni society. Yemen's long history of civil interactions and cooperative activity will be utilized to further the peacebuilding to ensure inclusion of citizen needs and contribute to the sustainability of the peace process. A key failure of the NDC was a lack of communicating elements of the outcomes to the broader Yemeni population. In the earlier phases of the peace process in Switzerland, and particularly Kuwait, such communications could have used Track II and III channels to put pressure on the parties to the conflict at the negotiating table, thus contributing to more positive peace outcomes.

#### Output 2:

- A national YPS dialogue structure including Government, UN and civil society is established with clear governance mechanisms and decision-making processes. This output creates a national YPS alliance and conducting a national dialogue and develop consultation paper results from the consultation meetings and data collected in the on-line survey.

#### Output 3:

- A collaboration between the national YPS dialogue process and youth-led CSOs is established to conduct joint advocacy and communications activities, engaging with additional Track II & III constituencies around inclusive peace. Under this output, the project will design advocacy and strategic communication messages and implement them while engaging with Track II & III constituencies around inclusive peace.
- Enabling environment level activities of the project seek to go beyond earlier peace efforts in Yemen by capitalizing on lessons learned and seeking clearer and more concerted joint action to push parties to the conflict beyond cease fire discussions into peace building, relief and recover.

#### Output 4:

- A strategic framework for UNSCR 2250 in Yemen is developed, reflecting the UNSCR 1325 model with the aim to foster political, programmatic, financial and technical support of YPS partners including government, UN agencies and Track I, II & III actors. Under this output, this project will; (1) Develop a YPS strategic framework; (2) Establish a Youth Human Rights Commission; (3) Contribute to the Secretary-General's Progress Study Advisory Board for YPS and global partners, and follow-up feedback; (4) Establish youth- and women-led joint monitoring mechanism for the implementation of the peace agreement.

**Project links to specific peacebuilding initiatives in Yemen:**

- The Yemeni Women’s Pact for Peace and Security (YWP) was launched in 2015 under UN Women and in cooperation with the OSESGY. This inclusive platform of nearly 60 women leaders represents different political parties and CSOs from inside and outside Yemen and includes many young women. YWP holds consultation meetings in Yemen and outside on issues related to the overall framework of the peace process aimed to promote women’s inclusion in all negotiations and associated committees. Lessons learned from the YWP project which have contribute to the design of this project include: the primary level of activity is with CSOs rather than individuals, thus strengthening the sector; clear and transparently communicated selection criteria for participation of individuals in activities and selection of organizations; and develop strong governance processes and systems to minimize conflict and maximize impact.
- YWP along with European Institute for Peace, International IDEA and the Berghoff Foundation have been running Track II activities around the Yemen process for the past few years. These meetings bring together representatives from different constituencies to allow for a constructive and open- minded discussion on the future of Yemen.
- With the support of the UK Foreign Commonwealth Office, UNFPA implemented a 6-month project to localize UNSCR 2250 that concluded in June 2018. The project sought to increase access to knowledge of young people about UNSCR 2250 and identify ways to contribute to peacebuilding. Awareness raising sessions reached over 1,000 youth in Sana’a City, Aden, Mareb, Hadramout (Mukalla and Seiyun), Ibb, Dhamar and Hodeidah ([www.2250yemen.com](http://www.2250yemen.com)).
- Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) is supporting a pilot project to address emergency conditions inside prisons and other places of detention, to improve the resilience of women and juvenile populations in these facilities with development support. Under this initiative UN Women is supporting women inmates, with the UNICEF is addressing the needs of juveniles and UNDP is improving the physical conditions in such facilities for all inmates, male and female.
- There are numerous projects and initiatives implemented by national actors including the Ministry of Youth and Sport in both the Internationally Recognized Government and Ansar Allah controlled areas, although both lack funding. Other political actors including the General People’s Congress, The Peaceful Southern Movement and The Southern Transitional Council are seeking to engage young people in their political agendas and campaigns.
- There are many initiatives led by young women and men activists at the local level on political participation, protection, prevention and reintegration. For example, in Sana'a one project, which aims at establishing a youth council for political participation. The initiative succeeded in gathering 95 young leaders after a long process of selection. It is worthy to mention that this initiative is led by a young women activist.

Objective	Indicators	Information to collect during evaluation
<b>Overall Objective:</b> Young women and men are empowered to participate in and influence the peace building process in Yemen and further the YPS agenda		

Objective	Indicators	Information to collect during evaluation
<b>General outcome:</b> The needs and priorities of young men and women and provisions for youth inclusion are articulated in the peace agreement and post-conflict stabilization, relief and recovery plans	Number of youth and gender related provisions in draft peace agreements/ceasefires, position papers presented by YPS alliance and minutes of meetings with decision makers in various parties and government	Evidence of integrating the 5 key pillars of the UNCSR 2250 (participation, protection, prevention, partnerships & disengagement, and reintegration) in both formal peace agreements (in Yemen and in the governorates) and as social contracts / informal agreements among communities with varying political allegiance in the governorates and the districts.
<b>Output 1:</b> Young men and women are equipped to engage and participate actively in Track II dialogues, including in online dialogues.	Number of young people with increased knowledge about the YPS agenda (disaggregated by age, sex and geography)	% young people (male & female youth) with knowledge of the 5 key pillars of the UNCSR 2250 resolutions contextualized for Yemen (and specifically Taiz and Sana'a).
	Number of young people participating in monthly on-line dialogues (disaggregated by age, sex and geography).	% young people (male & female youth) reporting active participation in monthly on-line peace and security dialogues.
<b>Output 2:</b> A national YPS dialogue structure including Government, UN and civil society is established with clear governance mechanisms and decision-making processes.	Existence of a functional YPS structure with clear governance mechanisms and decision-making processes.	A national level YPS with a clear hierarchy and decision-making structures that actively engages youth-led CSOs and gives them space to actively contribute to decision making process engagement and contribution to decision making is in place and functional
	Number of technical proposals and/or position papers developed informing the peace process	Local level consultation peace meetings held (where youth actively participated alongside key influential YPS committee members)
<b>Output 3:</b> A collaboration between the national YPS dialogue process and youth-led CSOs is established to conduct joint advocacy and communications activities, engaging with additional Track II & III constituencies around inclusive peace.	Existence of a functional advocacy committee comprised of national YPS dialogue process and youth-led CSOs.	YPS actively working with selected youth-led CSOs at local (Taiz & Sana'a) and national levels to promote youth participation in peace dialogues in Yemen and drive the YPS agenda (UNCSR 2250).
	Proportion of youth-led CSOs members with positive perception on levels in youth inclusion in the peace process.	% Youth-led organization members reporting being consulted, trained & built consensus on the YPS structure and modes of operation. The youth should also report influence in driving the YPS agenda in Yemen.
<b>Output 4:</b> A strategic framework for UNSCR 2250 in Yemen is developed, reflecting the UNSCR 1325 model with the aim to foster political, programmatic, financial and technical support of YPS partners including government, UN agencies and Track I, II & III actors.	Existence of a Strategic Framework for UNSCR 2250 and mechanism for its implementation in Yemen	A joint peace process framework established for Yemen with all reporting requirements, committees, protocols / SOPs, and resources in place and being implemented by all concerned parties taking into consideration the 5 key pillars of the UNSCR 2250 and 1325 models, contextualized for Yemen.





## Research objectives and methodology:

### Objectives of the Impact Assessment:

The impact assessment provides an opportunity to UNFPA and other stakeholders involved in the Yemeni peace processes identify the intended and intended changes that can be attributed to the YPS project and other similar projects in Yemen that have been coordinated with the YPS project to achieve peace outcomes in Yemen. Specifically, the impact assessment will look at the extent to which the project design, implementation approaches and its intended outcomes (youth participation in peace dialogues) have set the right trajectory for building local capacities for peace and how these capacities can feed into the bigger peace negotiations in Yemen. The impact assessment will thus seek to answer the following specific questions:

- How has the project (and other similar initiatives) contributed in terms of creating space for women and youth to participate in local peace dialogues in line with track II dialogues, UNSCR 1325 and UNSCR 2250?
- How has the project affected (positively or negatively) relationships among key stakeholders, especially at local level, given the localized complexities catalyzed by the prevailing conflict?
- Has the project (and other similar projects) impacted on traditionally existing mechanisms of local governance, conflict resolution and peace negotiations?
- How has the project contributed to the overall progress on track I peace dialogues in Yemen?

### Assessment methodology:

The research was designed with three main objectives: end-line survey, project evaluation; and impact assessment of the YPS project in Yemen. To broadly answer all the evaluation questions and fulfill the intended research objectives, the research was integrated to cover all the key aspects of the research and individual reports (end-line survey, project evaluation and impact assessment) separately. The study was mainly qualitative with quantitative collected from the same participants (non-probability sampling) who had a close interaction with the project (which did not directly work with a larger number of direct participants) and thus were in a better position to provide the right information required to answer the key research questions. However, mixed methodologies were used for triangulation purposes with the quantitative tool providing numerical scores based on the perception of the research participants. In particular, the following methods were utilized:

### Literature review:

In order to get a broad understanding of the context and seeking to establish a connection between the context and the project, the end-line survey included a detailed review of existing literature from media briefings and other research papers about the Yemeni social fabric and its overall impact on the conflict. In particular, the documents reviewed were categorized as below.

