



# Overcoming the barriers to an interlinked three-track peace process in Yemen

## Overview

This learning brief explores the barriers and opportunities to pursuing an interlinked three-track peace process in Yemen. It brings together the experiences of actors working in the three peacebuilding ‘tracks’ to identify the barriers at each level, and draws on the knowledge of these actors to set out clear, relevant and actionable recommendations for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen (OESGY) and the donor community moving forward. To our knowledge, this is the first report of its kind for Yemen.

The brief is based on key informant interviews and consultations with 40 actors across Yemen. These include women and youth peacebuilders in Ta’iz, Amran and Aden engaged in Track 3 peacebuilding activities, and national and international actors engaged in Track 1 and Track 2 activities.

The brief begins by setting out the key findings and recommendations from this research. More detailed recommendations are presented in boxes at the end of each subsequent section. The brief covers:

- The rationale for pursuing an interlinked three-track peace process in Yemen
- Barriers and opportunities to achieving an interlinked three-track peace process in Yemen
  - Barriers to and recommendations for linking Track 3 to Track 1
  - Barriers to and recommendations for linking Track 3 to Track 2
  - Barriers to and recommendations for enhancing impact following grassroots engagement

## Key findings and recommendations

1. At present, there is an acute lack of communication channels between the tracks, which prevents the grassroots from being able to meaningfully engage with and inform Track 2 recommendations and Track 1 discussions.

**Recommendation: OESGY and the donor community should encourage the development of communication channels between Track 3 and the other tracks.**

2. Funding and support are key to ensuring these communication channels are designed and managed effectively.

**Recommendation: OESGY and the donor community should fund and support the development and management of these communication channels.**

3. The existence of bridges is not enough to ensure the meaningful participation of the grassroots. Relevant actors must utilise these communication channels in order for them to become effective mechanisms for grassroots engagement.

**Recommendation: OESGY and the donor community should incentivise the use of these bridges by relevant actors.**

4. Without clear information about which topics are likely to be discussed at Track 1, Track 2 and Track 3, organisations will not be able to develop substantive recommendations that are relevant to negotiations.

**Recommendation: OESGY and the donor community should provide clear guidance to Track 2 and Track 3 organisations about how they can enhance their impact following the development of these channels.**

Women and youth working at the grassroots level (Track 3) on activities that contribute towards local-level peace have invaluable knowledge and understanding of the needs of women and youth on the ground. If engaged meaningfully, this could both enrich discussions and recommendations at Track 2 level and enhance Track 1’s ability to build sustainable and equitable peace. There is appetite from actors in all three tracks to incorporate Track 3 perspectives into the peace

process. While barriers exist to achieving this, they are not insurmountable. With commitment, political will, creativity, and cooperation, the experiences of women and youth at the grassroots level can be meaningfully incorporated into peacebuilding at Track 1 and Track 2 in Yemen.

**A note on ‘meaningful participation’:** The physical presence of women and youth in Track 1 and 2 is not enough to constitute ‘meaningful participation’. Meaningful participation requires that the experiences of women and youth on the ground are used to inform recommendations made at Track 2 and decisions made at Track 1. Thus, their physical presence may be necessary, but it is not sufficient. Actors at Track 1 and 2 must engage in systematic, genuine and sustained communication with those at the grassroots because:

- Sustained and genuine engagement is key to building the confidence and trust of the grassroots in the peace process. This enhances the likelihood that peace agreements will hold in the medium-long term. If this trust is weak or broken, it increases the risk of renewed armed conflict.
- Systematic engagement with a variety of stakeholders at the grassroots level is key to ensuring a balanced and accurate representation of the needs and demands of a variety of grassroots stakeholders.

## The rationale for pursuing an interlinked three-track peace process in Yemen

**The three ‘tracks’ are broadly distinguished as follows:**

**Track 1:** Within this track, political elites and decision makers at the national and international level engage to negotiate ‘high level’ peace agreements such as ceasefires and peace treaties. Low levels of trust between actors backed by armed groups make the negotiation of power-sharing agreements complex and often slow. In Yemen, this complexity is exacerbated by the involvement of international powers. Official negotiations between the parties in conflict have stalled. The last Track 1 peace consultations took place in Stockholm in December 2018.

