

Selected drivers of the current conflict and their impact on women, men, girls, and boys

OVERVIEW

The dynamics of the conflict in Yemen have significantly evolved since it started in September 2014. The UN-brokered ceasefire that came into effect in April 2022 has reduced active conflict, allowing for the analysis of why the war persists and its impacts on the population (Brookings 27/01/2023; CFR accessed 20/01/2024; ACLED 14/10/2022). Such analysis is especially relevant as the war enters its tenth year. Household coping strategies are increasingly limited or exhausted, resilience is low, trust and social capital are diminished, and humanitarian needs are likely to grow even in the absence of fighting.

The 2022 ceasefire agreement marked a significant shift in conflict patterns, including the cessation of air strikes and cross-border attacks (CAAT accessed 20/01/2024; ACLED 14/06/2022). Despite the official end of the truce in October 2022, fighting remained subdued for most of 2023 as negotiations for another peace agreement continued (CAAT accessed 20/01/2024; OSESGY 02/04/2023).

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Key findings

- During the conflict changes in gender roles have occurred alongside the ideological reinforcement of traditional and patriarchal gender norms by governing authorities and religious leaders.
- The conflict impacts are mediated through established gender norms. While women’s increased participation in the labour force may have initiated a shift in gender norms, it does not apply to everyone and may have even aggravated other existing gender inequalities (Jadallah 13/07/2015; UNDP 23/11/2021).
- The reduction in active conflict since the 2022 truce appears to have had an adverse effect on women and girls, providing greater opportunities for the enforcement of traditional gender norms. A clear example is the DFA’s imposition of stricter restrictions on communities under their control, including the Mahram requirement (ACAPS 05/05/2023).
- The conflict has had a significant impact on economic wellbeing. Conflict-induced economic collapse, profiteering by Yemen’s elite, and a focus on the war economy have left many households vulnerable to economic shocks, with reduced livelihood access (UNSC 25/01/2021).
- Male responses to household economic stress and women’s economic engagement draw new generations into the conflict (driving more conflict) and uphold and entrench patriarchal notions of men as the provider (an impact of the conflict).
- The weak rule of law and the degradation of Yemen’s legal system have created a culture of impunity where abuses are perpetrated without fear of formal consequences, making exploitation and abuse more likely (IRC 29/01/2020).

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Aim

This report seeks to consider the differentiated impacts of the conflict on women, men, girls, and boys, how these impacts are linked to the drivers of the conflict, and how they interplay with key features of the context. Understanding these dynamics and their influence on the lives of Yemenis will support the development of humanitarian interventions that adhere to the 'do no harm' principle.

Methodology

This analysis draws on established approaches to conflict analysis to understand the conflict drivers and explore their gendered impacts on women, men, boys, and girls in Yemen (DDG 02/2020; GPPAC 01/11/2017; GSDRC 05/2017; UNICEF 11/2016). It relies on a combination of secondary data review and information collected through interviews with experts. Findings were validated during a joint analysis meeting with information analysts from the ACAPS Yemen Analysis Hub.

Interviews were held with 25 people, 19 in Yemen and six outside. Interviewees were selected for their background, understanding, and lived experiences of the conflict. They included humanitarians, academics and commentators, businesspeople, and community leaders. Interviews in Yemen were conducted in Abyan (1), Ad Dali' (1), Aden (1), Al Hodeidah (2), Amran (1), Hadramawt (1), Ibb (1), Ma'rib (4), Sana'a (4), and Shabwah (3).

Limitations

The lack of recent data at the sub-national level on the gendered impact of the conflict in Yemen limits this analysis, meaning findings are indicative and cannot be generalised nationwide. Challenges in collecting primary data in Yemen sometimes prevent interviews from going as deep as would be desirable into the subject matter, limit the scope for follow-up interviews, and hinder systematic primary data collection across the country. The information presented in this report provides a snapshot of the situation in the locations where interviewees are based that may be indicative in and relevant to other locations. Differences throughout the country must also be acknowledged.

The context in Yemen remains volatile, and the dynamics can change rapidly. Although there has been a decline in violence over the past year, this analysis should be considered in light of any significant changes to the conflict and regional dynamics that might occur. The Houthi attacks on ships in the Red Sea and the subsequent retaliation by US and UK forces highlight the speed at which the situation can change (CFR accessed 20/01/2024).

ACRONYMS

DFA – de-facto authority in the north of Yemen (also known as the Houthis)

GBV – gender-based violence

HIV – human immunodeficiency virus

IDP – internally displaced person

INGO – international non-governmental organisation

IRG – Internationally Recognized Government of Yemen

KSA – Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

NGO – non-governmental organisation

SRH – sexual and reproductive health

STC – Southern Transitional Council

UAE – United Arab Emirates

UK – United Kingdom

US – United States of America

UXO – unexploded ordnance

WHO – World Health Organisation

OVERVIEW OF THE CONFLICT IN YEMEN

The current conflict in Yemen has deep-rooted causes, stemming from historical imbalances in state formation, long-term co-optive and extractive governance, and gross social and economic mismanagement (MEI 19/02/2019). These have prevented the equitable distribution of resources, led to exclusion and marginalisation of some areas, reduced service provision, and degraded key institutions including the justice system and the rule of law (Jadallah 13/07/2015; MEI 19/02/2019; KII 25/10/2023). The Arab Spring reached Yemen in 2011, disrupting the network of alliances that maintained the political status quo in Yemen, resulting in instability. Existing power structures disintegrated and alliances between Yemen's political elites shifted. The following period of instability and the failure to address core issues, such as marginalisation, corruption, and a lack of opportunities, set the stage for the complex and multifaceted conflict that unfolded in 2014 (MEI 19/02/2019; ICG 20/10/2011).

