

Safeguarding the Rights and Freedoms of Yemeni Women and Girls

Stakeholders Advocacy Strategy

2025-2030



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Cover photo: An internally displaced woman and girl in the Al-Hujjub Mountain area of Taiz governorate on April 1, 2021 // Sana'a Center photo by Ahmed al-Basha.



The Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies is an independent think-tank that seeks to foster change through knowledge production with a focus on Yemen and the surrounding region. The Center's publications and programs, offered in both Arabic and English, cover political, social, economic and security related developments, aiming to impact policy locally, regionally, and internationally.

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Dr. Sawsan Al-Refaei, an expert in Equity, Public Policy, and Advocacy, authored the strategy. She has managed large-scale programs and provided technical support to governments, civil society organizations, United Nations Organizations, and other international organizations in areas such as gender-sensitive policies, equity-based strategies and planning, results-based frameworks, and advocacy. Dr. Al-Refaei has extensive experience working in humanitarian settings and during emergencies, particularly in the areas of women, peace, and security.

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Executive Summary

Constraints on women's rights and freedoms, along with gender imbalances, are struggles in Yemen that predate the war. A decade of conflict, political instability, and pervasive insecurity has compounded this situation, posing a serious threat to the role and participation of Yemeni women in public life. Reports of increased gender-based violence, discrimination, and marginalization of women; restrictions on their freedom of movement and expression; as well as harassment and targeting of female leaders and activists are all worrying trends that appear to be on the rise since the onset of war. Without action, they risk pushing women out of Yemen's political and public life.

In response, the Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies convened a three-day scenario-building workshop in Amman, Jordan, in May 2023. The workshop brought together Yemeni leaders from various professional sectors, including academics, artists, journalists, educators, members of civil society and women's groups, business professionals, and researchers. Together, they developed various scenarios for the status of women by 2030 and formulated strategies to enhance their role in Yemen. The following strategy is the culmination of their work, in addition to consultations with more than 60 Yemeni male and female leaders from various governorates in Yemen and the diaspora, as well as extensive desk research and mapping of current efforts and gaps in the protection of women's rights.

The strategy outlines a shared vision for stakeholders with influence on women's rights and freedoms, including Yemen's internationally recognized government, political parties, civil society, and national and international organizations operating in Yemen, such as the United Nations (UN). It is premised on the understanding that Yemeni women and girls should enjoy equal rights and participate fully in public life, socially, politically, and economically. They should be able to express their opinions and use their voices to shape decision-making at all national, regional, and local levels. To achieve this goal, Yemeni stakeholders identified three priorities to safeguard women's rights and freedoms better:

- Promote positive narratives around the leadership role of Yemeni women in governance and development, including their active role in peacebuilding, political life, and civic space.
- Ensure the protection of Yemeni women working in the public realm, including female human rights defenders, politicians, community leaders, and professionals such as lawyers, journalists, and humanitarian workers.
- Empower women-led civil society organizations, informal associations and networks, women in political parties, and human rights defenders.

Numerous stakeholders in Yemen are developing gender strategies, revisiting their gender-related policies, and responding to the escalating demands of Yemeni women for support and protection against current risks. Concurrently, a growing body of evidence examines the prevailing patterns and underlying causes of the barriers faced by Yemeni women in the public sphere. Such developments present an unmissable opportunity for collective action. This requires different agencies, both national and international, to collaborate, ensuring a more comprehensive and practical approach. To successfully implement this strategy, it is crucial to integrate strategic actions into the existing advocacy plans and strategies of key stakeholders, including the Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies (SCSS). This will entail establishing clear links between actions that support women's rights and freedoms and broader strategies aimed at achieving political transition, transitional justice, and peacebuilding.



Three girls fetch water from a well in a camp for displaced people west of Aden on July 10, 2023 // Sana'a Center photo by Rajeh Al-Omari.

I. Introduction



Yemeni women have faced a long and challenging journey of advocacy that has spanned decades. This journey has been directed toward dismantling state and societal structures characterized by discrimination and oppression. Motivated by a profound commitment to instigate change and fueled by their personal experiences, they have striven for transformative shifts in gender dynamics. Prolonged conflicts, the rise of political and religious extremism, economic decline, and widespread poverty have consistently hindered this pursuit of gender transformation and its realization. Despite these formidable challenges, Yemeni women have consistently demonstrated resilience, standing up after each fall and recommencing their efforts anew. Against this backdrop, this strategy delineates a collective vision for stakeholders, including Yemen's internationally recognized government, political parties, civil society, and national and international organizations working in Yemen. Its main goal is to address the multifaceted barriers encountered by Yemeni women and girls, particularly those exacerbated by ongoing conflict, political instability, and pervasive insecurity. The imperative of gender equity and equality is underscored as a fundamental catalyst in maintaining the fabric of communities, invigorating economies, and keeping nations resilient. Its principle is not only an obligation under International Human Rights mechanisms, but a strategic move that would support economic growth and peacebuilding in Yemen. The strategy's vision aspires for a Yemen where every individual, irrespective of gender, is afforded equal opportunities, assured of their safety and security, and experiences equitable and just treatment within domestic spheres, educational institutions, professional environments, and broader societal contexts.

1.1. Context Analysis

Discrimination and Marginalization of Women

Women played an instrumental role in all aspects of Yemeni society and made significant gains leading to and during the 2011 Yemen uprisings,^[1] assuming leadership roles and active membership in the National Dialogue Conference (NDC).^[2] The period of 2014-2022 was characterized by a boom in Yemeni women-led civil society organizations and unprecedented international support for women leaders and activists.^[3]

[1] Tom Finn, "Saleh is gone, but Yemen women's struggle goes on," Reuters, April 11, 2012, <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-yemen-politics-womenidUKBRE83AoRQ20120411>

[2] "Women in Peace and Transition Processes, Yemen (2011–2015)," Case Study Series. Geneva: Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative, The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, April 2018, [case-study-women-yemen-2011-2015-en.pdf](https://www.inclusivepeace.org/case-study-women-yemen-2011-2015-en.pdf) ([inclusivepeace.org](https://www.inclusivepeace.org))

[3] Nadia Al-Sakkaf, "Yemen's Women and the Quest for Change," Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, October 2012, <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/09434.pdf>

Almost a decade of war has set back the rights and freedoms of Yemeni women. Despite political and ideological differences, authorities on the ground have harmonized practices to marginalize women,^[4] leveraging social norms and the radicalization of communities during the conflict. This reality is reflected in stricter dress codes, mobility restrictions, especially in Houthi-controlled areas, and policies that limit the presence of women and girls among men or in crowded spaces.^[5]

Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) has become endemic in Yemen, with more than 6.36 million women and girls at heightened risk of its various forms, including harmful traditional practices.^[6] The protracted conflict, natural disasters, economic collapse, water scarcity, continued food insecurity, and loss of safe access to basic services and sources of livelihood have further exacerbated risks, particularly for women and girls, to various forms of GBV, including child marriage, trafficking, beggary, child labor, and sexual exploitation and abuse.^[7] Around 30 percent of girls in Yemen are married before the age of 18.^[8] Rising divorce rates and declining economic conditions have left more women, girls, and female-headed households disproportionately vulnerable.

