



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

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SAVE THE DATES

February: Training on Journalism for Peace in Hadhramout

February: Launch of a Survey on Negotiations, *results published in March*

March: Publication of 'My Solution' Videos

March: Training on Organizing Public Debates in Taiz

FOREWORD

Dear readers,

I am pleased to introduce you to the first 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 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. Field activities, survey findings and success stories of young Yemeni peacebuilders will be highlighted periodically through this series of newsletters.

I hope you will find this reading interesting and that it will contribute to support and empower the voices of the Yemeni youth.

Yours sincerely,

A.Paolini, UNESCO



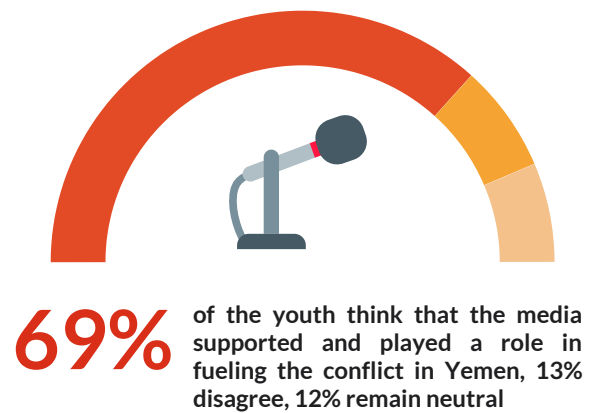
Facts and Figures

In November 2020, RNW Media in partnership with UNESCO GCC and Yemen office launched a survey to capture the perspective of the youth on the role played by the media in Yemen. Through a mixed method approach, the team was able to gather 825 responses from youth aged 18Y-30Y from the different Yemeni governorates. The survey included questions around the freedom of press, confidence in the local media, factors affecting the role of the media and what can be done to strengthen its positive impact on peacebuilding.

The results of survey indicate that Yemeni youth tend to have a negative perception on the role that the local media is playing towards peacebuilding, including a general lack of trust in local media outlets and an overall belief that the news reported is being polarized.

The data shows that the youth perceive several barriers standing in the way of neutral factual reporting. Among which is the limited to no space for freedom of expression, given that there is a strong belief that the journalists are under pressure to report some news in a bias manner. Professional and neutral reporting might also be affected by the journalists political partisanship and lack of adequate training on peacebuilding reporting.

To restore and regain the youth's trust in local media, recommendations coming from the participants include fostering freedom of expression by providing journalists with safe spaces to report factual news and by protecting them from threats and political pressures. It is also suggested to enact laws to enhance freedom of expression and limit negative factors contributing to its diminishing. Additionally, enhancing the skills of journalists by providing them with professional reporting on peacebuilding training is key to improve their competence in communicating to the general public including the youth.



My Solution

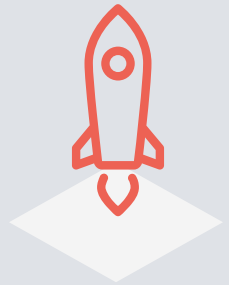
In August 2020, UNESCO GCC and Yemen office and RNW Media launched an open call inviting young Yemenis to submit their "solutions" for achieving peace in their country. Among the several submissions, 7 promising initiatives have been selected and supported to further develop their ideas and projects. These projects, referred to as "My Solution" are developed by the youth for the youth across Yemen and led by socially active young people from the civil society.

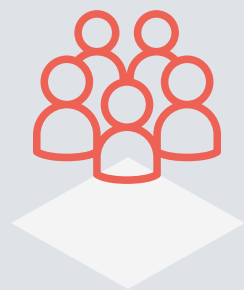
An outstanding proposal was submitted by *Takween*, a Yemeni women youth-led cultural club aiming at fine-tuning youth skills and empowering them to promote peace through creative arts. The project aims to utilize art in its different forms to counter-fight narratives of violence while concurrently restoring youth's trust in peace and security. Takween strives to provide a safe space for artists and cultural practitioners, and encourage the youth to speak up and express their aspirations.