**Track 2:** Within this track, civil society leaders, local government, private sector representatives, researchers and other influential personalities with open channels to Track 1 engage in discussions parallel to and in advance of Track 1 activities. These discussions are often facilitated by the UN and other international organisations. One of the key roles of Track 2 is to bring actors trusted by the parties in conflict together informally, to build trust between them, and to identify their priorities and red lines prior to the Track 1 negotiations. At this level, activities include drafting the terms of ‘high level’ peace agreements and providing recommendations for how to stabilise volatile political situations. Track 2 actors also play a crucial role in ensuring that these drafts and recommendations are informed by the needs of those on the ground. This is essential, since ‘high-level’ agreements are unlikely to hold in the medium-long term unless they have buy-in from – and reflect the needs of – the wider population. While Track 1 activities have largely come to a halt in Yemen, Track 2 activities remain active.

**Track 3:** Within this track, local leaders, officials and grassroots organisations engage in local dispute resolution and activities to enhance social cohesion within communities. These actors are in a unique position to identify the needs of the communities in which they work and to provide ideas about how these needs can be met. Collectively, these experiences provide a nuanced picture of the concerns of the population, reflecting differences that may exist between geographies and social categories.<sup>1</sup> In the context of Yemen, this track is very active. Track 3 actors show astounding resilience, continuing their work in the face of multiple and considerable barriers.

<sup>1</sup> The term ‘social categories’ refers to groups whose identity features cause them to have particular experiences and needs. Such social categories include but are not restricted to, men, women, youth, tribes, religious groups, people with disabilities, and ethnic groups. These categories are rarely homogenous and often intersect. Understanding the needs and priorities of these intersecting groups is key to establishing sustainable and equitable peace.

The three-track approach to peacebuilding recognises that, since conflict occurs at multiple levels of society, sustainable peacebuilding requires engagement at each of these levels. **Our findings show that peacebuilding in Yemen has largely taken a pillar approach with regard to the three tracks.** While all three tracks are active, in many cases they function independently of one another, with limited channels for communication between them. This is especially the case between Track 3 and the other tracks. **Lessons from peace processes elsewhere show that strong bridges**

**between the three tracks are key to achieving sustained and equitable peace.**<sup>1</sup> This recognises that ‘peace’ is more than the absence of fighting by armed groups. In order for peace to be sustainable and equitable, everyone must benefit from the cessation of hostilities. There can be no sustainable, positive peace where the violence previously experienced during conflict is allowed to play out in different spheres, including in new forms of physical violence or economic, social or political conflict.

When the experiences of women at the grassroots level do not inform ‘high level’ peace agreements, the signing of these agreements consistently leads to: a) an increase in violence against women, b) their political disenfranchisement and c) the economic exclusion of women at all levels of society.<sup>2</sup> **Research over the past 20 years has concretely established that the meaningful participation of women at the grassroots and other levels of society builds stronger and more durable peace.**<sup>3</sup> This is because it “broadens the peace dividends beyond the fighting parties, engaging a constituency who can promote social acceptance of the peace deal”.<sup>4</sup> This reduces the chance of a relapse into conflict. While a similarly comprehensive study on the inclusion of other identity groups such as youth has not been done to our knowledge, there are strong grounds to expect that similar findings would be true.

## Barriers and opportunities for achieving an interlinked three-track peace process in Yemen

**At present, there are limited formal opportunities for Track 3 actors to contribute to Track 1 or Track 2 activities.** Of the 18 individuals working in Track 3 consulted in this study, only one had participated in an official engagement about peacebuilding with Track 1 actors – the National Dialogue Conference held in Sana’a. Six individuals had directly engaged with Track 2 actors, although it was not clear what this entailed. Participation was arranged through personal networks, links to international NGOs or women’s roles within a political party. Of these seven individuals, only four felt their engagement had any influence. Of those who had not directly engaged with Track 1 or Track 2 actors, only one woman felt able to influence them – through her advocacy efforts regarding the release of prisoners.

**The Track 3 actors spoke of their appetite to contribute their experiences to the peace process.** They raised frustrations about the lack of communication channels between the tracks and perceptions that there was a lack of political will from Track 1 and Track 2 actors to meaningfully engage with the knowledge they could offer. Some also recognised that they lacked skills in areas such as advocacy, and were keen to receive training to strengthen these.

