6. Conclusions

The objective of this research was to open new channels of communication regarding the protection of women and girls among key actors in the Yemeni context. The process has provided these actors with the opportunity to share their perspectives on the issue of Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and to make contributions towards the protection of women and girls. As illustrated by one of the project researchers:

> "We will come up with outcomes based on what we have found. The report shares the points of view of the movements. This is very good: because they have received recognition, we give them a voice on the issue. This is the value added of the study."

This final section concludes the report by presenting five key highlights regarding existing understandings, policies, and practices of the WPS framework among the three political movements in Yemen, and highlights related opportunities.

I. The political movements are willing to engage in discussion on WPS

The three movements involved in this research – the Islah Party, the Southern Transitional Council (STC), and Ansar Allah – allowed their members to participate in the research process. One of the researchers explained:

> "I had imagined that no one would answer the questions or that they would try to avoid the answers, but I'm happy to see that they were very courageous, they were brave, and this encourages us to do more, not to give in to fear and to war."

Although the research indicated that knowledge about the WPS framework remains limited among members of the three movements, it found that the practices and activities of the women members on the ground are well aligned with WPS. Moreover, research showed that what the women are doing intersects with, and is inclusive of, the four pillars of WPS: participation, protection, prevention, relief and recovery. Their practices are also in alignment with a human security standpoint, which prioritises people and their social and economic interactions with the aim of protecting them from traditional security threats (such as military action or human rights violations) and non-traditional issues such as poverty, disease, and low levels of education.

II. Women in the three movements actively participate in the peace, security, and humanitarian fields

The research revealed the active participation of women in the political, economic, and security processes of the three movements. Women maintain political representation in all three movement structures, albeit at a low percentage. They also actively participate at different levels in the process of political diplomacy and peace talks when possible, whether through their movements or through the activities of civil society organisations and international actors. Even so, the research revealed that it would be an important step forward for women to be actively involved in holding dialogues and formulating proposals for reform in the governance and organisational structures of the movements and their internal regulations in a way that responds to gender and enhances the participation and empowerment of women.

In addition, women in the three movements actively participate in security and protection-related activities, including leading community committees, advocating for and facilitating the release of prisoners of war and abductees, supporting the families of the martyrs, the wounded, and the displaced, providing logistical support to the battle fronts, and defending the rights of women and girls to freedom of movement, education, and economic empowerment. As summarised by one of the researchers:

> "Women in all movements were clear about their roles in peacebuilding, humanitarian issues, etc. This shows that all movements agree on that there is a role of women in this work."

The women from the movements were also found to be particularly involved in addressing issues of displaced communities and working on various humanitarian, livelihood, and resilience activities, in addition to their work defending the rights of women and girls to protection from violence. The research further showed how women remain open to local and international civil society activities related to peacebuilding and humanitarian interventions and, importantly, how open they are to participating in activities with women from other political movements, if required for peace.

III. There is a need for women's political participation and protection to be promoted across all the movements

Even though women clearly play a role in political processes, the research found that these roles need to be better recognised and supported by the movements, and the movements need to address the obstacles or limitations that prevent women from reaching their full potential.

While the existing rules and laws are not necessarily detrimental for women, the research showed how they could be improved. One researcher spoke to this:

> "The laws and rules are not hindering women, but they are not being implemented. Still, women were not part of creating the by-laws and the regulations, because at the time this was done, they were not participating."

The research found that the regulations and by-laws of the three studied movements – the Islah Party, the STC, and Ansar Allah – and of the rest of the Yemeni movements as well, including political parties and non-state armed actors, were devoid of the concept of protection for women and girls, especially in times of armed conflict. The concept also received rare mention in the Constitution, in the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) or in other legislation. This gap has created a perception among leaders and decision-makers that women's participation in politics during armed conflicts cannot be considered safe – a view that arises out of their fear for women's safety. The absence of actual protection mechanisms may be an additional reason for postponing women's participation in politics until after the war, or until the establishment of the state of the South by the STC, according to its objectives.

The important link between women's participation and protection was thereby stressed in the findings: where real or perceived protections for women were lacking, their participation was also undermined. However, the contrary also remains true: the lack of women's participation can contribute to continued protection failures, as issues of women and girls' protection are not prioritised. Safe participation mechanisms therefore need to be established for women in the movements.

IV. Capacity-building trainings and dialogues were requested both by women and men in the movements

The research identified the need for various trainings, particularly for women and girls, to give them the opportunity to develop the skills and confidence needed for meaningful participation in decision-making. Both women and men from the movements also need to be provided with the knowledge and tools to better support and develop efforts to protect women and girls and enhance their participation, notably through promoting their education, but also through restructuring the movements processes and creating dedicated policies and other tools.

The need for dialogue regarding women's protection and participation within the movements and among the wider community and external actors (notably, civil society and international organisations, but also other movements) came up as a request from the three movements.

V. Solutions need to come from within

The research found that, in order to be effective, efforts related to promoting the participation and protection of Yemeni women and girls need to be localised and adopted by the men and women from the movements. Women within the three movements have developed a local experience of the WPS framework, which is closely aligned with the concept of human security. This local experience is worthy of attention and development to enable women to play a leadership role in their political participation and protection, including in conflict prevention on the movement, society, and state level.

The research recommends that tangible programmes and interventions be developed with the movements, such as:

- establishing internal dialogues to discuss women's issues between the women's movements and leaders of the political movements;
- integrating women's visions and the WPS framework into the process of organisational and governance development;
- training and capacity development activities for women and men in the movements;
- enhancing women's participation with the support of local and international civil society activities;
- providing political, programmatic, logistical, and financial support to women's activities; and
- providing support at all levels for economic empowerment and community resilience projects, education, protection and psychological support for women and girls.

In conclusion, while finding local and internal solutions is important, women also need to enhance their skills and confidence to be better able to contribute, and their contributions need to be officially recognised and better supported both within the movements and by external actors.

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