Almost all forms of GBV are aggravated by political and security instability, like homicide and one of its forms, 'honor crimes,' sexual violence, including rape, and early and coercive marriage. Violators, who can be family, close relatives, or people in the community, take advantage of collapsing law enforcement systems and the fragility of social protection mechanisms to increase the severity and scope of their crimes. In addition, physical violence, torture, and intimidation can be used by state and de facto state groups and personnel to terrorize women out of the public realm. Economic violence against women also prevails in the form of deprivation of rights and resources, deprivation of education, control over salary or income, and denial of inheritance.^[9]

Access to GBV services continues to be limited, with fewer than 5 percent of health facilities offering clinical management for rape or other forms of GBV. The GBV Area of Responsibility (AoR) within the humanitarian system emerged as one of the most underfunded clusters in 2023, undermining the

[4] Afrah Nasser, "Realignment of Yemen's Identity Politics," Al Jazeera, August 26, 2015, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2015/8/26/realignment-of-yemens-identity-politics/>

[5] "Yemen Women's Economic Empowerment in the Yemeni Context," ACAPS, June 6, 2023, https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20230606_acaps_thematic_report_yemen_womens_economic_empowerment_in_the_yemeni_context.pdf

[6] "Reimagining Resilience: Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation in the Context of the Polycrisis," 2022 Global Report, UNICEF, <https://www.unicef.org/media/146176/file/Yemen%20I%20FGM%202022%20Report.pdf>

[7] "Understanding the cycle of gender-based violence in Yemen," ACAP 2023 GBV Analysis, November 2023, https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20231117_ACAPS_Yemen_analysis_hub_understanding_the_cycle_of_gender-based_violence.pdf

[8] UNICEF and UNFPA 'Global Programme to End Child Marriage,' 2017, <https://www.unicef.org/protection/unfpa-unicef-global-programme-accelerate-action-end-child-marriage>

[9] Fawziah Al-Ammar, Hannah Patchett, and Shams Shamsan, "A Gendered Crisis: Understanding the Experiences of Yemen's War," Sana'a Center For Strategic Studies, December 15, 2019, <https://sanaacenter.org/publications/main-publications/8480>

efficacy of service provision. The lack of adequate funding for awareness-raising and prevention, risk reduction, and response activities is likely to further impede effective responses to GBV unless it receives prioritization in the future.^[10]

Many displaced households are headed by women, and are more vulnerable to GBV, poverty, and violations of fundamental rights. Women and girls with disabilities are at even greater risk of GBV, and services to prevent and address such violence are overstretched or absent in some areas. Reporting of GBV cases is hindered by fear, stigma, and a lack of legal redress mechanisms. Marginalized women and girls, including the *Muhamasheen*,^[11] face additional challenges in terms of social, economic, and political disadvantages. Economic violence against women in the form of denying their access to their property and inheritance is prevalent. Women often do not seek formal access to their rights due to limited information and legal support.^[12]

Limitations of Freedoms and Movement

Yemeni women are presently facing alarming levels of restrictions on movement, primarily though not exclusively in areas under Houthi control, where women are required to travel with a *mahram*.^[13] A *mahram*, defined as in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), refers to a person with whom marriage is prohibited because of their close blood relationship to a woman.^[14] Women reported to local media that bus drivers refused to take them on board because they did not have a *mahram*, or that it costs them more money to travel since they must pay for the *mahram*'s ticket.^[15] According to testimonies, a written approval from a *mahram* is not sufficient. Personnel at security checkpoints have reportedly verbally harassed or threatened women if they do not obey orders and return.^[16]

Women are also not allowed to stay in hotels except when accompanied by a *mahram*. In addition, authorities require women to show guardianship permission and have their guardian present—a father, brother, husband, or son—to obtain or renew personal identity cards or passports,^[17] despite the national

[10] "Yemen: Humanitarian Needs Overview," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), January 2024, <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-humanitarian-needs-overview-2024-january-2024>

[11] The *Muhamasheen* (the Arabic term for marginalized) are an ethnic group in Yemen who experience systematic discrimination. They are generally referred to negatively and racially discriminated against in Yemen as "Akhdam" (the Arabic term for Servants), and are considered to be the lowest social class in the country.

[12] "Yemen: Humanitarian Needs Overview," United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), January 2024, <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-humanitarian-needs-overview-2024-january-2024>

[13] Afrah Nasser, "Yemen: No Woman Will Travel Alone," Daraj, November 21, 2022, <https://daraj.media/en/yemen-no-woman-will-travel-alone/>

[14] "Mahram: Women's Mobility in Islam," Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Mahram-Womens-Mobility-in-Islam.pdf>

[15] "Trapped: How Male Guardianship Policies Restrict Women's Travel and Mobility in the Middle East and North Africa," Human Rights Watch, July 18, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2023/07/18/trapped/how-male-guardianship-policies-restrict-womens-travel-and-mobility-middle>

[16] "Yemen: Huthis suffocating women with requirement for male guardians," Amnesty International, September 1, 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/09/yemen-huthis-suffocating-women-with-requirement-for-male-guardians/>

[17] Ibid.

law not specifically requiring such conditions. Lack of civil documentation can prevent family reunification, compromise freedom of movement, and limit access to essential services and opportunities for employment.^[18] Restrictions on women, overall, have had additional negative ramifications as they have increasingly become the primary breadwinners for their families during the conflict.^[19]

Restrictions on the movement of female aid workers in Houthi-controlled areas have further challenged the availability of critical services, adversely impacting the health needs of women and girls. These barriers not only dramatically reduce women's and girls' access to services; they also limit the humanitarian response's understanding of needs due to a reduced presence of female humanitarians in assessments.

Comprehensive data related to GBV is rare in Yemen because of the sensitivity of the topic and taboos around discussing it.^[20] The impact of restricting freedom of movement on Yemeni women and girls will only be fully assessed after some time, but it is expected that the regression in women's status will be drastic.

Women Leaders a Target

Women have been subject to myriad forms of harassment, including blackmail, threats, and defamation campaigns.^[21] These attacks not only affect women, but also their families, and can have devastating consequences.^[22] Overall, harassers not only terrorize women but also communities as a whole, by assuming a moral police role and seeking to curtail fundamental rights and freedoms.

Many forms of GBV are being tolerated or even used by warring parties to suppress political and civic participation^[23] of marginalized groups, including women. Since 2011, armed groups in Yemen, including the Houthis, have restricted the growing interest and capacity of women to protest, campaign, or mobilize society.^[24]

[18] Sawsan Al-Refaei, "How Humanitarian and Peace Frameworks Fail to Respond Systematically to Gender Based Violence in Yemen," Yemen Policy Center, December 2022, <https://www.yemenpolicy.org/how-humanitarian-and-peace-frameworks-fail-to-respond-systemically-to-gender-based-violence-in-yemen/>

[19] "Social Impact Monitoring Report: July–September 2022," ACAP 2022, https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20221122_acaps_yah_simp_july_to_september_2022.pdf

[20] "Case Study: Delivering integrated services for gender-based violence, and sexual reproductive health and rights to conflict-affected communities in Yemen- Taiz Gov. Al Taziyah district (Alaghwah) 2019-2020," UNFPA & Deem, August 1, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/case-study-delivering-integrated-services-gender-based-violence-and-sexual-reproductive-health-and-rights-conflict-affected-communities-yemen-taiz-gov-al-taziyah-district-alaghwah-2019-2020>

[21] Rohwerder, B. (2017). Conflict and Gender Dynamics in Yemen. K4D Helpdesk Report. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies

[22] Rim Mugahed, "Absent from the Negotiation Table and Shunned from Public Life: Yemeni Women at a Crossroads," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, September 4, 2023, https://sanaacenter.org/files/Absent_from_the_Negotiation_Table_and_Shunned_from_Public_Life_Yemeni_Women_at_a_Crossroads_en.pdf

[23] Amanda H. Blair, Nicole Gerring, Sabrina Karim, "Ending Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in War and Peace," United States Institute of Peace, September 26, 2016, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2016/09/ending-sexual-and-gender-based-violence-war-and-peace>

[24] "Yemen's Women: Out from the Shadows," The Guardian, May 9, 2011, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/05/09/yemens-women-out-shadows>

Women humanitarian workers and women's rights activists ^[25] have been targeted online and on the ground through defamation campaigns in an effort to suppress their voices, hide their realities, and limit their influence and reach. Unprecedented extreme actions are being carried out against women, including detainment, imprisonment, torture, and kidnapping. The brutal Houthi crackdown on civil society actors and widespread detentions that began in June 2024 included many women who were prominent in the humanitarian and civic sphere.^[26]

Reported cases show that pro-government authorities have also subjected women to unwarranted detentions, house raids, unauthorized searches, and the confiscation of personal property.^[27] In recent years, there has been a discernible shift in the nature of GBV incidents. This transition from random, isolated incidents to coordinated efforts indicates a concerning escalation in the tactics employed to undermine and intimidate publicly active women.

