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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
AND KEY FINDINGS

WOMEN AS PEACEBUILDERS IN YEMEN*

FINAL REPORT PRODUCED FOR:
CSSF Yemen//June 2018

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*Suggested citation: 'Heinze, M. and Stevens, S. (2018), "Women as Peacebuilders in Yemen", Social Development Direct and Yemen Polling Center.'



This report was funded through the UK's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund, but the views expressed and information contained within it are not necessarily endorsed by HM Government, nor do they reflect UK policy.

ACRONYMS

AQAP	al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula
CSSF	UK Conflict, Security and Stability Fund
CSO	civil society organisation
DFID	UK Department for International Development
GBV	gender-based violence
GPC	General People's Congress
(I)NGO	(international) non-governmental organization
IDP	internally displaced person
IRG	internationally recognized government
NAP	National Action Plan (on women, peace and security)
NDC	National Dialogue Conference
SFD	Social Fund for Development
SLC	Saudi-led coalition
STC	Southern Transitional Council
UAE	United Arab Emirates
YSP	Yemeni Socialist Party

LIVING CONDITIONS: A DECENT STANDARD OF LIVING, FOOD SECURITY AND AVAILABILITY OF BASIC NECESSITIES, SERVICES, JOB OPPORTUNITIES, PAYMENT OF SALARIES, ECONOMIC PROSPERITY, AN END TO IDP SUFFERING, SOCIAL WELFARE BENEFITS TO VULNERABLE FAMILIES;

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, A FUTURE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION, EDUCATION, HEALTHCARE, SOCIAL EQUALITY;

SECURITY AND STABILITY: AN END TO THE WAR, CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES, SAFETY, ARMS CONTROL, DISAPPEARANCE OF GUNMEN, REMOVAL OF MILITIAS, REDUCTION OF CRIME, PRESENCE OF ACTIVE SECURITY AUTHORITIES;

STATEBUILDING AND GOOD GOVERNANCE: REINSTATEMENT OF STATE INSTITUTIONS, A RETURN OF GOVERNMENT, JUSTICE AND RULE OF LAW, SOCIAL JUSTICE, DEMOCRACY;

INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS: HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUAL CITIZENSHIP, FULL CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS, PUBLIC FREEDOMS, FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT AND EXPRESSION, POLITICAL PARTICIPATION FOR ALL AND RESPECT FOR DIFFERENT OPINIONS;

A STATE OF MIND: TRANQUILLITY, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SPIRITUAL STABILITY, HARMONY, LOVE AND AFFECTION, COEXISTENCE, AND COMMITMENT TO ISLAM AS A RELIGION OF PEACE.



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WOMEN AS PEACEBUILDERS IN YEMEN - JUNE 2018

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We know that conflict is gendered: that men and women have different experiences and play different roles. We also know that although women are often politically, economically and socially marginalised, they still play a significant role in peace and stability. This research sought to understand *how* women in Yemen are engaging in conflict prevention, peace and stability activities in three target governorates (Ma'rib, Ta'iz and Lahij) and investigates how their *capacities and opportunities* to engage are affected by their experiences of conflict, insecurity and changes in the wider social and governance environment.

Our findings point to both a core set of overall trends which validate existing knowledge on women, conflict and peacebuilding in other parts of Yemen, as well as important local nuances and contrasts in each target governorate – and even within governorates.¹ It found that **women are at the frontline of sustaining families and communities and addressing the devastating effects of conflict**. In a protracted conflict such as Yemen's, de-escalation in ways which do not undermine long-term peace is a key need alongside efforts to address the dynamics that drive further conflict. Women are playing an essential role in this in a number of ways: by meeting humanitarian need and mitigating suffering; maintaining local services where government is inadequate or absent; addressing the psychological impact of violence; promoting peace; mediating between armed parties; and contributing to economic recovery.

Our research also highlighted the **very real risks of doing harm**. If not implemented thoughtfully, humanitarian distribution can provoke tensions by not providing for everyone in the community (or assessing areas without providing follow-up support), targeting only one segment (e.g. IDPs) of a highly vulnerable community, or using women's organisations purely as conduits for aid distribution, inadvertently diverting their agendas and priorities. Programming in support of women's empowerment could equally expose women to further risks if not very carefully designed in a context where women's public activity is being directly threatened by violent extremist groups, and domestic violence is increasing as traditional gender roles are challenged. There may also be times when international partners *should not* support women's effective local responses to conflict and instability, such as direct conflict mediation in tribal areas, for risk of undermining their local legitimacy. Time and again, local women emphasised **the need to work in partnership with them, and to make external support inclusive** of the whole community, whilst making the most of the opportunity to advance women's strategic interests and status.

