



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

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FOREWORD

This is the fifth 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 September to October 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.

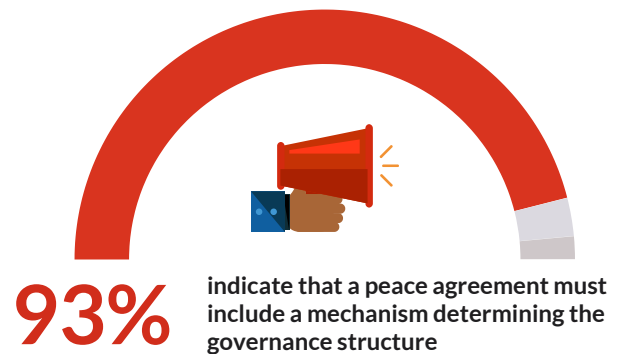


Facts and Figures

In August 2021, RNW Media in partnership with UNESCO GCC and Yemen office launched a survey to capture the type of government that the youth think is most suitable for their country. Through a mixed method approach, the team was able to gather 851 responses from youth aged 18Y-30Y from the different Yemeni governorates. The survey included questions around the type of government, as well as their opinions on who should decide on the governance structure, and their perception on the advantages and disadvantages of decentralization.

While the participants expressed their support to a proper distribution of power and wealth among the regions and governorates as they think this reduces any calls for separatism (76%), they remained divided on their preferred governance structure. Overall, the participants tend to prefer federalism with 6 regions according to the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference (51%) over a 2 regions of north and south decentralized structure (16%), and generally chose it over having a central government. In relation to the unitary structure, the youth tend to prefer broad allocations of powers to the governorates (21%) over restricted ones (8%).

The participants expressed that the government type should be decided by the Yemeni people through an impartial and monitored referendum (72%) while also agreeing that any structure change requires a stable transition period to pave the way for a sound selection (85%). Additionally, the youth strongly agreed that any future peace agreement must include a mechanism for determining the governance structure in Yemen (93%). The participants also think that an equitable distribution of power and wealth may reduce any calls for separatism (90%).



My Solution

In April 2021, UNESCO GCC and Yemen office and RNW Media launched a second “My Solution” call for proposals inviting young Yemenis to submit their ideas to achieve projects that could contribute to peace building in their country. In the second cycle, 7 proposals were selected to be supported to achieve their objectives. Among the winners was Weeam, a youth led initiative that aims to raise awareness and empower the youth with hearing loss in Yemen. Through organizing workshops, videos, and leaflets using sign language, the initiative engages with the youth on a variety of health, economic and peacebuilding topics.

In relation to “My Solution”, Weeam opted to raise the awareness of people with hearing loss on the United Nations Resolution 2250, which discusses the role of the youth in peace and security. First, the initiative organized a training of trainers, which equipped 10 young women and men with hearing loss, with the knowledge and skills needed to deliver a training on the UN resolution to a larger audience. Subsequently, using sign language, the trainers were able to raise the awareness of 80 students with hearing loss in 3 schools and a university. Aisha Jubari, director of the initiative, and Ahmed Alakhli, translator and relations officer explain “Both the trainers and students were very enthusiastic to learn about peacebuilding, it was the first time some of the participants learn about the UN resolution. This peacebuilding awareness training targeting the individuals with hearing loss was the first of its kind in Yemen.”

In parallel, short films using sign language were produced and posted on social media discussing peacebuilding, the challenges endured by the individuals with hearing loss and the importance of integrating them in the society. The videos, which reached over 80,000 views each, featured success stories empowering the youth. Jubari and Alakhli explain “Among the posts, we featured a real story of a student with hearing loss who attended a regular school and succeeded in teaching the other students sign language. The story was inspiring to many and received large support from the viewers.”

Jubari and Alakhli explain that this project was not only beneficial to their target audience but also to the members of the initiative who themselves are individuals with hearing loss, “The support provided throughout the project helped us in enhancing our skills especially in project and content management.” The activities helped Weeam reach a greater number of youth and increased their exposure, Jubari and Alakhli highlighted “Unfortunately, our community is marginalized, and through “My Solution”, we were able to engage with youth with hearing loss on peacebuilding and provide them with material tailored to their needs. We noticed that the youth are very welcoming and open to learning more about peace efforts.”





