

List of acronyms

CDC	Constitution Drafting Committee
WFD	Women’s Forum for Dialogue
CDF	Civic Democratic Initiatives Support Foundation
CMI	Crisis Management Initiative
DFID	Department for International Development
EU	European Union
FSI	Failed States Index
GBV	Gender Based Violence
MAF	Mutual Accountability Framework
NAP	National Action Plan
NDC	National Dialogue Conference
PDF	Political Development Forum
SSR	Security Sector Reform
TPSD	Transitional Program for Stabilization and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

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Fatima Uqba	Country Manager, Saferworld International
Maggy Grabundija	International Gender Consultant, Transition and Peace Support Project, UNFPA
Khaled Abdulmajeed	Chief of Team, Good Governance, UNDP
Abdulhakeem Al-Ofairi	Deputy, Partners Yemen
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Jamila Raja	Chairperson, Consult Yemen and NDC member
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Foreword

While following the tumultuous events in Yemen since 2011, I have been struck by the commitment and bravery Yemeni women have shown in their efforts to ensure their voices are heard in political processes aimed at creating the foundation for a more peaceful and stable Yemen. Through their activism, women ensured a 30% presentation in the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) that gathered over 500 Yemenis from across the political spectrum to craft solutions to the most critical national issues. As a result of women's active contribution in the dialogue, the final recommendations address a number of key issues advocated by women during the NDC. As such the recommendations can be regarded as broadly inclusive – a key factor for durable peace.

Yemen is now at another critical juncture, with ongoing air strikes, deep internal rifts, and a number of peace process initiatives underway without a clear single structure or positive forward momentum being evident. In many conflict and post-conflict settings, addressing the critical national issues tends to be perceived as competing with sustained support for women's inclusion. Many of the remarkable achievements on women's participation threaten to be lost also in the midst of a violent conflict in Yemen. I am convinced that women's greater role in conflict resolution and finding a durable, peaceful solution to the current crisis are mutually reinforcing, rather than competing, priorities. This is exactly the moment to ensure the whole potential of the Yemeni society is utilised for peace and stability of the country. In this context, this publication intends to provide insights and ideas for actors involved in supporting women's meaningful inclusion in conflict resolution and political processes in Yemen.

We at CMI firmly believe that women's inclusion in conflict resolution is essential for the sustainability of peace and thus in the interest of the whole society.



Executive Director
Crisis Management Initiative

Overview and methodology

This research aims to enhance the interventions of the peacemaking community to support women's meaningful participation in political transition and conflict resolution efforts in Yemen, including those of CMI.

The activities aimed at strengthening the voice of women in the political process are part of CMI's broader efforts to support inclusive and effective conflict resolution and implementation of the political transition in Yemen. CMI has supported the work of the Women's Forum for Dialogue (WFD) – a group of 25 influential women from diverse political and geographical backgrounds – since early 2013 in order to ensure women's views and concerns are incorporated into the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) and subsequently the new constitution in an inclusive way. In 2015, the WFD members have continued cooperation to ensure women's voices are heard in the political transition and conflict resolution processes.

The research task was to conduct a mapping of Yemeni and international organisations and actors undertaking activities specifically enhancing women's meaningful participation in inclusive conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It offers practical recommendations on the optimal ways in which the WFD and other similar forums can add value to the existing networks, initiatives and organisations focusing on these issues and, in particular, engage with male decision makers to influence the inclusiveness and effectiveness of conflict resolution, peacebuilding and reconciliation approaches.

This report is based on field research comprising an integrated field survey and literature review of women's conflict resolution and peacebuilding activities implemented by eight (8) national and international organisations as well as two women activists in Yemen.

The research faced some constraints because of the dramatic deterioration of the security situation in Yemen during the assignment period (December 2014–April 2015). As a result, the KIIs were conducted with the staff still working in Yemen; however, the planned interviews with the main donors such as EU, USAID and DFID had to be replaced with a literature review. Moreover, going to the field to assess the impact of women's activities, including humanitarian interventions, and to meet women's leaders involved in community-based conflict resolution activities in Lahij and Abyan was difficult due to violent clashes between different entities. For this reason, the report represents more than a snapshot but less than a comprehensive mapping of its subject.

Executive summary

As the political environment changed due to the 2011 revolution and the following political transition, the Yemeni government, the international community and civil society decided to shift from previous approaches dominated by good governance, humanitarian and development concepts to a more direct set of conflict resolution and peacebuilding frameworks and policies. It is important to mention that the conflict resolution and peacebuilding approach in Yemen is relatively new and emerged with the formulation of the Yemeni government national plan Transitional Program for Stabilization and Development (TPSD) in 2012. Previously, the national plan was called the National Plan for Development and Poverty Reduction. When comparing the two national plans, it is clear that the Yemeni government's focus has shifted from development and poverty reduction to a development and stabilisation approach. Another issue is that stabilisation was meant to be implemented mainly during the transition period of two years (2012–2014), which was later extended to 2015 (after all, it is meant to be short-term and temporary).

Research data and analysis of recent activities and efforts in the field clarify that, after the revolution of 2011, a larger number of organisations and groups are engaged in conflict resolution and peacebuilding activities. Yet, the conflict resolution and peacebuilding approach is still new or emerging in Yemen only since 2011; most of these organisations adopted the new approach for the first time in their activities.

For example, activities implemented to enhance women's participation in the peace process, particularly the National Dialogue Conference (NDC), heavily rely on women's human rights and good governance frameworks such as women's rights to political participation, rather than the conflict resolution and peacebuilding approach. Similar to the post-conflict activities, the dominant framework for these activities is humanitarian, paying more attention to the service delivery dimension than building resilience. Conflict resolution activities exist mostly at the community level, and again, they are launched for development purposes to establish or manage socio-economic projects such as water projects.

Women's meaningful participation in transition processes requires women's representation in terms of numbers and also in terms of gender perspectives (goals and plans) in all aspects of conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes, including post-conflict recovery, political participation in conflict resolution, mediation, security sector reform and transitional justice, as well as state reconstruction. Unfortunately, the research did not identify adequate activities for women's participation amongst these different opportunities and sectors, except for their participation in the NDC process at national and community level.

Largely, the attention paid to conflict resolution and peacebuilding has been in terms of policy, such as the NDC outcomes, the new constitution draft, public finance management and army and security reforms. With regard to humanitarian assistance for post-conflict recovery, the scope of funds, activities, target areas and beneficiaries have been expanded since 2012, yet it is difficult to assess the concrete impact on women's lives due to the short time of implementation and because of multiple obstructions during Yemen's now stalled political transition.

There are many other women's advocacy groups besides WFD that were formed during the transition period and have since been working on women's political participation in the conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes. Examples of such groups include the Campaign on Con-

stitutionalizing Women Rights, the Women's Independent Network (WIN), the AMAL Coalition (coalition for politically-affiliated women), the Advocating for Women's Rights Coalition (AWRC), the Women's National Committee (WNC) and the Yemeni Women's Union (YWU).

International organisations and agencies have also played a supportive role in advocacy efforts: the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and two United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded partners, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the Responsive Governance Project (RGP). In addition, Oxfam GB and local partner organisations carried out efforts to support the integration of six women's issues in the constitution including the rights to political participation, equal citizenship, non-discriminatory legislation and a life free from violence.

Also, the Women and Youth Forum (WYF), under the Office of the UN Special Adviser on Yemen, created a document called the Women's Charter that required all NDC outcomes related to women's rights to be used as an advocacy and reference tool for others. The International Peace Institute (IPI) authored a policy paper – Towards a Constitution for All Yemenis: Women and Men – which outlines the importance of incorporating women's rights in the constitution. Moreover, a voluntary campaign #ourConstitution was running on Facebook and Twitter. There were also other advocacy activities, which were being led by women's rights activists.

These efforts include providing support for women in the NDC and CDC to back their push for the inclusion of women's rights and the political quota for women in the NDC outcomes and the constitution. All groups share the same objectives of integrating women's rights into the new constitution and ensuring the 30% women's quota. Their ways of working are similar as they depend on influencing decision makers through meetings, seminars, reaching out via the media and conducting protests in the streets.