Documents	Critical information to be collected
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open-source data gathering including local media reports, relevant published research, and any other publications / briefs from other actors working on or doing research about the conflict in Yemen (such as UNFPA,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To get a top-level historical understanding of the conflict in Yemen and how it has affected the gender dynamics and points of influence.</li> </ul>

<p>UN Women, UNDP, Search for Common Grounds, Human Rights Watch, etc.).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project documents (proposal, progress reports, MEAL / review reports and any other project documents relevant to this study).</li> <li>• Any local and international agreements available to the team (through the web or given to us by the client).</li> <li>• Other relevant publications about the conflict in Yemen and its impact.</li> <li>• YPS and PBF frameworks for Yemen.</li> <li>• Meeting minutes for the YPS structure and action points taken.</li> <li>• Any documented local, national and regional peace agreements made.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program alignment with the local priorities for sustainable peacebuilding and conflict transformation at national, governorate, district and community levels.</li> <li>• To get a detailed overview of what the project put in place to promote the role of women and girls in peacebuilding and conflict transformation.</li> <li>• Consultation, coordination and Participation / engagement of other stakeholders during the different stages of the program.</li> <li>• Adapting to changing dynamics and Integration of lessons learnt from stakeholders' feedback and internationally developing events (in relation to the Yemen peace process).</li> </ul>
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### Key Informant Interviews (KII):

Key informants were selected based on their understanding and interaction with the project / program and their technical area of focus relevant to the Program. The final list of key informants was agreed in consultation with UNFPA, UN Women and implementing partners where the following (17, out of the initially planned 20) key informants were selected.

Key Informant	Category	Location / level
AWAM Foundation	Grant recipient	National, Sana'a
FAF	Grant recipient	National, Sana'a
UNFPA	Grant recipient	National, Sana'a
UN Women	Grant recipient	National, Sana'a
YLDF	Grant recipient	National, Sana'a
YWOB	Grant recipient	National, Sana'a
Community leaders (2 in Taiz & 2 in Aden).	Religious leaders	Community (Taiz & Aden).
Committee heads & elders (7 leaders in Taiz & Aden)	Community leaders	Community (Taiz & Aden).
<b>Total key informants</b>		<b>17</b>

### Focus group discussions:

The Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) will seek to get perceptions from members of grass-root CSOs (youth and women-led) that have been actively participating and interacting with project activities. In particular, the FGDs will seek to consolidate similar and divergent opinions from the different population segments that have interacted with the program and potential program participants in future. Given the cultural context where men dominate in discussions and decision making, male and female FGDs were held separately so as to give both groups an opportunity to freely express themselves during the discussions as well as for comparative purposes between male and female, unless the intended participants were actively engaged in women and youth empowerment initiatives. In total, the research employed 13 FGDs across the different villages with different participants.

FGD Participants	# of participants	District / Village covered.
Youth & Peace Alliance members	8 (3 females)	Sana'a, Taiz, Dhamar, Aden
Consultative meeting participants	7 (3 females)	Taiz
Consultative meeting participants	7 (3 females)	Marib (Medina, Jubah), Hadramout (Mukalla, Sayoun), Sana'a (Al Amanah)
Training of trainers	6 (2 females)	Taiz, Aden, Sana'a
Dual training	8 (3 females)	Taiz, Marib, Sana'a
Youth & Peace Alliance members	8 (4 females)	Aden, Hadramout, Sana'a, Dhamar
Consultative meetings	8 (6 females)	Sana'a, Hadramout, Aden,
Youth conference	8 ( 4 females)	Sana'a, Taiz, Aden
Consultative meetings	6 (1 female)	Marib, Hadramout, Sana'a
Training of Trainers	7 (3 females)	Taiz (Al Turbah), Aden, Hadramout
Training	8 (3 females)	Dhamar, Taiz
Cascade training	7 (2 females)	Taiz, Sana'a
FGD 13	6 (3 females)	Taiz
<b>Total Number of FGD participants</b>	<b>94</b>	

### Quantitative approach:

The individual survey was administered as part of the field research to all key informants (except for grant recipients) and FGD participants who were identified and interviewed during the research. In total, 87 (out of the planned 100) respondents were interviewed after their respective discussions. The quantitative approach did not use the conventional of randomly selecting respondents because of the nature of information being collected which focuses largely on knowledge and perceptions of individuals and institutions targeted by the project as direct participants or people of interest to the conflict and the outcome of the peacebuilding process. The distribution of the 100 respondents (according to sex and age category) is given in the table below.

Respondent's sex	15 – 18 years.	19 – 29 years.	30 – 34 years.	35 – 45 years.	Total
Female	0	26	7	4	37
Male	1	29	15	5	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>87</b>

### Research limitations

Based on our understanding of the context and the task at hand, ISC has identified the following risk factors / limitations and proposed recommendations for smooth execution of the process.

Risk factor	Mitigation
Accessibility constraints leading to not getting information from the ground	ISC has presence in all field locations and thus access to local stakeholders and at the community, district and governorate level.
Coordination and engagement with UNFPA, UN Women and other partners / stakeholders in Sanaá and Taiz.	ISC's lead consultant in Sanaá was in constant communication and interaction with UNFPA team and all the grant recipients to follow up on intended research participants and timely availing of project documents.

<p>Evaluation process is generally interactive, potentially aid the spread of COVID-19.</p>	<p>ISC has a database of research assistants in the field who have previously conducted evaluations in similar circumstances and will replicate the same during this evaluation. ISC will work with UNFPA to provide a framework that will consider WHO / health cluster recommendations in minimizing the spread of COVID – 19 and adjust the methodologies accordingly.</p>
<p>Non-cooperating research respondents, especially for KIIs in Aden.</p>	<p>This was particularly visible among key informants in Aden where the research team could not establish whether it was out of fear or just unwillingness to participate in the research. This challenge was addressed by targeting national level respondents (mainly grant recipients) and through online FGDs that were held with respondents from multiple locations.</p>

## Presentation and discussion of research findings:

### Political back ground, governance and the conflict.

The Yemeni conflict is perceived to be rooted around historic failures in political processes as a result of overlooking the traditionally known cultures and political systems which were focusing mainly on consultation and inclusion, popularly known as *Shura*. This was a main driver to exclusion and political dominance by a few individuals experienced over time which led to the national uprising witnessed in 2011 (which also happened in other countries within the MENA region, popularly known as the Arab spring).

After the Arab spring, the then state of affairs provided a fertile ground for vested interests locally, nationally and internationally (with visible interests from regional actors within the Middle East) who were using their different points & tools of influence to further their different interests and political agendas, which was locally seen as an exploitation to the people's ignorance or low level of awareness on the traditionally known systems of local governance (*Shura*). The power-sharing deal signed by Yemen's President Ali Abdullah Saleh in November 2011 provided a transitional government and pointed out to key governance reforms with elections expected to be held, a national unity government formed and reforming key government institutions aimed at improving justice, law enforcement and national defense systems. During this period, the Yemeni national government was already struggling to establish legitimacy, and limited capacity to address its pressing issues which caused a lot of uncertainties and affected the government's role in restoring stability. Yemenis had relied on indigenous tribal traditions to regulate conflict and establish justice for centuries, if not millennia. Tribal law had effectively handled conflicts between various tribes, between tribes and extractive companies, and between tribes and the government. It had successfully prevented and resolved conflicts over resources, development services, and land, and had sometimes managed to contain complex revenge-killing cases. Nationally, tribal mediators had played an important role in promoting political dialogue and building consensus among political groups. (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, published in April 2012<sup>8</sup>).

To further reinforce the linkage between politics, governance and conflict, a report published by UNDP in 2015 revealed that a major factor contributing to conflict and insecurity, in addition to increasing inequality, is the chronic governance challenges that hinder inclusive political participation, i.e., from electoral processes to participation in institutions such as parliament, to stronger engagement of public (particularly youth, and marginalized social and ethnic minorities). Exclusion and failure to promote integration can lead to social dislocation and unrest<sup>9</sup>. It is within this connotation that bring about the importance of incorporating and promoting inclusive governance in building sustainable peace.

An earlier quoted publication by Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, (published in April 2012) revealed that most Western observers and urban Yemenis believed then that tribes and the tribal system have been an impediment to state building and development in Yemen. And, indeed,

8 [https://carnegieendowment.org/files/yemen\\_tribal\\_governance.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/yemen_tribal_governance.pdf)

9 <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/RBAP-DG-2016-Governance-n-Peacebuilding-Annual-Report-2015.pdf>

there have been tribal leaders who traded the needs of their people for political influence and who were part of the corrupt patronage network that undermined the state. The locally experienced political tensions led to gradual and further escalation of the deteriorating situation into a full conflict in March 2015 after the legitimate and internationally recognized government headed by Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi was overthrown on January 22 of the same year, and this was followed by a military campaign from about 10 countries led by Saudi Arabia. The situation began to deteriorate gradually since the beginning of the conflict and the Saudi air force intervened to bomb the Houthi group, which overthrew the legitimate government.

The existing political tensions, diversity of opinions, deteriorating / collapsed economy and feelings of exclusion (especially among the youth and other socially excluded segments) have continued to provide a fertile ground for the conflict to escalate at the will of either party. The young and socially excluded groups are particularly vulnerable for recruitment in the ongoing armed conflict, given the different political factions that have arisen during the time of the conflict. *“Young people were forced to participate in the existing conflict with the aim of protecting or defending their region and Taizi youth are born on peace and their motto of construction and peace in resolving the conflict, each of them will return to their private or public work, leave arms, build peace and consolidate human values. therefore, we cannot influence them because they are obliged to protect the province, but we can influence them if the other party accepts the solution of the conflict, we will be the first to invite and persuade young people to build peace”*, community leader in Taiz.

As a result, there is a general feeling that these talks have not yet bore any fruits. According to another community leader in Taiz (Taiz- Traffic – Jawwal), there are many vested interests and roots (such as weapons, ignorance, racism, just to name a few) for the conflict in Yemen as reported by the direct quote *“I need a lot of time to talk about conflict in Yemen until now. It has a lot of reasons such as weapons, ignorance, racism and etc. what causes a war between the government and Al Huthi fighting group. This war has caused comprehensive destruction, poverty, murder, starvation and other consequences what led many Yemenis to enter the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia border in order to find money to live, but we didn't find security due to the consistent conflict between parties”*.