Yemeni women have reported that social media campaigns often target female staff of local and international organizations, accusing them of trying to shift social norms. At the local level, the restrictions make it much harder for women humanitarians to reach vulnerable women and girls in the most impacted communities. Some organizations have had to open sub-offices in Aden to be able to carry on with their projects, but there they have faced further restrictions and challenges and come under pressure from the government to move their headquarters from Sana'a to Aden.^[28]

Women in the Economy

Yemen has one of the world's lowest rates of female participation in the workforce.^[29] Since the conflict began in 2015, the participation rate for women has stayed around 7 percent.^[30] Yemeni women are significantly underrepresented in the formal labor market, while they are overrepresented in informal jobs, unpaid family roles, and low-wage or part-time work.^[31] Research suggests that initially, the war affected a larger proportion of women

^[25] "UN Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen presents its fourth report to the Human Rights Council," United Nations Press Release, September 14, 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2021/09/un-group-eminent-international-and-regional-experts-yemen-presents-its>

^[26] Bilqees Al-Lahbi, Rim Mugahed and Lara Uhlenhaut, "A Year in Patriarchy: Key Setbacks in Yemeni Women's Rights in 2024," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, February 4, 2025, https://sanaacenter.org/files/A_Year_in_Patriarchy_Key_Setbacks_in_Yemeni_Womens_Rights_in_2024_en.pdf

^[27] Thuraya Dammaj, "War Passing Over Women's Bodies," The Yemen Review, November and December 2023, Sana'a Center For Strategic Studies, <https://sanaacenter.org/the-yemen-review/nov-dec-2023/21555>

^[28] "Speaking Up: The Role of Women in Building Peace in Yemen," OXFAM, March 8, 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/speaking-role-women-building-peace-yemen#:~:text=Outside%20interventions%20from%20armed%20groups,since%20the%202015%20conflict%20escalation>

^[29] Fawziah Al-Ammar and Hannah Patchett, "The Repercussions of War on Women in the Yemeni Workforce," Sana'a Center For Strategic Studies, July 13, 2019, <https://sanaacenter.org/publications/main-publications/7721>

^[30] World Bank Data Dashboard, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLFCACT.NE.ZS?end=2014&locations=YE&most_recent_year_desc=true&start=2000

^[31] Michele Bruni, Andrea Salvini and Lara Uhlenhaut, "Demographic and Labor Market Trends in Yemen," ILO, 2014, [wcms_358144.pdf \(ilo.org\)](https://www.ilo.org/publications/iloorg/wcms_358144.pdf)

in the labor force than men. In 2015, male employment had declined by 11 percent, while female employment had fallen by 28 percent.^[32] These figures varied nationally, but they were more prominent in Sana'a.^[33] Data from the same year showed that women-owned businesses were harder hit than male-owned businesses, although they accounted for just 4 percent of all companies before the conflict.^[34]

However, there have been some unexpected outcomes regarding women's employment patterns since the war. Recent reports have observed that women are increasingly establishing small businesses and venturing into employment sectors traditionally dominated by men, such as retail and specific service industries.^[35] Additionally, the humanitarian response has given rise to new employment prospects for a modest yet expanding group of urban young women who are assuming leadership positions in international organizations, the private sector, and local non-governmental organizations.^[36]

Meanwhile, female health and education professionals are withdrawing from these vital sectors because public salaries are not being paid. Limitations to movement and harassment in public spaces, compounded by significant reductions to incentives for healthcare, have notably led to the withdrawal of qualified healthcare workers, including critical women staff, from remote and frontline areas.^[37]

Women in Civic Spaces and Peacebuilding

Women in Yemen face exclusion from government^[38] and public spaces, as well as systematic sidelining from public positions. Gender segregation has increased to levels previously unseen in the country. This has rendered women invisible in the public eye.^[39]

Yemeni civil spaces have shrunk because of the persecution of individuals and parties that oppose the ideologies of de facto state groups, the absence of independent media and press, and strict control over non-governmental organizations, especially those led by women or who serve women. Since June 2024, Houthi-controlled areas have witnessed a wave of alarming arrests

[32] "Yemen Damage and Needs Assessment: Crisis Impact on Employment and Labour Market," ILO, January 2016, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-arabstates/-ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_501929.pdf

[33] Fawzia Al-Ammar and Hannah Patchett, "The Repercussions of War on Women in the Yemeni Workforce," July 13, 2019, Sana'a Center For Strategic Studies, <https://sanaacenter.org/publications/main-publications/7721>

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Marta Colburn, "A New Path Forward: Empowering A Leadership Role for Yemeni Civil Society," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, January 26, 2021, <https://sanaacenter.org/publications/main-publications/13021>

[37] Ibid.

[38] "Yemen in Focus: 'No women, no government' movement demands political participation," New Arab, December 19, 2020, <https://www.newarab.com/analysis/yemen-focus-womens-group-demands-participation-government>

[39] Thuraya Dammaj, "War Passing Over Women's Bodies," The Yemen Review, November and December 2023, Sana'a Center For Strategic Studies, <https://sanaacenter.org/the-yemen-review/nov-dec-2023/21555>

targeting civil society members, including female activists. Meanwhile, in government-held regions, deep political divisions and ongoing factional disputes continue to erode progress on women's rights and civic participation.^[40]

Many women have been forced to flee Yemen, while others who remained have stopped their activism, changed their fields, or shifted to other organizations.^[41]

In response to these challenging conditions, women continue to participate in coalitions, networks, hubs, and group initiatives that enable them to collaborate on peacebuilding efforts. These coalitions serve as a form of collective protection and are a step in the right direction, but ultimately, greater protections are needed.

Gender programming, meanwhile, is particularly complicated in Yemen. Projects focusing on gender, targeting youth and women, or seeking to contribute to peace have, for various reasons, struggled with limited funding due to the conflict. Additionally, organizations have faced difficulties in obtaining permission for such programming from local authorities, particularly in Houthi-controlled areas. Women's and youth local networks struggle to integrate women's agendas into the peace process at both national and local levels. Nevertheless, this has not prevented them from achieving progress.

Women and the Peace Agenda

Yemeni women have been actively involved in promoting community cohesion and peacebuilding. They have been instrumental in alleviating the impact of conflict through local mediation efforts and initiatives.^[42] Local women's groups and peace activists have assumed crucial roles in de-escalating conflicts. They have achieved this by mobilizing support within communities, collaborating with local leaders, and engaging in negotiations with various conflicting parties.^[43]

Parties to the conflict, however, have kept women on the sidelines in peace talks.^[44] To date, women have had little to no representation in the most crucial peace negotiations that have taken place, a condition that persists despite their lack of involvement in armed conflict or vested interests in ongoing or historical hostilities.

^[40] Bilqees Al-Lahbi, Rim Mugahed and Lara Uhlenhaut, "A Year in Patriarchy: Key Setbacks in Yemeni Women's Rights in 2024," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, February 4, 2025, https://sanaacenter.org/files/A_Year_in_Patriarchy_Key_Setbacks_in_Yemeni_Womens_Rights_in_2024_en.pdf

^[41] Elizabeth Hagedorn, "Yemeni women activists escape war with the help of a global, underground network," The World, July 29, 2019, <https://theworld.org/stories/2019/07/29/yemeni-women-activists-escape-war-global-underground-network>

^[42] Iman al-Gawfi, Bilkis Zabara and Stacey Philbrick Yadav, "The Role of Women in Peacebuilding in Yemen," CARPO, February 27, 2020, <https://carpo-bonn.org/en/publications/carpo-briefs/the-role-of-women-in-peacebuilding-in-yemen>

^[43] Joke Buringa, "Strategizing Beyond the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda in Yemen: The Importance of CEDAW," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, August 23, 2021, https://sanaacenter.org/files/Strategizing_beyond_the_Women_Peace_and_Security_Agenda_in_Yemen_en.pdf

^[44] Maryam Alkubati, Huda Jafar, and Esham Al-Eryani "Grassroots Voices: Women and Everyday Peacebuilding in Yemen," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, April 28, 2023, https://sanaacenter.org/files/Grassroots_Voices-Women_and_Everyday_Peacebuilding_in_Yemen_en.pdf

A common explanation for the low participation of women in UN-led peace processes is the quota system, which allocates a specific number of seats at the negotiating table to conflict actors and political parties. Usually, parties nominate all-male delegations. When asked to include women, the Yemeni government, for example, argues that it is beyond its power to intervene in who political parties nominate to represent them.^[45]

This stark absence of women is in contradiction with the UN's Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, specifically UNSCR 1325, which urges all parties to include women in peacebuilding initiatives.^[46] This exclusion intensifies existing challenges surrounding women's rights, leading to increased gender-based violence and the reinforcement of traditional gender norms.^[47]

The Yemen Women, Peace, and Security National Action Plan (NAP),^[48] as per resolution 1325 (2000), does not include specific activities, clear indicators, or strategies that focus on advocacy with different allies on women's inclusion and participation. This strategic gap represents another obstacle and reflects the unequal power relations within Yemeni and international support structures.