As the war in Yemen enters its tenth year, it is relevant to explore the multi-conflict system that has developed. Key features include the following.

- National-level conflict between the IRG, with the support of the STC, against the DFA. This includes multiple local, mainly tribal, conflicts, often unintentionally worsened or intentionally exploited by regional sponsors and the ideological dimension of the conflict (Salisbury 18/02/2015; Jadallah 13/07/2015).
- Regional rivalry between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and Iran, as they fought for regional hegemony on Yemeni territory (MEI 27/03/2023; Salisbury 18/02/2015).
- The economic conflict between the IRG and the DFA, which has led to the creation of two separate currencies, divided tax systems, and private sector interventions that have disrupted trade dynamics (ICG 20/01/2022; Arab Center DC 20/09/2023; WB 30/05/2023).

The media has been instrumentalised by the conflict parties to aggravate the conflict. Conflict narratives are propagated through media outlets, creating information environments where objective facts are obscured. Social media, especially Facebook, contributes to divisive narratives, instigating regionalism and violence by humanising one side and dehumanising the other. Rumours spread through the media have shaped agendas and complicate the comprehension of reality.

CONFLICT DRIVERS

Economic decline

Profiting from the industry around the conflict is so entrenched among, and important to, different Yemeni elites that it is a disincentive for the conflict to end. The warring factions in Yemen are also trying to dominate crucial aspects of the nation's economy, and conflict-induced economic collapse has left Yemeni households vulnerable to economic shocks, with reduced livelihood access significantly affecting economic wellbeing (UNSC 25/01/2021).

War profiteering has been a feature of Yemen's many conflicts. Even when Yemen's GDP fell by almost 42% between 2015–2017, conflict parties continued to direct economic resources towards the conflict to continue profiting directly from it (MEI 19/02/2019; UNSC 25/01/2021). The war economy has become a way of generating wealth for different groups, including commanders, businesses, politicians, and local leaders, and is intertwined with the social structure of tribal and economic interest groups making up the Yemeni elite (UNSC 25/01/2021). The war industry is perceived to be a motivating factor in the continuation of the conflict and an artificial control over its intensity (Brandt 2017; KII 30/10/2023 c).

Economic warfare is an obstacle to effective governance. The economy is intricately woven into the strategies of conflicting parties and fuels warfare, affecting critical infrastructure and entrenching a zero-sum mentality where conflict parties view the economic competition as a situation where one side's gain is the other side's loss (ICG 20/01/2022). Internal divisions also persist within conflict parties, hindering effective governance and revenue generation. Asymmetries in the economy, such as divergent monetary policies, and private sector challenges further complicate the economic landscape (Davies and Wennmann 19/12/2022).

Conflict-induced economic collapse has affected the capacity of Yemeni households to meet essential needs. People have lost their jobs, and public sector salaries, which have not been paid regularly, have been unable to keep up with inflation. The conflict and economic situation has led to a breakdown in Yemen's physical infrastructure, diminishing the already limited provision of utilities and services (UNDP 23/11/2021). The cost of living and reduced purchasing power have made meeting basic needs unaffordable, and there are limited employment opportunities in many parts of the country (NRC 03/10/2023). Coping strategies are overstretched or exhausted (ACAPS 22/05/2022, WB 13/09/2023).

The influence of regional parties

The most consequential driver in Yemen's conflict since 2014 has been the involvement of regional parties, which has had an impact at the country level. The KSA and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) respectively support the IRG and the STC against the DFA, which has the backing of Iran. Regional dynamics had increased the intensity of the conflict through the provision of military support, equipment, training, and incentives for it to continue (CSQ 01/10/2022). This changed in 2022, when the UAE and KSA began looking for ways to extricate themselves from the conflict and the KSA attempted to use its influence in mediating between parties (KII 18/10/2023 a; MEI 31/01/2023; MEI 27/03/2023).

The KSA-led coalition's intervention in 2015 aimed to counter Iranian influence in Yemen and protect vital trade routes (Salisbury 18/02/2015). The struggle between these regional powers heightened the intensity of the conflict, especially after the Houthi movement's takeover of Sana'a triggered direct intervention from the KSA-led coalition (Al-Tamimi and Venkatesha 01/10/2022).

Besides supplying direct military support, military equipment, and training, regional parties have also provided political, economic, and ideological incentives for the fighting to continue based on their respective agendas for dominance in the region (Al-Tamimi and Venkatesha 01/10/2022). The UAE and KSA have since become visibly fatigued with the war, causing concern among the IRG and the STC about losing their support (KII 18/10/2023 a; MEI 31/01/2023). Reports indicate that the KSA is looking for ways to reduce the financial burden of the war by positioning itself as a mediator in peace negotiations (MEI 27/03/2023).

Although united in their opposition to Iran, the KSA and the UAE have their own agendas that do not always align. Divergence between the KSA and the UAE's agendas is reflected in their support for different factions and their strategic objectives in Yemen (TNA 02/03/2018; SCSS 02/10/2019). The differing agendas of their backers have resulted in tension and even hostility between the IRG and the STC (KII 22/10/2023 a; KII 22/10/2023 b). Some instances include the STC's takeover of Aden in August 2019, with clashes between the separatist groups and those loyal to the IRG, and the seizure in August 2022 of energy facilities in Shabwah by UAE-backed military units from a pro-IRG faction (SCSS 04/09/2019; The New Arab 21/08/2022). The DFA has interpreted these differences as a sign of weakness in the alliance, encouraging them to pursue military operations (KII 22/10/2023 c; UNSC 25/01/2021).