## Opportunities

The impact of the project on creating opportunities and shaping the messaging on peacebuilding for several stakeholders such as youth, community leaders, religious leaders and CSOs.

### Youth opportunities

Local influencers have acknowledged the available opportunities and importance of involving youth in different community initiatives, including peace building processes, due to their numerical strength and influence among their peers. Particularly, this was highlighted by an influencer in Taiz:



Opportunities for community-based peacebuilding and conflict resolution exist through community work and prepare the youth who play a vital role for positive change, construct towards peace, societal acceptance and debate towards achieving security, stability and reject violence and resolve all disagreements.

Influencer from Taiz

This brings out the appreciation and willingness of different stakeholders within the communities to implement UNSCR 2250. There is a general acknowledgment and appreciation of the critical role the UN (through its agencies) has played (by providing funding and other forms of support to local youth initiatives) in promoting youth visibility and role in peacebuilding. The UN's neutral position and interest to end the conflict is something that also came out strongly among the youth in Dhamar who said *"The organization coalition in building peace that was established in Taiz, youth peace coalition that was established by UNFPA and YWOB" and I believe that UNFPA, UNW and SFCG are interested in these fields"*. As a result, this has promoted their participation in local initiatives that seek to integrate youth in peace building and decision making as reported by one FGD participant in Dhamar district who said *"I participate in workshops about peace, I train in this field, participated in youth collation for peace that has been recently established. I participated in Musahamti Program for development organized by YRO, the program was about integrating youth in decision making at the level of districts"*.

### Community leaders' opportunities

Community leaders have been the centers of influence and in their own way, they have reported numerous opportunities available to them in promoting peace and reconciliation among their local and neighbouring communities. *"The opportunities before us are so many that come through awareness, counseling, guidance, and conflict resolution between people, as well as through meeting with young people in schools, forums, mosques, and centers for memorizing the Holy Qur'an, as well as what some institutions and bodies create today towards educating young people, exploiting their energies and moving them towards raising awareness of peace and create an environment that welcomes accept others"*, religious leader in Taiz.

Community leaders also acknowledge and recognize the existing peacebuilding and reconciliation opportunities at their localities by working hand in hand with other community members through different initiatives and forums as given was reported by an elder in Taiz.



There are great efforts to build peace and resolve conflicts in Taiz governorate that are being undertaken by young people in some foundations and initiatives such as the process of releasing prisoners by forming a relationship between the parties to the conflict.

An elder in Taiz

This has been driven by the necessity to urgently resolve the prevailing conflict which has had negative ramifications in all spheres of human development in Yemen and created one of the largest humanitarian crises globally.

### Religious leaders' opportunities

Within the local communities, different community leaders acknowledged their roles and influence as an opportunity to spread awareness and culture in the circles of society and push them towards peacebuilding and preserving the social fabric, social cohesion, and communicating with the private entities or bodies who have interests in the outcome of the conflict.





The opportunities before us are so many that come through awareness, counseling, guidance, and conflict resolution between people, as well as through meeting with young people in schools, forums, mosques, and centers for memorizing the Holy Qur'an, as well as what some institutions and bodies create today towards educating young people, exploiting their energies and moving them towards raising awareness of peace and create an environment that welcomes and accepts others.

A religious leader in Taiz

## CSOs opportunities

The participants acknowledged the numerous opportunities that came from contributions made by different organizations such as trainings and formation of local committees aimed at laying the right foundation for peace and re-conciliatory dialogues.

## Peacebuilding initiatives

Promoting government legitimacy and inclusive governance requires a great deal of local presence, awareness, trust and influence of key government structures such as the judicial systems, law enforcement, and provision of essential services. This is one of the missing pieces acknowledge by youth particularly youth & peace alliance members in Dhamar who said *“There are no formal structures at present. In the past, the General Secretariat worked for the outputs of the National Dialogue, and it was canceled. As long as there are no effective structures, then there are no influential individuals.”* The observed outcome of absent or invisible government institutions is that local peace dialogues and processes have largely been left out to informal operatives (such as local CSOs and traditional structures for inter-communal peace negotiations and peace dialogues.

## Government peacebuilding initiatives

It was also reported that state actors particularly in law enforcement, defense, legislation, judiciary and provision of essential social services have the primary responsibility of creating an environment for peaceful co-existence among community members, working closely with other non-state actors such as the local CSOs and traditionally and locally accessible actors such as the local administration, religious leaders and community laws as reported by one participant who benefited from a ToT training who said *“To add to what colleagues said, the local authorities in the districts, tribal norms, community laws, sheikhs and Aqal (neighborhood leader) have a role in enhancing security, as in some villages according to the customs and traditions of the region”.*

However, a critical player to play a leading role in this is the government and the situation in Yemen is such that different political factions / groups have control and influence in different geographical locations, even within the districts, and this puts the aspect of closely working with the government in a very precarious position. In addition to this challenge, there is a perception of systemic political dominance and exclusion of marginalized groups and some youth felt that they are not fully involved in local peace dialogues. *“We deliver a message about peace because currently the role of young people is marginalized. There is no entity that contains their ideas and supports the youth to pursue their goals”*, FGD with local initiatives & local activists in Taiz, Ma'rib and Sana'a. This further reiterates the earlier reported observation where most research participants rated their individual

understanding of the Peace Dialogue structures and their participation in local peace dialogues at about 60% (i.e. 3 out of 5).

## UN and international community peacebuilding initiatives

Reports from field key informants indicated that important dialogues and negotiations have taken place at national and international levels / platforms which included the international negotiations spearheaded by the UN envoy, Jamal bin Omar, who in his turn tried to reach a peaceful solution between the conflicting parties. However, the negotiations and dialogues have not yielded any meaningful fruits (as far as the locals are concerned) and this is largely blamed on the vested political interest of international and regional actors. However, it is to be acknowledged that there are different agreements reached (negotiated by the UN and international players within the Middle East region) but have not translated to lasting peace on the ground. It is also acknowledged locally that there are a lot of national and international negotiations with the Geneva talks in Kuwait where many countries were involved to find a resolution being used as an example.



The national dialogue supported by the Gulf is considered one of the most beautiful discussions because it blamed all groups and segments of society, and people came out with agreed and unanimous decisions, and it is a precedent that did not happen in the modern history of Yemen for people to unite the system and form of the state. To succeed, the prominent role of youth was because they are leaders of change and they are the pillars of the homelands.

A religious leader in Taiz

## Religious leaders' peacebuilding initiatives

Cutting across the different stakeholders at local level, there is a general and unified view that peaceful coexistence among individuals within the communities and with neighboring communities is paramount. There are different local initiatives that seek to build lasting peace and security, especially in Taiz governorate. This was particularly articulated by a religious leader in Taiz governorate who said *"Crying over the ruins does not work. Rather, we must look for solutions. Today there are forums to form a public opinion. We, as preachers, have meetings that unite us to form a public opinion about peace. I think our first step today is to eliminate hatred from people, from a legal standpoint that we look at people regardless of color, sect, tribe, and protrusions that began to appear from here There, we want to embody a unified people, so we work with it and sometimes we form public opinion through unified speeches"*.

## Community buy-in

Notable to the distraction of war is the visible abuse of human rights by both warring parties, massive displacements, weak systems of governance, and a protracted humanitarian crisis resulting to lack of basic services. *"The war led to the destruction of infrastructure, the killing of children and women, the displacement of citizens, the campaign of arrests, the increasing of prices, the lack of food status, an acute shortage of medicines and medical supplies, and damage medical facilities"*, religious leader in Taiz. Within this understanding, the general feeling in the communities is that the conflict has caused a rupture in the social fabric and there is a general appreciation of the on-going peacebuilding efforts, dialogues and initiatives with one of them being the intentional involvement of the youth in line with

UNSCR 2250. Both the young and the old, irrespective of their gender are united by a common vision for a peaceful Yemen.