These and other collective women's initiatives aim to keep the women's agenda on the peace negotiation table, address gender-based violence, mitigate the suffering of civilians, support prisoners and detainees, and ensure that the humanitarian needs of women and girls are prioritized.

^[45] Fatima Mutaheer, "Yemen's New Networks in Women's Peacebuilding," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, September 10, 2021, https://sanaacenter.org/files/Yemens_New_Networks_in_Womens_Peacebuilding.pdf

^[46] Maryam Alkubati, "Women's Voices in Yemen's Peace Process: Priorities, Recommendations, and Mechanisms for Effective Inclusion," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, February 22, 2022, <https://sanaacenter.org/publications/main-publications/19400>

^[47] Ibid.

^[48] "National plan to implement Security Council Resolution 1325: Women, Security and Peace 2020 – 2022," Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, <https://wpsfocalpointsnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Yemen-2020-2022.pdf>



A mother carries food on her head at a Muhammasheen camp, west of Taiz city, on February 21, 2021 // Sana'a Center photo by Ahmed Al-Basha.



II. Strategy Development Process and Goals



This strategy is the result of an extensive consultative process with Yemeni stakeholders. In May 2023, the Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies convened a three-day scenario-building workshop in Amman. The event brought together 16 Yemeni participants, representing a range of professional sectors and originating from various governorates, including Sana'a, Ibb, and Aden, in addition to members from the diaspora.^[49] The workshop's primary aim was to acquire insights and develop strategies addressing the challenges currently faced by Yemeni women, while also identifying potential avenues for their empowerment in a post-conflict environment. Among the attendees were academics, artists, journalists, educators, representatives from civil society and women's groups, business professionals, and researchers. Together, they laid the foundation for formulating effective strategies aimed at enhancing the roles and involvement of women in Yemen by 2030, culminating in the development of this strategy.

To complement the findings from the scenario-building workshop, key informant interviews were conducted with representatives from the media, the private sector, civic organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the protection and GBV service sector. The interviews helped validate and prioritize the recommendations presented during the scenario-building workshop.

Overall, in the collective consultation process, more than 60 Yemeni leaders, both male and female, were engaged and contributed to the development of this strategy. This includes members of diverse political parties, journalists, human rights and women's rights activists, women's advocates, public servants, researchers, artists, business leaders, and lawyers.

Furthermore, the lead author conducted a desk review of reports and studies published by the Sana'a Center and other organizations, including UN agencies and international organizations such as Oxfam, as well as humanitarian reports from 2015 to 2024. These reports were reviewed to obtain data on the key priorities identified by stakeholders in Yemen on women's rights and freedoms. The desk review also aimed to map all women's rights and freedoms advocacy efforts and strategies that had been recently implemented to obtain a clear picture of current efforts and remaining gaps.

^[49] Maryam Alkubati, "Women's Public Participation in Yemen by 2030: A Scenario-Building Approach," Sana'a Center For Strategic Studies, January 21, 2024, <https://sanaacenter.org/publications/main-publications/21784>

2.1. Strategy Objectives

- To foster and strengthen networks and partnerships among local, national, and international stakeholders dedicated to safeguarding the rights and freedoms of women and girls.
- To establish and document positive and empowered narratives about women in leadership, while building a cultural and social foundation that recognizes and respects women's rights and contributions to society.
- To support the documentation of gender-based violence in Yemen and support tangible actions towards lifting measures violating women's rights to movement, work, and participation in political and social life.
- To support female leadership in humanitarian and development sectors and empower women-led civil society organizations, informal associations, networks, and community leaders to gain visibility and sustain their community-based work.
- To establish protection measures for women participating in the public sphere.

2.2. Strategic Vision & Priorities

Strategic Vision

Women and girls in Yemen participate fully in public life, socially, politically, and economically, and can express their opinions and use their voices effectively to shape decision-making at all national, regional, and local levels.

Strategic Priorities

1. Promote positive narratives around the leadership role of Yemeni women in governance and development, including their active role in peacebuilding, political life, and civic spaces.
2. Ensure the protection of Yemeni women working in the public realm, including female human rights defenders, politicians, community leaders, and professionals such as lawyers, journalists, and humanitarian workers.
3. Empower women-led civil society organizations, informal associations and networks, women in political parties, and human rights defenders.

2.3. Advocacy Tactics & Actions

To address these priorities, the strategy will utilize key tactics and actions summarized below, which are detailed in the Strategic Action Plan (see Appendix 1). The strategy is designed to influence decision-makers while simultaneously putting pressure on them through public mobilization and coordinated advocacy efforts. A broad spectrum of stakeholders will be engaged at multiple levels, and an intersectional approach will be employed to ensure that the voices and capacities of marginalized groups are strengthened.

Key Advocacy Tactics:

- **Research and Policy Development:** Generating, collating, and reporting data on the current status of women's and girls' freedoms and rights in Yemen.
- **Network Strengthening and Allyship Building:** Identification of current networks that promote Yemeni women and girls' rights inside Yemen and in the diaspora. The strategy supports building allyship with similar networks in the region and globally, to make the crisis in Yemen and its impact on women and girls more visible at the regional and international levels, and to garner more support.
- **Community Engagement, Communication, and Campaigning:** Awareness-raising activities, participatory and shared learning events. Engagement with women and girls from religious minorities, the *Muhamasheen*, and those living in remote areas or with disabilities will be prioritized.
- **Advocacy Capacity Building:** Support to civic organizations to perform their advocacy role through providing core funding, technical advice, and training. Programs focusing on vulnerable groups will be prioritized.

Key Strategic Actions:

- **Policy Dialogue and Policy Development:** This will include activities that analyze both existing and new policies that limit women's rights and freedoms and promote gender-sensitive approaches in Yemen. It will create platforms for dialogue between women leaders, representatives from the government, political leaders, and international actors on the current status of women and advocating for stronger positions in support of women.
- **Media Campaigning & Communication:** Public awareness campaigns will use media and public events to educate and inform the general public, highlighting achievements and impact. This entails focusing on the tangible

effects of women's work and sharing inclusive stories, including those that highlight how their efforts have made a difference in communities, emphasizing the positive changes brought about by their activism. Social media platforms will also be utilized to connect with a younger, more diverse audience, encouraging engagement through hashtags, online campaigns, and interactive content.

- **Capacity Building:** This will primarily involve training of local journalists and media personnel on highlighting women's needs and creating positive and empowered narratives on Yemeni women.
- **Research and Reporting:** To counter the current dearth of information, this entails carrying out research to gather data on the status of women and regression of their freedoms and rights, in addition to documenting case studies and stories of women's experiences to highlight the real-life implications of rights violations and the importance of advocacy work.
- **Community-Based Dialogue and Community Engagement:** This aspect focuses on working with local communities to understand their specific challenges and needs concerning women's rights. It also involves empowering and supporting women's groups, specifically to promote collective action and support.
- **Partnership and Coalition Building:** This will entail collaboration and partnerships with local and international NGOs that have expertise and resources to support women's rights initiatives.
- **Economic Empowerment:** This includes supporting women entrepreneurs and providing resources to help women start their businesses.

2.4. Target Audience and Stakeholders

The primary audience and key stakeholders of this strategy are institutions and individuals that contribute to or influence the economic and social empowerment of women in Yemen. In particular, it is targeting:

- The internationally recognized government of Yemen
- The United Nations
- UN Women
- The Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen (OESGY)
- Donors and the international community
- Yemeni civil society

The strategy also calls for non-traditional civil actors in women's rights, such as the private sector, trade unions, chambers of commerce, and other international actors. This approach goes beyond just women and feminist activists, academia, or opinion leaders. It will engage a diverse range of social, political, and economic leaders, as well as a broad base of grassroots representatives, to ensure collective impact is achieved. Additionally, the participation of men as leaders and community members will be key, as will be the engagement of multi-sectoral professionals, including lawyers, media personnel, health professionals, law enforcement personnel, and others.