Activity in the Highlights

In October 2021, RNW Media and Tamdeen Youth Foundation, in partnership with UNESCO GCC and Yemen office, organized a public debate hosted in Hadramout and broadcasted online through Manasati30 Facebook page, on whether "the type of government in Yemen should be determined by the Yemenis through a referendum". Young women and men from different Yemeni governorates were divided into affirmative and opposition teams of 3 individuals each, and shared persuasive arguments to support or refute the thesis.

Subsequently to the discussions, the participants received feedback from the jury of specialists in the field, and then the audience voted through an online poll for their favorite team, based on the debating performances. The event also included a presentation of the results of survey on the type of government and a musical performance showcasing the Yemeni art heritage. This event is part of a debate series "Manassa Talks" hosted in different Yemeni governorates, that aims to create opportunities of dialogue and encourage the youth to express their opinions and aspirations, as well as build their capacities in debating.

Prior to the session, the youth participated in a training to equip them with the needed debating and public speaking skills. The hands-on activity empowered the youth with knowledge on how to effectively participate in a debate and express ideas publicly.

Abdul Hafeez Al-Faqih, trainer, explained "We were able to provide the participants with important skills in debating, building arguments and refuting them. These skills are not only beneficial when debating, but will also be useful to the participants in their practical work, given that most of them work in the field of media and journalism." Amal Khaled, a trainee and debate participant, agreed and shared "I learned how to build and present arguments backed up by facts, I will be able to apply that in my job as a talk show host."



Link to the debate video: <https://www.facebook.com/Manasati30/videos/940793949845442/>

Peacebuilding Story



In March 2021, UNESCO GCC and Yemen office and Community Media Network in Jordan, partnered with 5 local Yemeni radio stations to produce programs aiming to enhance conversations around peacebuilding and voice the youth's needs and opinions with decision-makers and duty bearers. The participating stations, Weam Radio 99 FM, Al-Amal Radio 95.5 FM, Al-Etihadhiah Radio 99.1 FM, Radio Lana 91.9 FM and Tawasool Radio 90 FM, are producing peace related radio programs, field reports and podcast episodes.

Through this initiative, the radio stations are highlighting important societal and peace related issues such as the role of youth and women in peacebuilding, the economic impact of the war, the role of art, among other subjects. Abubaker Al-Mehdar, deputy director at Weam Radio, explains "The topics discussed aim to strengthen the role of peacebuilding and social coexistence." Samira Salem, director of Tawasool Radio, added "We discuss women's participation and economic empowerment, we encourage women to be an active partner in all the fields of society and independent in their decisions."

The radio stations are broadcasting episodes developed internally as well as rebroadcasting ones produced by other stations, with the aim to unify the radio speech, and enhance collaboration and balanced coverage. The programs allowed the youth to have a specialized segment on peacebuilding and provided them with platforms to voice their opinions. Salwa Bakhder, executive director at Al-Amal Radio explains, "We now have a dedicated time and team working to produce content and engage with the youth on peace discussions." Mohammed Al-Jamei, director of Al-Etihadhiah Radio, added "We intensified our discussion with the youth to gather their opinions and thoughts, especially in collecting direct inputs from the field."

In preparation for production and broadcasting, the teams participated in a 10-days hands-on training which provided them with the tools needed to implement the project, while ensuring gender and conflict sensitivities and promoting peace building discussions. Samira Salem explains "The training empowered our teams and enhanced their professional skills, which was reflected in the quality of the content produced and in the increase of engagement with the youth." The continuous support provided enabled the stations to strategically reach the youth and even in cases increase their audience. Ashreqat Ebrahim, director of programs at Radio Lana, adds "Among the benefits of our participation was that we were able to provide the youth with a much-needed platform to voice their opinions on important topics that directly impact them."

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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>