Key findings

Gender-based violence (GBV)² has increased since the conflict began, in both public and private. This is in line with international experience³ and includes domestic (emotional/verbal, physical) violence; abduction; rape; sexual harassment in public spaces (by armed men); early marriage; and physical threats and attacks towards female activists.

¹ For example regarding visions for a future Yemen, responses varied even within target districts, with different target groups favouring either a united/central state as it exists now, a federal system of various regions, or to a lesser extent separation of the South from the North. Responses also varied regarding the existence and severity of GBV, with some participants not acknowledging that this is a problem in their area; and the extent to which women can contribute to peace and stability, with less educated or unemployed men and some less educated women making more restrictive comments.

² The term gender-based violence (GBV) was introduced by women's rights activists – and is most commonly used – to emphasise the link between gender discrimination and violence against women and girls. Whilst some actors include some forms of violence against men and boys in their use of the term GBV, in this report GBV is used to describe violence against women and girls unless otherwise stated due to the focus of the research on women, and the understanding that the vast majority of GBV is experienced by women and girls and perpetrated by men and boys.

³ See DFID VAWG Helpdesk query 159 on GBV and Conflict in MENA, and "No Safe Place: A Lifetime of Violence for Conflict Affected Women and Girls in South Sudan", DFID What Works Main Results Report 2017.

Women are more economically active than they were before the war, as men have been injured, killed or lost their jobs. This has brought a sense of empowerment for women but has also caused tensions between men and women, leading to more domestic violence. There is a risk that positive changes will be reversed once conflict ends if not proactively supported.

Women are playing an essential role in delivering an impressive local humanitarian response and sustaining community services and structures, even under direct threat and with extremely limited resources. This is considered an acceptable, “natural” role for women in public life across Yemen, although the significance of their contributions is not always recognised nor sufficiently supported, which women activists perceive as an obstacle.

Local understandings of peace are based on a broad human security framework emphasising basic services and jobs. Efforts by women to address poor living conditions, livelihoods and humanitarian need are understood as contributions to peace and stability.

Changes in the religious environment have had particular effects on women, especially a rise in radical religious rhetoric and greater influence of Islamist actors. In some areas (Ta’iz and Lahij), this has resulted in severe threats and violence against women activists and restrictions on women’s movement.

Women activists are often cooperating effectively with local governance structures and local leaders are receptive to women’s involvement in public institutions, although women are still generally excluded from formal decision-making and political structures.

Women are engaged in resolving conflicts, promoting peace, and providing security in a limited way in some areas. This includes directly mediating inter-tribal conflicts and conflicts over public resources, working as police officers (a few in urban centres), screening women at checkpoints, and supporting resistance fighters with food, money and moral support.

Recommendations

1. Continue to prioritise life-saving humanitarian support, including GBV mitigation and response, across conflict-affected parts of Yemen

The current UK focus on humanitarian aid in Yemen should be considered an opportunity to empower women, in line with UK commitments in the National Action Plan (NAP) 2018-2022 on women, peace and security. For DFID and its humanitarian partners, taking a gendered approach is essential to deliver effective responses, but will also help to sustain positive changes to gender roles emerging during conflict and strengthen women’s leadership and participation. At a minimum, this should include ensuring the participation of women-led civil society organisations (CSOs) and activists in decision-making on humanitarian aid. We recommend that DFID’s Humanitarian Team and other humanitarian donors explore:

- a. Encouraging humanitarian organisations to partner with local women-led CSOs to design and deliver humanitarian aid**, being careful not to simply use them as distribution mechanisms but to build their capacity to meet their own objectives.⁴ These CSOs and their leaders are experts in the needs, risks and entry points in each location and are ideally placed to advise international partners. Such partnerships should however assess risk of, and take steps to mitigate, backlash from men in the

⁴ A recent study by Oxfam and International Alert (Anderson, 2017) found that across the MENA region: “donors and INGOs are inadvertently hindering the gender justice agenda by exerting a disproportionate influence on the priorities, type of work and opportunities of WROs [women’s rights organisations] in the four contexts” included in the study, of which Yemen was one.

area who may feel excluded from job opportunities generated by humanitarian aid (see 3.a and 5.a below).