2.5. Strategic Theory of Change - Collective Impact

Participants at the scenario-building workshop held in Amman^[50] developed three scenarios in which political and security trends could impact women's rights by 2030:

- **Empowerment:** Advancements in women's rights and empowerment, rooted in deep societal reforms and a strong legal framework.^[51] This requires an inclusive political settlement that addresses women's needs and fosters nationwide stability, security, and justice.
- **Regression:** Uncertain political settlement, along with the collapse of state institutions, leads to weak fulfillment of women's rights and lack of participation, and risks of further marginalizing women.
- **Erosion:** In the scenario of state collapse, deep-rooted societal biases and a weak legal framework contribute to a significant decline in women's rights and empowerment. The unstable political climate threatens fundamental human rights, particularly for women, further excluding them from politics.

Workshop participants in Amman stated that collective impact can help prevent further regression and erosion of women's rights. They acknowledged that restrictions on women's freedom of movement and public participation not only infringe upon their rights and opportunities but also adversely affect the economic, social, and cultural development of societies. Such limitations perpetuate a cycle of inequality and obstruct progress towards more equitable and inclusive communities. Within this, the collective impact framework, a cross-sector approach to solving complex issues on a large scale, serves as a valuable blueprint for community change and is part of a broad frame of collaborative efforts focused on systems and policy change.^[52]

^[50] This is the vision of women and civil activists who participated in the Amman workshops in 2023.

^[51] "Yemen Gender Justice & The Law," UNDP, December 10, 2018, <https://yemen.un.org/en/17750-gender-justice-law-yemen>

^[52] The Tamarack Collective Impact Toolkit: <https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/collective-impact-toolkit>

This framework contains five core conditions, including:

- the development of a common agenda
- using shared measurement to understand progress
- building on mutually reinforcing activities
- engaging in continuous communications and engagement
- providing a backbone to move the work forward

This approach is particularly valuable for empowering women and girls in public spaces. It brings together stakeholders who are committed to gender equality, helping them align with the strategy and work collaboratively towards achieving equity and equality for women and girls. Additionally, it establishes a common agenda for the next five years and ensures that the stakeholder base is continuously expanded to improve representation.

The conditions outlined have been integrated into the strategy's theory of change. This theory posits that significant advancements for women's and girls' rights and freedoms in Yemen—especially in terms of their presence and participation in public life—can only be realized if all stakeholders share a common agenda and use the same metrics to gauge progress. The strategy also emphasizes that engaging with the community and effective communication, through both existing and new platforms, are essential for mobilizing grassroots support and meeting advocacy goals.

2.6. Guiding Principles^[53]

- **A human rights-based approach** promotes people-centered and sustainable development methods for planning and decision-making, based on the principle that respect for individual human rights, dignity, and gender equality must underpin any civil, political, social, and economic agenda.
- **An intersectional approach** should be grounded in a clear understanding of how various backgrounds, identities, and lived experiences intersect for women and girls in Yemen. This means that when we advocate for women's rights—such as the right to move freely, the right to express themselves, and the right to participate in public life—we must also consider additional factors that contribute to their experiences of discrimination and marginalization. These factors include ethnicity, race, economic class, political affiliation, and disability.

^[53] These guiding principles were developed in consultation with stakeholders participating in the Amman workshop and validated during the validation workshop conducted virtually on February 17, 2023

- **A multi-sectoral implementation approach** adopts a deliberate collaborative approach among various stakeholder groups (e.g., government, civil society, private sector, donors, and international actors) and sectors (e.g., health, justice, and economy) to jointly achieve advocacy goals and leverage the strength, perspectives, and expertise of each stakeholder.
- **An evidence-based approach** bases its objectives on research findings regarding the status of Yemeni women and girls, as well as gender analysis. It integrates the best knowledge and expertise in its proposed strategic directions and tactics, while considering the unique realities of intersectional groups of women and girls.



Medical students take a break after completing their practical exams at Aden University on February 22, 2022 // Sana'a Center photo by Sam Tarling.



III. Strategy Implementation



The internationally recognized government of Yemen bears the primary responsibility for safeguarding the rights and freedoms of Yemeni women and girls. The current political crisis in Yemen and the ensuing fragmentation necessitate consideration of the influence of other authorities, such as the Houthi group (*Ansar Allah*) and Southern Transitional Council (STC), in their respective areas of control. Local councils play a crucial role in supporting the programming and funding of women-led organizations and networks, as well as in protecting local women leaders and advocates. Consequently, the implementation of this strategy will depend on the engagement of all levels of government.

It will be facilitated by integrating strategic actions into the existing advocacy plans and strategies of key stakeholders, including the Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies. This integration involves establishing clear connections between strategic actions that support women's rights and freedoms and broader strategies aimed at achieving political transition, transitional justice, and peacebuilding.

The strategy leverages existing networks and coalitions of women that have strategies and plans addressing violations of women's rights and limitations to their freedoms. It aligns with the key strategies and plans of international actors, including the gender strategy of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen (OSES-GY), the UK's Gender Strategy, and the European Council's Global Gender Strategy.

It also relies on civil society organizations, activists, and community groups to maintain a collective impact, raising awareness and building a united voice. In this process, the voice and capacity of marginalized groups to claim their rights will be strengthened, employing an intersectional lens in advocacy. It will prioritize the rights of women and girls from religious minorities, the *Muhamasheen*, and those living in remote areas or with disabilities.

Although this strategy is not anticipated to expand civic space or prevent its further contraction, the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) will include specific strategic activities aimed at enhancing the resilience of civic actors to engage, collaborate, and organize independently.

3.1 Accountability

There will be a collective effort to measure progress towards achieving development as part of the stakeholder commitment to implementation.

The Sana'a Center will collate data against the SAP (see Appendix 1) and include lessons learned and recommendations for stakeholders.

The consolidated Strategic Action Plan (SAP) presented in Annex 1 will serve as the framework for reporting and will target all stakeholders involved in the development of this Strategy. The SAP is designed to ensure that all stakeholders commit to the following:

- Integrating gender equality and the empowerment of women into the scope of analysis and evaluation, ensuring the collection of data related to gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Incorporating gender equality and the empowerment of women into evaluation criteria. Evaluation questions will specifically address how they have been incorporated into the design, planning, and implementation of the intervention, as well as the results achieved.
- Employing gender-responsive methodologies, methods, tools, and data analysis techniques in stakeholder efforts, including research, policy development, and advocacy.

3.2. Monitoring and Evaluation: Feasibly Measured Progress Indicators

The strategic framework includes both quantitative and qualitative indicators to monitor change. These indicators may not provide the complete picture of the extent to which strategy outcomes were achieved, but they will enable stakeholders to understand progress and tackle implementation roadblocks as they arise.

The Performance Indicators included in the SAP fall under one or more of the following:

- **Reach:** This measures the number of individuals and groups impacted by strategic actions and activities. It includes the count of participants in social media campaigns, the number of allies and groups engaged in dialogue, advocacy efforts, or contributions to any of the tactics outlined in the Strategic Framework (SF).

- **Access:** This indicator assesses the number of decision-makers or opinion leaders (individuals or organizations) that stakeholders can connect with, along with their responses. Documentation, including written records, recordings of meetings, interviews, or interactions with officials, as well as media coverage and public or private statements of support from decision-makers, is included.
- **Influence:** This measures the progress made regarding policy, practices, attitudes, behaviors, or social norms related to women's and girls' rights and freedoms. Examples include public or private statements and actions that support policy demands, as well as the enactment or voting on specific policies or practices.

The selection of data collection methods will depend on the following criteria:

- Whether the techniques will provide the information needed to track progress and demonstrate change.
- Whether there are any safety implications for data collectors or populations involved.
- Potential for bias in the data collection process.
- Resources required for collecting and analyzing data.