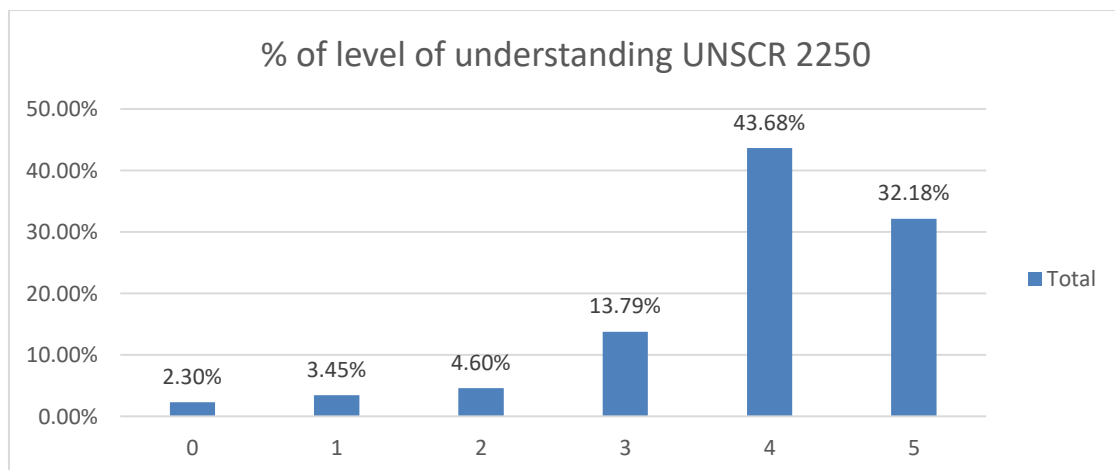
## Knowledge and understanding impact

### Knowledge of UNSCR 2250

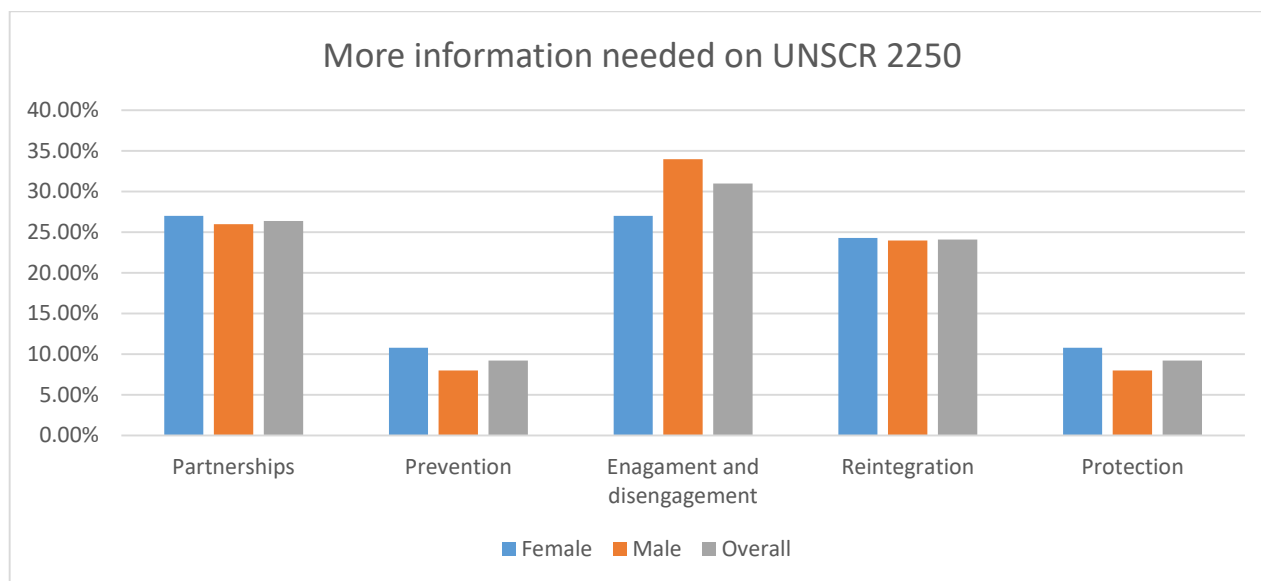
UNSCR2250 self-assessment of among the individual research participants indicated high level of awareness across board with minor variations as observed by the descriptive statistics summarized in the table below. The UNSCR 2250 is summarized into 5 key pillars looking at:

- 1 **Participation:** It calls on Member States to involve young people in conflict prevention and resolution, in violence prevention and in the promotion of social cohesion. Member States are urged to consider ways to increase representation of youth in decision-making at all levels.
- 2 **Protection:** Recalls the obligations to protect civilians, including young people, during armed conflict and in post-conflict times, and in particular protect young women and young men from all forms of sexual and gender-based violence.
- 3 **Prevention:** Urges Member States and key Stakeholders to facilitate an enabling environment and improve investments in socioeconomic development and quality education for young women and young men, and create mechanisms to promote a culture of peace, tolerance, intercultural and inter-religious dialogue that involve youth.
- 4 **Partnership:** Urges UN entities, international organizations and civil society to actively increase political, financial, technical and logistical support for young people’s participation in peacebuilding. It also highlights the importance of partnering with youth, local communities and non-governmental actors in countering violence extremism.
- 5 **Disengagement:** Support the meaningful reintegration of young women and men directly involved in armed conflict.

The statistical analysis revealed that the participants showed a high level of understanding of the UNSCR 2250. Almost one third of the participants showed very strong understanding, while more than two fifths of the participants showed very good understanding. Comparing these values to the baseline scores, where only one sixth of the respondents knew about the UNSCR 2250, it is evident that the project had a very positive impact on equipping the participants with knowledge about the UNSCR 2250.



Project activities aimed at creating local awareness on UNSCR 2250 have generally boosted local awareness on local peacebuilding processes but that just ends at that **“AWARENESS”** with some of them reporting *“Actual practice in the right to participation in peace and security, many organizations have worked to raise awareness for young people in Resolution 2250 and Resolution 1326 in the field of training and qualification, but all as media only, and there is no real participation and just rehabilitation and training. There is no real decision-making and real participation of youth or women in peacebuilding.”* which is an acknowledgment and appreciation of the knowledge and information received but the space or forums to promote their participation is either not visible or simply does not exist.



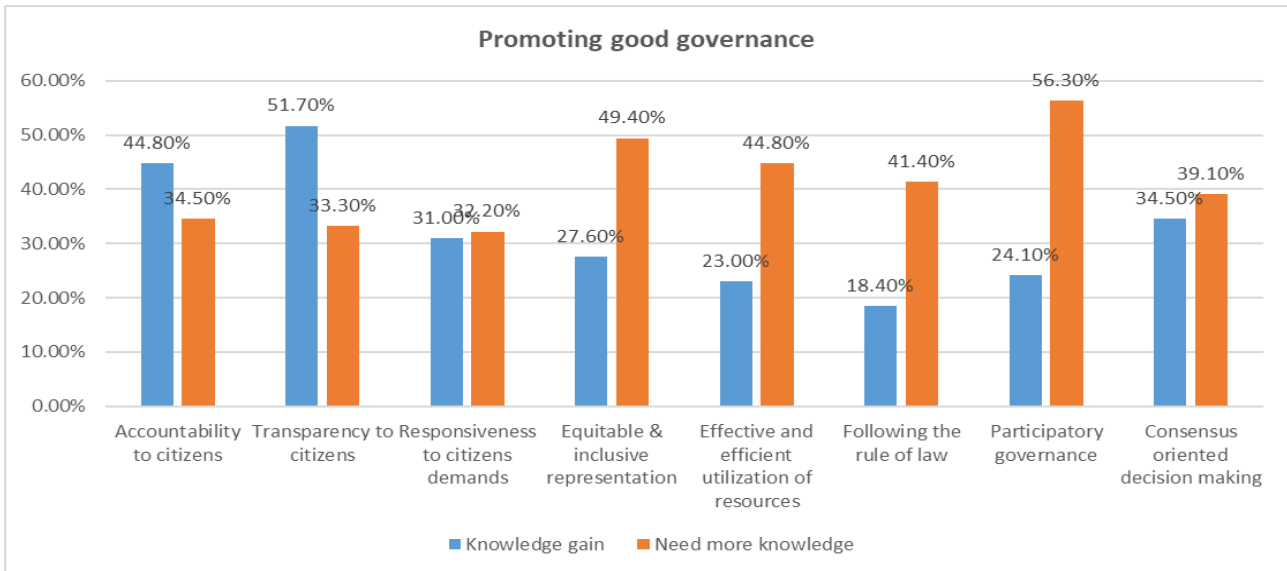
However, the participants expressed that they needed more knowledge in the 5 pillars of the UNSCR 2250. For example, quarter of the respondents needed more information in building partnerships for technical & financial support and joint lobbying. More than one third of the participants needed information in engagement/disengagement and the role of government & other players in the conflict to protect civilians. Almost one quarter of the participants needed information in reintegration of young men & women directly engaged in the conflict. The information in Conflict prevention through socioeconomic development and protection were less requested.

### Knowledge of good governance

Another area of impact attested by the project is equipping the participants with knowledge about good governance, decision-making and peacebuilding. Most participants rated themselves slightly above average (3 out of a possible maximum of 5) as given in the summarized scores in the table below.

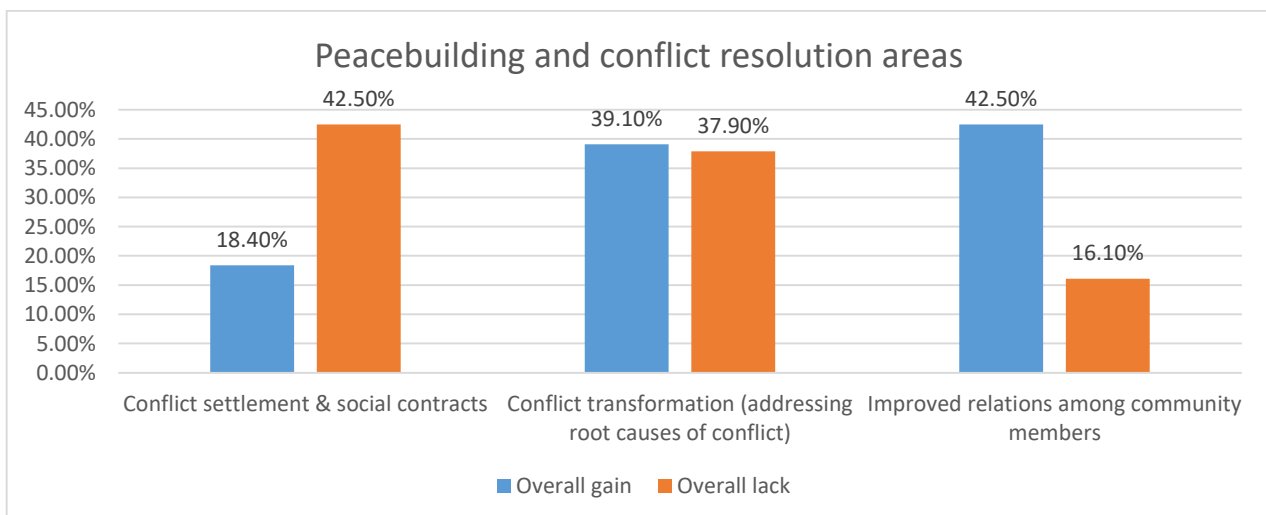
Individual knowledge on good governance, decision making and peace building	Mean	Minimum	Median	Maximum	Mode
Overall	3.0575	0.0000	3.0000	5.0000	3.0000
15 – 18 years	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
19 – 29 years	3.1818	0.0000	3.0000	5.0000	3.0000
30- 34 years	2.7727	0.0000	3.0000	4.0000	3.0000
35 – 45 years	3.3333	2.0000	3.0000	3.0000	5.0000
Female	3.0811	0.0000	3.0000	5.0000	3.0000
Male	3.0400	0.0000	3.0000	5.0000	3.0000

With respects to the areas of good governance, the following chart showed that the participants showed high knowledge on the skills and areas which are self-achieved such as accountability to citizens, transparency to citizens. However, as the continuum moves ahead toward participatory and collective areas, the rate of knowledge gain decreases. For example, more than half of the participants expressed they needed more information and training on participatory governance, almost half of them needed more information on equitable and inclusive representation, more than two fifths of them needed more knowledge in effective utilization of the resources and in following the rule of law.



