



Empowering Yemeni Youth Towards Peace: Ensuring Access To Information And Participation

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SAVE THE DATES

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FOREWORD

This the fourth newsletter of the project "Empowering Yemeni Youth Towards Peace: Ensuring Access To Information And Participation" managed by UNESCO GCC and Yemen office. This newsletter aims at raising the voices of Yemeni youth through sharing their perspectives and stories with decision makers, duty bearers, and international and regional actors.

Through its different sections, this newsletter edition will shed light on some of the activities done part of this project and by the youth in support of the peace building process in Yemen, from June to September 2021. Field activities, survey findings and success stories of young Yemeni peacebuilders will be highlighted periodically through this series of newsletters. This document is shared with the aim to contribute, support and empower the voices of the Yemeni youth.



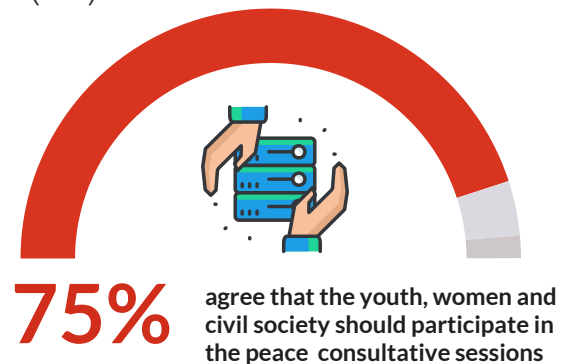
Facts and Figures

In June 2021, RNW Media in partnership with UNESCO GCC and Yemen office launched a survey to capture the perspective of the youth on the peace they aspire to have. Through a mixed method approach, the team was able to gather 1,168 responses from youth aged 18Y-30Y from the different Yemeni governorates. The survey included questions around the youth's peace aspirations and their thoughts on the peace negotiations and efforts.

While the participants expressed their strong desire to have peace in Yemen, the youth remain divided on whether they think that the parties to the conflict have in fact the will and the power to end the war. Around 44% indicated that they feel optimistic about the parties' abilities but remain skeptical that they will actually achieve much; while 38% do not feel optimistic at all, neither on their ability nor their will.

According to the participants, the issues that could stand in the way of achieving peace include the economic interests of the parties to the conflicts not aligning (60%), external interferences in Yemeni politics (41%), lack of trust between the parties (41%), among other factors.

To attain peace, the youth think that the parties to the conflict could nominate a group of individuals with high competence in analysis and negotiation, to prepare the ground for formal negotiations (71%), and have a specialized team tasked to hold periodic discussions (73%). The youth expressed the importance of a fair representation in the discussions, and that different member of the community should be included in the talks. Also, the participants strongly support the youth and women's participations in the peace talks (73%) and in consultative sessions to ensure representation and progress (75%).



My Solution

In April 2021, UNESCO GCC and Yemen office and RNW Media launched the second "My Solution" open call inviting young Yemenis to submit proposals to achieving peace in their country. Among the several submissions, 7 promising initiatives led by Yemeni youth, have been selected and supported to further develop their ideas, including the *Peace Journalism*, *Humans of Taiz*, and *Dakkh*.

Throughout the next months, the initiatives will continue implementing online and offline activities aiming to engage with the youth on important conversations around peacebuilding. The *Peace Journalism* initiative launched an online campaign and competition, as well as a workshop and an awareness raising event, to enhance the youth's awareness on peacebuilding matters such as the role of the United Nations Special Envoy in peace mediation, and the United Nations Resolutions 1325 and 2250. On the other hand, *Humans of Taiz* opted to create an online awareness raising campaign, which includes visuals and real stories covering humanitarian topics such as the inclusion of those with special needs, countering racial discrimination, among other issues. Additionally, *Dakkh* is studying through an online survey, the spread of hate speech in the society and aims to find ways to confront it by conducting in-depth analysis and hosting workshops, along with an online campaign.

Through their participation in "My Solution", the initiatives increase their visibility which facilitates spreading awareness in the society and engaging with the youth on peacebuilding matters. Mohammed Alhasani, journalist and social media manager at *Dakkh*, explains "Through this project, we continue raising the voices of the participants and understanding their perspectives, while also being able to reach to a greater number of Yemenis. We are also able to benefit as an initiative from the exchange of knowledge we receive at different stages of the project." Khalid Alsaeed, founder of *Humans of Taiz*, added "Through our participation, we are able to strengthen the role of our platform and expand our scope of work."