Active and normalised violence: ineffective governance, a culture of impunity, and the struggle for legitimacy

The struggle between an ineffective central authority and multiple entities resisting centralised control remains. The three main conflict parties all claim to be the exclusive legitimate authority of Yemen, while local groups claim local legitimacy and, in the vacuum of state-provided services, attempt to win loyalty by providing a level of assistance, governance, and protection to the people living in their areas of influence. These factors combine to perpetuate the conflict and have normalised violence as part of society.

Yemen's recent history has given rise to distinct political cultures, many of which lean towards secessionism. Regional parties, particularly Iran, the KSA, and the UAE, have fortified these secessionist dynamics so groups have become better armed and organised and possess military and political infrastructure (Salisbury 27/03/2018). The weakness of the central government has allowed tribal and regional power configurations to challenge its authority, especially when larger armed groups fracture into smaller groups with divergent interests (KII 22/10/2023 a).

The issue of legitimacy, both internal and external, is an important driver of the Yemeni conflict, with conflict parties continually attempting to highlight and defend their legitimacy and denounce that of their opponents (IGC 20/08/2018). Each side declares itself 'the only legitimate authority' and seeks to use, or imitate, the legitimacy of a central state apparatus to underscore its credentials (KII 26/10/2023; MEI 14/05/2020). For example, the DFA has sought to use state institutions to underscore its oversight and control of northern Yemen, replacing civil servants with people loyal to their ideology (KII 22/10/2023 c).

One consequence of the fragmentation of Yemen's central state and institutions has been the deterioration of Yemen's legal system and any support for upholding the rule of law. The conflict-driven culture of impunity has created conditions that make exploitation and abuse more likely (IRC 29/01/2020). The weakness of the rule of law and the dysfunctional judicial system has led to a culture of forced disappearances, the use of extrajudicial incarceration, and secret prisons across much of the south (UNSC 25/01/2021; KII 22/10/2023 d; HRW 18/04/2023; AOA et al. 30/08/2022; AI 12/07/2018).

Jostling for legitimacy also occurs at the local level, where it is conveyed not through elections but through the provision of security, basic goods, and governance (IGC 20/08/2018). This generates tension between local groups and central authorities (particularly the IRG) and allows local armed groups to thrive by establishing local legitimacy (as has been the case with al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula) (IGC 02/02/2017).

Exploitation of sectarianism and ideology

The fragmentation of the Yemeni elite, which preceded the start of the war, gave opportunities for external parties to take advantage of the divisions that emerged. In doing so, the conflict took on a more ideological and sectarian dimension (Jadallah 13/07/2015). This dimension gives conflict parties a greater hold over the populations in their areas of control; they use it to justify measures of social control, functioning as a tool to mobilise new fighters, entrench power systems, and demonise the 'other' (YPC 03/2023).

All parties present their struggles as ideological and use religious discourse to consolidate their political ambitions. For example, political concerns partly influence the DFA's pursuit of a more restrictive form of social governance, but it is also related to the group's ideology (Jadallah 13/07/2015).

IMPACT OF THE CONFLICT ON WOMEN, MEN, GIRLS, AND BOYS

The drivers that facilitate the continuation of the war do not exist in isolation and are interconnected. They variously aggravate each other, reinforce each other, sometimes mitigate each other, and they transform over time while simultaneously generating impacts mediated through and influenced by features of the context. Direct causality between conflict drivers and impacts is difficult to draw because of these interconnected and mutually reinforcing characteristics. For this reason, the impacts are not divided into specific categories, but a table is provided for each impact to highlight the different drivers that are related to it. For this analysis, the most pertinent contextual feature is Yemen's patriarchal gender norms. The selection of drivers and impacts seeks to highlight how these relationships contribute to the changes that women, men, boys, girls, and other groups experience differently.

Gender norms are produced and reproduced daily during both war and peace (WILPF 26/03/2023; ACAPS 23/11/2023). Women, girls, men, and boys are socialised into inequitable norms from an early age. In Yemen, women are generally positioned as subordinate to men, who traditionally adopt the role of providers and decision makers inside the home (CARE et al. 11/2016; ACAPS 23/11/2023). Women are traditionally viewed as the primary caregivers in the household, responsible for cooking, cleaning, caring for children and adults with additional needs, and collecting water and firewood. The practice of early marriage, culturally seen as a way to protect girls from sexual harassment and abuse and to build social alliances, also stems from patriarchal gender norms that view women and girls as caretakers and otherwise devalue their potential contribution outside the home (ACAPS 11/04/2023 and 06/06/2023).

Men are responsible for providing financially for the family (CARE et al. 10/2016; ACAPS 11/04/2023; IRC 29/01/2020). Men are also the primary decision makers, including making decisions about

healthcare access (including sexual and reproductive health or SRH), family planning, and education (ACAPS 11/04/2023 and 08/12/2023; IRC 29/01/2020).

Yemen's legal system reinforces these existing patriarchal norms and gender inequalities (ACAPS 23/11/2023; ERT 29/06/2018; USAID 30/01/2020). For example, men are granted guardianship rights over their female relatives, there is no minimum age for marriage, and a woman's testimony holds half the value of a man's (ERT 29/06/2018; USAID 30/01/2020; SCSS 15/12/2019; WILPF 12/12/2018; ACAPS 23/11/2023). The Mahram requirement, while not codified, requires women to have a guardian for travel (ACAPS 22/11/2022 and 05/05/2023). Women also need their guardian's permission to marry and, while not legally encoded, to obtain a passport or open a bank account (CARE et al. 11/2016; K4D 30/03/2017; ACAPS 14/12/2023 and 06/06/2023).