- b. Providing support and training to women involved in humanitarian activities**, such as psychosocial support, training them to be 'family experts' for other women in their communities, and to build networks with other women in similar roles beyond their area.

2. Address the causes of GBV and strengthen services for survivors

GBV should not be regarded as inevitable effect of conflict. From international experience we know it has the potential to cause further violence, e.g. revenge attacks, to undermine peacebuilding and stability efforts and long-term recovery. Effective responses do exist. We recommend the UK explore the potential for further action along the following lines:

a. Support public communications campaigns to address gender-based violence.

This could include using local media platforms to remind people of the existing social values and norms surrounding protecting women in public and private. A campaign could be implemented in partnership with women activists to ensure local appropriateness, as part of other strategic communications and norm change work (see below).

b. Encourage international humanitarian organisations to better mainstream GBV into their sector programmes and establish standalone GBV services for survivors, in line

with the Call to Action on Protection from Gender Based Violence in Emergencies and the agreed Roadmap made in 2016.⁵ This should include integrating the minimal initial service package (MISP) into all humanitarian response,⁶ as well as psychosocial support to both women and men (and specifically to couples and communities) affected by conflict, violence and economic hardship to support survivors and address the drivers of GBV perpetration, in line with global evidence.⁷

c. Promote peace, tolerance and gender equality among school children and youth

through school-linked peace clubs. This approach has been implemented successfully in contexts such as Nigeria, Pakistan and Afghanistan to address GBV and harmful gender norms within a wider pro-peace framework, and has been proven to reduce both levels of violence experienced by children as well as risk factors for perpetration (men) and experience (women) of GBV in later life.⁸ Women activists in Yemen are already promoting peace in schools and with youth so this would fit well with their existing activity.

3. Support women's roles in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and mediation

Existence of traditional norms regarding women's roles in resolving conflict offers an opportunity, but may be under threat. Women activists also cite a lack of recognition of women's contributions to conflict prevention, peace and stability as an obstacle. There may be space to do more to sustain networks between women working in this area, share ideas and experiences and encourage further action. We recommend that the UK considers:

⁵ See: <https://www.calltoactiongbv.com/> (10.06.2018).

⁶ The Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) is a series of crucial actions required to respond to reproductive health needs at the onset of every humanitarian crisis. See UNFPA for more: <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/what-minimum-initial-service-package> (10.06.2018).

⁷ Multiple studies have highlighted that interventions which work with both men and women, intervene at the relationship level (i.e. with couples), or work holistically with the whole community, are significantly more effective in preventing GBV than single-intervention or women/men-only engagement. See for example: <http://www.whatworks.co.za/documents/publications/4-effectiveness-of-interventions-to-prevent-violence-against-women-and-girls/file> (10.06.2018).

⁸ See for example DFID's Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP) Peace Clubs model: <http://www.nsrp-nigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSRP-How-to-Guide-Setting-up-and-Running-Peace-Clubs.pdf> or "Right to Play" programming as part of violence prevention work in Pakistan: <http://www.whatworks.co.za/about/global-programme/global-programme-projects/item/299-preventing-violence-against-women-and-girls-through-school-based-programmes> (10.06.2018).

a. Promoting awareness of women’s contributions to peace, stability and development through dialogue and strategic communication, in collaboration with local women activists. This could include local dialogue meetings, billboards, radio and TV discussions on the positive roles women have played during the conflict, profiling local women role models, and engaging influential men in discussion – traditional, religious and political leaders. It could also involve working with moderate imams on religious education, shown to be a protective factor against radicalisation. Such work should consider risk of backlash and seek to promote positive examples of men and women working for peace and stability together.

b. Establishing local ‘family centres’ with female staff only as a place women can turn to for advice and support, together with local activists and with the support of local authorities. We found that there are no places women can turn to for help outside of the family, and yet women supporting other women is generally considered acceptable.

c. Supporting and promoting gender-sensitive peace dialogue. Many Yemeni activists speak positively of “dialogue tents” set up during the National Dialogue Conference (NDC). Such an initiative could be revived in partnership with local women activists and CSOs, integrating a focus on family-related issues and conflicts which are considered acceptable for women to engage in.

