

CONTEXT IN BRIEF

In 2014 and 2015 Al Houthi forces advanced southward and expanded the scope of the armed conflict in Yemen. In March 2015, a coalition around the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia coalition began conducting airstrikes against Al Houthi and allied forces to halt Al Houthi southward expansion, damaging and destroying public infrastructure, interrupting essential services, and reducing commercial imports to a fraction of the levels required to sustain the Yemeni-population.

Since the conflict in Yemen escalated in 2015, the country has remained home to one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. In 2022 the UN brokered a truce that resulted in a reduction in conflict but the situation on the ground remains fragile due to the economic crisis, high levels of unemployment and rising food and fuel prices. The UN estimates that over 21 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance.¹

The disproportional impact of the conflict in Yemen on women has been particularly marked and goes far beyond the immediate casualty consequences of death and injury. The war has a gendered impact on women in many different ways:

- All forms of gender-based violence (physical and psychological abuse, sexual harassment, early marriages, FGM, denial of inheritance, mobility restrictions) increased since before the conflict;
- Because of the disrupted healthcare system and the cultural taboo against women being treated by male doctors, the maternal mortality rates are high, access to healthcare products are often limited by men and women are expected to be care takers of ill family members;

- The gendered impacts of war on education and economic participation are manifold with challenges to girls school attendance (mostly in northern regions) and the denial of property and inheritance.

Before the war, women and girls in Yemen already faced gender inequalities due to the deeply engrained patriarchal social norms and patriarchal political and legal system. For example, no constitutional or legislative provisions prevent gender discrimination and there is no anti-discrimination legislation.

These developments are also reflected in global assessments of women's inclusion, justice, and security. Yemen has ranked last or second to last in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index for 13 consecutive years since 2006.² In 2017, Yemen was listed as the worst place in the world to be a woman and the Women, Peace & Security (WPS) Index 23/24 ranks Yemen 176th out of 177 countries when it comes to the status of women in society.³

SPCY'S APPROACHES

Promotion of gender equality is an essential part of the module objective of the project "Supporting Peaceful Co-Existence in Yemen" (SPCY). The project highlights the "contributions to strengthening the role of selected women, youth, and civil society actors in actively shaping peaceful coexistence at the local level in selected governorates".

To achieve this goal of enhancing the role of Yemeni women at the local level, the project focuses on promoting inclusive contributions by selected women and women's initiatives for peaceful coexistence.

¹ [Yemen Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023 \(December 2022\) - Yemen](#)

² [WEF GGGR 2021.pdf \(weforum.org\)](#)

³ [Yemen - GIWPS \(georgetown.edu\)](#)

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SPCY'S Output on 'Women Empowerment' focuses on promoting inclusive contributions from selected activists, women's initiatives, and non-governmental organizations, taking into account the needs and perspectives of marginalized groups (e.g. Muhamasheen⁴, IDPs, people with special needs). The goal is to improve the social and economic participation of women, girls and previously marginalized groups and critically question patriarchal norms in society to reduce structural inequalities and shift unequal power relations.

All activities are guided by a gender-sensitive approach and wherever possible incorporating a gender-transformative approach. The project's gender-transformative approach takes an intersectional perspective on the design of capacity development measures regarding different education levels, special needs, the gender-specific digital divide, as well as gender-specific security needs, perceptions, opportunities for action and access, and narratives in Yemen.

Male decision-makers and male change agents are specifically addressed and included in capacity development and exchange formats. Success stories of female achievers are made visible taking into account the intersection of various dimensions of discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, ability and other dimensions.

Through targeted capacity development as well as funding opportunities and networking of women and women's organizations the project's outputs tries to address restrictive socio-cultural gender norms, which are the root causes of limited opportunities and denied

participation of women, girls and marginalized groups for peaceful coexistence.

RESULTS

SPCY'S Women Empowerment Output supports grassroots initiatives by local NGOs through local subsidies.

One of those projects in 2023 is implemented by the Organization of Peace & Social Security in Yemen. It focuses on strengthening capacities for peaceful coexistence through economic empowerment but thereby addressing underlying root causes of harassment. Through skill training in mobile maintenance and economic support women are empowered to open their own businesses. But this is not only an opportunity this training provides. The economic field of mobile maintenance and sales is dominated by men. Women who hand in their phones in mobile maintenance shops are often subjected to harassment, for instance by downloading private photos and videos that are often used to blackmail the women and further harass them.