The ability of Yemeni women to exert influence in decision-making depends on a range of factors and circumstances, including age, experience, the absence of a male family figure, or income generation. As Yemeni women get older, they may become more involved in deciding how family resources are spent (ACAPS 11/04/2023; SCSS 10/03/2021). Adherence to the Mahram requirement also depends on various factors, including geographic location, social class and minority grouping, tribal affiliation, education level, profession, and family preference (ACAPS 14/12/2023). That said, patriarchal gender norms continue to restrict many women's agency and act as a barrier to economic empowerment. Women who want to work find themselves limited to jobs that are considered socially acceptable for women or that have limited engagement with men (ACAPS 06/06/2023).

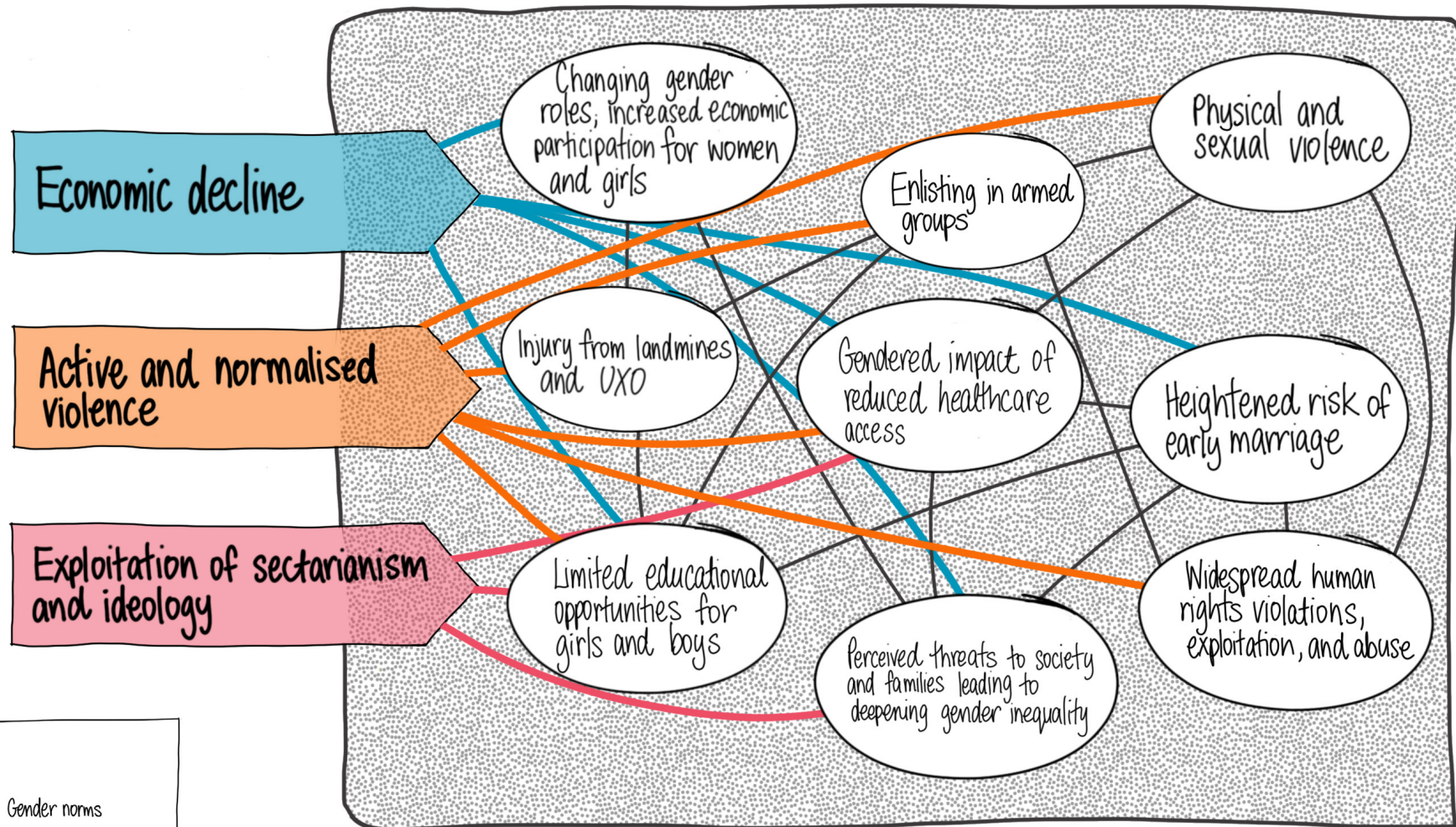
Despite prevailing patriarchal gender norms, the conflict and conflict-induced economic collapse have resulted in some shifts in roles and responsibilities among women and men (UN Women 01/2019; Oxfam 08/03/2023). Although women's contributions differ considerably between households, there are indications that women in Yemen have been able to expand their economic role and, by extension, their role within the household (SCSS 15/12/2019). Still, women engaged in paid work bear the double burden of earning an income while continuing to be responsible for household tasks, including cooking, cleaning, and childcare (ACAPS 11/04/2023; USAID 30/01/2020).

Gender is not the only differentiator in how people experience the impacts of the conflict. Social capital also plays a key role in Yemeni society (ACAPS 08/02/2022; USAID 30/01/2020). Women and girls tend to have less social capital than men and boys, but this is not always the case, and social capital appears to be importantly entrenched within households, families, and the connections they have with each other. Social, cultural, and economic capital all contribute to an individual's status and resilience (USAID 30/01/2020; Bourdieu 1986). While the impacts discussed below provide generalisations about the types of people they most impact, these impacts, in reality, have many variations.