## Barriers to – and recommendations for – linking Track 3 to Track 1

**Individuals working with Track 1 actors spoke of their appetite for incorporating the experiences of grassroots women and youth into Track 1 negotiations and outputs when these recommence.** They identified the need for the following to achieve this:

- Develop creative ways to communicate with the grassroots to overcome the challenges of access to Yemen.
- Request clear and substantial demands from Track 3 to enable concrete recommendations for Track 1.
- Manage the expectations of Track 3 regarding the nature and pace of change at Track 1, to prevent disillusionment among Track 3 actors.

**They also acknowledged that this appetite to engage with Track 3 is not shared by all Track 1 actors.** The perception that there is a lack of political will from Track 1 to meaningfully engage with the experiences of Track 3 was shared by stakeholders at both Track 2 and Track 3. This lack of appetite stems from the barriers laid out below.

### Barrier 1: Lack of Political Will

**The parties in conflict are resistant to engaging with Track 3 because they see it as irrelevant to their interests.** They have also previously rejected opportunities from OSESGY to have more seats within their delegations so long as

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<sup>1</sup> Elgueta, S, 2018: Pp. 22. During the Guatemalan peace accords, the formation of the Asamblea de la Sociedad Civil (ASC, Civil Society Assembly) enabled civil society groups to discuss the peace accords in parallel to the formal peace process. The ASC comprised of victims’ and human rights organisations, trade unions, churches, indigenous organisations and universities. While they could not veto the accords, they made multiple recommendations and were key drivers of the agreements which focused on indigenous people’s and women’s rights. The ASC also proved valuable to the groups it comprised, supporting women’s and indigenous people’s rights groups to establish themselves.

<sup>2</sup> UN Women, 2015: 169

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

they are filled by women as this was seen as an affront. This suggests that the parties themselves will not be a successful mechanism for pursuing grassroots participation.

**Social norms in Yemen, which frame women and youth as ‘ignorant’, cause a perception that they are unable to add value to discussions.** Actors across the tracks raised concerns about the limited power that women and youth within the parties have to influence decision-making. This suggests that even if they were included in a party’s delegations, this inclusion would not constitute meaningful participation.

**The Houthis claim to represent Yemeni youth because they have a young membership.** While the voices of militarised youth are present within the parties, those of civilian youth are not. This sends the message that the only route for the voices of youth to be heard is through their participation in violence. One interviewee explained, “*Violence, weapons and power is the voice that is listened to lately since the outbreak of war*”. Further, given the large number of youth party members who are fighting in the war, Track 2 actors highlighted the importance of comprehensive disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes once the war ends. Without this, they argue that “*the next generation of political class will understand nothing of [human] rights and civil issues, as all are combat militia*”. Civilian women and youth should therefore be included in the design of DDR programmes to ensure that they reflect the concerns and priorities of the civilian population.

**Recommendation: OSESGY and the donor community should compel the parties in conflict to engage with Track 3.** This could involve attaching the millions of post-conflict reconstruction funds to the requirement of including women and youth in the peace talks. However, a material dividend alone is unlikely to ensure meaningful engagement. Instead, Track 1 actors must understand that engagement with Track 3 is key to the sustainability of peace agreements. Lessons learned from other peace processes could be drawn on to achieve this. This requires considered and efficient coordination between international actors to ensure that their messaging to the parties in conflict around the importance of grassroots engagement is consistent and comprehensive.

**Recommendation: OSESGY and the donor community should encourage the parties to engage meaningfully with their female and youth members and develop links between their members and the grassroots.** In order to achieve meaningful female and youth representation in a future civilian government, female and youth members of the parties must be granted decision-making power and must represent the needs of those on the ground.

**Recommendation: OSESGY and the donor community should fund leadership training for women within parties and those who are heads of civil society organisations.** This training should be founded in feminist leadership principles and alternatives to patriarchy and militarism. It should be tailored to and reflect the cultural background and vision of peace of the women being trained, rather than imposing Western or patriarchal expectations of what a leader should look like and say.

**Recommendation: DDR programs should take into account the dangers of a militarised youth growing up to be the new leaders of the country.** These programmes should be designed to include training in human rights and good governance.