Data emerging from this research suggest the following:

- While women's advocacy groups such as WFD are involved in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, their core work remains within diverse sectors including development, women's human rights and humanitarian issues. It is important that these groups shift their primary focus to core conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes with a clear political emphasis or link.
- Given the capacity constraints, limited financial resources and renewed violence in Yemen, it may be difficult to successfully implement the full scope of work on women's meaningful participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in this phase. It is suggested building the capacity of women groups on conflict resolution and peacebuilding and focusing on implementing certain areas related to the women's peace and security framework that represent the most prioritised and needed issues for the large population of Yemeni women.
- It was difficult to identify organisations, projects or women's groups that call themselves peacebuilders. These organisations, projects and groups perform conflict resolution and/or peacebuilding work within a wide spectrum of other sectors such as women's empowerment, development, human rights, democracy and governance. More specifically, there is a noticeable gap in capacity building on peacebuilding and conflict resolution, alliance building, and training.

- Notably, organisations, projects and women’s groups struggle to identify what ought to be valuable opportunities for working together on the ground in conflict areas to create more sustainable peace across the conflict spectrum.
- However, while there are many micro-level interventions, a systems approach to peace, which would allow for macro-level planning and cumulative impact, is not evident; plus there is no concrete coordination between women’s efforts at different levels. A systems approach¹ suggests that peacebuilding analysis and interventions are very different from those used in politics, which define national states to determine how one analyses and responds to conflict resolution and peacebuilding challenges. There is a need to draw sensible limits around one’s analysis and interventions into conflict. Peacebuilders, especially CSOs, need to look for the main drivers of a big systems change: the key factors – structural (basic systems and institutions), attitudinal (widely held group attitudes and beliefs), and transactional (how key people work together to deal with conflict) – that help explain why macro and micro activities should be linked to a systems approach to peace. In a previous attempt to integrate a systems approach to peace, WB² suggested Civil Society Functions for Peacebuilding:

- 1) protection of people’s lives,
 - 2) monitoring government activities,
 - 3) public advocacy (articulation of specific interests, especially of marginalised groups and bringing relevant issues to the public agenda),
 - 4) formation and practice of peaceful and democratic attitudes and values among citizens,
 - 5) social cohesion,
 - 6) establishing relationships to support collaboration between interest groups, institutions and the state,
 - 7) providing services to citizens or members can serve as entry points for peacebuilding.
- Such suggestive interventions are helpful for women’s advocacy groups and WFD and may light the road to re-evaluate and re-design their future work.

- In measuring the impact of the current conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts on women’s population, evaluation techniques should be as interdisciplinary as the field itself, which is beyond the scope of this research. Any field evaluation taken in the future for this purpose should be willing to experiment with unconventional indicators of social change in general and women’s social and gender power transition that efforts on conflict resolution and peacebuilding contribute and attribute. For example, resilience interventions should tap into and strengthen the capacity of households and communities to anticipate, adapt to and manage future conflict and disasters. Indicators should prove that capacities and access abilities of women, girls, boys and men in emergency preparedness, basic services including security, livelihood support, social protection, political participation and community and political leadership, are all strengthened in evidence.

1 Robert Ricigliano: Building Peace Across Borders, 2011. Available at: http://www.c-r.org/sites/default/files/Record%2022_5A%20systems%20approach%20to%20peacebuilding_2011_ENG.pdf. [Accessed 25 May 2015].

2 Civil Society and Peacebuilding. Social Development Department and Sustainable Development Network, World Bank, 2006.

It is recommended for WFD members to build their capacities in the women's peace and security frameworks, to build their organisational structure and programme as a conflict resolution and peacebuilding entity, to ally with other women's advocacy groups, to reach out to communities, media and decision makers as well as to build their leadership profile. Above all, to act as a CSO working in conflict resolution and peacebuilding and adopt a systems approach to peace.

It is hard to identify at this early stage the main issue on which the WFD should focus its advocacy work. A situation analysis needs to be carried out before determining which of the following issues could be considered for campaigning:

- **Disarmament:** WFD and other advocacy groups are advised to study or analyse the escalated violence since the post-NDC period that started with the war between the Houthis and the Yemeni government of President Hadi in September 2014; also, to study the negative implications of a nationwide war and frequent airstrikes led by Saudi Arabia and the coalition of Arab states since the end of March until the time of writing. The WFD should consider using the latest UN Security Council Resolution 2216 as a primary advocacy tool for its statements. The resolution demands all Yemeni parties, in particular the Houthis, to end the use of violence, withdraw their forces from all areas they have seized, including the capital Sana'a, and relinquish all additional arms seized from military and security institutions, including missile systems, etc. Based on that, WFD and other advocacy groups may consider playing a role in conflict prevention by adopting a disarmament campaign when the current war comes to an end.
- **Establishing a sustainable mechanism for women's participation in conflict mitigation and resolution:** During the current conflict, the UN Secretary-General appointed Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed as his new Special Envoy to Yemen. It is important for WFD and other advocacy groups to start communication with the new representative and demand an institutional mechanism for participation in conflict mitigation and resolution. This step demands large-scale planning, organising and coordination between women's advocacy groups and other CSOs, plus constant and formal support from UN Women. It may not be a practical idea to implement in the case of WFD and advocacy groups in Yemen. Therefore, it is recommended to think of a conflict resolution and peacebuilding mechanism, albeit at a small and low scale. Firstly, it is important for WFD to collaborate formally with other advocacy groups and CSOs, in particular community-based organisations, which focus on conflict resolution and peacebuilding activities, to agree on the mutual work objective and divide roles and responsibilities. Secondly, the WFD has to introduce a focused mission for the collaboration, for example, ask different groups and organisations to monitor the conflict situation amongst different stakeholders, conflict resolution activities, humanitarian assistance activities, peace talks and negotiations, etc. Then, develop bi-weekly or weekly briefs, agree on gender sensitive and conflict sensitive demands or actions, communicate those briefs and demands to the UN Special Envoy's office and create large media coverage of their regular work. This is a suggested tactic that was successfully implemented by Northern Ugandan women during the civil war (1980–1986)³, but other examples could be sought from other places.

3 Gender Dimensions of Conflict: Strategies for Sustainable Peace. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), 2005.

- Integrating gender and women's peace and security frameworks into security sector reform and transitional justice: However, the NDC outcomes said little about women and security reform and transitional justice, but WFD can still use the same outcomes to build an implementation plan with strategies of work and coordination. Yet, the plan would be more effective if WFD could receive technical support from CMI to develop such a plan. It is recommended to conduct a five-day workshop to introduce the concept, review the related NDC outcomes and identify SMART objectives and strategies.
- Revising the constitution draft from a gender sensitive and conflict prevention perspective: Context analysis reports by USAID, DFID, the EU and others identify the main elites ruling, corruption, army division, centralised governance, poverty, widespread grievances, among other things, as the main reasons behind Yemen's state fragility and renewal of conflict. There is still a big question whether or not the new constitution draft provides sustainable and preventive solutions to those drivers. For example, although Yemen is a poor country, the constitution draft has not admitted that, has not put it as a priority and has not promised to tackle the issue seriously. Social and economic rights are scattered in many parts of the constitution draft, which weakens the state approach and commitment to fight poverty and endorse development. In such cases, it is recommended to have a separate chapter in the new constitution for development, like the constitutions of other poor countries like Uganda, Ethiopia and Mali do. For WFD and other advocacy groups, it is essential to consider this point and start a critical review of the constitution draft by asking the help of relevant experts.

I Introduction

Yemen is an extremely fragile state, ranked as the eighth most vulnerable country of 177 countries in the Failed States Index (FSI) of 2014.⁴ State fragility is reflected in many aspects of Yemeni people's lives, particularly in the socio-economic aspects. Poverty in Yemen is widespread. Since 2007, international development reports describe Yemen as one of the poorest countries in the Arab region with a per capita GDP of USD 1160. The country was ranked 140 out of 182 in the 2007 Human Development Index (HDI). Ever since reunification in 1990, Yemen's relative position on the HDI has remained more or less unchanged, with very slow progress towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Yemeni economy is caught in a slow growth cycle, with no job creation, leading to stagnant per capita incomes and rising levels of unemployment, particularly amongst the youth.⁵

As a result of the state's fragility, there are large gender disparities, with significant gaps in women's access to economic, social and political opportunities. In 2014, Yemen ranked absolutely worst at No. 142 in the 2014 Global Gender Gap Index for the ninth year in a row. In addition to poverty, malnutrition, food insecurity, unemployment, poor provision of basic social services like health, education and clean water that all Yemeni people suffer from, women in Yemen face cultural challenges, which control women's daily life due to the state's weak ability to provide protection and apply the rule of law.

