

GIZ PROJECT “SUPPORTING PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE IN YEMEN (SPCY)”



SPCY WEBSITE

ARABIA FELIX BRAND

Action Area Youth Empowerment:

CONTEXT

Since 2015, Yemen has endured a devastating civil war leading to profound economic, social, and political fragmentation. Ranked as the world's second most fragile state in 2023, the nation faces a crisis impacting every facet of life. Women, youth, and particularly marginalized groups — notably the Muhamasheen (1) and people with disabilities — bear the brunt of violence, lack of basic services, economic stagnation, and social disintegration. These hardships are compounded by restrictive socio-cultural and religious gender norms, limited

resources, and an acute humanitarian crisis, collectively undermining women's participation in societal rebuilding. These factors contribute to Yemen's position at the bottom of both the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index and the Georgetown Institute's Women, Peace, and Security Index for 2023/2024.

GENDER AND FRAGILITY

In Yemen, gender-based structural violence is pervasive, particularly in areas under Ansar Allah control. Here, the mahram system severely

restricts women's mobility and participation in public life by mandating a male guardian for travel. This restriction not only curtails women's freedom but also forces many out of essential employment in NGOs and UN agencies ([source](#)).

Since the onset of the civil war, there has been a staggering increase in gender-based violence (GBV), including physical assault (50% increase), sexual abuse (35% increase), psychological abuse (25% increase), resource denial (17% increase), and child marriages (11% increase) ([source](#)).

(1) The term Muhamasheen refers to a specific group, which historically and currently experiences marginalisation in the Yemeni context. The social discrimination involves among other things, limited access to housing, education, healthcare. An estimated number of 3.5 million people suffers in Yemen under the label of Muhamasheen.



Coinciding with globally recognized days — starting on November 25th, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and concluding on December 10th, Human Rights Day — this 16 days of activism Against GBV campaign, leveraged the Arabia Felix social media platforms and SPCY's [Yemeni Women's Voices Platform](#).

ABOUT SUPPORTING PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE IN YEMEN

The GIZ project “Supporting peaceful coexistence in (SPCY),” strengthens the role that women, young people and civil society stakeholders can play in actively shaping peaceful coexistence at the

local level. Embracing the 2030 Agenda's 'leave no one behind' principle, SPCY focuses on those most disadvantaged groups who experience various, often gender-specific, forms of violence — including people

with disabilities, internally displaced persons (IDPs), the Muhamasheen, and other socially, economically, and geographically discriminated groups.

ARABIA FELIX BRAND

Under SPCY, the Arabia Felix brand, encapsulates strategies to bolster young people's belief in their potential as agents of change, offering them avenues for peacefully shaping their social environment. It employs a blend of digital and non-digital approaches to enhance media information literacy against polarized narratives like hate speech by celebrating diversity, and promoting gender-sensitive conflict transformation through peace pedagogical approaches.

The measures include social media campaigns, four e-learning courses on atingi, eleven mobile game

applications, and diverse edutainment products designed to nurture critical thinking, playful learning, and non-violent conflict resolution skills. In Yemen, digitalization presents a dichotomy of challenges and opportunities, particularly for women. Yemen ranks last on the UNDP's Gender Inequality Index (2021-2022), with gender disparity placing women at a further disadvantage in accessing digital resources. The approaches of the Arabia Felix brand outlined in the subsequent pages are geared towards platforms and devices predominantly used by young Yemeni women and represent

a strategic avenue for engagement, education, and empowerment in a virtual space where traditional barriers can be circumvented. However, to reach those most impacted by the digital divide, including women and girls with limited or no online access, strategies like the offline distribution of digital products (e.g. Arabia Felix serious game apps) becomes essential. These provide tangible, interactive means to promote learning and dialogue about gender and peace, ensuring inclusivity in peacebuilding and digital literacy efforts within Yemen's complex social fabric.

LEVERAGING SOCIAL MEDIA AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

According the Civicus Monitor, Yemen has a "closed civic space". A closed civic space is a setting where the freedoms of expression, association, and assembly are significantly curtailed "by state and powerful non-state actors who carry out widespread violations against human rights defenders, journalists, and dissidents without any meaningful domestic and international consequences for the perpetrators". This concept is not confined to offline activities; it can transcend into the digital world, where online surveillance, censorship, and cyberattacks can also restrict civic freedoms. SPCY's digital peacebuilding approaches have seen success, sidestepping some of the

constraints found in physical spaces, such as risks associated with gathering in person or limited access to traditional educational resources, to promote dialogue, education, and conflict resolution.

For instance, the Arabia Felix social media strategy is a powerful conduit for combating GBV in Yemen. With a reach exceeding 4.7 million across Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, our approach effectively challenges GBV and amplifies positive portrayals of young women and other disadvantaged groups. Central is the peace pedagogical approach adopted in content creation. One example is the "16 Days of Activism against GBV"

campaign, created by young Yemeni illustrators and creative content creators. This campaign aimed to raise awareness, and disseminate knowledge to combat violence against women and girls (VAWG).

IMPACT

In the short term, our thematic campaigns have increased awareness and sparked critical discussions on GBV and women empowerment. SPCY's long term strategy is to continue to use social media as a catalyst for change in a society where every voice against violence paves the way for a more equitable future.