## **Barrier 2: The peace talks currently exclude peacebuilders**

**While discussions during the peace negotiations, such as those regarding the logistics of demobilising armed groups, may not always require civilian input, there are times where they will.** Some Track 1 actors believe that the peace talks do not require the input of civilians because they involve discussions that are not relevant to them, such as around the logistics of demobilising armed groups. They argue that the time for the participation of civilians will come after the weapons have been put down. However, in many cases these discussions are relevant to civilians. For example, the relocation of armed groups may have significant implications for the women living in areas near the relocation, with the presence of armed groups increasing the risk of gender-based violence (GBV) against them. Equally, discussions around potential future power-sharing agreements will likely shape both the mechanisms of governance in a transition process and possibly also thereafter, and the priorities of a transitional government when it comes to addressing the needs of the people and ensuring the necessary stability to safeguard the transition process. Women and youth are well placed to inform such deliberations.

**Representatives of Track 3, with a strong understanding of the reality on the ground, are best placed to identify the issues that need their contribution as they arise.** Since it may not be immediately clear to Track 1 actors which

issues require engagement with Track 3, Track 3 must be represented at the negotiating table. Once these issues are identified, OSESGY could host further break-out sessions where a wider group of civilian grassroots representatives are able to discuss and make meaningful recommendations, as necessary.

**Increasing the visibility of the work of Track 3 actors could contribute to increasing their perceived legitimacy among Track 1 actors.** However, some actors highlighted that the space for women and youth to carry out peacebuilding work beyond humanitarian aid provision is continuing to reduce due to political pressure. As a result, many grassroots women and youth are forced to conduct their activities in secret to reduce the risk of accusations regarding their political affiliation and subsequent arrest. Therefore, any attempts to increase the visibility of their work must be sensitive to the security needs of Track 3 actors.

**Recommendation: OSESGY and the donor community should encourage the creation of space for grassroots women and youth to be represented during the peace talks to ensure they can contribute where necessary.**

**Recommendation: OSESGY and the donor community should lobby those in positions of power to enable Track 3 peacebuilders to engage in Track 3 activities without fear of harassment or arrest.**

**Recommendation: OSESGY and the donor community should raise the visibility of Track 3 actors to add legitimacy to their contribution at Track 1, whilst remaining sensitive to their security needs.**

### **Barrier 3: The representatives of Track 3 have, to date, had no clear mandate to represent the views of those they claim to represent**

**OSESGY and the donor community should encourage Track 3 representatives at Track 2 to be explicitly apolitical and make their mandate to represent the grassroots clear.** Due to the low levels of trust between parties in conflict, the inclusion of non-party affiliated individuals without a clear mandate to represent the views of grassroots women and youth is met with resistance. Previous rounds of Track 1 discussions, such as those in Stockholm, show that the women advising the UN Special Envoy were met with suspicion, their political affiliation was called into question, and their right to be at the table was challenged by Track 1 actors because they were civilian women and so perceived to have nothing of substance to add to discussions. They were consequently de-facto excluded from negotiations. Actors across the three tracks also raised questions about the mandate of those women included in Stockholm to represent the views of grassroots women, since their links to the grassroots were unclear. Similar concerns have been raised regarding youth participation.

**If these organisations had a stronger mandate, OSESGY would be in a better position to utilise them.** For example, it could engage with these organisations and their networks on crucial matters relevant to the peace process to ensure that the needs and ideas – as well as the regional diversity – of Yemeni society are taken into account.

**OSESGY and the donor community must recognise that ‘women’ and ‘youth’ are not homogenous groups and so will not be able to provide unified views in all cases.** Actors at Track 2 and 3 highlighted frustrations at the apparent expectation that ‘women’ and ‘youth’ would always be in agreement and thus able to provide a unified response. OSESGY and the donor community should encourage the development of – and should engage with – a variety of organisations that represent the diversity of experiences and opinions among women and youth in Yemen.

**Recommendation: OSESGY and the donor community should encourage Track 3 representatives at Track 2 to be explicitly apolitical and make their mandate to represent the grassroots clear.** A clear mandate requires broad grassroots support, transparency during the selection of representatives and a feedback mechanism for grassroots organisations to ensure that the mandate of these representatives to represent the grassroots is maintained. Communication and coordination among Track 3 organisations prior to the selection of representatives may improve grassroots support for these representatives.