## Knowledge of conflict resolution

For the conflict resolution, the project made positive impact on that the participants gained varied levels of knowledge about the mechanisms by which to resolve conflicts. For example, more than two fifths of the participants reported improving relations among the community members is the area which they received more knowledge in. In a similar fashion, almost two fifths of the respondents reported that their most understood area is the conflict transformation and addressing the root causes of the conflict. Conflict settlement and social contract is the least gained mechanism.



On the other hand, more than two fifths of the participants expressed that they needed more information on conflict settlement and social contracts. While the amount of knowledge gained in the conflict transformation is high, the amount of extra needed information in the same mechanism is also equal to that of gain. Still one sixth of the participants expressed their need for more information in improving relations among community members.

### Knowledge production

The project had a positive impact on knowledge production of consultative papers which informed the wider community about the priorities of the youth in Yemen.



“...consultative meetings that contributed to the drafting of consultative papers that will benefit stakeholders interested in the Resolution and Yemen as a whole, so that they have knowledge about youth priorities and the stage in Yemen.”

A UNFPA representative

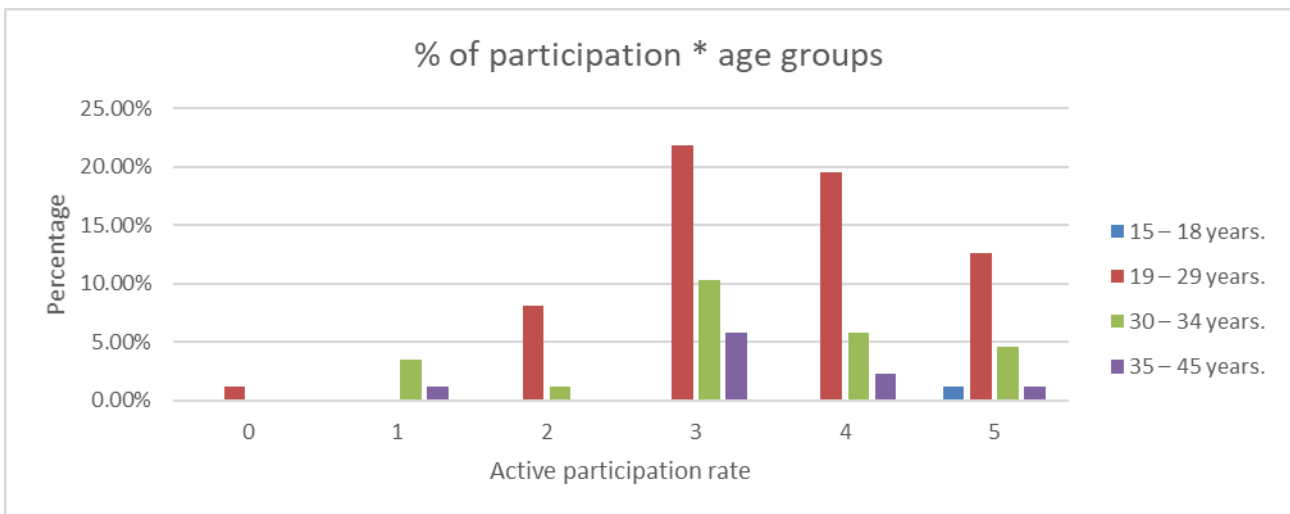
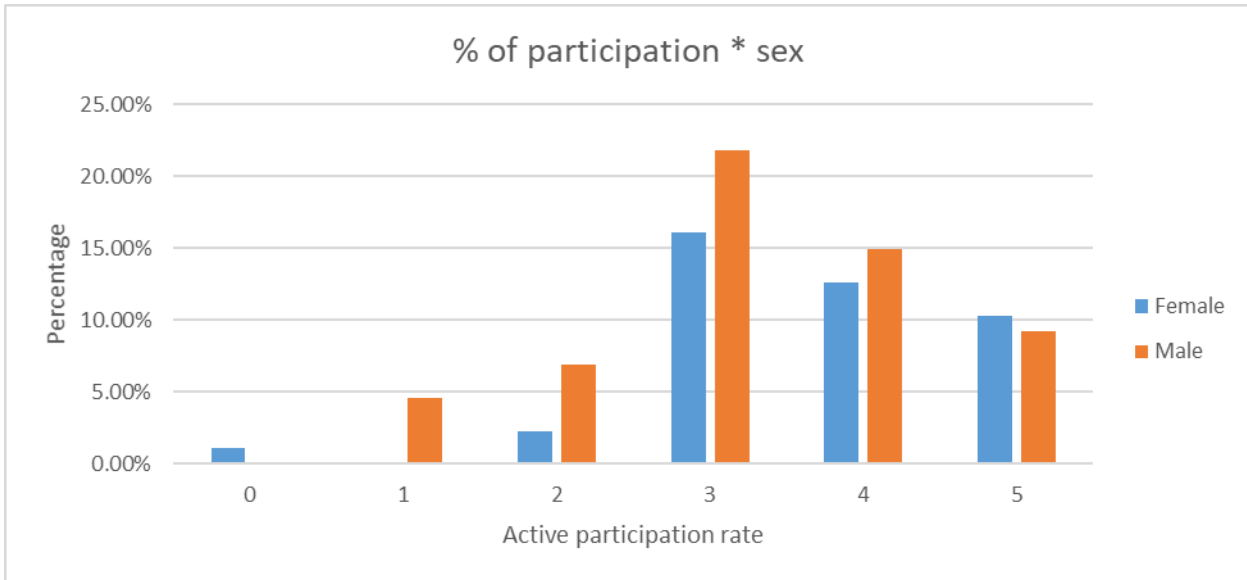
### Participation

Through the YPS structure, the project has created a platform for youth from all corners of Yemen to participate in the on-going peace dialogues alongside key players who are in positions of influence within the society. The impact assessment ascertained the existence and accessibility of this structure. However, a key observation was that despite a big proportion of youth reported participation in these dialogues (over 90%), only 26.4% reported participation in these processes on a monthly basis with 35.6% of them reporting their participation on a quarterly basis. Despite this milestone, the youth still feel that their level of influence in these processes is not at their level of expectation as they are still facing several social barriers that hinder their full participation. The youths’ role has thus been limited to awareness campaigns (which is very important) despite everyone acknowledging the importance of including youth and women in peacebuilding processes and decision making (UNSCR 2250 and UNSCR 1325).

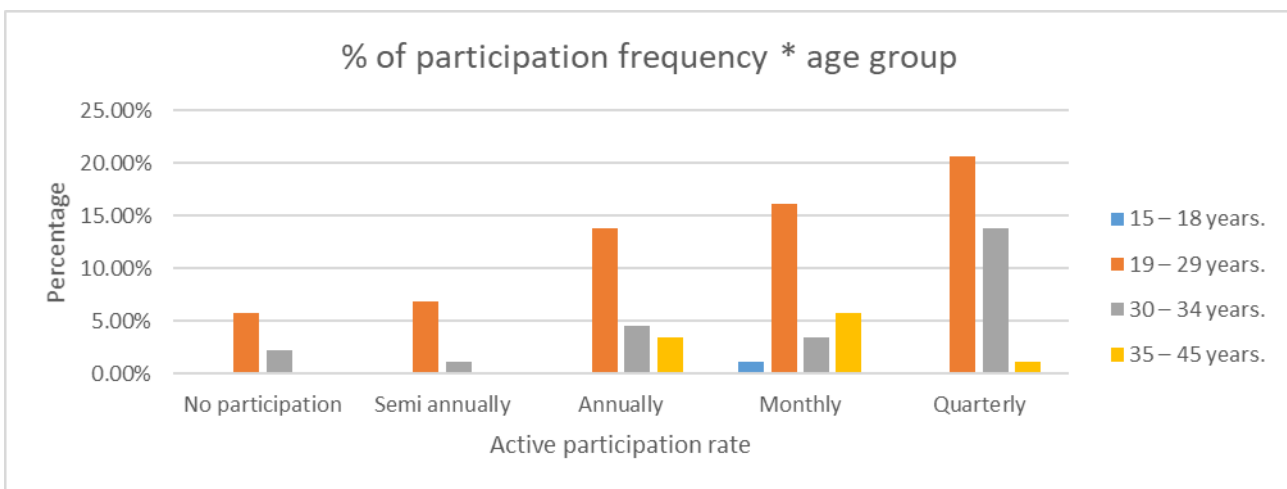
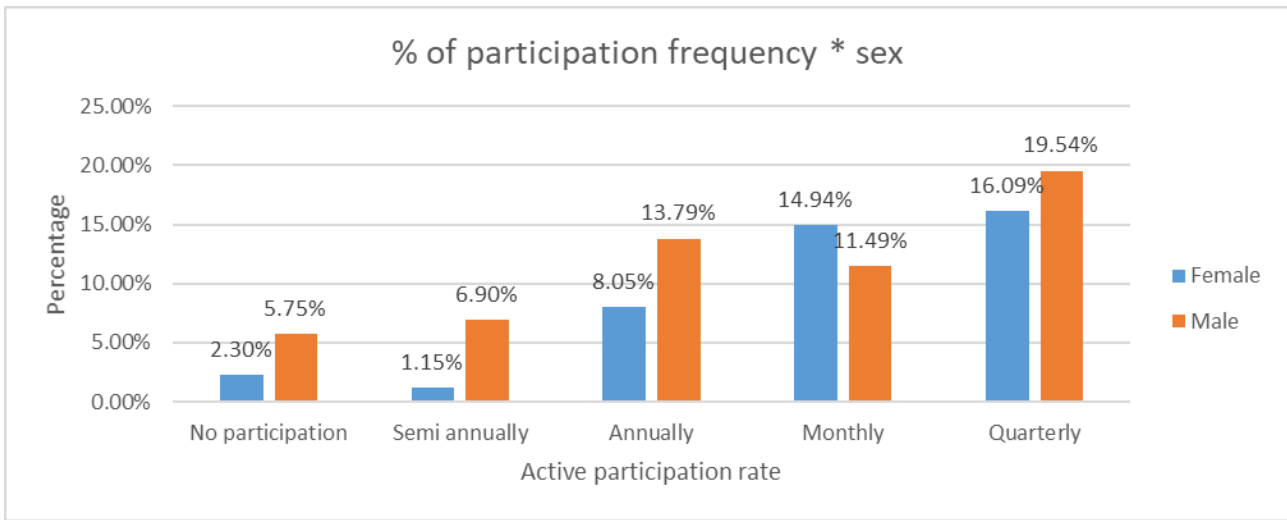
In terms of individual experience of the participants in peace building and conflict transformation, majority of the participants had between 1 – 5 years. A significant 25.3% had less than 1-year experience as given in the table below.