NON-VIOLENT COMMUNICATION (NVC) AS A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

Al-Gaddah Challenge is a narrative game on NVC. It is part of 11-application Arabia Felix Serious Game series, downloaded over 100.000 times. It immerses players in the life of 18-year-old Yasmeen, a young woman navigating complex social dynamics in Yemen.

This game effectively promotes human rights values such as tolerance, acceptance, and equality by challenging stereotypes and encouraging empathy. Al-Gaddah Challenge

exemplifies how conflict-sensitive peacebuilding tools, particularly non-violent communication, can be instrumental in advancing gender equality. This synergy is crucial in a context like Yemen, where gender disparities are deeply intertwined with broader societal conflicts.

Yasmeen's interactions reflect larger societal dynamics in Yemen. By successfully using NVC, she becomes a role model, showing how women can assert their rights and

opinions in a society where their voices are often marginalised.

IMPACT

Al-Gaddah Challenge has started shaping perceptions about women's potential in society, especially among young players. Long-term, such serious games empower players to apply the principles learned in their everyday interactions.



Al-Gaddah Challenge features a diverse range of female characters, symbolising different aspects of Yemeni society. This intersectional representation of gaming fosters a deeper understanding of women's roles as agents of change and challenges societal norms.

"HERO INSIDE US": A MIRROR TO SOCIETY THROUGH EDUTAINMENT

The serious soap opera, the "Hero Inside Us," blends entertainment with educational content, tackling sensitive social issues like arranged marriages, GBV, and discrimination. This innovative format effectively addresses complex topics in Yemeni society by weaving them into compelling narratives that resonate with viewers.

The web-series, filmed in Sana'a and Aden, stands as a culturally authentic portrayal of Yemeni life. Each of the ten episodes, reaching over 1.8 million viewers on the Arabia Felix social media platforms, is complemented by 10 "Beyond the Story Clips," a segment that

dives into the depicted conflicts, offering constructive resolutions. The series has garnered acclaim and numerous awards most recently at a festival in Los Angeles, validating its impact and relevance.

Leila's story in the series encapsulates the challenges faced by many young Yemeni women. Pressured into an

arranged marriage by her uncle, she struggles to pursue her passion for IT and coding. This narrative mirrors the real-life predicament of girls who confront elevated school dropout rates due to ideological, financial, or security reasons, often leading to child labour, abuse, and forced marriage.

In "Hero Inside Us," the character Mahmoud serves as a poignant example of marginalized masculinities, a group often overlooked in discussions about gender and societal norms. Mahmoud, an aspiring musician, social media entertainer, grapples with societal expectations and



familial disdain for not pursuing a “respected job”, shedding light on the broader issue of non-conforming masculinities within Yemeni society. His passion for sharing his work on social media is met with ridicule and dismissal, primarily from his older brother. This subplot highlights how men who deviate from traditional masculine norms often face hostility and derision, both from their immediate social circles and wider society. By showcasing Mahmood’s journey, the show not only humanizes his experience but also raises awareness about the detrimental effects of such



societal pressures on men. It challenges viewers to reconsider their perceptions of masculinity and the harmful consequences of enforcing rigid gender roles. Mahmood's character arc crucial in demonstrating how gender issues are not exclusive to women but also significantly affect men.

IMPACT

"Hero Inside Us" not only entertains but also educates, shining a light on the intersectionality and diverse experiences of marginalized groups in Yemen. By showcasing strong, multi-dimensional characters, the series underscores the importance of understanding and addressing the unique challenges faced by various segments of Yemeni society. Through its narratives, "Hero Inside Us" fosters empathy, challenges stereotypes, and inspires change, making it a powerful tool in the fight for gender equality .

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1) EMBRACING LOCALIZED KNOWLEDGE

A crucial learning from the Arabia Felix activities is the amplified effectiveness of peacebuilding when it incorporates localized knowledge production. By valuing and integrating the unique insights and experiences of SPCY’s target group, initiatives gain deeper relevance and impact, fostering more sustainable and culturally resonant solutions.

2) EMPOWERING WOMEN AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

Recognizing women as agents of change brings essential perspectives to the forefront, enhancing the effectiveness and inclusivity of peacebuilding efforts. This emphasis on women's roles goes beyond mere participation, advocating for their leadership and decision-making. By leveraging digital tools, women can circumnavigate traditional barriers to participation.

3) CONTEXTUALIZING THE INTERSECTIONAL LENS

By recognizing the multifaceted identities and experiences that intersect with gender — such as ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status, and geographic location — SPCY ensures its approaches are finely tuned to embrace the full spectrum of lived realities. Addressing the diverse experiences ensures activities are responsive to the varied needs and challenges of Yemeni youth.

FUTURE VISION: EXPANDING IMPACT WITH THE PRIZE MONEY

Winning the gender competition would significantly bolster SPCY’s capabilities, thereby advancing its mission for a more peaceful, inclusive, and gender-equal society. We envision scaling up our existing thematic campaign against hate speech to focus on targeting women and marginalized masculinities. This expansion would include collaborations with Yemeni influencers, production of engaging video clips, and broader outreach efforts. Such campaigns are vital in addressing the pervasive issue of gender-based hate speech, contributing to a more respectful and equitable societal discourse.

Applicants from SPCY: Aishatu Gwadabe, Mohammed Al-Azzani, Kafia Al-Afif & Greta Matz.