Shroq Al-Ramadi, Takween's executive director, explains that "Art is a way of expressing your inner-self that you sometimes feel are impossible to express in words". She adds "Art makes for an ever-lasting impact in a wide range of audience".

The activities organized part of this initiative include writing stories and developing social media content such as posters to help young Yemenis restore their hope in peace and security for the future of their country. Additionally, the team organized live-broadcast interviews with prominent young Yemeni youtubers and social media influencers who shared their experiences, with the aim of inspiring the youth to express their ambitions and advocating for them.

The activities also include engaging with the youth in an open-day activity that encourages them to creatively express their peace aspirations through art. Utilizing these activities, Takween drives youth to be a constructive force for positive change by providing them with space to propose solutions and taking actions in support of the peacebuilding process.





Activity in the Highlights

UNESCO GCC and Yemen office, in partnership with Media Association for Peace (MAP), and with the support of RNW Media, organized a 5-days training of trainers on peace journalism in Yemen. This activity, which aimed at developing the skills and capacities of young Yemeni journalists, was held to provide a balanced coverage of the peace building process, giving the trainees tools and keys to understand the ongoing negotiations while taking into account the different sensitivities to relay a neutral information.

Ten young Yemeni journalists (5 women/5 men) coming from each of the 5 governorates covered by the project (Aden, Hadhramout, Hudaida, Sanaa and Taiz), attended the sessions which focused on media ethics, understanding and analyzing conflict as well as fighting against disinformation and hate speech and practicing peace journalism.

Subsequently, 5 best trainees were selected to give a training on peace journalism to 60 journalists in Yemen and produce information materials and content on the peace building process in their country. This activity will contribute to increasing Yemeni youth access to reliable information and to building a sense of trust and ownership, as well as empowering the youth in taking a constructive role in the peace building process.

Vanessa Bassil, organizer and trainer, and founder and president of MAP, explains that "Learning about human rights and their legal aspects has a high importance, especially for journalists working in conflict zones, such as Yemen. Knowing their rights and understanding the mechanisms of protection in international law allow them to better protect themselves and defend their reporting. Simultaneously, learning about notions and practices of peace and human-rights journalism, enhance their skills in reporting adequately on the peacebuilding process in Yemen."

For more information, please visit: <https://en.unesco.org/news/young-yemeni-journalists-trained-peace-journalism>



Peacebuilding Story

On the 15th of September, the Manasati30 team in collaboration with UNESCO's project team, organized the *Enough War* campaign advocating for an immediate nationwide ceasefire in Yemen, through raising the voices of youth and addressing decision makers. The campaign engaged with the youth through different activities including a survey that captured the opinions of over a thousand Yemenis, interactions on social media by sharing stories and posting campaign frames, and creating numerous multimedia content.

Young women and men were also invited to share their stories and messages along with pictures which were combined for publication as a digital mural and shared widely online. The campaign reached over 38,000 individuals solely on Facebook. The activity hashtag was widely used by the youth, local NGOs, politicians, artists, journalists, social media activists, and community pages. Through this campaign, the youth expressed their strong desire to end fighting in the country.

The youth expressed their perspectives regarding a ceasefire in Yemen through participating in a survey, which shows that 97% of the youth from the country's different governorates think that an immediate nationwide ceasefire is urgently needed to save the deteriorating humanitarian situation, stop the collapse of the economy and the currency fluctuation, strengthen the fragile security situation, save the tumbledown of basic services, among other reasons.

Additionally and in support of the campaign, graduates from Taiz university sent a powerful message by creating a human chain that reads #Enough-War, as shown in the picture above. In line with the theme of 2020's International Peace Day, "building peace together", the campaign succeeded in mobilizing young people to play a role in the peace process and by amplifying the voices and opinions of young women and men calling for peace.

For more information, please visit: <https://en.unesco.org/news/restoring-hope-perspectives-yemeni-youth-about-peace-and-future-yemen>



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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/node/328337>