COMPLEX ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN CONFLICT DRIVERS AND IMPACTS IN YEMEN

CONFLICT DRIVERS

CONFLICT IMPACTS



Key

- Gender norms
- Associations between impacts
- Associations between drivers and impacts

— Economic decline

— Active and normalised violence

— Exploitation of ideology and sectarianism

Changing gender roles: increased economic participation for women and girls

DRIVERS AND CONTEXT	
Main driver/s	Economic decline
Other driver/s	Exploitation of ideology and sectarianism Active and normalised violence
Links to gender norms	Men's role as provider Women's domestic role Policing women in public spaces Acceptability of men's punishment of their wives Acceptability of early marriage
NEGATIVE IMPACTS AND CONSEQUENCES	
Most affected	Women and girls, especially from groups and households with limited social capital and high levels of unmet needs (the poorest households)
Others affected and indirect impacts	Men unable to fulfil their gender role as household provider

Men have struggled to meet their traditional role as provider because of challenges related to job losses, business failures, and persistent unemployment linked to conflict-induced economic deterioration. Many men who have kept their jobs have had to accept irregular salary payments that have not kept up with inflation. Some men have left their families to fight with armed groups, and others have left their families in search of work elsewhere (SCSS 15/12/2019; ACAPS 11/04/2023). Interviewees spoke of the stress that the stigma of not being able to provide for their family and the need for their wives to work places on men, with some even turning to suicide (KII 13/10/2023).

In response to the economic challenges that have accompanied the conflict, necessity has seen new economic opportunities for women emerge, and more women are contributing to household economies (KII 22/11/2023). Some women have started small businesses, while others are employed outside the home, marking a change from their traditional role and position in the domestic sphere (KII 26/10/2023). Women are being engaged in jobs that men would normally carry out, with women and girls working in retail, hospitality, and the security forces (particularly in the north with the DFA) (SCSS 23/07/2019; CARE et al. 11/2016).

Women and girls in greater need or with less social capital are more likely to work in stigmatised jobs outside the home and are more vulnerable to harassment or violence. Such work is often physically demanding and poorly paid and exposes them to risks at their

workplaces and during travel. Others have been forced into activities such as begging (SCSS 23/07/2019). Women and girls living in rural areas or who are IDPs are especially vulnerable (CARE et al. 11/2016).

Perceived threats to society and families leading to deepening gender inequality

DRIVERS AND CONTEXT	
Main driver/s	Economic decline
Other driver/s	Exploitation of ideology and sectarianism Active and normalised violence
Links to gender norms	Men's role as provider Women's domestic role Policing women in public spaces
NEGATIVE IMPACTS AND CONSEQUENCES	
Most affected	Women and girls Women working for civil society and NGOs Women and girls requiring assistance from civil society and NGOs outside main centres
Others affected and indirect impacts	Men who feel disempowered by women's increased economic engagement Communities becoming more conservative

Yemen's patriarchal gender norms have historically stigmatised women working outside the home, limiting women's economic engagement. Even when they work with the support of their husbands and families, they may face some stigma and the dual workload of their jobs and traditional roles at home (ACAPS 06/06/2023). Although women's increased economic engagement has increased household-level decision-making power for some women, there is tension remains between the economic imperative for some women to work and the lack of capacity of some men to provide. This tension has been linked to an anecdotal increase in gender-based violence (GBV) (SCSS 15/12/2019).

While women's increased participation in the labour force could have initiated a shift in traditional gender norms, overall, there has been a structural deepening of patriarchal standards, worsening existing gender inequalities (Jadallah 13/07/2015; UNDP 23/11/2021). While the changes have caused some to question these norms, the more pervasive response has been to view women's increased economic engagement as a threat to family dynamics (KII 17/10/2023 a). As one interviewee put it:

“The conflict led [to] the woman going out to the labour market to search for income to help her family, which sometimes led to her leaving the house for very long hours and the neglect of the children.” (KII 23/10/2023)

Women’s economic engagement is seen as disempowering for men, leading to some households and communities becoming even more conservative. Governing authorities and religious leaders have contributed to this, underscoring the role of women as caregivers and in need of protection. This is reflected in the increased enforcement of the Mahram requirement, particularly in DFA-controlled areas (KII 17/10/2023 a; Wilson Center 24/03/2023).

One interviewee noted that conflict parties and people with conservative values particularly target women working in civil society organisations and NGOs because they view them to be strongly influenced by the West and promoting Western ideas (KII 18/10/2023 b). There has been a concerted attempt to reinscribe ‘traditional’ values across the country, including the idea that it is shameful for women to work (KII 30/10/2023 d). This has presented challenges for women working for humanitarian organisations (KII 17/10/2023 a). Even when the enforcement of the Mahram requirement was somewhat relaxed in 2023, it remained enforced for Yemeni women working in INGOs or civil society organisations (ACAPS 30/08/2023). This has greatly reduced women’s and girls’ access to services and the humanitarian response’s understanding of the needs of women and girls (ACAPS 05/05/2023; KII 15/08/2023).

Heightened risk of early marriage

DRIVERS AND CONTEXT	
Main driver/s	Economic decline
Other driver/s	Exploitation of ideology and sectarianism Active and normalised violence
Links to gender norms	Men’s role as provider Women’s domestic role Acceptability of early marriage
NEGATIVE IMPACTS AND CONSEQUENCES	
Most affected	Girls, especially from economically disadvantaged or conservative households worried about protection risks
Also affected, indirect impacts	Children of child brides, who are more likely to have poor health and education outcomes and, if they are girls, to also be subjected to early marriage

Early marriage is not new; it is both legal and widespread in Yemen. Before the conflict, 52% of Yemeni girls married before the age of 18, and it is estimated that the rate of forced and early marriage tripled between 2015–2018 (the early years of the war) (CARE et al. 11/2016; IRC 25/02/2019). Across the literature and among key informants, there is a strong sense that conflict, insecurity, and economic collapse have all contributed to an increase in early marriage (ACAPS 23/11/2023).