Political conflict, coupled with a lack of serious preventive peacebuilding processes, is the main reason behind the state's chronic fragility. Since 1962, Yemen has witnessed several conflicts that have been resolved by regional arbitration. It was not until 2011 that conflict resolution and peacebuilding approaches were introduced in Yemen. Even then, they were combined with regional mediation efforts as the GCC initiative provided the former president domestic immunity from prosecution in return for his stepping down. Under the agreement, a national consensus government was formed between competing parties and the seats split equally between the former ruling party, the General People's Congress (GPC), and the opposition bloc, the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP). The GCC initiative was stuck to a Sana'a-centric approach by not bringing the main marginalised groups like the Houthis and Southern Movement (Hirak) into the new government. In short, regional mediation, through GCC Initiative, brought competing elites associated with the old regime into the leadership of the conflict resolution and peacebuilding process in Yemen after 2011. That mediation reflected its failure in the renewed conflict that ensued.

In the north, a number of coups were staged and wars broke out periodically between progressive forces (Marxists, nationalists, and other secular or civil groups) and traditional forces (tribes and Islamists). In the south, several wars and assassinations characterised the relationship between radical and moderate socialist groups. Additionally, armed conflict was a traditional means to settle political tensions and broker regional agreements between North and South Yemen.⁶

4 Fund For Peace (FFP), <http://ffp.statesindex.org/>

5 FFP, <http://ffp.statesindex.org/rankings-2014>

6 See a reference in Arabic: El-Janahi Saeed: *The Yemeni National Movement: From revolution to Unification*. Dar-Amal for Studies and Publishing, 1992.

In 1994, four years after reunification, civil war broke out. The South ultimately lost the war, at a tremendous cost: the government was recentralised in the North; northern leaders ousted tens of thousands of southern civil and military staff; and forces associated with the North looted the former South's institutions, properties and land, both private and public.⁷

Internal military conflicts in Yemen continued. One involved the Houthis – Zaidi Shia believers from the far north of the country. The government viewed their demands for equal representation as a desire to bring back the Zaidi Imamate of the past. The Houthis and the government forces engaged in six rounds of fighting in 2004–2009. The sixth round of the Sa'dah war, known as Scorched Earth, destroyed the Sa'dah governorate and greatly affected Amran, Hajjah, Sana'a and Al Jawf. The war exacted a disproportionate toll on non-combatants and led to a widespread humanitarian crisis: more than 250,000 people were displaced and the civilian infrastructure was destroyed. The war made the regime vulnerable, weakened the central government and emboldened other actors such as al-Qaeda.⁸



Map of Yemen

On 22 March 2011, the president's relative, commander of the northwestern military district and head of the First Armoured Division, Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, announced that he would protect and support protesters. Widely considered the second-most powerful man in Yemen, Ali Mohsen's decision precipitated dozens of military defections, which effectively shifted the military balance of power against the president. At this point, the regular military was largely supportive of the protest movement, while the Republican Guards, commanded by the president's son, Ahmed Ali Saleh, and the intelligence apparatus, run by the president's nephews, remained loyal to him.

7 See a reference in Arabic: El-Sakkaf Abubaker: The Contemporary Yemen: Working papers of Hamburg's Seminar. Sana'a: CEFAS, 1997

8 Boucek, Christopher: "War in Sa'ada: From local insurrection to national challenge." In Carnegie Papers, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010.

While Yemeni youth, men and women were peacefully protesting in most of Yemen's governorates, armed conflict broke out in many cities, including Sana'a, and elite alliances mainly inside the Hashid tribal confederation (to which Saleh and al-Ahmar belong) changed. This left the former president with few options: resignation or a bloody civil war. As rival military units faced off in the streets of Sana'a, a swift transfer of power to a civilian, transitional government was demanded by the peaceful protesters to avoid a confrontation and the possibility of widespread violence. In this context, Saleh chose a rapid and dignified transfer of power. After almost one year of popular protests and unrest, all major Yemeni political parties agreed in November 2011 to a peaceful transition of power with the signing of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Initiative, an agreement brokered and sponsored by the UN and the international community.

The agreement removed President Ali Abdullah Saleh from the Presidency. Vice President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi was appointed as his successor and was tasked with leading the nation through a two-year transition period that is now in crisis due to the recent Saudi airstrikes and surrounding events. As a next step on a path that was hoped to lead to reconciliation, a Government of National Reconciliation (GNR) was formed in December 2011, with ministerial portfolios split between the General People's Congress (GPC) and the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP).

As part of the transition guided by the GCC agreement, Yemen drafted a new constitution based on the outcomes of the comprehensive National Dialogue Conference (NDC), a 10-month process that included representatives from all major political parties, women, youth and civil society organisations. The NDC, which began in March 2013 and concluded in January 2014, brought together 565 participants. In addition to the traditional political players, the Houthis, the Southern Movement, women and youth were all represented. Nearly 30 per cent of the participants were women and 20 per cent youth.

The brokered agreements and peace talks lasted only until 2014 when conflict broke out again between the Houthis and the Yemeni government and other political opponents – the Ahmar family, Major General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar (not a member of the Ahmar family) and his military allies, the Salafi fighters, and the Sunni Islamist party, Islah, and their affiliated tribes. A series of battles expanded southward from Sa'dah to the Amran governorate, to the gates of the capital. In September 2014, the Houthis occupied major institutions in the capital after militarily taking over key institutions.

Generally, the transition period has not provided an enabling setting for women to maintain the political and social gains they made in 2011 and through their participation in the NDC.⁹ In addition, the humanitarian situation is severely deteriorating as nearly half of Yemenis struggle with food insecurity and malnutrition, and gender-based violence is increasingly reported. This has particularly affected IDPs, women, children, migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees, who face threats of serious abuse.¹⁰

On the other hand, the capacity of Yemeni civil society and women's advocacy groups in dealing with conflict is limited and nascent. The first meaningful experience of Yemeni people with peace sensitive approaches was in the peaceful youth revolution in 2011.

9 Wameedh, Shakir: Lost in Transition: Power Analysis, Women Advocacy and Constitution Drafting. (Unpublished.) Oxfam GB, 2014.

10 Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 27 August 2014. Available at: www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/.../A_HRC_27_44_ENG.doc

The 2011 revolution marked a turning point in terms of women's participation: this time also women from poorer neighbourhoods and those who had not been politically active before were actively involved. Despite their lack of experience of political life, Yemeni women from different backgrounds took to the streets, standing side by side with men. One of their objectives was to prevent further escalation of the conflict. Due to cultural norms protecting women from violence, their presence in the protests prevented much violence making their participation socially more accepted.

Because of women's extraordinary levels of activism in 2011, women were represented in unprecedented numbers with a total of 152 delegates out of 565 in the NDC. Some of the seats were allocated specifically for independent women delegates, angering some political parties who would have liked to keep the seats for their own bases. For the first time, political parties were forced to ensure that 30 per cent of their representatives were women. Women also held leadership positions as three of the nine working groups in the NDC were chaired by women. For the first time, women entered politics in meaningful numbers.¹¹

In addition, out of the 31 members of the NDC technical committee five were women. Four women were appointed in the 17-member constitution drafting committee. Three women ministers were in the first transition government, the Government of National Reconciliation (2011–2014). Four women ministers were appointed in the second transition government, also known as the Government of National Partnership (November 2014–January 2015).

Women participants of the NDC had the opportunity to push for a gender-sensitive agenda. Seven of the nine NDC working groups endorsed a 30 per cent women's quota in the legislative, executive and judicial authorities to be adopted when the new government would be formed. All nine working groups called for women's rights and demands to be drafted in the new constitution.

Women in the NDC fought to build consensus around equal citizenship, no discrimination based on sex, and that the term "citizen" shall apply to both women and men. In addition, they demanded the rights to women's equal access and control on national wealth and international co-operation, social welfare and economic and cultural prosperity as well as protecting women and girls' physical integrity including through criminalising female genital mutilation (FGM), sexual harassment, exploitation and trafficking. The NDC also recommended the minimum age of marriage to be set at 18 for both sexes.

11 Wameedh, Shakir: *Lost in Transition: Power Analysis, Women Advocacy and Constitution Drafting*. (Unpublished.) Oxfam GB, 2014.

II Main findings

1. Conflict resolution and peacemaking is an emerging approach

This research reveals that the conflict resolution and peacebuilding approach was introduced in Yemen in comprehensive terms only in 2012 when the Yemeni government, based on a joint assessment done by the main agencies of the international community and led by the World Bank,¹² developed the TPSD. Therefore, we can say that the TPSD is the main charter that governs the transition and peacebuilding process in Yemen. The document heavily depends on the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) peacebuilding approach, which involves a range of measures to strengthen national capacities at all levels for conflict management with the overall goal of reducing the risk of relapsing into conflict. Thereby it aims to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development. It depends on a variety of strategies, processes and activities to sustain peace over the long term.