Risks of doing harm should be carefully considered in relation to any direct support to women as mediators or in conflict resolution. In some areas, such as where women are capitalising on tribal norms and customs, external support may undermine local legitimacy.

4. Support women’s roles in civil society and local governance structures

Even operating under hardline Islamist restrictions, women have some space and agency to support victims of conflict and sustain communities. Preserving and if possible expanding this space to operate is essential. Local governance actors are also relatively open to, and would benefit from, women’s greater participation in decision-making processes. Options to consider include:

a. Provide broad-based capacity-building support to civil society, such as establishing civil society resource centres where CSOs can access IT, training and technical advice on fundraising or implementation; facilitating peer networking between civil society leaders (technology and in-person meetings); and providing small-scale financial and in-kind support where this can be done without risking capture.

b. Provide targeted support to women activists and CSOs. This could include training in peacebuilding and conflict mediation, and peer networking between women activists. Such support would complement the above and could be integrated into a wider civil society support programme or be linked to a women, peace and security initiative.

c. Promote inclusive local governance structures through small-scale support to local councils and similar structures which incentivises the inclusion of women in leadership and decision-making processes. The Social Fund for Development (SFD) has successfully implemented a ‘microfund’ of this kind to some local councils – this could be a model to support in more stable areas.

5. Strengthen economic recovery and jobs

Greater economic empowerment of women is a common, positive effect of conflict, but in some cases reverses after the re-establishment of peace. Preserving the space for women’s participation in economic activity will require active support. Inclusive economic

development will also address conflict drivers in Yemen.⁹ We recommend that the UK and other donors:

a. Support inclusive economic recovery and livelihoods programming, in partnership with women-led CSOs and with targeted support to women. Unemployment/loss of livelihoods is having a direct impact on GBV as well as contributing to vulnerability to extremism in more unstable areas. Inclusive (men and women, youth, not just IDPs/former combatants) livelihoods programming, incorporating direct or ring-fenced support targeted towards women to sustain positive changes to economic roles, would contribute to stability and gender empowerment in communities worst affected by conflict and deteriorating living conditions.

6. Support women as security actors

In some areas women are playing an active role in local security. Research findings suggest that some communities are supportive of women's greater engagement in local security, particularly in relation to GBV and family matters. Options for UK support include:

a. Establish and support women, peace and security fora in more stable areas. This could be a multi-agency forum bringing together women activists and civil society leaders with security agencies, humanitarian response and protection agencies, local government and community leaders to address local issues related to women, peace and security. Discussing child and youth security would be a locally appropriate entry point. This has been supported successfully by the UK in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo and could work in Ma'rib, with potential to expand elsewhere.

b. Support to women in the police: Where present, women police officers could be trained and supported to provide more effective security on the street for women, address family issues and respond to GBV. Small-scale, piloted support where the community seems receptive and policewomen are already present (e.g. Ma'rib city) could sow the seeds for larger scale community safety work. Strategic communications work on women's roles and GBV could also incorporate positive images of policewomen.

c. As part of longer-term security and justice programming in more stable areas: establish women's sections in police stations in urban centres with a separate entrance for women, female staff, separate women's cells and bathrooms. This could be an expansion of the two activity areas above, and linked to local reform of security and justice services where possible, establishment of local Family Centres, shelter homes and support to women-led CSOs. We know that women rarely report GBV (or other crimes) due to an absence of female officers and fear of further violence from the police, and yet evidence suggests that women, particularly those most marginalised (IDPs, *muhammasheen*), would like to do so.¹⁰ This would be an important step forward in encouraging reporting and response to GBV and in strengthening women's participation in local security.

⁹ Inclusive economic development is one of five pillars within DFID's Building Stability Framework (2016), recognising that economic marginalisation is often a significant driver of conflict. This is certainly the case in Yemen, as discussed by Peter Salisbury in *National Chaos, Local Order* (2017).

¹⁰ See research on public perceptions of the security sector and police in Yemen by the Yemen Polling Center (2013: 67-8): http://www.yemenpolling.org/advocacy/upfiles/YPCPublications_Public-Perceptions-of-the-Security-Sector-and-Police-Work-in-Yemen---January-2013.pdf (10.06.2018) and from 2017 (pp. 115-8): http://www.yemenpolling.org/advocacy/upfiles/YPCPublications_YPC-Data---Perceptions-of-the-Yemeni-public-on-living-conditions-and-security-related-issues---May-2017.pdf (14.06.2018).