Many Yemenis consider early marriage to be a legitimate coping strategy that addresses key challenges aggravated by the war; a girl’s marriage reduces economic pressure on her family and brings the added benefit of dowry payments. It is also considered a way of protecting girls from harassment and to preserve her and her family’s ‘honour’ (ACAPS 23/11/2023). Anecdotally, the practice has been especially prevalent in IRG-controlled areas on the west coast (ACAPS 17/11/2023).

Daughters from economically vulnerable families are more likely to be forced into early marriage to help their families benefit financially (KII 15/10/2023; KII 22/10/2023 d). Early marriage not only reduces a girl’s opportunity for education, curtailing future livelihood opportunities, but also places girls at increased risk of various health and protection threats, including domestic violence and early childbirth (young mothers face a heightened risk of complications, such as obstetric fistula) (Girls Not Brides 12/06/2013).

Physical and sexual violence

DRIVERS AND CONTEXT	
Main driver/s	Economic decline Active and normalised violence
Other driver/s	Exploitation of ideology and sectarianism Culture of impunity
Links to gender norms	Men’s role as provider Women’s domestic role and limited role outside the home Policing women in public spaces Acceptability of men’s punishment of their wives Acceptability of early marriage
NEGATIVE IMPACTS AND CONSEQUENCES	
Most affected	Women and girls
Also affected, indirect impacts	Men and boys (particularly migrants and Muhasheen)

Among the many implications of the conflict and conflict-related economic challenges is the increase of women and girls in public space (either outside the home working or supporting

the family in other ways), increasing their vulnerability to violence. At the same time, the structures and norms that previously served to protect women and girls have changed. For example, the increase of women and girls in public space implies that there is no male relative to accompany female family members to protect them or highlight their respectability.

Physical violence against women and girls has been normalised in Yemen, and domestic violence is common (ACAPS 23/11/2023). It is widely acceptable for a husband to punish his wife if she disrespects social norms, and men have a right to 'discipline' their female relatives (ACAPS 11/04/2023; Oxfam 09/2020; ERT 29/06/2018). The conflict has contributed to increased risks of GBV being perpetrated by a family member, including a male guardian (ACAPS 23/11/2023). The psychological pressure that men face to uphold traditional gender norms by providing for their families and the shame of failing to do so are considered drivers of violence (KII 25/10/2023 a). Interviewees suggested that men sometimes try to escape their problems through drug use, but this can also result in increased violence within the home (KII 30/10/2023 a).

Conflict aggravates existing vulnerabilities and underlying social issues, including physical and sexual violence (IRC 25/02/2019). Anecdotal evidence suggests that the conflict has combined with gender norms to intensify physical violence (including domestic violence), sexual violence, harassment, and economic abuse (ACAPS 23/11/2023). This is attributed in part to increased unemployment resulting from the conflict-induced economic deterioration. Men have more time to harass women and girls when they have no work, and without jobs, they cannot afford marriage and are less likely to be considered desirable husbands by the families of prospective brides. Such harassment benefits from the prevailing culture of impunity (SCSS 15/12/2019).

While women and girls experience GBV disproportionately in Yemen, there are documented cases of men and boys facing violence including sexual violence used as a form of torture against captured and detained men and boys – both Yemeni and migrant (CARE et al. 11/2016; ERT 29/06/2018). There are also reports of an increase in Yemeni boys experiencing rape and sexual violence and anecdotal reports of the sexual abuse of boys in the workplace (such as bathhouses), the recruitment of boys into prostitution, and rape in schools (ACAPS 11/04/2023; SCSS 15/12/2019). Muhamasheen boys are reported to be especially vulnerable to sexual violence (ERT 29/06/2018; SCSS 15/12/2019).

In a society where survivors of sexual abuse face intense stigma and risk putting their family's reputation at risk, threats of retribution from perpetrators and their families, as well as a dysfunctional legal system, limit the willingness of survivors and their families to report GBV (SCSS 15/12/2019; CARE et al. 11/2016).

Enlisting in armed groups

DRIVERS AND CONTEXT	
Main driver/s	Active and normalised violence Economic decline
Other driver/s	Exploitation of ideology and sectarianism A culture of impunity
Links to gender norms	Men's role as provider
NEGATIVE IMPACTS AND CONSEQUENCES	
Most affected	Men and boys (concerns for those who enlist and those who do not)
Also affected, indirect impacts	Women and girls Households (including women and children) left without a male household head

Men and boys join armed groups to support their families because of the wages and other benefits armed groups provide to the families of enlisted soldiers. The current conflict-induced economic collapse means many men are unable to provide for their families. In addition to the livelihoods challenges they face, Yemen's patriarchal culture fosters shame amongst men who cannot meet the traditional role assigned to their gender. Joining an armed group is seen as a solution to two problems: economic challenges and the failure to conform to patriarchal gender norms (KII 30/10/2023 d; KII 18/10/2023 b). Armed groups specifically target young men and boys, attracting them to their cause through a combination of ideological indoctrination and 'voluntary' recruitment driven by economic need.

Men and boys who enlist face the risks of violence, injury, and death (IRC 29/01/2020). The psychosocial impacts of the conflict are also numerous and the knock-on effects significant. For example, trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder may increase the risk of violence in the home or may limit the man's ability to work and provide for his family. Men and boys who engage in the conflict may also internalise the ideologies of conflict parties, bringing such ideologies back into their homes and their communities (CARE et al. 10/2016). Men and boys who do not enlist fear kidnapping, detention, and conscription (IRC 29/01/2020).

Although voluntary and forced recruitment into armed groups mainly affects young men and boys, conflict parties have also recruited women. For example, the IRG recruited women in Ta'iz into their army in the early years of the conflict, and the DFA recruits women into Al Zainabiyat, its female arm, which operates as a security unit monitoring the behaviour and presence of women in gathering places (To Be for Rights and Freedoms 03/2016). Al Zainabiyat

suppresses anti-Houthi sentiments among women and reports on the conversations and activities of women in DFA areas (Wilson Center 24/03/2023).