**Recommendation: OSESGY and the donor community should engage with a variety of organisations mandated to represent different women and youth.** Since ‘women’ and ‘youth’ are not a homogenous group, they cannot be expected to present unified ideas at all times. It is therefore important to encourage the development of and engagement with a variety of groups to reflect the diversity of experiences and opinions among women and youth in Yemen.

## An exception: Mothers of Abductees Association

The Mothers of Abductees Association presents an example of where an organisation working primarily at the Track 3 level has been able to participate in Track 1 and Track 2 activities. Interviews with Track 1 and Track 2 actors, as well as with a member of the Mothers of Abductees Association, identify the following factors as key to their successful engagement at the Track 1 level:

- **Apolitical stance:** Despite the political nature of issues around abductees and the release of prisoners, the Mothers of Abductees have insisted on taking an apolitical stance. This has allowed them to stay above party politics and to demonstrate that the issues they are engaging with provide common ground across party lines.
- **Clear and substantive demands:** The Mothers of Abductees have consistently provided clear, substantive, and feasible demands to Track 1 actors.
- **Strong skills in leadership, advocacy and negotiation:** The Mothers of Abductees include members with strong leadership, advocacy and negotiation skills. For example, they conduct stakeholder mapping to identify key decision makers with influence, and then develop targeted advocacy that articulates clear messages to those influential actors. They also draw on members with natural charisma and a passion for the cause to deliver these messages. Their membership and leaders include educated women with professional legal backgrounds.
- **Recognition of the nuance of prisoner exchange:** The Mothers of Abductees ensure that their messaging reflects the nuance of wider issues around prisoner exchange. For example, they are clear that they support parties in refusing to exchange an abductee with an imprisoned soldier. Instead, they demand that all parties release all those who have been kidnapped, and that they put an end to abductions.

## Barriers to – and recommendations for – linking Track 3 to Track 2

**Due to multiple barriers, in practice, neither of the organisations intended to represent grassroots women do so to the degree intended.** There are two main women's organisations intended to represent the experiences of grassroots women to OSESGY and other Track 1 and 2 organisations: The Yemeni Women's Pact (Tawafuq) and the Women's Solidarity Network (WSN).

- **Tawafuq:** The members of Tawafuq that we spoke to acknowledge that the group's membership consists primarily of older, elite women from within and outside of Yemen who are not closely linked to the grassroots. They also recognised that, by being closely associated with UN Women and acting as a consultative body for OSESGY, Tawafuq finds it difficult to hold OSESGY to account. These concerns echo the perceptions of interviewees from outside of Tawafuq, at both the Track 2 and Track 1 level.
- **The Women's Solidarity Network:** The WSN was founded in order to respond to the challenges faced by Tawafuq. However, their members feel that there is resistance from OSESGY to engage with them. While the WSN has a large grassroots membership, it faces criticism from within and outside the organisation that it is led by an unelected group of older, elite women from the diaspora. Concerns were raised from within and outside of the organisation that this leadership does not meaningfully engage with their members or conduct capacity building that could empower them to represent themselves in Track 2 activities or to actors at the Track 1 level.

Several Track 2 actors indicated that there are other organisations working at the Track 2 level that are engaged to a limited extent with grassroots women. They also acknowledged that, to date, this engagement has not been as frequent as they would like.

**Organisations engaged directly with grassroots youth from Yemen highlighted that there is also a lack of opportunities for youth to engage with or represent themselves during Track 2 activities.** Concerns were raised that:

- Those youth who are able to engage with Track 1 actors and at the Track 2 level come from elite families and are often members of the diaspora.
- Young people from Yemen are instrumentalised by the organisations or political parties that facilitate their engagement at the Track 2 level. As a result, it can be difficult to determine whether the views they present are their own or reflect the views of the organisations they are members of.

These concerns are exacerbated by the lack of formal entities (such as Tawafuq and the WSN for grassroots women), which are specifically mandated to represent the views of Yemeni youth at the Track 2 level or to Track 1 actors.

### Barrier 1: Some Track 2 organisations lack commitment to engage with Track 3

While there is a genuine desire across many Track 2 organisations to engage more systematically with women and youth at the grassroots level, this appetite is not shared by all. At present, organisations representing women and youth spend too much time 'looking upwards' and not enough time 'looking downwards'. For example, as well as demanding 30% representation in Track 1 negotiations, Track 2 organisations must listen to the needs and ideas of women and youth on the ground and incorporate these into their recommendations at Track 2.