A5: Individual’s experience in peace building and conflict transformation	15 – 18 years.	19 – 29 years.	30 – 34 years.	35 – 45 years.	Female	Male	Overall
Between 1 year and 5 years	0.0%	56.4%	63.6%	77.8%	54.1%	64.0%	59.8%
Between 5 years and 10 years	0.0%	5.5%	18.2%	0.0%	5.4%	10.0%	8.0%
Less than 1 year	100.0%	30.9%	18.2%	0.0%	27.0%	24.0%	25.3%
More than 10 years	0.0%	3.6%	0.0%	22.2%	8.1%	2.0%	4.6%
No experience at all	0.0%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%	5.4%	0.0%	2.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Most of the participants from both sexes rated themselves more active to fully active in participation in the YPS programs. The males are noticed more active than the females from the beginning of the participation rating scale, especially in the medium participation rate where the difference is higher. Yet, the percentage of females who are very active in participation are slightly higher than the males.



The most active age group is that ranging between 19-29 years. The slope of the participation activity resembles to a great extent that of the segregation by gender above, where most participants rated themselves above the average (more than medium active), then the slope decreases towards the continuum when the rate of participation is very active.



Despite their acknowledged participation in peace building dialogues, most of them attend these meetings on a quarterly basis with only 26.4% (35.2% females and 20.0% males) reporting their participation on monthly basis. Those aged between 35 – 35 years were the ones who recorded monthly participation in these dialogue meetings. This summary is given in the table below. It is highly believed that young people are the future of Yemen and they have great capacities for driving change at the local level. However, young men and women are still trying to reveal their visions and perceptions of the future of Yemen and the support they need in building national peace in order to spread the culture of coexistence and tolerance and equal access to resources, employment and services in an inclusive, responsible, transparent and law enforcement government to ensure the existence of a prosperous, equal and secure society in which all people live in the presence of justice and respect for human rights. This was further noted through one of the KIIs in Taiz.



The main resources that can be exploited in building peace are youth because they are the main pillar in peace building if they are educated and trained about peace and conflict resolution, even at the level of the neighborhood or the surrounding community in order to develop their skills to be able to build peace at the local or regional level if there are great efforts.

KII participant in Taiz



## Women and youth participation

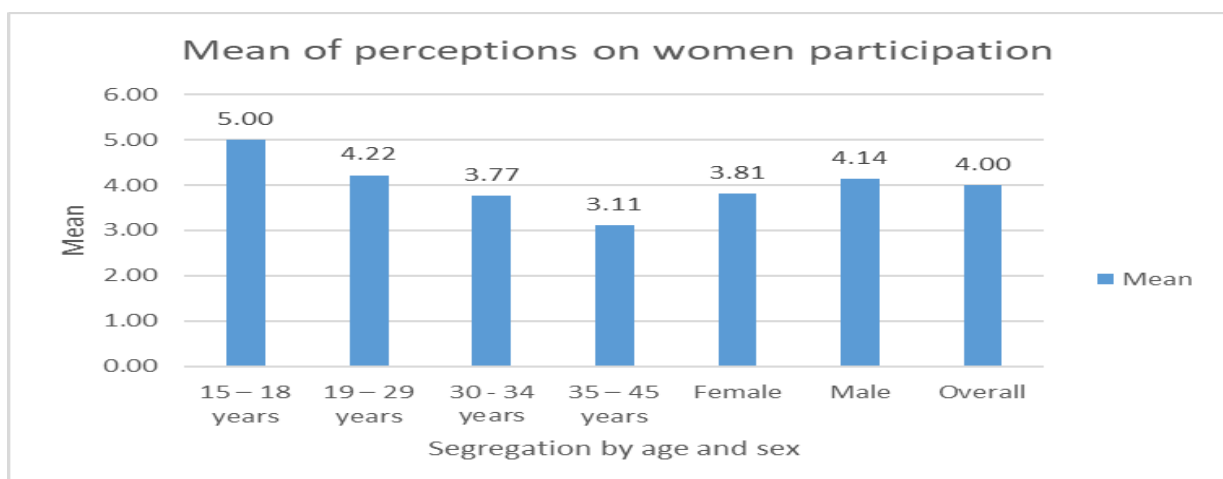
With a traditionally male dominated society and the sustained weakening of formal structures of governance, traditional structures and mechanisms have in their own way continued to assume the role of governance and peacebuilding at local levels. Though not yet fully to the intended level, the project has set up a right trajectory by empowering youth and women to fully participate in peace negotiations and inclusive governance. However, a clear area that needs much emphasis is around civic education (around inclusive governance), finding ways to work with the relevant government institutions in the field and coordinating continued peace dialogues at national level. Linking these dialogues with international re-conciliatory efforts will be key in order to minimize or eliminate the existing grievances that exacerbate the existing political tensions at local levels.



It is imperative to involve them in active participation in society, they must be inspired by reviving the spirit of volunteer work. This is the first thing, the second thing is that we help them pull them out of their reality and solve their problems and create a spacious environment for them that helps work, for example some young people hope to work. We are helping them and we are taking their hands as much as we can.

A religious leader in Taiz

The male had a higher positive attitude for involving women and youth and women in peacebuilding and decision making in comparison to female respondents. Similarly, the younger population (less than 30 years) felt this was more important in comparison to their older counterparts.



Despite the higher rating of importance among male and youthful respondents, the general observation was that there was a positive attitude towards involvement of women and youth in decision making and peacebuilding processes. It came out that 87.4% of the research participants had a positive attitude towards involvement of women and youth in decision making and peacebuilding processes. This was further affirmed through discussions with local leaders which revealed a high level of optimism with their youthful population and women given their potential role they could play in leadership and local peacebuilding and conflict transformation.



Women have a big role to play in building peace. Women and youth are part of decision-making and policy-making, whether at the local level or the private sector, because peace needs new faces to take control of matters in governance, and youth with women play a pivotal role in different sectors to build links between local communities and raise public awareness about peace.

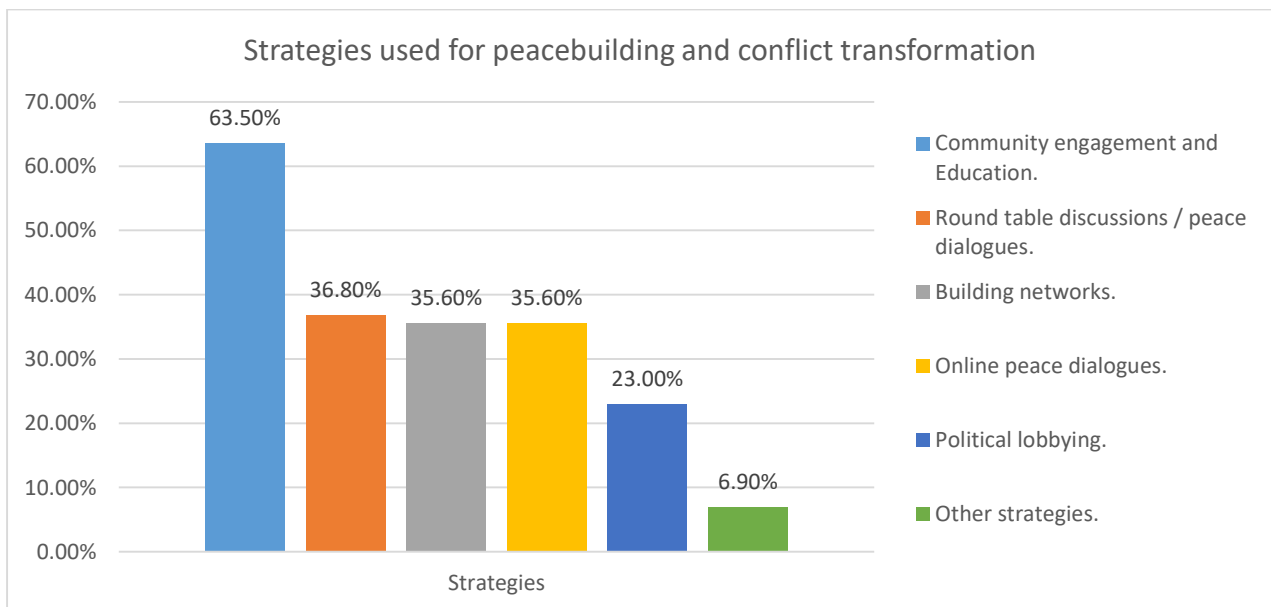
A community leader in Taiz (Bani Issa).