Widespread human rights violations, exploitation, and abuse

DRIVERS AND CONTEXT	
Main driver/s	Active and normalised violence Ineffective governance A culture of impunity
Other driver/s	Exploitation of ideology and sectarianism Economic decline
Links to gender norms	Policing women in public spaces Women's domestic role Acceptability of men's punishment of their wives Acceptability of early marriage
NEGATIVE IMPACTS AND CONSEQUENCES	
Most affected	Women, men, boys and girls Particularly from specific groups or categories of people, e.g. People who speak out against conflict parties (e.g. journalists, activists) and their families Al Muhamasheen, IDPs, migrants, refugees
Also affected, indirect impacts	Society overall because of the absence of freedom of speech for fear of repercussions

The fragmentation of Yemen's central state apparatus and institutions has created enabling conditions for exploitation and abuse to flourish (IRC 29/01/2020). Forced disappearances, the use of extrajudicial incarceration, and secret prisons continue unchecked across much of the south because of a culture of impunity (UNSC 25/01/2021; KII 22/10/2023 d; HRW 18/04/2023HRW accessed; AOAV et al. 30/08/2022; AI 12/07/2018). For average Yemenis, there is little difference between the DFA and the STC, who use the same methods (e.g. arbitrary arrests, torture, hidden prisons) to curtail freedom (KII 17/10/2023 b).

"My nephew was assassinated. My sister [has been] subjected to many attacks because she defended detainees who forcibly disappeared. Recently, I began working on the issues of detainees, people who had disappeared, and violations to civilians by the security authorities. I [have also been] subjected to a lot of harassment, including at work, to the point of cursing and campaigns to distort our reputation, but we are still standing" (KII 20/10/2023).

This culture of impunity allows for violations by conflict parties to continue without access to justice or recourse for victims. The violence includes arbitrary arrests, imprisonment, the confiscation of property, physical and sexual violence, and the denial of humanitarian aid (KII 24/10/2023). People who speak out against authorities face risks; one interviewee noted that the country has "prisons full of journalists and activists" (KII 26/10/2023).

Personally motivated or arbitrary violence against individuals takes place unchecked, without access to justice or recourse for victims. Yemen's culture of impunity affects all social groups but to differing degrees. Without a robust legal system to rely on, individuals look to informal protection systems. The degree to which these are available depends on a range of factors, including social capital. As a result, women, girls, boys, and people from marginalised communities (such as Al Muhamasheen, IDPs, refugees, and migrants) are at higher risk of arbitrary actions by more powerful individuals or groups because they are less likely to have strong informal protective mechanisms to fall back on (CARE et al. 10/2016; KII 24/10/2023; ACAPS 14/08/2020; KII 17/10/2023 c).

Injury from landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO)

DRIVERS AND CONTEXT	
Main driver/s	Active and normalised violence
Other driver/s	Economic decline – may force people to move through, or work in, areas with a risk of landmines and UXO A culture of impunity Ineffective governance
Links to gender norms	Womens's role as caregiver Expectations related to household duties such as water collection, gathering firewood, tending to livestock
NEGATIVE IMPACTS AND CONSEQUENCES	
Most affected	Girls and boys IDPs and people on the move (many of which are women and children)
Also affected, indirect impacts	Anyone moving through areas where there has been active conflict Those reliant on the movement of goods for essential supplies (e.g. medicines) or livelihoods (e.g. shop keepers, traders) Women are usually responsible for looking after those injured or disabled by land mines

UXO, including landmines, are widespread and present a general risk to movement because they have not been laid systematically and are unmapped (CEIP 01/09/2022; KII 22/10/2023 d). In the months immediately after the signing of the April 2022 truce, landmines and UXO were the primary killers of children, causing more than 75% of war-related casualties among children

(Save the Children 01/07/2022). Children accounted for 65% of all casualties from landmines and UXO in 2023 (Mwatana 11/01/2024). The reason for this was the fact that more families were moving back to previously inaccessible areas after the truce because of the decrease in active conflict (Save the Children 30/06/2022). Children are also exposed to landmines and UXO when they are playing or engaging in livelihood activities, such as collecting firewood and water or tending to livestock (Save the Children 23/03/2023). As at March 2023, landmines and UXO continued to kill or injure children at a rate of one child every two days (Save the Children 23/03/2023).

IDPs, most of whom are women and children, are especially vulnerable to landmines and UXO (STC 23/03/2023 a). The physical threat posed by landmines and UXO has a direct impact on their ability to return home, access livelihoods, and resume business and services (UNDP 04/04/2023).

Limited educational opportunities for boys and girls

DRIVERS AND CONTEXT	
Main driver/s	Economic decline Active and normalised violence Ineffective governance
Other driver/s	Exploitation of ideology and sectarianism
Links to gender norms	Differing expectations of boys and girls Policing women and girls in public spaces Women's domestic role Acceptability of early marriage Men's role in household decision-making (including about education)
NEGATIVE IMPACTS AND CONSEQUENCES	
Most affected	Girls and boys
Also affected, indirect impacts	Teachers who are not getting paid or who no longer have a school building to teach in Future impacts on communities and the country in general, which will have a less educated population With differing curricula throughout the country students from one area of control cannot easily assimilate to schools in a different area, this broadens the differences and adds a challenge to any reunification efforts

A range of factors affect children's education access, including widespread insecurity causing families not to send children to school. As at October 2022, 25% of schools had been destroyed or damaged by conflict or were being used for non-educational purposes

(e.g. as shelter for displaced people) (ICRC 13/10/2022). Other factors include school closures, a lack of resources, and unpaid teacher salaries (IRC 29/01/2020; KII 25/10/2023 b). By 2022, the conflict had left over two million children out of school; many others could lose education access as the war and its associated impacts continue.