**Recommendation: OSESGY and the donor community should make clear their expectation that Track 2 actors engage with Track 3 – and incentivise this engagement.**

### Barrier 2: Track 3 actors face logistical barriers to engaging with Track 2

Track 3 actors face the following logistical barriers to engaging with Track 2:

- **Security risks:** Track 3 actors are at risk of harassment and arrest due to closing civil society space. They are consequently subject to restrictions on movement and often have to lie about their activities in order to pass check points.
- **Social norms:** Women in Yemen are restricted by social norms that require them to travel with a male guardian (*mahram*). Care responsibilities, which disproportionately fall to women, also restrict the ability of women to engage in Track 2 activities when they are invited to participate.
- **Financial and logistical barriers:** The lack of funding to cover the costs of travel or phone credit also prevents women and youth from engaging with Track 2 actors. Limited internet access makes video calls difficult, although not impossible.
- **Personal networks:** Women and youth working at Track 3 in Yemen are most likely to engage with Track 2 and 1 actors through their personal networks. This severely limits the ability of those without personal networks to feed into discussions at these levels.
- **Advocacy skills:** Several interviewees raised concerns that most Track 3 actors in Yemen lacked skills in advocacy, which are key to Track 2 discussions. This is understood to be partially because a large proportion of Track 3 activities focus on delivering humanitarian aid in Yemen,<sup>5</sup> which requires different skills to advocacy.<sup>6</sup>
- **Understanding the issues being discussed at Track 2 and Track 1 levels:** Several interviewees raised concerns that many Track 3 representatives lack an understanding of the broader issues being discussed in the peace process. They highlighted the importance of having a strong foundational knowledge of these broader issues to ensure they are able to relate their individual experiences to these discussions. They explained that without this knowledge, women and youth representatives often remain silent in meetings, which adds to the misconception that they are unable to contribute valuable insights to discussions.
- **English language skills:** Because many of the Track 2 discussions are hosted in English, some interviewees raised concerns that a lack of English skills would pose a barrier to the meaningful engagement of Track 3 actors in Track 2 meetings.

**Recommendation: The donor community should allocate funding to projects focused on the development and management of creative communication channels between Track 2 and Track 3 that overcome the aforementioned barriers that Track 3 actors face.** These programmes could include:

- Training opportunities for Track 3 actors to better equip them for engagement at Track 2. This training should include resources in Arabic.
- Designing creative ways for Track 3 actors to engage with Track 2 that limit exposure to security risks.
- Covering the cost of travel, Wi-Fi and phone credit to ensure that communication channels between Tracks 2 and 3 remain open and accessible at both ends.

<sup>5</sup> This is likely due to a) the lack of funding available for other peacebuilding activities, and b) the risks of engaging in activities associated with building peace.

<sup>6</sup> These advocacy skills include: effective stakeholder mapping; the ability to shape and effectively articulate clear and substantive demands to a targeted audience; an understanding of the logistics of the peace process, for example what is discussed at Track 2 and Track 1; realistic expectations about the timeframe for change and feasibility of demands; coordination in advance of meetings with relevant actors to ensure that the messages are delivered with impact; etiquette within meetings; and how to collaborate with others to build ideas together.

### Barrier 3: Track 2 actors lack the funding to systematically build and manage communication channels with Track 3

**Lessons from international donors and NGOs working with the grassroots show that the aforementioned challenges to Track 3 engagement can be resolved.** Creative solutions include the use of online platforms, YouTube, personal telephones and mobile telephone apps. These enable communication between the tracks without requiring Track 3's physical presence. Track 3 actors were also keen to network with Track 2 actors more broadly – online networking sessions are a way to help build the networks of Track 3 actors. Emerging evidence from the COVID-19 response shows that some of these solutions are already being put into practice across Yemen. While the move towards information technology risks restricting some from participating, it also offers new forms of influence if supported by the international community. Any move towards online activism must recognise and mitigate against the exclusion of marginalised groups.

**Creative solutions require funding.** In order for these communication channels to be comprehensive and workable, Track 2 needs funding to set them up and manage them. Donors could play a key role in funding these communications channels and in covering the logistical costs of Wi-Fi and phone credit for Track 3 actors to ensure that the communication channels are open and accessible from both ends.