The youthful population were very passionate about educating the wider community about their rights and good citizenship, which is a gap they have identified among their peers “We want to continue educating the community about their rights because most of the youth do not know their rights”, one of the participants of the FGDs from Taiz mentioned.

### Community leaders’ participation

In recognizing the available opportunities for peacebuilding and increasing the profile of youth and youth in Yemen Peace process, the leaders, particularly, have worked with other local actors and foundations in different campaigns, seminars and through the use of social media. A recent example was a campaign that was aimed at promoting women participation in governance.

As reported through the quantitative tool, it emerged that community engagement and education is the widely used approach, and rightly so, in driving the YPS agenda in Yemen. Of interest to note is the low proportion in the use of social media which has a potential for a wider coverage as well as the low proportion of political lobbying, given the acknowledged high political influence of the conflict.



Further emphasized by the community leaders, there are different initiatives to promote the capacity and visibility of young people (both male and female) in leadership roles and peacebuilding.



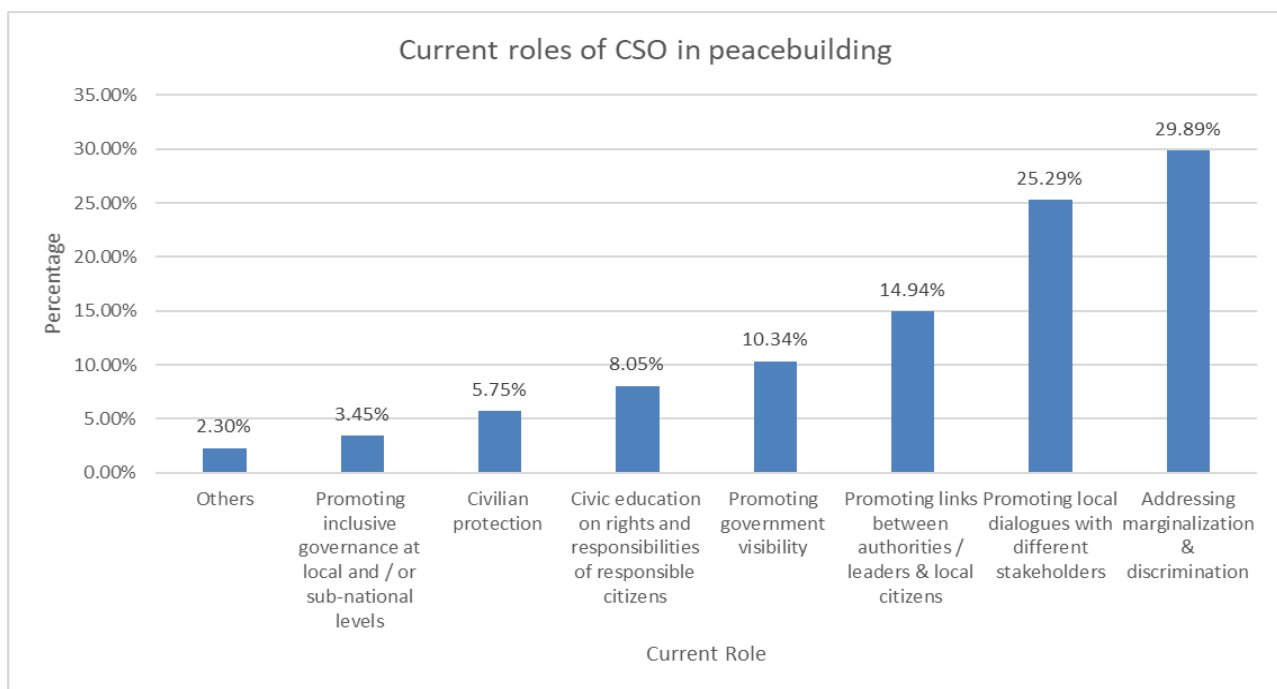
I participated in community dialogues in Jabal Habashi district in building peace with Al-Wad Development Foundation in partnership with Search for Common Ground Organization. We are working hard to build the capabilities of young people (male and female) in the region to be effective leaders in society because they are the basis in peace building, we also seek to build peace by addressing the main causes of conflict and building the capacity of young people to solve conflicts peacefully. I play an important role in promoting social stability, so we focus on peace building approaches that help the development and humanitarian program to ensure its contribution to social cohesion and peace building.

A community leader in Bani Issa

### Community Social Organizations participation

The influence of local councils, CSOs and international actors in Yemen has been acknowledged because of their regular interaction with the local population and the nature of their programming. *“The main actors are the leaders of the institutions, and if communication with them is required, we go to their offices, and there is no difficulty in reaching them, given that the conditions are somewhat stable for us. the controlling, ruling and actor party is the transitional council, while the official authorities are not present and matters are somewhat complicated”*, one of the participants from the FGDs mentioned.

From the quantitative study, most organizations largely focus on addressing marginalization & discrimination and promoting local dialogues with different stakeholders in efforts to promote good governance, peacebuilding and conflict resolution as given in the table below.



## Challenges reducing the impact on participation

Key to these efforts is to productively engage the youth in voluntary peacebuilding initiatives as well as trying to find localized opportunities for them to make a living, given that the rate of unemployment was further exacerbated by the prevailing conflict.

In addition to lack of employment for the youth, systemic / “cultural” challenges have continued to undermine the potential contribution of women and youth in peacebuilding and community development in general.



The biggest challenges are unemployment. Unemployment has made young people dominated by this despair on the part of the youth. On the woman’s side, the constraints and challenges are the presence of a deficient view of a wide segment of society that women are only tasked with their homes. This is a mistake. We need to intensify awareness, education, counseling and guidance sessions. Not only the man’s partner, but the woman is the man’s companion and she supports the man in all aspects of life.

A religious leader in Birbasa (Taiz)

On their individual rating of good governance, it came out that most of the participants were more knowledgeable (and by looking at the more information they felt they need) was largely revolving around transparency and accountability to citizens, as given in the table below.

## Partnership

With so many players in the Yemen conflict, the National Dialogue Structure (NDS) puts emphasis on collecting the views and opinions of local CSOs in efforts trying to resolve the conflict in Yemen. It is also acknowledged that the importance of holistically supporting young people in Yemen for them to champion the peacebuilding process as reported by one of the leaders in Taiz who said *“Young people can be supported by implementing training and rehabilitation courses and providing all basic services that enable them to continue their journey towards achieving peace, whether financial, moral, and technical support”*. With this being a critical element of the UNSCR 2250 and by and large the YPS agenda in Yemen, this definitely ought to form part of the peace discussions and dialogues in Yemen. According to age dis-aggregation, respondents aged 15 – 18 years was 100%, 19 – 29 years was 67.3%, 30 – 34 years was 54.5% while 35 – 45 years was 55.6%. The descriptive statistics of the individual ratings are summarized in the table below.

Individual understanding of the peace building dialogue structures in Yemen	Mean	Minimum	Median	Maximum	Mode
Overall	2.7931	0.0000	3.0000	5.0000	3.0000
15 – 18 years	5.0000	5.0000	5.0000	5.0000	5.0000
19 – 29 years	2.8192	0.0000	3.0000	5.0000	3.0000
30- 34 years	2.5455	1.0000	3.0000	5.0000	3.0000
35 – 45 years	3.0000	2.0000	3.0000	5.0000	2.0000
Female	2.6757	0.0000	3.0000	5.0000	3.0000
Male	2.8800	0.0000	3.0000	5.0000	3.0000

Individual ratings indicate an average understanding (given the fact that the respondents ought to be active participants in these structures) of the peacebuilding dialogue structures in Yemen. With the average understanding of the YPS dialogue structure, it came out that 44.8% of the respondents acknowledged their need for more information in order to enhance their understanding of the overall agenda of the YPS peace dialogue structure in Yemen. There is however some level of awareness on the contribution made by the supported given to women and youth in order to increase their profile, influence and role in enhancing local capacities for peacebuilding and conflict transformation. *“The United Nations Peace Fund supported in UN resolutions. Also, the United Nations Women Commissioner. Female participation is very weak and participation is very weak”*, FGD with local activists, local initiatives and movements in Taiz. According to these participants, the areas where they need more information are summarized in the table below.

Which areas of the YPS structure do you need more information on?	15 – 18 years.	19 – 29 years.	30 – 34 years.	35 – 45 years.	Female	Male	Overall
Structure.	100.0%	40.0%	63.6%	44.4%	40.5%	52.0%	47.1%
Membership.	0.0%	36.4%	40.9%	33.3%	24.3%	46.0%	36.8%
Decision hierarchy	0.0%	38.2%	63.6%	33.3%	35.1%	50.0%	43.7%
Agenda.	0.0%	43.6%	54.5%	33.3%	48.6%	42.0%	44.8%
Advocacy / lobby initiatives.	0.0%	49.1%	40.9%	55.6%	35.1%	56.0%	47.1%
Schedules	0.0%	29.1%	50.0%	11.1%	29.7%	34.0%	32.2%
Alliances.	0.0%	40.0%	45.4%	44.4%	35.1%	46.0%	41.4%
Others.	0.0%	7.3%	9.1%	0.0%	8.0%	6.0%	6.9%

Though the above statistics reveal the existence of a functional YPS structure, it is key to note that most of these participants do not fully understand critical aspects of the YPS structure and thus moving back to the basics and create a general awareness of this structure might be helpful for them to appreciate it and possibly be active participants in the dialogues or even suggest changes that can make a lasting impact on sustainable peace dialogues, especially involving women and youth. To note also was that 47.1% (which is around half of the total number of research participants) of local youth and women CSOs need more information / sensitization on its advocacy or lobbying initiatives without overlooking at the agenda (44.8%), schedules (32.2%) and existing alliances for peace building and related advocacy / lobbying (41.4%). Given the acknowledged and appreciated contribution of UN Women and UNFPA and the Peace-Building Fund in general, the UN and its local implementing partners have a unique opportunity to continue working with women and youth (with the optimism about their contribution highly regarded by key community leaders) in driving the peace building and conflict transformation agenda in Yemen. However, a critical contributor to the conflict, continued action by international and powerful actors, needs to be addressed due to the indiscriminate bombings and shelling which have potentially hindered the local efforts in building peace as reported by one of the key informants in Taiz who said *“Individual efforts were from youth initiatives to end the siege , but they didn’t succeed, due to the intransigence of one of the conflicting parties”*, neighborhood leader in Al Dhahra (Taiz governorate).