The UN approach is a combination of peacemaking, humanitarian support and development enhancement to provide:

- Support for political processes, including electoral processes, and promote inclusive dialogue and reconciliation.
- Support for the provision of basic services, such as water and sanitation, health and primary education, and support for the safe and sustainable return of refugees and internally-displaced people.
- Support for restoring core government functions, particularly basic public administration and public finance.
- Support for economic revitalisation, including creating jobs, particularly for youth and demobilised former combatants.

The TPSD has been developed with an overarching goal of “restoring political, security and economic stability and enhancing state building”. It is built around two major pillars that include five focus areas to be addressed during the transition period and beyond: 1) political and security stability and state-building, and 2) socio-economic recovery.

The TPSD considers the issue of youth and women empowerment as cross-cutting as well as stand-alone in certain areas. In addition, within each area there is a set of reform measures that have a great potential to benefit the entire programme and provide the basis for the success of the transitional period. To prevent the renewal of Yemen’s crisis, the TPSD sets at the head of its priorities the finalisation of the peaceful transfer of power, the restoration of political and security stability, the fulfilment of urgent humanitarian needs and achieving economic stability.

¹² Joint Social and Economic Assessment for the Republic of Yemen. World Bank, United Nations, European Union, Islamic Development Bank in collaboration with The Government of Yemen, represented by the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, 2012.

The issue of youth and women is standalone in certain areas, such as in the medium priority four: human resources development in line with the aspirations of youth and women. This includes: a) increasing girls' basic education enrolment rates, b) expanding primary health care and reproductive health services, c) engaging youth and women in all committees for transition, including the National Dialogue Conference, d) introducing amendments to laws related to women and youth rights and enforcing laws that end violence against women, and e) utilising youth and women quotas for political participation. The TPSD identifies female-headed households at the top of the vulnerable groups in need of humanitarian assistance.

Furthermore, the TPSD mainstreams gender in the top priority one – finalising the peaceful transfer of power and restoring political stability – as well as top priority two – achieving security stability and enhancing the rule of law. Top priority one includes ensuring the participation of women and youth in the NDC, while top priority two suggests developing a national legislation pertaining to issues of vulnerable groups such as women and IDPs.

2. Conflict resolution and peacemaking's priorities are the same as the Mutual Accountability Framework's

Interestingly, the international community succeeded in producing a Mutual Accountability Framework (MAF) with an executive mechanism for follow-up and monitoring the TPSD. A detailed MAF was agreed by the international community and the transitional Yemeni government in Riyadh in September 2012. The previous national plans for development and poverty reduction have lacked such measures.

The MAF contains commitments to improve the delivery of development assistance on condition of reforms and better government performance on the Yemeni side and to support the Yemeni government in substantially and rapidly accelerating the pace of reforms. The Friends of Yemen pledged about USD 8 billion for the three-year period 2012–2014, but most of that support is targeted to enhance economic development and the development of public services.

The conflict resolution and peacebuilding activities of international actors and national NGOs, some of which were assessed in this research, reflect the MAF to a great extent, almost literally. In practice, this means that most of the peacemaking activities planned based on the MAF priorities focus on humanitarian assistance and political transition support. A great deal of attention was paid to women's issues from the point of view of service delivery for humanitarian purposes as women were identified as one of the top vulnerable target groups, especially women IDPs, along with children and youth. Financially, a great allocation of funds goes to human resources items or beneficiaries, where women fall in these criteria. In other words, it is true that gender is integrated in the MAF but it is integrated from numerous perspectives rather than ever from one of power or political transition. Because of the short implementation period (2012–2014), organisations did not have the adequate time to implement women's empowerment activities such as resilience building or combating gender based violence (GBV); activities focusing on service delivery and ensuring women's political participation in the NDC seized the attention of the organisations.

For example, the European Union (EU) Multi-annual Indicative Programme (2014–2016) seeks to enhance key enabling components of community and household resilience by providing im-

mediate and life-saving support in particular. As nutritional needs and food insecurity are growing, the EU strategy is targeting a large number of internally displaced from the past conflicts, as well as refugees and other victims of forced displacement (including migrants displaced from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and highly vulnerable ones from the Horn of Africa). Specific attention is given to gender as the strategy seeks to promote the rights of vulnerable people, especially women and children (with particular attention to girls). Resilience will be enhanced by empowering women to embrace self-reliance, with a strong focus on access to financial services and income-generating activities, as well as by establishing equitable and sustainable community organisations for promoting development. In healthcare services, the approach focuses on ensuring improvement of meal frequency of women and children.

The same focus on humanitarian assistance and resilience is shared by the Yemen Country Development Cooperation Strategy (2014–2016) of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and Yemen Operational Plan (2011–2015) of the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

USAID is working to integrate technical areas of development assistance with current humanitarian aid programmes. The strategy mitigates the challenges of vested interests and humanitarian crises, and stays flexible in the fluid context of transition. The focus is on addressing the core barriers to participation that inhibit development and resilience. The immediate emphasis for USAID strategy is delivery of humanitarian assistance. In terms of gender, USAID is trying to reduce gender disparities in access to, control over, and benefits received from resources, wealth, opportunities and services. In addition, the aim is to reduce gender-based violence and mitigate its harmful effects on individuals and communities.

DFID's goal is to help Yemen prevent and manage crises and address the drivers of conflict and poverty by addressing urgent humanitarian needs and delivering basic services. Gender is integrated in DFID's operational plan by addressing immediate and underlying humanitarian needs; targeting women and girls in particular to respond to and manage conflict; building resilience and access to basic services; ending aid dependency through creation of jobs; and improving social and economic rights, including through programmes to reduce poverty and malnutrition of vulnerable groups (women, girls and children).

3. Women's participation in national dialogue as primary focus

The research reveals that the assessed conflict resolution and peacebuilding activities mostly focus on women's political participation in conflict resolution and political transition from a women's human rights perspective more than using peacebuilding and a conflict-sensitive framework. This focus has its positives but it has its negatives as well. It is positive that women's activities focus on political participation and help them in gaining more power to influence the peace agenda. Yet, focusing on political participation makes conflict resolution and peacebuilding activities and women's advocacy groups active at the level of policy, rather removing them from participating meaningfully in other tangible opportunities or sectors of peacebuilding for prevention, protection and reconstructing, such as conflict resolution, security reform, mediation, and transitional justice activities.

The research has identified that the visible role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes is the role of women's political participation in the political transition, especially in the NDC and other related activities at the national and community levels; but not actually in the political dialogues which led to these processes.

According to the KIIs with the UN agencies, international NGOs and local organisations, most of the gender and peacemaking programmes were implemented with a focus on supporting women's participation in the NDC at different levels. It is worth mentioning that in all assessed activities, women's participation was not less than 30% of the target group.

Supporting political transition process project

Through the Good Governance Programme, UNDP provided generous technical support to the NDC General Secretariat. It also supported active participation of non-political stakeholder groups such as the civil society, youth, researchers and academics as well as women. The UNDP programme's impact was clearly noticed in the performance of CSOs and youth representatives and the NDC outputs. The CSOs had technical support activities through UNDP, such as trainings, seminars, discussion sessions, media and communication support plus political support, which resulted in their producing a policy paper on the CSO agenda in the NDC. In the policy paper, the CSOs provided a comprehensive diagnosis on the civil society sector's problems and a consolidated vision on solutions.

As a result, the government of Yemen acknowledged the tremendous contribution of CSOs in improving service delivery as well as their role in developing policies for comprehensive and sustainable development, and determined to strengthen their capacities and facilitate their operations throughout the country. This firm commitment, included in the MAF, led to the adoption of a new Partnership Framework between the Yemeni government and CSOs in September 2013.¹³ In addition, it led to 20 per cent allocation in the NDC for the civil society representatives. During the period of 2009–2013, the number of CSOs in Yemen has increased from 9,000 to 12,000 organisations, of which 25 per cent are active.¹⁴ Most of the CSOs are Islamist and politically-based.¹⁵ The self-sufficiency and effectiveness of women's CSOs (either women-led or targeting women beneficiaries) are still limited; only 2 per cent of registered CSOs are female oriented, and most of them are welfare organisations.¹⁶ Despite the fact of a low number of women CSOs, more than 30 per cent from the CSO 20 per cent quota was given to women's organisation representatives in the NDC.