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

This research has validated existing knowledge of how women are affected by, involved in and responding to conflict in Yemen, whilst pointing to significant geographical variations and some important changes in each governorate. These trends and variations are summarised in the below table, which highlights our key findings, discussed in detail in Sections 2-6.

Summary of key findings: trends and geographical variations

KEY TRENDS AND FINDINGS

GBV HAS INCREASED SINCE THE CONFLICT BEGAN, IN BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE. THIS IS IN LINE WITH INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND INCLUDES DOMESTIC (VERBAL/EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL) VIOLENCE; ABDUCTION; RAPE; SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN PUBLIC SPACES (BY ARMED MEN); EARLY MARRIAGE; AND PHYSICAL THREATS AND ATTACKS TOWARDS FEMALE ACTIVISTS.

WOMEN ARE MORE ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE THAN THEY WERE BEFORE THE WAR, AS MEN HAVE BEEN INJURED/KILLED OR LOST THEIR JOBS. THIS HAS BROUGHT A SENSE OF EMPOWERMENT FOR WOMEN BUT HAS ALSO CAUSED TENSIONS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN, LEADING TO MORE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND DIVORCE.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATIONS

MA'RIB - Early marriage considered a problem "among IDPs" entering the area. Harassment in public present but not as violent or widespread (mostly verbal/emotional violence against women activists). Women considered to be unable to protect themselves in public due to their traditional "secluded" role in the community. Tribal norms and traditions perceived to protect women from violence.

TA'IZ - Numerous accounts of abduction, rape and murder, both towards women in general and activists in particular. Strong sense of fear for women going out in public to do daily chores or work. Extremist groups (Ansar al-Sharia, a Salafi group under the leadership of Abu al-Abbas, AQAP, the so called 'Islamic State') seen as main threats in public spaces.

LAHIJ - Sexual harassment, assault, abduction and rape also described as recurrent problems but less so than in Ta'iz. Women working in agriculture or out collecting firewood said to be particularly at risk, especially in rural areas.

SO WHAT: GBV should not be regarded as inevitable effect of conflict. It signifies the undermining of traditional protective norms and penetration of extremist ideologies. From international experience we know it has the potential to cause further violence, e.g. in the form of revenge, it weakens women's participation in economic activity, and peace-building and stability efforts.

MA'RIB - Women positive about new economic roles and opportunities. More women going to university than before (first university recently opened). IDP women's rights seen as undermined by new pressure on them to work and earn a living. Highest number of people mentioning increased tension between husbands and wives due to women becoming breadwinners.

TA'IZ - Sense among men that women are "taking job opportunities" from men. Highest number of negative comments, mainly from less educated men, that women should not (or cannot, due to security - Salah) work outside the home. Women are less able to go out in public due to security risks - some thought this was negative as it prevented women from working.

LAHIJ - Women positive about new economic roles and opportunities. Sense of frustration among some men that women are "taking job opportunities" from men and that a woman is becoming "too outspoken" if she goes out to work while her husband does not.

SO WHAT: Greater economic empowerment of women is a common, positive effect of conflict, but in some cases reverses after the re-establishment of peace. Preserving the space for women's participation in economic activity (and the benefits this brings to society) will require active nurturing and steps to mitigate backlash from men, whatever the optimism on the ground.

KEY TRENDS AND FINDINGS

WOMEN ARE PLAYING AN ESSENTIAL ROLE IN DELIVERING AN IMPRESSIVE LOCAL HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AND SUSTAINING COMMUNITY SERVICES AND STRUCTURES, AND THIS IS GENERALLY CONSIDERED AN ACCEPTABLE, "NATURAL" ROLE FOR WOMEN TO PLAY IN PUBLIC LIFE ACROSS YEMEN, ALTHOUGH THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS IS NOT ALWAYS RECOGNISED NOR SUFFICIENTLY SUPPORTED AND WOMEN ACTIVISTS PERCEIVE THIS AS AN OBSTACLE.

