

## Project profile

# Enhancing women's role in peace and security in Yemen

## Background

Women have a crucial role to play in building peace amid the long-standing conflict in Yemen. Despite evidence that peace initiatives are more durable when women participate, they have largely been pushed to the margins of society throughout the war. Resurgent conservative gender norms and an increasingly polarised society have closed down the space for women to coordinate with one another, weakening existing networks of women activists and limiting their ability to participate in discussions around peace and security. Women activists are striving to gain back the momentum they built during the uprisings in 2011.

Saferworld has worked in Yemen since 2012, promoting women's political participation, holding dialogues on gender, peace and security, and publishing research covering women's participation in protests and the transition process, women's roles in the security sector and focusing on women's security concerns.

## Project approach

This is a joint project between Saferworld and Yemeni organisations Wujood Foundation for Human Security, the National Foundation for Development and Humanitarian Response, and the Yemen Polling Centre.

The project works in Aden and Ibb to empower women activists and civil society organisations to engage in local peacebuilding initiatives, raise awareness of women's peace and security concerns and highlight the part women can play in addressing them.

- We conduct **qualitative research** to understand how conflict affects women, what roles they play locally to respond to that, and how changing gender norms affect women's participation. Our research also outlines ways to enhance support for women's peacebuilding efforts.
- We support **women-led community peacebuilding initiatives** in Aden and Ibb by providing training on peacebuilding, gender and conflict analysis as well as on practical skills. The resulting initiatives are inclusive, consisting of both women and men, different age groups and people with disabilities.
- **The advocacy and awareness raising activities** we support as part of the project help share learning from the women's peacebuilding initiatives and research on gender drivers of conflict and peace with local and national authorities, civil society and international policymakers. We share recommendations, lessons learnt and positive examples through policy reports, case studies, community dialogues and experience exchange meetings.



### Project locations

Aden and Ibb governorates, Yemen

### Partners

Wujood Foundation for Human Security  
The National Foundation for Development and Humanitarian Response (NFDHR)  
The Yemen Polling Centre (YPC)

### Donors

European Union, Instrument Contributing to Security and Peace (ICSP)  
Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (N.W.O-WOTRO)  
Department for International Development (DFID)

### Project budget

€645,068 (€500,000 EU contribution)

### Project duration

30 months (2016 - 2018)\*

### Saferworld thematic area

Gender, peace and security

## Main outcomes

This project promotes a more inclusive and sustainable peace process in Yemen by empowering women and raising awareness of their rights, enhancing their political agency and highlighting the value of community activism. By building autonomous community groups in two governorates in Yemen, the project helps ensure that people can better respond to women's security concerns and advocate for peace locally.

This action also critically examines gender norms, social roles and traditions and how they enable or limit women's engagement in peacebuilding. Its inclusive approach, where women and men of all ages, backgrounds and social groups can participate, brings people together to make their communities safer and more peaceful.

## Funded by



\*Some aspects of the gender research dissemination will continue after this date as part of the Peace Research Partnership, funded by UK aid from the UK government.

Photo: Women's action group participants in Aden celebrate the results of their local peacebuilding initiatives.

## Initial findings and recommendations

Our research shows that:

- Women in Yemen are making a positive impact in sustaining community cohesion and promoting peace in their communities
- Project activities are empowering women to play a positive role in building peace at the local level.
- Individual stories are meaningful in describing change. For example, a woman from Al Mualla, Aden realised that she was being marginalised at work where her rights were being ignored, and her participation in this project gave her the confidence to request a professional transfer. Another woman from Gharafa in Ibb told us how her husband did not allow her to take part in public activities, but that she managed to reach an agreement with him where he understood the benefits of her participation in public life and ability to financially contribute to the family. A man from Mansoura in Aden also explained that he used to refuse to interact with women, but that his exposure to this project made him realise the value of a mixed environment. He said that this experience changed his approach to the women around him, both at work and at home.

Our research also provides a better understanding of how to support Yemeni women in their efforts to build peace, and how to respond to the needs of women-led initiatives.

- Current issues of concern for women relate to security and livelihoods, protecting children from the threats posed by ongoing violence, and the psychological impact of the conflict.
- Opportunities for women's participation in peacebuilding identified by participants include: campaigns against violence and arms; awareness-raising campaigns about community peace and education, particularly engaging youth; promoting the inclusion of women across all levels of decision-making, including in the security sector; psychosocial support within communities; and child protection work.
- Women-led initiatives need direct financial support and usually require only small amounts of funding. Donors should redesign the mechanisms that make funds available so that smaller groups can more easily access them.
- Women-led initiatives also need institutional support, including from the international community, in areas that are not directly related to humanitarian efforts.
- Technical and practical capacity strengthening should also be offered in areas such as psychosocial support, child protection, conflict transformation, and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration.

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives.

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