Several of the NDC outcomes dealt with the right to freedom of association and the importance of providing CSOs with greater space to operate. Among other things, the NDC outcomes affirmed the principle of non-interference by the state in CSO activities and the need for state support of CSOs via the public budget. On the other hand, the NDC outcomes affirmed the importance of CSOs not involving themselves in political issues; CSOs in Yemen have been accused by many

13 Partnership Framework Between the Government of Yemen and Civil Society Organization. UNDP, 19 December 2013. Available at: http://www.ye.undp.org/content/yemen/en/home/library/democratic_governance/partnership-framework-between-the-government-of-yemen-and-civil-.html. [Accessed 25 May 2015].

14 *ibid*.

15 Civil Society in Yemen: A National Participatory Review. HTSPE, 2010; Colburn, Marta: Yemeni Non-governmental Organization Assessment Report. Sana'a: Social Fund for Development, June 2009.

16 Colburn, Marta: Yemeni Non-governmental Organization Assessment Report. Sana'a: Social Fund for Development, June 2009.

reports¹⁷ of having political affiliation and using most of their funds for political purposes rather than development purposes, for example taking advantage of aid programmes to mobilise poor people to vote or conducting partisan voter awareness efforts. For this reason, the NDC outcomes included provisions recommending that CSOs should only receive foreign funding if it is to be used for “developmental objectives only.”¹⁸

A similar work to supporting CSOs in the political transition process was conducted for youth. With the help of UNDP, a Youth Policy Option Paper produced and, later, a Youth Observatory was established to monitor ministries’ performance, educate the public on the NDC outcomes and to monitor the progress on their implementation. As a result, youth participation in the NDC was 20 per cent; again, more than 30 per cent of youth portion was given to female members. Youth demands on civil state, development and other civil and political rights were integrated in the NDC outcomes.

Many actors besides UNDP, such as UNFPA, the Office of the Special Adviser on Yemen and USAID, played important roles in obtaining the 30 per cent quota for women in the NDC. In addition, UNFPA, through its Women Community Alliance Project, provided technical and political support to NDC women members and helped in supporting women’s agenda in the NDC by strengthening their voices, facilitating coordination, building alliances and lobbying and running community and media campaigns. As a result, women’s demands were integrated in the NDC outcomes and to a great extent in the constitution draft, though this result is attributed to other players as well.

National dialogue support programme

In partnership with the Berghof Foundation, a German NGO based in Berlin, Political Development Forum (PDF) implemented the National Dialogue Support Programme (2012–2014) aimed at bringing together all relevant national stakeholders and actors (state and non-state) on key conflict issues, such as state reform. The project aimed to serve as a common platform for trust-building, learning, reflection and decision-making. The project sought to develop a new social contract and create nationwide ownership. Specifically, the project aimed at strengthening an inclusive Yemeni-led national dialogue with technical and process-related support and advice.

For example, PDF jointly with the Berghof Foundation facilitated a meeting with major Yemeni decision-makers in Potsdam in March 2012. The meeting was attended by 10 Yemeni stakeholder representatives plus two women from the NDC. Here, the framework, agenda, basic principles and mechanisms of the National Dialogue Conference were discussed and agreed upon. The issues discussed were transitional justice, restructuring of the army, state building, constitution drafting, wealth distribution and power sharing.

In addition, the National Dialogue Support Programme established a mixed team of German and Yemeni advisors who offered thematic and process-related expertise and support to the main Yemeni actors and accompanied inclusive local dialogue processes in selected governorates and the six proposed federal regions (Azal, Sheba, Aden, Aljanad, Hadramawt and Tihama). The programme also provided technical and process-related support and advice to the NDC structures

17 See, for instance, *Civil Society in Yemen: A National Participatory Review*. HTSPE, 2010 & Colburn, Marta: Yemeni Non-governmental Organization Assessment Report. Sana’a: Social Fund for Development, June 2009.

18 NGO Law Monitor: Yemen. The International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL). Available at: <http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/yemen.html>. [Last updated 5 October 2014].

and mechanisms, including support for deadlock-breaking and problem-solving mechanisms. The main output of this process was a state reform document, which was submitted to the NDC for consideration.

The National Dialogue Support Programme's target groups are the groups, parties and movements identified in the GCC agreement to take part in the NDC, such as youth, women, the former ruling party and its allies, the main opposition parties, Houthis, the Southern movement and civil society.

There is no stand-alone gender component in the National Dialogue Support Programme; yet, the project approach is to ensure women's representation in all activities including seminars, consultative meetings, trainings and regional groups.

Supporting the community-based national dialogue project

Supporting the Community-based National Dialogue Project is implemented by Democratic Partners for Change (Partners) and Partners-Yemen and funded by USAID. The project aimed at communicating sub-national demands to the NDC. In partnership with 28 CSOs at the governorate level, the project targeted more than 500 citizens, 40 per cent of which were women, from different social and economic backgrounds in eight governorates (Sana'a, Al Hudaydah, Ibb, Ta'izz, Aden, Shabwah, Abyan and Al Bayda').

The project conducted a series of public discussions. More than 95 per cent of the pressing issues for the communities in those governorates were social issues mainly related to securing basic service provision and ensuring their quality especially related to water, electricity, security and health. A comprehensive document of community demands was developed by Partners-Yemen and submitted to the NDC Secretariat. The community demand document was distributed to the NDC's nine working groups for consideration. As a result, neutrally and with no gender-sensitive lens, the Yemeni people's rights to social and economic development, resources and services were largely covered by the NDC outcomes and the constitution draft.

Local engagement, advocacy and dialogue project

Partners-Yemen implemented an initiative called Local Engagement, Advocacy and Dialogue (LEAD). LEAD consists of sub-national advocacy campaigns that draw attention to political and tangible changes, which people in eight target governorates want to see. People in Sana'a want to know what the federal status of the capital of Sana'a is in the new constitution. In Aden, people seek the constitutional protection for the architectural heritage of Aden. In Ta'izz, people want to see the water problem solved. In Abyan, electricity bills of returned IDPs, who left their homes during the 10-month war between AQAP and the army in 2013, were demanded to be invalidated. Because Al Hudaydah is a coastal, humid and hot region, people want to pay a lower electricity tariff in summer. People in Shabwah want to know how much is contributed by oil companies to community support. Finally, regardless of the tribal and conservative context of the Al Bayda' governorate, people there want to secure 30 per cent of the job opportunities and grades in the local government for female graduates.

Peace and transition support project

The Peace and Transition Support Project (PTSP) is a project jointly implemented by UNDP and UNFPA (2014–2016). The overall objective of the project is to support increasing citizen partici-

pation in peace and development planning and policy development as well as to support the rebuilding of the social contract with marginalised groups, most importantly the youth and women. This project takes a peacebuilding and statebuilding approach, working with and through the country's existing systems to address the drivers of conflict and to ensure that the state exercises commitment to recovery programmes independently, where the state's capacity and resources are timely responsive to people's needs to recovery without relying on foreign funds or support. The approaches of the project are: a) linking local governance and service delivery in Yemen, b) linking local governance and civil society to foster state-society relations, and c) linking transitional support to institution building.

At the national level, the PTSP provides seed funding to support implementation of legal and policy amendments suggested by the outcomes of the national dialogue and constitution regarding democratic and people participatory local governance system, including the gender-sensitive outcomes in that issue. The project targets four conflict-affected and at risk governorates (Hajjah, Ta'izz, Hadramawt and Soqatra). All target authorities and civil society that are accessible receive an initial minimum package of orientation training, basic civic education, infrastructure support, capacity development, such as on gender concept, gender mainstreaming, reproductive health and gender-based violence. The project is intended to secure establishing and building the credibility of local administrations and civil society as partners for building peace in Yemen. More specifically, the project enhances inclusive development by raising the issue of equity in the distribution of public goods, for example, allocating 15 per cent of post-conflict funding for women's projects through a local authority development plan.

4. Less activity coverage in areas of security, conflict resolution and transitional justice

Unlike post-conflict recovery and political participation activities, there are fewer activities implemented in security sector reform, conflict resolution and transitional justice. The research has identified two main activities in the area of security sector reform conducted by the EU and Saferworld and one activity on transitional justice conducted by Democratic Partners for Change, while women's involvement in conflict-resulting activities are mainly individual, standalone initiatives.