**Recommendation: The donor community should allocate funding to projects focused on ensuring Track 2 organisations can engage systematically with Track 3.** Without funding and support, Track 2 actors face multiple barriers to building and managing communication channels with Track 3 actors, which limits their ability to provide this sought-after representation.

### Barrier 4: In many cases, Track 2 actors lack the trust of Track 3 actors, who believe their engagement will not be mutually beneficial

**Some Track 3 actors believe that when Track 2 organisations engage with them, this engagement disproportionately benefits Track 2 organisations.** They describe being used as “porters”, to do the dangerous work for Track 2 actors, which the Track 2 actors benefit from in terms of funding and a space at higher level discussions, without offering support to Track 3 actors in return.

**One way to build trust is to link up with programmes providing support to the grassroots.** Lessons learned from donors and international NGOs working with grassroots women and youth in Yemen suggest that linking up with programmes providing support to communities at the grassroots is one way to ensure that those engaging in discussions with Track 2 organisations feel they are benefitting from the peace process.

**Another way to build trust is to manage the expectations of Track 3 actors about the nature and pace of change at Track 1 level.** Track 2 must be clear about how discussions with Track 3 actors can feed into the peace process at higher levels prior to engaging with them to prevent disillusionment.

**Recommendation: OSESGY and the donor community should support the building of trust between Track 2 and Track 3 to ensure that engagement is mutually beneficial.** This could include helping Track 2 actors link up with implementation partners providing direct support to communities.

## Barriers to – and recommendations for – enhancing impact following engagement

### Barrier 1: Going beyond calls for representation

Track 2 and Track 3 actors should develop substantive demands in order to enhance their impact on Track 2 recommendations and Track 1 discussions. While a focus on 30% representation at the Track 1 level is important, OSESGY and international donors are keen to hear other ideas about how to support women and youth on the ground, and what Track 3 actors feel should be included in a peace treaty.

### Barrier 2: Information as key to meaningful engagement

Track 2 and Track 3 actors face a barrier to producing substantive demands that are relevant to Track 1 discussions, given the resistance from Track 1 actors to share the topics being discussed at this level. While the parties in conflict

are often resistant to sharing information about the content of negotiations, it is important they do so in order to: a) ensure that recommendations made by Track 2 and 3 are relevant, and b) build the trust of the grassroots in the peace process, which is key to achieving sustainable peace.

### Barrier 3: Coordination as key to information sharing

Track 2 organisations must develop communication channels between themselves and with organisations working with the grassroots in activities beyond the scope of peacebuilding. At present there is limited communication between Track 2 organisations and those working outside peacebuilding with grassroots women and youth. This prevents the spread of information and hinders the understanding of the situation on the ground at Track 2. Some organisations working with women and youth on issues beyond peacebuilding are resistant to coordinate with Track 2 and Track 1 actors due to apprehension about becoming ‘politicised’ and having their work stopped or reputation tarnished. It is important that communication channels are developed which enable organisations to keep their apolitical stance in-tact.

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#### About this report:

##### Social Development Direct

Social Development Direct (SDDirect) is a leading provider of high-quality, innovative and expert social development assistance and research services. Our work in Security, Justice and Peacebuilding recognises that ‘peace’ is more than the absence of fighting by armed groups. Sustainable and equitable peace must be inclusive and benefit all members of society, including marginalised groups. Our experts have experience of conducting research, designing and implementing peacebuilding programmes, and implementing UN Security Council 1325 across conflict and post-conflict countries. We are committed to working in close partnership with local peacebuilders in all our programmes.

##### CARE International

Founded in 1945, CARE International works around the world to save lives, defeat poverty and achieve social justice. We focus our efforts on girls and women because they are hardest hit by poverty, discrimination, crises and inequality. To empower women and girls, we must therefore address their needs and enable their agency and leadership, which is why we also address food and nutrition security, climate change, and humanitarian crises – including conflict, disasters and situations of chronic insecurity — all major challenges for the world’s poor, regardless of gender.

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Suggested citation: SDDirect/CARE (2020) *Overcoming the barriers to an interlinked three-track peace process in Yemen*, SDDirect and CARE International, London, UK.

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