The initiatives also highlighted their professional growth as the teams benefit from the support provided throughout the planning and implementation phases. Maha Awn, social media manager at *Humans of Taiz*, explained "We are gaining solid skills related to project and financial planning, and content management." On a final note, Salem Ben Sahel, founder of *Peace Journalism*, mentioned that "Through implementing this project and after, we hope to be able to continue reaching to the youth to achieve our goal of raising their awareness on peacebuilding developments."





Activity in the Highlights

Aiming to create opportunities of dialogue and encouraging the youth to express their opinions and aspirations, RNW Media and Afaq Foundation, in partnership with UNESCO GCC and Yemen office, organized on July 6th a public debate in Aden on the topic of "Engagement of the youth in the peacebuilding process", which was attended by around 250 young women and men, decision makers and representatives from civil society organizations.

The event was organized part of the efforts to celebrate World Youth Skills Day and consisted of having two teams of young women and men debating whether the youth's role is essential in peacebuilding. The discussions, which first presented the thesis and then the teams supported or refuted it while sharing persuasive arguments, touched on topics related to politics, society and education. Subsequently to the discussions, the affirmative and opposition teams received expert feedback from the jury of specialists in the field, and then the audience voted for their favorite team based on the debating performances.

The debate was preceded by a training to equip 12 of the youth participants with debating and public speaking skills. The hands-on training, which was organized over the course of five days empowered the youth with knowledge on body language in debating, effective participation and expression of ideas publicly. In preparations, the selected participants also took part in consultation sessions with a debate expert who helped the teams develop their arguments.

Ali Bn Amer, attendee and journalist, commented "I voted for the blue team in the pre-voting, but after listening to the debate, I was convinced by the red team, who showed the skills they were trained on, so I voted for them." The event also held art performances on the topic of peace. The debate, which was covered by the local media and published on social media, received high interaction from the youth, reaching over 339,000 online users. This event comes as part of a debate series "Manassa Talks" that will be organized in different governorates in Yemen in the upcoming months.



Peacebuilding Story



This section aims to shed light on a peacebuilding effort implemented by the youth in Yemen, which does not necessarily fall within the scope of the project or was implemented by any of its partners.



To help empower Yemen's future peacemakers and public leaders and equip them with the skills to lead with integrity, DeepRoot launched in May 2020 "A New Generation of Public Leaders in Yemen", an 18-months project funded by the European Union. Based on a participatory and inclusive approach, the project aims at strengthening the political capital of Yemeni youth leaders and their participation in decision-making processes.

Among the different activities implemented part of the project is the Hikma Fellowship, which brought together 15 distinguished Yemeni youth under the age of 40 from various political parties and movements, civil society groups, and independent youth, including those from regions often underrepresented in the national political arena.

The selected Fellows completed three different advanced training modules, including on Adaptive Leadership; Public Organizing and Negotiations; and Public Policy Analysis.

The curated program worked on sharpening their leadership skills and encouraged collaboration, cultivating a diverse community of young public leaders and helping to build a common vision for Yemen's future.

Another component of the Fellowship Program is the constructive engagement with Yemeni and international stakeholders. As part of the Hikma Fellowship speaker series, the Hikma Fellows engaged with internationally distinguished leaders including eminent UN mediator Lakhdar Brahimi, Nobel Prize winner & former President of Colombia Juan Manuel Santos, and US Special Envoy to Yemen Tim Lenderking, among others, as well as participated in the Forum of Emerging Leaders from Yemen and the Gulf, convened by DeepRoot in Cordoba, Spain, in June 2021. The Fellows also produced a joint statement, providing recommendations for the incoming UN Special Envoy to advance the peace process in a more effective way.

Additionally, to enhance engagement and communication with the general youth population across Yemen, the project launched the Hikma Platform. The platform aims to bring the voices of young men and women from around the country and abroad into public discourse. This is done through the use of WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger, a chatbot interacts with thousands of young Yemenis to get their input on critical topics relevant to youth.

Project Link: <https://www.hikmafellowship.org/hikmah-fellowship>

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

This collaborative project, led by UNESCO in partnership with RNW Media and funded by the United Nations Peacebuilding, is a timely and much-needed intervention to reconnect Yemeni youth with the peace-building process, by raising their voices, fostering the free flow of information and having a two-way communication. The project aims to empower the Yemeni youth through its different activities with the skills, knowledge and tools to create information, content and dialogue in support of the peace-building process.

For more information about the project, its activities or this newsletter, please visit the project website page:

<https://en.unesco.org/YemenUNPBFProject>