For example, the EU strategy focuses on core aspects in both the governance, security sector reform and justice, and socio-economic fields. In the Security Sector Reform (SSR), reforms in public administration are based on gender equitable and inclusive recruitment processes. In addition, progress with respect to gender equity at all levels should be made; the institutional organisation should include a number of women across the various levels of hierarchy; and campaigns on the role of women in the security sector should be conducted.

Community and security project

With financial support from the Netherlands Embassy in Sana'a, Saferworld implemented Community and Security Project (2012–2014) in two districts in the Ta'izz governorate. The project aimed at enhancing the role of the local community in maintaining and promoting security. Activities focus on raising the community awareness on engagement in security, building active practices towards security and bridging the gap between service providers and the community. In

addition, the project works to change the community attitude on security as a state and political responsibility and as social service equal to other basic services like water, electricity, health, etc.

With a gender-neutral approach, Saferworld in partnership with National Organisation for Community Development (NODS), a local NGO based in Ta'izz, distributed application forms for establishing Community Action Groups (CAGs). The roles of CAGs on security were explained in the application forms. Voluntarily, 50 per cent of the forms were filled by women. CAGs were formed with 50 per cent of participation by women.

Most of the project activities at the community level are identified and implemented by the CAGs. For example, CAGs identified the drug issue as the main problem. Drugs are widely used among community members including children who work in mechanic workshops. Also, children are heavily involved in dealers' networks. According to the Saferworld representative, disseminating drugs among the communities is a tool that political forces use to provoke conflict and destabilise social order. Drug dealers and users are usually involved in conflict activities, such as selling machine guns and ammunition if disputes happen. In addition, drugs provide a good source of income for conflict parties.

To tackle the drugs issue, CAGs conducted a number of awareness sessions at the community level, especially with families of working children. Moreover, CAGs convened a community meeting with heads of police stations to find a solution to the drug problems. Yet, political instability and insufficient capacity of security institutions and local CSO partners did not allow for much result to be achieved. Moreover, the role of women in the Community and Security Project has not been identified as there has been a lack of technical capacity on gender and security approaches and activities at the community level.

The other project of Saferworld specifically targeting women is the Women Safety and Security Project, funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). The project has two main activities: conducting a baseline study on women's safety and security that documents violations against women for the period from 2011 to 2012 in four pilot governorates (Ma'rib, Hadramawt, Abyan and Ta'izz). The second activity is enhancing citizenship-based security by strengthening the role of women in the policing sector. This activity started in March 2013 and has worked to introduce: a) gender-based reforms to police offices (recruiting and training women police officers); b) securing legal aid services to women in conflict with the law; as well as c) improving the women's detention conditions. There are six governorates targeted by the project: Al Hudaydah, Aden, Ta'izz, Abyan, Lahij and Hajjah.

Supporting Transitional Awareness and Reconciliation Techniques

Partners-Yemen is implementing Supporting Transitional Awareness and Reconciliation Techniques (START). START is a community-based approach to transitional justice in Yemen. It supports local reconciliation processes through community-based approaches that explore the intersections between informal, traditional and formal justice mechanisms. The project helps Yemeni citizens resolve grievances during Yemen's challenging transitional period. These grievances range from abuses of power by government officials under the former regime, to disappearances of loved ones, and crimes committed during the civil war. Through local reconciliation mechanisms, START is ensuring that the grievances of all Yemenis, including local tribal and religious leaders, women, and youth are heard and addressed.

Partners-Yemen has a web of supportive relationships with community-based organisations in the governorates of Abyan, Ta'izz, Aden, Lahij and Ibb. START empowers these organisations to handle reconciliation and resolution of grievances in a culturally appropriate and sustainable way. On the national level, START is raising general public awareness of the national transitional justice process in Yemen. START-grown community facilitators and women leaders reach out to individual communities to convey transitional justice principles, promote the National Dialogue's achievements, and build public confidence in transitional justice authority.

Jamila Raja: A woman mediator

It is not well known that Jamila Raja once settled a dispute between the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Houthis regarding the distribution of humanitarian aid dating back to 2011. Raja learned of the tense relationship between the UN entity and the group that was predominately concentrated in the country's north at the time when she became a member of the Sa'dah working group at the NDC. Both parties at the time had failed to build a relationship of trust. The Houthis were resentful that OCHA had referred to their movement as rebels in its reports, and the Houthis dismissed the humanitarian group as an affiliate working with former President Ali Abdullah Saleh who waged six wars against the Houthis in Sa'dah.

In March 2013, the NDC brought together 565 delegates from a variety of social and political backgrounds, including the Houthis. Raja represented a coalition of independent women. The NDC provided a space for representatives to exchange viewpoints and share experiences and resources.

Outside of her work at the NDC, Raja manages Consult Yemen, a local consultancy firm that provides technical advice to both national and international development and humanitarian organisations. Raja has influence in the political arena both locally and internationally due to her background. She has 15 years of experience as a diplomat and a media person. She also has a master's degree in media from the American University in Cairo and has held the position of Advisor to the Foreign Ministry. Her background and skills working in this field set her apart as an ideal third party to mediate when disputes became heated at the conference.

She immediately went to work to see if she could help improve relations between the Houthis and OCHA. Her first step was to contact Valerie Amos Baroness, the undersecretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator at OCHA, and invite her to reconsider describing the Houthis as rebels in OCHA's reports. Amos eventually visited Yemen and Raja arranged for a meeting that brought Amos face-to-face with Houthi representative Saleh Habra, the head of the Houthis' Political Council. Following the meeting, Amos sent out a memo requesting the OCHA to not refer to the Houthis as rebels in the reports.

Raja's mediation is all the more noteworthy against the background that previous efforts have failed to bring the Houthis and OCHA together for productive talks. There was a campaign to educate Houthi leaders on the nature of the UN's humanitarian work to build more confidence between the two entities, but it was Raja's mediation that really broke down a long-standing grievance. Thanks to Raja's tangible actions and experience working with high-level officials, the Houthis were able to begin working with OCHA in a new manner.

5. Quota as the main focus

Even though Yemeni women have been the most affected by the state fragility, transitional instability, deterioration of the security situation and the economy, the activities of women's advocacy groups do not reflect the response that the actual status of Yemeni women requires. Women and their children are the most affected by the worsening humanitarian crisis; they are the most economically and socially vulnerable groups in Yemen. Ongoing social tensions, the government's failure to respond to daily needs, ongoing attacks on the electricity supply infrastructure, and violent conflicts across the country all worsen the situation of Yemeni women, particularly poor and rural women.

Nevertheless, most of the conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts could be described as post-conflict recovery: the funds and interventions of the Yemeni government, the international community and civil society tend to focus on early recovery activities such as humanitarian assistance, job opportunities and providing social services like water and health. Women's advocacy groups including WFD do not pay much attention to the conflict resolution and peacebuilding sector, either through monitoring developments or trying to intervene, influence or implement in this sphere.

If women's advocacy groups, especially WFD, are keen on meaningful participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, they should build their demands around saving Yemeni women from their globally recognised lowest gender status. They should make women's needs for security, stability, development and justice as their main motivation and objective for further women's participation in the relevant processes. Women with access and influence should act as representatives of other less privileged women.

Unfortunately, most of the activists in the assessed women's advocacy groups including the WFD have not justified the need for women's greater participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in terms of defending women's right to peace, safety and security. Instead, the main driver for women's participation in this regard was expressed as defending the right of women's participation in the political transition, which will ensure more rights to women in the future state. It is hard to call this vision sensitive to conflict and building sustainable peace for many reasons. The demands of women's advocacy groups remain the same in the transition period as in the previous periods. The only change in techniques of advocacy is the use of more protests and social media, which is the impact of participation methods learnt in the 2011 revolution; and no knowledge on conflict resolution and peacebuilding was manifested in women activists' speeches, articles or statements.

Most women's advocacy groups focus on a 30% quota for women and integrating women's rights in the constitution, which is an important step in enhancing women's political participation and has provided particularly second-tier female leaders and young women with the opportunity to become leaders and continue campaigning activities in the post-NDC period.

Samira Zohra: A second-tier leader

At the National Dialogue Conference (NDC), Samira Ali Qanaf Zohra represented families of those who have been forcibly disappeared in Yemen. Zohra, a 40-year-old housewife with a degree in political science, knows first hand what it is like to have a family member forcibly dis-

appeared. Her father, a former commander in Yemen's First Armoured Division, disappeared in 1978 following the assassination of the then President of North Yemen, Ibrahim al-Hamdi.