CHANGES IN THE RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENT HAVE HAD PARTICULAR EFFECTS ON WOMEN, IN PARTICULAR A RISE IN RADICAL RELIGIOUS RHETORIC AND GREATER INFLUENCE OF ISLAMIST ACTORS.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATIONS

MA'RIB - Greater focus on longer-term development work and in rebuilding basic services. Many women involved in assessing needs in the community and collaborating with local authorities to deliver services and aid. Particular discussion of supporting IDPs who have entered the area. Culture of competition between NGOs described.

TA'IZ - Focus on emergency relief and psychiatric support to people affected by trauma. Food aid a big issue discussed, particularly as a source of conflict and means for activists to gain access to communities - armed men frequently demand food aid from activists to enter an area. Community awareness of women's role in peacebuilding said to be low.

LAHIJ - Sense that people in the community are generally supportive of women's involvement in community work. Focus on women working for other women in the area. Women addressing water and health shortages, health campaigns (awareness raising about cholera etc.) and leveraging funds from local philanthropists to keep schools and health clinics open.

SO WHAT: Even operating under hardline Islamist restrictions, women have some space and agency to support victims of conflict and sustain communities; they are negotiating access with numerous armed groups, and finding creative ways to meet need. Preserving and if possible expanding this space is essential.

MA'RIB - Increase in Qur'an education sessions and lectures discussing what is and is not permissible for women. Increase in radical rhetoric opposing women working, style of dress or going out without guardian. Increasing control and influence of Islah Party and affiliated imams.

TA'IZ - Greatest increase in radical rhetoric and extremism, focusing on women's dress, freedom of movement and working alongside men. Increasing calls to separate boys and girls at school and university. Increase in physical attacks and threats to women activists by extremist groups. Attacks against and murders of moderate imams and clerics.

LAHIJ - Most positive picture of religious changes. Reports of extremist discourse decreasing. More women described as engaging in religious education.

SO WHAT: Islamist attempts to consolidate power and enforce restrictive laws on women are not universally accepted, and have been successfully resisted in some areas. Religious education and working with moderate imams on women-related projects may be a key part of successful resistance.

KEY TRENDS AND FINDINGS

WOMEN ACTIVISTS ARE COOPERATING EFFECTIVELY WITH LOCAL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES AND LOCAL MALE LEADERS ARE RECEPTIVE TO WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS, ALTHOUGH THEY ARE STILL GENERALLY EXCLUDED FROM FORMAL DECISION-MAKING AND POLITICAL STRUCTURES.

WOMEN ARE ENGAGED IN RESOLVING CONFLICTS AT DIFFERENT LEVELS AND PUBLICLY PROMOTING PEACE, AND ARE INVOLVED IN PROVIDING SECURITY IN A LIMITED WAY IN SOME AREAS.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATIONS

MA'RIB - Generally positive picture of local government continuing to operate and cooperate with women activists. Some women present in governorate government offices. Proposal by female official for government gender quota.

TA'IZ - Most political leaders supportive of women running for local council or working in local services, including those affiliated with Islah and GPC.

LAHIJ - Local authorities supportive of women in public office but focused on "women's issues" or "family issues". Women's political activism discussed, and encouraged by Islah-affiliated leaders. Particular challenges in cooperating with local authorities in al-Hawta.

SO WHAT: Women are playing a leading role in sustaining local services and meeting community needs. Local governance actors are open to, and would benefit from, their greater participation in formal decision-making processes.

MA'RIB - Strongest role for women in conflict mediation. Many positive stories of women influencing or negotiating agreements between tribal groups, sometimes over resources (e.g. water). Women capitalising on local norms through symbolic acts to call for ceasefires/peace. Women helping at local checkpoints and fighting highway robbery. Women police reported to be present in Ma'rib city.

TA'IZ - Highest number of negative comments from regular men and women that women "play no role outside the household". Activists described limited community awareness of women's contributions to peace. Political, religious and traditional leaders generally positive about women resolving conflicts and promoting peace/non-violence. Women helping to address conflicts over local roads and services.

LAHIJ - Particular discussion of women resolving conflict among women or at a domestic level. Fewer examples of women mediating disputes over resources. Women also described as promoting peace but mostly among other women. Women reported to have joined local security services (police and similar informal initiatives) in a number of areas.

SO WHAT: Existence of traditional norms regarding women's roles in resolving conflict has been useful, but may be under threat now. There may be space to do more to sustain networks between women working in this area, share ideas and experiences and encourage further action.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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