3.3 Critical Assumptions and Risks

Assumptions

- Yemeni women's and girls' rights are further impacted by the rise of extremism and fundamentalism among those in power.
- The investment in women's leadership will not only change the narratives around women's political, social, and economic participation but will also protect Yemeni women and girls in general from being targeted.
- Yemeni civil actors such as political parties, non-governmental organizations, the media, and community-based networks and groups are losing their structural, programmatic, and financial resilience, which accordingly has resulted in weakened protection of women and girls from all types of gender-based violence.
- Yemeni women and girls fall under intersectional oppression mechanisms, which place them under a compound state of vulnerability. Current key actors in the humanitarian and peace-building sectors are not fully cognizant of the strong linkages between limitations of women's freedoms and violation of their rights and the impact of factors such as migration, displacement, urbanization, and climate change on Yemen.

- International, national, and local actors in Yemen are increasingly aware of the critical role of coordination on women and gender issues and the value of integrating a gender lens in both humanitarian and peacebuilding frameworks. International actors have demonstrated willingness to align and support local actors in addressing gender needs in Yemen.

Risks

- The implementation of the strategy may be impacted by a dramatic change in stakeholder directions in Yemen. Shifting priorities away from women's rights and gender equality, or diminishing buy-in due to conflicting priorities, may hinder implementation.
- The full implementation of the strategy may be adversely affected if funds are unavailable or curtailed. Sustainable contributions from all stakeholders, in terms of both financial and human resources planning, would mitigate these risks.
- Deteriorating security and political instability will affect the expected outcomes of this strategy. The increasing threat of violent extremism or the escalation of conflict, whether national or regional, will hinder the empowerment of women and girls, pushing it off the high-policy agenda.
- Further shrinking civil society space due to additional limitations posed by warring conflicts will limit the implementation of the Strategy. These limitations in the form of new sociocultural bans and/or legal barriers will render strategic actions such as the mobilization of community leaders and reaching victims/survivors of gender-based violence difficult.
- The absence of constructive male participation will render the advocacy strategy unsuccessful.
- Persistence of vertical, non-coordinated strategic actions among stakeholders may not lead to actual change in the status of women and girls, and further tokenization of gender issues.

Mitigation strategies that can be employed to reduce the risks to achieving expected results on empowerment of women and girls in the public realm include:

- Engage multi-sectoral national and local actors, such as human rights protection systems, local governments, and civil society, in a purposeful and meaningful manner, to ensure effective engagement at the grassroots level in advocacy activities.
- Support preparedness and resilience of civil actors to mitigate risks in the aftermath of unforeseen instability and crises.

- Enhance the capacity of strategy stakeholders to collect gender-sensitive data and support gender-based analysis exercises, enabling the Strategy to remain relevant to the needs of women and girls.
- Collective impact action can address the resistance of some parties to addressing gender issues and address the de-prioritization of women's and girls' gender needs in stakeholder programs and budgets.

3.4. Role of the Sana'a Center

In recent years, the Sana'a Center has produced numerous publications focusing on the gendered impact of conflict in Yemen, either as standalone research projects or as integrated components within broader studies. The Center is committed to playing an enabling role in fulfilling its mission, with a pronounced focus on gender and equity. Furthermore, it has responded to recommendations from women's organizations, dedicating specific sessions to women's protection and gender-based violence at its annual Yemen International Forum consecutively for two years.

Moving forward, the Sana'a Center is poised to deploy its resources strategically to aid in the realization of the objectives outlined in this strategy. A key component of this initiative will be the establishment of collaborative spaces and platforms, facilitating dialogue, planning, and the implementation of strategic actions amongst local, national, and international stakeholders, thereby fostering collective action.

The Sana'a Center is ideally positioned to facilitate a strategic advocacy dialogue among Yemen's stakeholders, as knowledge generation is central to its mandate. This role will support the collection of data and research on current violations of the freedoms and rights of women and adolescent girls. Additionally, it has expertise in documenting local narratives, providing a platform for expressing the diverse perspectives of Yemen, and influencing policy related to Yemen at the domestic, regional, and international levels.

Appendix 1: Strategic Action Plan

VISION	Women and girls in Yemen enjoy equal rights and participate fully in public life socially, politically, and economically, and are able to express their opinions and use their voices to shape decision-making at all national, regional, and local levels.		
OBJECTIVES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To foster and strengthen networks and partnerships among local, national, and international stakeholders dedicated to safeguarding the rights and freedoms of women and girls. 2. To establish and document positive and empowered narratives about women in leadership, while building a cultural and social foundation that recognizes and respects women's rights and contributions to society. 3. To support the documentation of gender-based violence in Yemen and support tangible actions towards lifting measures violating women's rights to movement, work, and participation in political and social life. 4. To support female leadership in humanitarian and development sectors and empower women-led civil society organizations, informal associations, networks, and community leaders to gain visibility and support their community-based work. 5. To establish protection measures for women participating in the public sphere. 		
STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1	Promote positive narratives around the leadership role of Yemeni women in governance and development, including their active role in peacebuilding, political life, and civic spaces.		
Tactics	Activities	Target by 2030	Lead
Policy Dialogue & Policy Development.	Conduct national policy dialogue forums that bring key local, national, and international stakeholders together to protect women's freedom of movement and freedom of expression. These sessions will include key United Nations agencies with GBV and protection mandates, as well as representatives from OSESGY, EC, US, and UK governments.	At least one national policy dialogue annually. At least 200 men and women engaged.	OSESGY, UN Women, EC, OHCHR, other
	Conduct regional and local policy dialogue forums that bring key local, national, and international stakeholders to determine collective action to protect women's freedom of movement and freedom of expression. Conduct regional policy dialogue forums and/or webinars on the protection of Yemeni women leaders in the diaspora.	At least 4 local policy dialogues. At least 50 women and 50 men engaged.	SCSS + Yemeni and international thinktanks and research institutions

	Integrate policy dialogue sessions in the Yemen International Forum (YIF) focused on stakeholder positions and actions to promote and protect women and girls' freedoms and rights.	At least two sessions annually focus on Gender and Gender-based Violence during the YIF.	SCSS
	Support women's representation in global and regional discussions and ensure women's voices are heard in international forums discussing human rights, development, and peace in Yemen.	5-10 Yemeni women leaders are supported to attend international forums to address women's rights violations.	OSESGY, UN Women, Donors
	Develop policy briefs and papers that provide a critical view of the government and other stakeholders' roles in protecting the rights and freedoms of women and girls in Yemen.	Policy briefs are published using existing formats: Yemen Brief, Yemen Economic Bulletin, Yemen Environment Bulletin, Rethinking Yemen Economy, etc.	SCSS Yemen Development Champions
	Conduct visits and interviews with Yemeni officials, including government representatives as well as Yemeni ambassadors abroad, to advocate for the application of policies in favor of women's freedoms and rights, particularly the freedom of women to travel, obtain national IDs and passports, and protection from digital defamation campaigns.	10-15 delegations of women and men meeting Yemeni government officials.	Yemeni Women Networks and NGOs
	Conduct visits to the Ministers of Interior, Foreign Affairs, and Justice; political party offices; and local security forces to discuss the limitations of women's movement and emerging forms of gender-based violence.	10-15 delegations of women and men conducting visits to ministers, political parties, and local security offices.	Yemeni Women Networks and NGOs, men allies and activists
Media Campaigning and Communication	Design a media campaign to promote the successes of Yemeni women leaders through virtual or in-person "human exhibitions" where the public can interact with women leaders and know more about their work and impact.		Yemeni Women Networks and NGOs, male allies and activists

	Publish a report or periodic spotlights that highlight women leaders' tangible impacts that made a difference in communities, emphasizing the positive changes brought about by their activism.	A quarterly publication that is focused on women in leadership.	SCSS + Yemeni and international thinktanks and research institutions
	Amplify women leaders' voices through wide-reaching platforms to share their challenges and successes. This can include podcasts, social media account takeovers, and webinars.	At least 2 podcasts per year that host grassroots women community leaders. At least two webinars per year on contributions and impact of Yemeni women leaders.	SCSS + Yemeni and international thinktanks and research institutions.
Public Awareness Raising	Support private and independent media channels (such as radio, TV, and social media) to capture and document women's stories, experiences, and practices at the grassroots level.	At least 2 local (governorate-based) radio programs focus on women's leadership life stories.	Donors
Capacity Building	Build the capacity of local media anchors, editors-in-chief, and editorial teams to craft positive narratives about women in leadership and their impact on the ground across various media products. This includes training on a culturally sensitive lexicon around women's rights and reframing the gender discourse to align with national narratives.		UN Women
	Integrate a gender lens in trainings and sessions targeting international journalists, researchers, and intellectuals to ensure that global coverage of Yemeni affairs includes coverage of women's rights violations.	Integrate Gender-based Violence in Yemen Exchange Program.	SCSS