Both girls and boys face reduced education access but for different reasons. Poverty and the inability to meet needs because of economic challenges affect school access for both boys and girls, but if resources are tight, families prioritise boys' education. Girls' education is considered to be of limited value, as girls are not expected to work after marriage and instead will be engaged in domestic tasks (Jadallah 13/07/2015). In addition, many school facilities and programmes are not designed with the needs of girls in mind, including a lack of female teachers and gender-segregated toilets and washing facilities (IRC 29/01/2020). Increased concerns about the harassment of girls also contribute to their reduced school attendance (USAID 30/01/2020; SCSS 15/12/2019; ERT 29/06/2018). Early marriage is also a key structural impediment for girls to drop out of school (IRC 29/01/2020).

Boys' education access is usually impeded by conflict-related factors, such as the boys joining armed groups (the number of child soldiers is linked to the number of boys dropping out from school) or concerns about kidnapping en route to school (Jadallah 13/07/2015; KII 17/10/2023 a; IRC 29/01/2020). For some young men and boys, the weakened education system and lack of livelihood opportunities cause concern that they may not be able to provide for a family in the future and will not make for a suitable husband. This lack of confidence and hopelessness lead to detrimental, risky, and anti-social behaviours, such as dropping out of school and "wasting time chewing qat or smoking in the streets", an increased interest in fighting games and weaponry, joining armed groups, or becoming involved in extremist groups (KII 30/10/2023 b; KII 15/10/2023; KII 18/10/2023 b).

The conflict has challenged the notion that education can lead to better opportunities. The breakdown of established structures, systems, and service delivery within Yemen has cultivated a sense of hopelessness and a loss of dreams and ambitions. This lack of opportunity has led to a 'lost' generation with "no good education and a difficult life of poverty, hunger, and displacement" (KII 15/10/2023; KII 26/10/2023).

Reduced education access for both boys and girls affects future adulthood participation in the workforce and aggravates risks that include early marriage and its associated issues for girls and armed group recruitment for boys (SCSS 15/12/2019; ERT 29/06/2018).

Simultaneously, conflict parties use education to further their ideologies and create divisions (YPC 03/2023). The need for legitimacy and the desire to establish and maintain ideological differences have resulted in these parties cultivating specific education strategies and potentially taking time away from academic subjects to focus on ideological instruction.

The education systems in the IRG-controlled areas and DFA-controlled areas have been diverging by design, and both areas of control have their own distinct curricula (KII 30/10/2023 d). The DFA has made changes to the school curriculum, imposed dress code regulations for girls, and mandated the national days and celebrations schools must observe (KII 22/10/2023 c; ACAPS 22/11/2022; OpenDemocracy 01/02/2022). Over time, they have established a curriculum that promotes an understanding of the conflict and the state of the country in accordance with Houthi sectarian ideology (KII 17/10/2023 a; KII 18/10/2023 a; KII 30/10/2023 a; KII 17/10/2023 b). The DFA also runs summer schools to underscore the importance of boys joining armed groups and convince them of the ideological nature of their cause, while the Zainabiyat promotes Islamist concepts in schools to garner the support of female students (ACAPS 03/08/2022; Wilson Center 24/03/2023).

The STC has announced that the curriculum in schools in areas under their control is being reviewed to identify classes that are “extraneous, false, and programmed to Yemenise the south, and replace them with lessons that carry the southern stamp, identity, and history” (CEIP 15/11/2021). The STC already promotes their ideology through regular lectures and events at schools, has banned the Yemeni flag and anthem during school assemblies, and uses the flag of the former People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen instead (YPC 03/2023).

Gendered impact of reduced healthcare access

DRIVERS AND CONTEXT	
Main driver/s	Active and normalised violence Ineffective governance Economic decline
Other driver/s	Exploitation of ideology and sectarianism
Links to gender norms	Men’s role in household decision-making (including about women’s healthcare and SRH) Women’s role as primary caregiver Women’s limited movement outside the home
NEGATIVE IMPACTS AND CONSEQUENCES	
Most affected	Women and adolescent girls, especially girls subject to early marriage because of the health implications of early pregnancy and protection risks
Also affected, indirect impacts	Children and babies of child brides

Yemen remains highly vulnerable to disease outbreaks, especially preventable communicable diseases (ACAPS 26/10/2023). In August 2023, WHO noted an increase in suspected measles and rubella cases, from 27,000 in 2022 to 34,300 in 2023. Such outbreaks occur within a context of “economic decline and low incomes, displacement, and overcrowded living conditions in camps, coupled with an overwhelmed health system, [and] low immunisation rates” (WHO 31/08/2023).

Pervasive patriarchal gender norms limit women’s and girls’ healthcare access (IRC 29/01/2020; ACAPS 11/04/2023). For example, in many families, men make decisions around healthcare, including family planning. Men also have the right to limit the movement of their female family members and refuse for them to be attended to by a male doctor (IRC 29/01/2020).

The conflict and the ideologies of conflict parties have curtailed access to gender-specific services, such as GBV, SRH, and maternal health services. For example, the DFA’s position is that “families should have as many children as possible to contribute to the war effort”, leading them to restrict access to SRH services (IRC 29/01/2020). In Amran, Hajjah, and Sa’dah governorates, some SRH activities, especially those focused on family planning and contraception, have been banned altogether and are not available (ACAPS 22/11/2022).

These barriers can have devastating effects on women’s health and wellbeing. For example, GBV survivors without knowledge of or access to the services available are at particular risk of complications from physical injury, HIV contraction, sexually transmitted infections, and pregnancy (CARE et al. 10/2016).