Zohra got her first taste of politics at the national level in the NDC where she was part of the transitional justice working group. The group was tasked with producing tangible steps to be taken for Yemen to deal with injustices over the course of Yemen's political history.

Following her work at the NDC, Zohra wanted to continue advocating for transitional justice so she organised the "Justice is Our Demand" campaign. Her efforts focused on calls for the Yemeni government to expedite the issuance of a transitional justice law and begin applying it.

Initially, the campaign had limited success. Zohra protested with only three others outside the prime minister's house to apply pressure on government officials. Zohra realised she would need to enlist some additional help. Her immediate idea was to focus on women who had proved to have a knack for organising campaigns to further their cause during the NDC. Zohra had been active during the conference, helping her fellow female colleagues campaign for greater political representation.

A major victory for women at the NDC was an endorsement of a measure to write in a constitutional clause that would require a minimum of 30 per cent representation for women at all levels of government when the new institutions are formed. In November 2014, it became apparent that women members of the Constitutional Drafting (CDC) Committee were struggling against their male colleagues to include a women's political participation clause in the new document. Although the NDC had endorsed a 30% quota for women, male members of the CDC argued that the quota provision was not clear in terms of timeframe, level of implementation in the federal system, timing and graduality of implementation.

To address the quota issue, Zohra organised a group on WhatsApp called "Not Less Than 30%," which initially included 40 members. The group eventually expanded to include 99 members from a variety of political parties, including the Houthis, Islah, GPC and the Socialist Party. This group allowed for women to exchange ideas and discuss a variety of advocacy issues. This group provided a strong foundation for a new advocacy group. In January 2015, Yemen's political process faced its most recent crisis when the Houthis dissolved the Parliament and established a Supreme Revolutionary Committee to take over leadership of the nation. Zohra felt her work and the work of her colleagues at the NDC was being compromised by the Houthis' action and undermined all kinds of achievements. She quickly changed the name of the WhatsApp group to "Women Will Bring Us Together" to shift the focus of their efforts to bringing the political transition back on track. "How can women talk about the 30% quota when the country is collapsing?" Zohra said.

The first step the "Women Will Bring Us Together" group decided to take was to apply pressure on the UN to include at least five women in the political negotiations it was overseeing. This caused the UN, under the leadership of its Special Adviser on Yemen, Jamal Benomar, to include female representatives in the negotiations. The requested number of five female participants fell short and only two women, who were consensually nominated by the group to represent the south and north of Yemen, were included.

Zahra believes the only way forward for Yemenis to include a minimum representation for women in the governance entities, regardless of the developments in the political sphere. She recog-

nises that women will be stronger working as one alliance, even if it takes a WhatsApp group to make it happen!

6. Framework for women, peace and security is ignored

Implementing the UNSC resolution on Women, Peace and Security requires the setting up of a planning, monitoring and accountability system with clear indicators. It also requires women's meaningful participation in processes of conflict resolution, conflict prevention and protection, peacebuilding, post-conflict recovery and transitional justice. Such a framework and plan do not exist in Yemen. It is thus imperative for women's advocacy groups, particularly WFD, to push international agencies including UN Women's officer in Yemen and the Yemeni government to establish a National Action Plan (NAP) for women, peace and security in Yemen.

This task may be hard to accomplish taking into account some standing difficulties. According to the UN Women Annual Report 2012–2013, progress in women's issues in Yemen is limited to the appointment of a gender specialist who participated in a post-conflict assessment that resulted in a roadmap containing provisions for women's health, education and employment.¹⁹

There is a large technical gap in UN Women and other UN agencies, especially the UN Special Envoy's office, regarding support for women during the transitional period. It is advisable that women's advocacy groups with the leadership of WFD carry out a similar activity, yet limited to a mutual agenda or plan for women's advocacy groups which focuses on conflict resolution and peacebuilding goals they have defined.

The UNSC resolution 1889 (2009) called for recognition of women's participation during peace processes that lasts long into the post-conflict period; additionally the Peace Building Support Office produced in 2012 a seven-point action plan on Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding, which was adopted across the UN's peacebuilding institutions. The action plan provides for pragmatic and specific changes in approaches to mediation, post-conflict elections, post-conflict planning, financing for recovery, deployment of civilians providing technical support, justice and security sector reform, and economic recovery. These actions are expected to have a catalytic effect in overcoming some of the obstacles to women's engagement in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. They include specific targets such as an effort to more than double the UN's current peacemaking spending on gender equality and women's empowerment to reach a minimum of 15% of post-conflict funds. Another target is the earmarking for women of at least 40% of jobs in temporary employment programmes (e.g. immediate post-conflict food for work initiatives).

Yet, the research exposes that field activities concerning women's post-conflict participation might be less than the policies promise:

- The UNDP in partnership with the Yemeni government implemented a national plan for youth economic empowerment. The youth entails here both men and women. Yet, a na-

¹⁹ UN Women Annual Report 2012–2013. Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2013/6/unwomen-annualreport2012-2013-en%20pdf.pdf>. [Accessed 24 May 2015].

tional plan for women's economic empowerment is still missing. It is promised in the TPSD that women are a prioritised group that should benefit from economic empowerment activities and job creation but this objective is handled by vast activities implementing many humanitarian projects across Yemen. Without a national plan for women's economic empowerment similar to the youth plan, it will be hard to achieve political commitment, capitalised efforts, effective results and concrete monitoring.

- There is no monitoring or therefore evidence that women, per the article on human resources relating to humanitarian interventions of TPSD, benefit from 15% of the post-conflict funds. According to the Annual Assessment Report on MAF 2014, women have a share of the leftovers from the GCC fund on microeconomic stability. The leftovers are only USD 1,010 million which have been disbursed among six sectors or items: the Transfer of Power, Humanitarian/Reconstruction, Economic Growth, Social Protection, Human Resources/Youth/Women and Governance/State Building.

There is great concern whether or not the majority of Yemeni women are getting tangible and rightful benefits from the post-conflict funds. Moreover, there is uncertainty that women advocates have properly scrutinised this issue as most of their efforts were put into political participation, especially integrating women's rights and quota in the new constitution. With the limited capacity of civil society actors focusing on women, it is hard to fight on every front. Therefore, it is important that women's advocacy groups develop the capacity to participate in planning and monitoring the conflict resolution and post-conflict recovery activities with the international agencies and the Yemeni government to ensure that women are benefitting from the funds and services available according both to commitments made and their own assessment of what is appropriate.

In addition, an essential component of the women, peace and security agenda is the prevention of conflict in the first place. Women's perspectives on tensions in social relations, their awareness of threats to personal, family and community security, their knowledge of the flow of small arms and light weapons through communities and their interpretation of extremism in local discourses all add up to a complex and important system of security sector reform. Yet, this component is largely neglected in the case of political transition activities.

Women's approaches to defusing conflicts, mediating disputes and building trust – from the community to the national level – have likewise been neglected in approaches to building peace. There are no tangible activities on preventing violence against women, for example. Prevention of sexual and gender-based violence is, of course, also a precondition to women's effective engagement in conflict prevention and all aspects of peace processes and peacebuilding. Tactical responses to the serious security threats faced by women, including gender-based violence, are neglected too.

For example, the EU post-conflict security sector reform (SSR) does not address the security threats women face. Dealing with these requires substantial investment to change administrative systems, personnel management, infrastructure development, training, and community relations. The EU SSR activities do not explain how to recruit women and invest in retaining them, train police in the protection of women, invest in facilities for women to report crimes and obtain medical examinations in confidence, and reach out to communities to build women's trust in the police and encourage higher levels of reporting of gender-based crimes. In addition, there are no

activities identified in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), which are essential for rebuilding the security environment in post-conflict periods.

7. Failure to focus on preventing and countering state fragility and conflict

The NDC provided the main opportunity for women to participate in designing the main mechanisms for statebuilding, which supposedly should have been based on a prevention point of view, specifically prevention towards the drivers of state fragility and conflict. Hitherto, the research has not found remarkable activities in this respect. Women participated with 30% in the NDC and four female members participated in the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC). True, women's participation in NDC and CDC was meaningful as the NDC outcomes and constitution draft include many key gender-sensitive provisions. But, by contrast, it is obvious that women's contribution in statebuilding, for example, was narrow; albeit that women in the NDC and CDC fought for provision stating that legislation in Yemen is civil, the draft constitution stated "Shari'a is the source for legislations". The CDC also failed in integrating "harmonising national laws with international standards and treaties" – a provision that would have likely assisted women's greater inclusion in the political sphere – to the constitution draft.