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2	Ensure the protection of Yemeni women working in the public realm, including female human rights defenders, politicians, community leaders, and professionals such as lawyers, journalists, and humanitarian workers.		
Tactics	Activities	Target by 2030	Lead and partners
Research and Reporting	Periodic collection of data on chronic and emerging measures put in place to limit women's movement, travel, or work in the public civic and political spaces through monitoring of the formal and informal media, documentation of women's testimonies, and conducting specialized studies on this topic.	At least two studies have been conducted and published to examine the limitations to women's and girls' freedom to move, travel, and work in public spaces.	SCSS+ others
	Monitor online campaigns against women in the public realm.		
	Integrate GBV and violations to women's freedom of movement and its impact on receiving basic humanitarian aid, and basic services such as health and education in Third Party Monitoring reports.		Donors and UN Agencies others
	Integrate GBV and violations to women's freedom of movement and its impact on receiving basic humanitarian Establish digital tools to monitor cyber gender-based violence and develop reporting systems of incidents linked to local law enforcement bodies and civil society organizations for protection., and basic services such as health and education in Third Party Monitoring reports.		
	Highlight GBV in UN reports and civil society shadow reports to UN HR mechanisms, and presentations in Security Council meetings, OCHCHR meetings, high-level consultative meetings with the UN Envoy office, peace talks, and key donor meetings.		Peace Track Initiative, National Commission for the Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights UNHCHR office in Yemen

Coalition Building	Provide coaching and training for Track 2 and Track 3 peacebuilding networks and initiatives to place violations against women's rights and freedoms on the high policy agenda when meeting with or reporting to peace process sponsors and negotiators.		UN Women/ OSESGY
	Establish governorate-level women's rights monitoring groups and coalitions that collect context-specific data on women's and girls' rights violations and limitations to their freedoms of movement and expression and establish mechanisms for reporting these findings to national and international stakeholders.		
Policy Development	Develop and disseminate positive affirmation policies that grant women the right to travel and move freely as part of their work in the humanitarian and peacebuilding sectors and grant them protection from all forms of gender-based violence. This includes resource allocation for additional protection measures for women researchers, humanitarian workers, human rights defenders, and journalists.	Humanitarian agencies and peace programming donors publish policies	Humanitarian agencies
Awareness Raising	Design and implement awareness-raising programs that target male community leaders, male youth, and male faith leaders on the severe impacts of targeting women leaders with gender-based violence.	Two campaigns target the male population.	Yemeni Women Networks and NGOs
STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3 Empower women-led civil society organizations, informal associations and networks, women in political parties, and human rights defenders.			
Tactics	Activities	Target by 2030	Lead and partners
Capacity Building	Support women entrepreneurs through programming and resource allocation.		Private Sector, Trade Chambers, others
	Build the capacity of women in the public sector, including women in leadership positions in ministries, the prime minister's office, and women members in political parties.		UN Agencies

	Support existing local projects and fund new ones, particularly in rural areas that promote female leadership in local humanitarian programming and peacebuilding.		Yemen OCHA
Community-based dialogues	Support women's organizations and networks to engage local religious leaders and influential figures (such as tribal leaders, village heads, and community leaders) using a culturally sensitive approach to discuss the cultural, political, and economic value of women's participation in public life.		Donors, UNDP, others
Community Engagement	Engage private sector leaders to fund and promote women's economic leadership through grants, mentoring programs, and training initiatives.		UNDP, Private companies and business owners
Media Campaigns	Enhance the visibility of women-led organizations that provide services to prevent and respond to GBV, and highlight their crucial role in addressing needs and gaps.		UN WOMEN UN agencies
	Produce and provide broadcast time for media products on the role of Yemeni women in social cohesion, peacebuilding, and the economy.		
	Support Yemeni young filmmakers to produce documentary films on women leaders, especially in the humanitarian sector, and the role of men community leaders as allies.		Donors and UN agencies
	Identify media platforms and channels that provide a positive narrative on Yemeni women, and establish collaboration ties and support		

Appendix 2: Targeted Audience and Stakeholders

1. The Internationally Recognized Government

The internationally recognized government of Yemen is the primary audience of this strategy. While Yemen ratified CEDAW in 1984, in December 2020, it established a cabinet without female ministers, contrary to both CEDAW and the outcomes of the 2013-2014 National Dialogue Conference (NDC).^[54] The government is represented by the Presidential Leadership Council, the prime minister, and cabinet ministers. In principle, it has committed to implementing the National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325 (2020-2023) and following the recommendations of the NDC quota on women's rights and freedoms, including the 30 percent quota in all levels of government. In practice, this has neither been implemented nor enforced by law.

The Women's National Committee^[55] and its branches in all Yemeni governorates are governmental stakeholders mandated to advance women's and girls' rights and mainstream a gender lens in governmental policies and strategies.

Yemen's political fragmentation in the aftermath of the war has also given rise to de facto authorities, including the Houthi group (Ansar Allah), the Southern Transitional Council (STC), and other Yemeni political parties and powers on the ground. These groups now exert control in different regions/areas of the country.

2. The United Nations

The Yemen Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) have committed to taking concrete steps toward ensuring gender equality throughout the humanitarian response, to make sure that women, girls, boys, and men of all ages and backgrounds have access to humanitarian assistance and protection that cater to their distinct needs.^[56] Through its United Nations Yemen Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2022–2024, the UN is committed to ensuring that the rights and freedoms of Yemeni women are protected. It has also developed standards, frameworks, and policies to follow on gender mainstreaming, such as *IASC Gender with Age Marker (GAM)*, *OCHA Gender Policy (2021-2025)*, and *IASC Gender Policy and Accountability Framework*.

^[54] Joke Buringa, "Strategizing Beyond the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda in Yemen: The Importance of CEDAW," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, August 23, 2021, https://sanaacenter.org/files/Strategizing_beyond_the_Women_Peace_and_Security_Agenda_in_Yemen_en.pdf

^[55] The Women's National Committee website: <https://wncyemen.com.ye/>

^[56] "Gender Considerations in Humanitarian Response in Yemen," ReliefWeb Response, <https://response.reliefweb.int/yemen/gender-considerations-humanitarian-response-yemen>

3. UN Women

Between 2016 and 2018, UN Women assisted Yemeni women to organize consultations on topics including demilitarization, the future status of Yemen's southern governorates, confidence-building measures, a ceasefire, the economy, and negotiation priorities and challenges.^[57] UN Women Yemen collaborates with its partners to eliminate discrimination against women and girls, empower women, and promote equality between women and men as both partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action, and peace and security initiatives.

UN Women contributions address the needs of vulnerable women and girls to ensure those affected by the crisis can participate in, are empowered by, and benefit from response and recovery efforts, mainstream gender in humanitarian response, and support women's leadership in peace processes according to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325).^[58]

4. Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen (OESGY)

The Office of the Special Envoy has worked to better understand and support Yemeni women's meaningful participation in transitional and peacemaking processes, dedicating staff and resources to ensure the integration of gender analysis and perspectives into the peace process. The OESGY is committed to strengthening its efforts to promote gender inclusion in line with UN standards and commitments.^[59]

5. Donors

Donors, including the UK government and the European Council, among others, have developed their own gender strategies that address the challenges faced by Yemeni women and girls, outlining ways in which their funding can contribute to the empowerment of women.

6. Yemeni Civil Society

Civil society in Yemen significantly advances the rights of women and girls through various roles. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) address specific gender needs through the provision of social services and programming. Women's and youth organizations, as well as advocacy groups, ensure that women's rights remain on the political agenda. Professional associations and trade unions can play a crucial role in ensuring that women can participate safely in the economy.