### Women and youth partnership

Of importance to note was organizational strategic priorities which might not produce the much-needed impact at a higher level as opposed to when these organizations were working or linking with the identified centers of power and influence such as the local authorities or working in inclusive governance which could raise the profile of the youthful population (given that these are youth-led or youth focused organizations) and women. Given the prevailing circumstances, working with local

communities on civilian protection and civic education would provide a widespread and immediate impact especially among the youthful population who are mostly at the fore-front of armed conflicts. However, this does not address the negative impact of indiscriminate bombings by the big players in the on-going conflict. To support the internationally recognized government in providing a conducive environment, the local organizations could pay close attention to increasing the visibility and influence of the identified government structures (defense, law enforcement, judiciary, legislation and provision of social services) among the local communities, however, this track of programming is also not very common / popular among the local organizations. This was coming out despite the fact that the youthful population had an overall vision for peace, stability and prosperity in Yemen as further reiterated by the youth in Retaz (Sana'a) who said that their vision was in ending the war, building peace, economic empowerment of the youth and give women space to play their roles in peacebuilding and community development.



The idea of this project came from the experience of the feminist consensus and was inspired by the feminist groups that work on the basis of Resolution 1325, we worked together with the feminist consensus and the UNW to draft the project in order to benefit from the experience and unify efforts between women and youth.

A NNFPA representative

In promoting the YPS agenda and UNSCR 2250 and 1325, the main strategy was to link local youth organizations, movements, associations, alliances and different initiatives with other key stakeholders (especially those with high influence) in different peace dialogues and campaigns. Particularly, the peace dialogues (through the YPS structure, NDC and the online peace dialogue platform) were meant to facilitate this process in addition to the different trainings, awareness campaigns and direct engagement with key personalities of influence at local levels. The project thus was implemented at different levels, working with different stakeholders, particularly women and youth in advancing the YPS agenda in Yemen. This was partly articulated by a research representative from UN women who said *“At the local level, the stakeholders in this project are activists, whether in women's or youth groups, and initiatives that work at the local level in any field related to the components of the resolution such as protection, partnership, or other components of the resolution. During the coming periods, the security committees will be among the stakeholders in the governorates, according to the advocacy issues that the youth consensus will work on. For example, there may be health, legal, and security bodies, depending on the issues that will be identified for advocacy”*.

### Community leaders

The leaders reported to regularly network with government agencies or non-governmental organizations in order to work with and to support youth in peacebuilding by creating the necessary networks and relationships between stakeholders and youth.

### International community

Appreciating the limited influence (and trust) and low capacity of state institutions and deterioration in delivery of critical social services, the UN Country Team (UNCT) in Yemen is spearheading a unified strategic framework focusing on peacebuilding; sustaining basic service delivery; Social Cohesion and Protection; and resilience building. In achieving this, the UNCT has acknowledged the potential and immense contribution of women and youth (in line with UNSCR 2250 and USCR 1325) and working

closely with whatever is remaining in the name of state actors (especially at governorate level downwards) and grass-root non-state actors<sup>10</sup>. Despite the fact that most of the interviewed have a broad understanding of the YPS dialogue and advocacy structures in place, there is still some effort required to translate this agenda to the local populations (especially among women and the youthful population who play an active role in armed conflicts) and working with them in the areas of international negotiations and lobbying, especially targeting the big players to the conflict.

According to one of the implementing partners (Awam foundation), it was revealed that the partners worked with UN-Women, just before 2010, on resolution 1325 in the National Dialogue with no less than 30% of the participants coming from independent women's coalitions, such as Belqis' granddaughter, peace partners, the Women Yemen Union and youth initiatives. These included training on capacity building, all of which fall under Track No. 3. The track number two is under the sponsorship of UN Women and international organizations such as Feminist Accord, Al Salam Company, 9 + 1 Group, Peace Path and others. Local actors have established and implemented the 1325 Axes and established an alliance called an (Wasl) between women leaders in Yemen from most of the governorates of the Republic, even from women living in the Diaspora, to support each other, to unify their voices and to know their needs; so that young men and women can make their voices heard. So we could have representatives in UN Women: *“The implemented meetings provided us with the opportunity to hear from youth organizations what challenges and obstacles they face in implementing Resolution 2250 and what are their priorities through their experiences, perspectives and the outputs of these consultative meetings that contributed to the drafting of consultative papers that will benefit stakeholders interested in the Resolution and Yemen as a whole, so that they have knowledge about youth priorities and the stage in Yemen”, UNFPA representative.*”

The project has facilitated discussions and dialogues with both state and non-state actors on the YPS agenda and on issues affecting women and youth. However, evidence of constitutional changes as a result of this dialogue processes was not visible, especially during KIs with grant recipients. *Young people were present even with or without the support of the local authorities. The youth had a great role, whether at the local level in resolving conflicts or building peace and advocating women's and youth issues at the level of local communities or at the governorate level, but they did not reach the national level, which is one of the priorities that we are working on,* YWOB representative. To be noted also was that in some areas, the local authorities were not very supportive on project activities as reported by a FAF representative (one of the grant recipients) who said: *“The local authorities in the south helped a lot but, in the north, the local authorities stop such projects like Sana’a and Dhamar”.*

<sup>10</sup> UN Strategic Framework for Yemen 2017-2019, <https://yemen.un.org/sites/default/files/2019-08/unct-ye-strategic-framework-2017-2019-doc.pdf>

## General Conclusions and recommendations:

### Concluding remarks

From the observations made and the analysis that came out, it is clear that the project was a buildup of previous initiatives on peacebuilding, designed through consultative processes, and used implementation approaches that were sensitive to the realities in Yemen. The general impact attributed to this and similar past investments is the reported high level of awareness and positive attitudes towards involving youth and women in peacebuilding and decision making. However, the key challenge is translating this knowledge into bringing youth and women in the peace negotiation table and giving them an influential voice. The main conclusions can be summarized as follows:

- The impact on equipping the participants with sufficient knowledge in conflict resolution seems to be less effective as the participants expressed that they needed more information in all the mechanisms of conflict resolution.
- The impact on the self-achieved skills in good governance is high, yet the impact on the participatory skills is less.
- The youth are seen more actively participating in the activities, though more frequently on a quarterly basis.
- Males had more positive attitudes towards women participation in peacebuilding and decision making than women. Younger age groups were noticed the highest in appreciating engaging women in the process.
- Community engagement and education is the most frequently used strategy by the community leaders in participating in the YPS agenda in Yemen. Roundtables, networks, and online dialogues are frequent.
- Since the UN (through the UNCT) is spearheading the peace dialogues and advocacy initiatives in Yemen, there is need to re-look at the existing linkages between the local and international level peace dialogues and advocacy initiatives in Yemen given the visible disconnect, especially among the local populations.
- To make strides towards these linkages, the visibility and influence of the existing YPS dialogue and advocacy also needs to be re-looked and promoted for youth (including the local level youth organizations) to develop an interest in this structure and proactively seek more information in terms of the existing initiatives (both locally and internationally).

To sum this up, the project and other existing initiatives have collectively contributed to creating more awareness on the importance of women and youth to participate in initiatives for the well-being of their communities (including peacebuilding and conflict transformation). Specifically, the project has been a build up to raising more awareness on key UN resolutions (UNSCR 2250, UNSCR 1325) that have been the basis for the YPS agenda in Yemen and have acted as a catalyst, at local level, to creating the necessary mind-shifts among key local stakeholders at centers of power on the importance of participatory and inclusive peacebuilding and reconciliation processes. However, the key consideration that needs more attention and focus is trying to integrate the positive aspects of existing tribal systems and structures (based on their social trust) and strengthening key government institutions (judiciary, local councils, and law enforcement) who have low visibility and social trust but very critical (alongside the department of social services) in creating an enabling environment and



space for women and youth to meaningfully participate in local peace processes and inclusive governance.

## Recommendations

- Provide more information and training on conflict resolution mechanisms.
- The main recommendation in relation to raising the profile of youth in peacebuilding and decision making was for the Ministry of Youth and Sports, CSOs and political parties have played a fundamental role in engaging youth and pushing them to the centers of decision-making, research and the UN agencies that are concerned with youth engagement and peace building.
- Provide more training and information on the participatory good governance strategies and mechanisms.
- Encourage the participant to participate in the activities on a monthly basis.
- Encourage women to assume their roles in the peacebuilding and decision making. Also encourage the older age groups to allow women to assume such role.
- Capitalize on the engagement and education mechanism through community and religious leaders to push the agenda of the YPS in Yemen further ahead.
- Push for greater linking of the local peacebuilding dialogues and advocacy initiatives in Yemen with the international level peacebuilding and advocacy programs.
- Promote the visibility of the state actors and support them to assume their normal roles in peacebuilding, and link them with the youth and women in Yemen to make the process more inclusive, integrative and engaging.