Despite the aforementioned shortcomings, women's contribution to women's rights was outstanding:

- Chapter II: Rights and Freedoms, article (76), "To give effect to the principle of equal citizenship, the State shall enact legislation and take measures, to achieve effective political participation for women to ensure access to at least 30% in various authorities and bodies". The NDC outcomes ensured that "women [are] to be represented by no less than 30 per cent in all branches of government, including the legislative, executive and judicial. This should apply to all elected and appointed positions." However, although the quota article in the constitution draft is responding to a great extent to the NDC outcomes, it does not identify the following elements:
 - As affirmative action, the implementation mechanism is not identified.
 - As affirmative action, the implementation timeframe is not identified.
 - It's not clear what "various authorities and bodies" are. Do they include the legislative, executive and judicial authorities and their branches in all levels of the federal state?
- Chapter II: Rights and Freedoms, article (75), "Citizens shall have equal rights, freedoms and public duties without discrimination due to sex, skin, colour, race, origin, religion, sect, belief, opinion, economic or social status, disability, political or geographical affiliation, occupation, birth or any other considerations."

The NDC outcomes talked about equality as an overall principle including equality of citizenship. In addition, the NDC outcomes stated that there should be "no discrimination based on sex".

The equality article in the constitution draft is only affirming the principle of no discrimination in citizenship especially in citizens' status before the law; it would have been stronger to affirm the equality principle in the political fundamentals in chapter I, and then chapter II should have made explicit the prohibition of discrimination and should have specified that women and men are equal before the law.

- The term "citizen" or "citizens" shall apply to both women and men. This article is included in the last chapter of the constitution draft (the Final Provisions); however, it was expected to be included in chapter I (the Political Fundamentals).
- Every citizen, male and female, has the right to be provided for and empowered by the state through the national wealth and international cooperation. All citizens have the right to social welfare and economic and cultural prosperity. These are indispensable to the protection of their dignity and character development.

The social and economic rights are largely covered by the constitution draft. However, since Yemen is a poor country suffering from corruption, it would be stronger if the constitution draft separates a chapter for development rights like most African states do.

- The constitution draft criminalises any assault on physical integrity, but there are no specifications on women's physical integrity, GBV or FGM. According to NDC outcomes, the state shall criminalise assault on physical integrity, including female genital mutilation (FGM), sexual harassment, exploitation of women in commercials in a manner which degrades and humiliates their dignity, and the human trafficking of women.
- The minimum age of marriage shall be 18 years for both sexes. This article is clearly set in the constitution draft.
- Yemeni nationality is for all Yemenis from a Yemeni father or mother. This article is included and stated in Chapter I (the Political Fundamentals), but there are no other provisions on passing the Yemeni nationality from a Yemeni woman to her non-Yemeni husband.

8. Conflict mitigation and resolution limited to the community level

The assessed activities at the sub-national and community levels revealed that women's participation in conflict mitigation and mediation is astonishing. This may be attributable to cultural acceptance of women's traditional role in conflict mitigation and resolution especially in the Yemeni tribal communities.

Yemen is a country that is historically more traditional than conservative, and the forms of activism that women exercised during the 2011 protests drew on local gender norms and capacities of individual women and groups that pre-dated the uprising. It is very important to highlight that one of the main reasons for women's extensive participation in the 2011 protests was their ability to utilise and invest in this traditional role. To learn more about these cultural advantages and to

utilise them in the advocacy activities for women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, it is important to research, document and explain to key actors about women's cultural practices on mediation, arbitration, and conflict mitigation.

The cultural perspective that women used in participating in 2011 protests has led to social change in a revolutionary manner. It has changed many roots and dynamics of gender power relation in the political sphere. This change has continued and played out in terms of women's participation in the uprising, during and post the NDC. Yet, those dynamics have not been reflected in longer-term outcomes of Yemen's conflict resolution, reconciliation and peace processes. With the exception of the NDC, women have been excluded from mediated processes, starting from the negotiations leading to the GCC agreement in November 2011 up to the PNPA signed in September 2014 and the UN-facilitated negotiations that continued until early 2015. This continues to be the case in the current crisis.

There is no evidence that women carry out any activities related to peace negotiations, for example demanding different stakeholders for concrete procedures that ensure participation of female mediators, or being included as members of negotiating teams. Women's inclusion in terms of numbers and influence on the peace agenda were absent in the GCC agreement, the Southern Issue Agreement, the Guarantees on the Implementation of the NDC Agreement, the Peace and National Partnership Agreement as well as the negotiations between the Houthis and other Yemeni parties in early 2015.

In addition, none of the activities assessed by this research has focused on establishing sustainable mechanisms to ensure regular consultations between mediators, parties to peace talks and women individuals or women's peace groups. It is obvious that Yemen does not have sustainable mechanisms granting the representation of women as civil society or as peace groups or even as prominent individuals or activists from the very start of a peace or transition process to the end. Yet, there are some initiatives that often happen, yet are not sustained, strategic and most of the time happen at the very end of any given process. Having a sustainable mechanism of women's participation in conflict mitigation and resolution in place might be one of the main activities of women's advocacy groups and WFD; they should coordinate with the head of the UN mission, Yemeni stakeholders and other parties to establish such a mechanism and to guarantee representation of women in future conflict resolution activities.

9. Transitional justice is gender blind

In times of war and societal breakdown, crimes against women often reach new levels of brutality and frequency. Ensuring gender justice and immediate measures to establish equal protection of the rule of law is an essential element of building sustainable peace.

In the assessed activities, no attention has been paid to the legal and normative framework for justice for conflict-related gender-based violence. Effective prosecutions for these crimes are too rare and almost no activities have been undertaken related to securing women's protection, security and access to justice through domestic and international courts.

Moreover, Yemeni women's experiences of conflict are not limited to sexual violence, but also include wide-scale socio-economic violations as well as gender-differentiated impacts of forced disappearances, torture, forced displacement and other crimes.

Apart from prosecutions, non-judicial methods, such as truth and reconciliation commissions, institutional reforms and traditional mechanisms, can play an important role in correcting the historical record and increasing accountability for crimes against women in war, without which it is extremely difficult to overcome the destabilising cycles of violence and retribution. Thus, there is a need to focus on ways to bring gender responsiveness into transitional justice mechanisms by ensuring the justice needs of women – including their rights to truth, prosecutorial justice and comprehensive reparations – are met and their dignity and safety protected.

Perhaps the most important transitional justice measure for women is also the least supported, implemented or funded mechanism: reparations. The need to deliver transformative and sustainable reparations for women in the aftermath of conflict, in order to address not just a single violation but the underlying inequalities which render women vulnerable to violence and shape its consequences, is not explicit in the TPSD or any other activities of researched programmes. A comprehensive reparations programme that has delivered on these goals is yet to be seen. It is important for women's advocacy groups and WFD to look at transitional justice from a gender perspective; they should monitor the transitional justice process in Yemen and demand representation. Moreover, they should continuously monitor and review the NDC outcomes and the constitution draft and ensure that a gender approach in transitional justice is adopted.

III Recommendations

The WFD, as well as the other women's advocacy groups, are new-born entities or bodies that have emerged from participation in the 2011 revolution and the NDC. They are still in need of technical support to become well established in terms of organisational structure and programmes. Therefore, it is recommended to:

1. Conduct a capacity-building programme on the women, peace and security framework and approaches as an introductory step to build WFD's institutional capacity. It is recommended to seek the assistance of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and their regional partner Abaad, a Lebanese organisation, to conduct the trainings.
2. Conduct a capacity and institutional assessment for WFD to design properly an effective structure and programme for the group. The assessment should analyse internal and external environments, available opportunities for alliance (including allying with other women's advocacy groups), decision makers, community and media outreach, lessons learned including effective ways of working. It should also assess available capacities and ways of capitalising on those as well as experience exchange.
3. Modify WFD's name to Women's Forum for Peace and Dialogue (WFPD). This might help shift the focus from political participation from a human rights perspective to fostering peace and adopting a conflict-sensitive approach.
4. Specify key issues of women, peace and security. WFD should define its mission, for example, working on disarmament, establishing a sustainable mechanism for women's participation in conflict mitigation and resolution, revising the constitution from a prevention perspective, advocating for gender sensitive transitional justice or monitoring security reform (protecting women civilians from violence) and monitoring post-conflict funds.
5. Building women's leadership profile is another important area. This can be obtained through programmes aimed at building leadership skills and campaigning capacity but also by conducting public and media campaigns to disseminate women's image as peacebuilders and amplify women's voices for stability and security.