The Yemeni society is a very conservative society in which women hesitate to take photos of their lives and friends even via their personal mobile in fear that this mobile will go into men's hands once there is a need for maintenance. Women working in mobile maintenance are not only economically empowered and claim their space and right in this economic field they also give other women



⁴ The term Muhamasheen refers to a specific group, which historically and currently experiences intersecting discrimination and marginalisation in the Yemeni context.

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more comfort and confidence in getting the phones maintained and reduces GBV.

Another example is SPCY's support to the Al Reada Foundation in Sana'a, which provides technical and knowledgeable training for women to start their own businesses.

But it empowers women not only economically in the fields of photography and graphics, but it encourages and trains them to give a voice to other women and marginalized groups through documenting their life experiences, challenges and personal attitudes and feelings.



Stories of these women but also on many other issues such as the Women, Peace and Security Agenda or reports from our online webinar on 'how men can support women in Yemen' can be found on the [Yemeni Women's Voices Platform](#) (YWVP), which has been set up and further developed by SPCY's Women Empowerment Output.



YWVP digital platform cares for the authentic representation of strong and inspiring Yemeni women and wants to shed light on women's affairs in general for the Yemeni society based in Yemen.

It is created as a space for local contributions on the debate on women's issues in Yemen. We therefore collaborate with local journalists and activities we contribute through articles and discussions on the platform. The platform is also used for sharing success stories and inspiration stories from women and women initiatives.

Through a closed facebook group a safe-space for exchange on topics and materials

related to current debates is provided. The closed group is moderated by Yemeni women activists. The objective of this closed group is to strengthen networking among women and women rights supporters and raise awareness on gender topics.

The SPCY project organized through the Yemeni Women's Voices Platform an exchange workshop on empowering marginalized women working in the cleaning sector in Yemen.



Often already marginalized women (like Muhamasheen)

work in the hygiene sector. They are often subject to various and intersecting forms of discrimination at the level of rights and freedoms. The workshop actively engaged with representatives of the community, the Muhamasheen and the community itself to have an open dialogue on the reasons and possible ways to improve the life of women working in the cleaning sector.

This activity is also part of the [Output's 16 Days of Activism against GBV campaign](#). Starting from the 25th of November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and ending on the 10th of December, Human Rights Day Yemeni online community moderators began to post for 16 days on the closed group in [Facebook](#) under the brand of the [Yemeni Women's Voices Platform](#).

Through thought-provoking articles, podcasts, short videos and recordings from our activities, for instance on the intersectional discrimination of marginalized women in Yemen ("Mohamasheen"), we want to shed light on the different forms of violence and on systemic inequalities to give a deeper understanding of the issues at hand, raise awareness as well as

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introduce resources and initiatives aimed at countering GBV in Yemen.



The projects activities also found it's way in [Yemen's television in the news broadcast of Aden TV](#) and was highlighted as a chance for the region and community of overcoming some of the severe challenges.

The Yemeni Women's Voices Platform was also invited to present itself and its activities in a regional radio broadcast. It shows that the activities of the Output are getting renowned beyond beneficiaries and with a highly sensitive topic like gender. The live recording will soon be shared on the platform.

QUALITY FEATURE OF OUR WORK

The project's work on gender has been acknowledged Through numerous testimonials by participants and partners from our projects and activities:

"My family always fights the hardship of life and struggles every day to secure food and water. Like other members of my family, I decided to go out and search for any work with the hope of securing my family life's basic needs. While searching for work, I was exposed to many sorts of violence. There was no opportunity for work in the area, especially for women and society did not accept women going out for work. I applied for sewing training which was announced for IDPs and vulnerable women in the area which gave me skills, experiences, and tools to start my sewing work and earn money to get the basics needs of my family and to get them out to life again". Irtfa'a Mohammed, 26, Participant in a training by the Organization of Peace & Social Security in Yemen

"I am the breadwinner of my poor family. My journey to find work also ended with failure or with temporary work of tiny revenue. I tried to find stable work that provided consistent revenue for my family, but in vain, to have my own project was a dream for me, an impossible dream to come true with the reality of a hard life and having nothing in my hands to start by. Because of my condition, I was subjected to bullying which led me to severe frustration. This training was the first step in building my project and it made an inclusive change in my life", Participant in a OPSS skills training.