^[57] Joke Buringa, "Strategizing Beyond the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda in Yemen: The Importance of CEDAW," Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, August 23, 2021, https://sanaacenter.org/files/Strategizing_beyond_the_Women_Peace_and_Security_Agenda_in_Yemen_en.pdf

^[58] "Yemen," UN Women – Arab States, <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/countries/yemen>

^[59] "Women, Peace and Security," Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen (OESGY), <https://osesgy.unmissions.org/women-peace-and-security>

Appendix 3: Key National, Regional, and Global Commitments on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls

The Yemeni Constitution^[60]

The constitution is considered a foundation for organizing society, including the feminist movement. It was approved by referendum in 1991 and was amended in 1994 and 2001. The constitution consists of five sections, seven chapters, and three sub-chapters. The most critical sections include: the foundations of the state, fundamental citizenship rights and duties, and the organization of state authorities.

The most important constitutional texts relevant to women include the following:

- **Article 5:** The Republic of Yemen confirms its adherence to the UN Charter, the International Declaration of Human Rights, and the Charter of the Arab League, and generally recognizes the principles of international law.
- **Article 24:** The state shall guarantee equal opportunities for all citizens in the fields of political, economic, social, and cultural activities and shall enact the necessary laws for the realization thereof. Article (25) Yemeni society is based on social solidarity based on justice, freedom, and equality in accordance with the law.
- **Article 31:** Women are the sisters of men, and they have rights and duties as guaranteed and required by Sharia and stipulated by law.
- **Article 41:** All citizens are equal in public rights and duties.
- **Article 42:** Every citizen has the right to participate in the political, economic, social, and cultural life of the country. The state shall guarantee freedom of thought and expression of opinion in speech, writing, and photography within the limits of the law.
- **Article 58:** Inasmuch as it is not contrary to the Constitution, the citizens may organize themselves along political, professional, and union lines. They have the right to form associations in scientific, cultural, social, and national unions in a way that serves the goals of the Constitution. The state shall guarantee these rights, and shall take the necessary measures to enable citizens to exercise them. The state shall guarantee freedom for the political, trade, cultural, scientific, and social organizations.

^[60] "Constitution of the Republic of Yemen," amended via a public referendum held on February 20, 2001, Wikisource, last edited May 25, 2016, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Constitution_of_the_Republic_of_Yemen.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)^[61]

The Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on December 10, 1948 (General Assembly resolution 217 A), as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations. Article 1 states that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” The right that one should not be discriminated against based on gender is addressed in Article 2, which reads: “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Optional Protocol (1979)^[62]

The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) provides a comprehensive framework to guide all rights-based action for gender equality, including that of UNFPA. Under this treaty, gender inequality is understood to be the result of discrimination against women. CEDAW calls for equality in outcomes rather than simply equality in opportunities. Thus, it is not sufficient that antidiscrimination laws are put into place; the state has the obligation to take all necessary steps to ensure that women enjoy equality in their daily lives. CEDAW defines discrimination and the range of steps that states must take to eliminate it, affirms women’s rights in specific areas, and makes provisions for ratification, monitoring, reporting, and other procedural matters. The optional protocol includes an inquiry procedure and a complaints procedure. An inquiry procedure enables the Committee to conduct inquiries into serious and systematic abuses of women’s human rights in countries that become States Parties to the Optional Protocol. It is modelled on an existing human rights inquiry procedure, article 20 of the International Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993)^[63]

The 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW) is the first international human rights instrument to exclusively and explicitly address the issue of violence against women. It affirms that the phenomenon violates, impairs, or nullifies women’s human rights and their exercise of fundamental freedoms. The Declaration defines gender-based abuse, calling

^[61] “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” adopted on December 10, 1948, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf

^[62] “Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,” adopted on December 18, 1979, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>

^[63] “Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women,” adopted on December 20, 1993, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-elimination-violence-against-women>

it “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.” The Declaration further states that gender-based violence takes many different forms and is experienced in a range of crisis and non-crisis settings. It is deeply rooted in structural relationships of inequality between women and men. During conflict, systematic gender-based violence is often perpetrated and/or condoned by both state and non-state actors. It thrives on impunity both in times of war and in times of peace.

Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993)^[64]

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (VDPA) was adopted by consensus at the World Conference on Human Rights on June 25, 1993, in Vienna. It draws attention to the importance of women’s rights and the rights of the “girl-child.” In Part I, paragraph 18, it states: “The human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social, and cultural life, at the national, regional, and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community.” It also explicitly recognizes gender-based violence, sexual harassment, and exploitation, going on to state that: “Gender-based violence and all forms of sexual harassment and exploitation, including those resulting from cultural prejudice and international trafficking, are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person, and must be eliminated. This can be achieved by legal measures and through national action and international cooperation in such fields as economic and social development, education, safe maternity and health care, and social support.” It concludes by proclaiming women’s rights and gender-based exploitation as legitimate issues for the international community. “The human rights of women should form an integral part of the United Nations human rights activities, including the promotion of all human rights instruments relating to women. The World Conference on Human Rights urges governments, institutions, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to intensify their efforts for the protection and promotion of human rights of women and the girl-child.”

^[64] “Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action,” adopted on June 25, 1993, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/vienna-declaration-and-programme-action>

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and Beijing Plus (1995,2015) ^[65]

Adopted by governments at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PFA) sets forth governments' commitments to enhance women's rights. The Platform provides a blueprint for women's empowerment, including a gender analysis of problems and opportunities in 12 critical areas of concern, as well as standards for actions to be implemented by governments, the UN system, and civil society, including the private sector. In addition, the Platform provides the first global commitment to gender mainstreaming as the methodology for achieving women's empowerment. In 2015, the international community reviewed 20 years of progress since Beijing to assess how far Member States and other stakeholders have come in implementing the commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995

Women, Peace and Security Framework (2011)^[66] and Commitments (2000, 2008, 2009, 2013, 2015)^[67]

The UN Security Council adopted resolutions that recognize that war impacts women differently and reaffirmed the need to increase women's role in decision-making concerning conflict prevention and resolutions: UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, peace and security 1325 (2000), 1889 (2009) and 2245 (2015); UNSC Resolutions on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 2106 (2013), and 2122 (2013). Taken together, the resolutions represent a critical framework for improving the situation of women in conflict-affected countries.

UN resolution on Child, Early and Forced Marriage (2013)^[68]

This is the first-ever resolution on child, early, and forced marriage adopted at the Human Rights Council, co-sponsored by a cross-regional group of over 100 countries, including countries with high rates of child marriage. It emphasizes the need to include child, early and forced marriage in the post-2015 international development agenda, and recognizes child, early and forced marriage as a human rights violation that "prevents individuals from living their lives free from all forms of violence" and negatively impacts the "right to education, and the highest attainable standard of health, including sexual and reproductive health.

^[65] "Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action," Fourth World Conference on Women, September 15, 1995, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/01/beijing-declaration>

^[66] "UN Strategic Results Framework on Women, Peace and Security: 2011–2020," Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Secretariat, January 24, 2014, <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/110527>

^[67] Refer to the United Nations Digital Library: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/>

^[68] "United Nations General Assembly Adopts Resolution on 'Child, Early and Forced Marriage,'" Girls Not Brides, November 20, 2014, <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/HRC-resolution-on-child-early-and-forcedmarriage-ENG.pdf>

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)^[69]

All UN Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015, which includes a framework of 17 global Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030, with targets and means of implementation. The outcome document “Transforming our World” was adopted by the Member States of the UN General Assembly in September 2015 and took effect on 1 January 2016 to guide policies and decisions over the next 15 years. Gender equality is a stand-alone goal (Goal 5) and is mainstreamed in other goals and targets. The targets capture key structural constraints to gender equality, such as discrimination, violence against women and girls, harmful practices, unpaid care work, participation in decision-making, and sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. The 2030 Agenda calls for all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls to be eliminated, including through the engagement of men and boys.

UN System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2017)^[70]

UN-SWAP is a UN system-wide, mandatory action plan for operationalizing gender equality and women’s empowerment, as well as accelerating gender mainstreaming within the UN system, to which all UN entities are obligated to adhere.

^[69] “The 17 Goals,” United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

^[70] “UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women,” United Nations Sustainable Development Group, December 2016, <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/un-system-wide-action-plan-gender-equality-and-empowerment-women>



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