EUROPEAN INSTITUTE OF PEACE

PATHWAYS FOR RECONCILIATION IN YEMEN

Engagement in Shabwah, Taiz, Al-Maharah, Aden, Al-Hodeidah, Ma'rib, Sana'a, Al-Dhale'e and Hajjah

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Introduction

The Pathways for Reconciliation in Yemen project[1] was developed under the European Institute of Peace's Conflict Justice and Reconciliation programme. It is the largest effort in recent history and ongoing conflict to engage members of society to consider their needs, perspectives and rights in the search for lasting peace. This report covers highlights from consultations with nearly 16,000 people in nine governorates in Yemen between October 2020 and October 2021.

The process reflects a commitment that peace must be shaped by genuine participatory engagement with society beyond those actively engaging in hostilities or involved with the conflict parties. The likelihood of obtaining a legitimate and sustainable settlement significantly depends on how inclusive the process is and the extent to which it engages beyond elite voices of the powerful.

Yemen benefitted from the 2013–2014 National Dialogue Conference (NDC). While some of the ideas and conclusions it reached remain relevant, the conditions in the country are now significantly worse. Although the NDC was innovative and inspirational, its model can be improved upon to promote a more inclusive process that helps facilitate more legitimate outcomes.

The process of engagement is an essential aspect of sustainable peacebuilding. It should not be seen as a 'soft' option or an ornament to 'serious' talks with conflict parties. Sustainable peace ultimately requires a critical mass of society to buy into any settlement. To do so, they must believe it represents an improvement to the status quo, and that it is in their interest to stick with it and to withhold support from potential spoilers. The more seriously the settlement's creation takes into account the views of the wider society, the greater the chances of conferring legitimacy and obtaining buy-in.

The Pathways to Reconciliation initiative identifies the priorities and concerns of ordinary citizens. While some of the findings may not surprise, this does not limit their usefulness. Citizens' genuine engagement in the initial steps of this process is of the utmost importance. A striking proportion of those consulted (78 per cent) did not support any political party; they consider themselves unrepresented, and with no appropriate avenues in which to express their needs and aims.

[1] A civil society focus group endorsed the idea of describing the process as مسارات للمصالحه فى اليمن which resonates with local values and translates well into Arabic. It translates to *pathways for reconciliation in Yemen* and avoids the problematic use of 'transitional justice', which does not translate as well and can create confusion.

Key Lessons

The initiative generated the following set of lessons and recommendations, which represent an overview of key impressions and findings.

Local dynamics need to be properly understood. The types of grievances and aspirations expressed – related to ending the war and securing a dignified life – varied little among the 36 districts. However, undeniable (and sometimes stark) differences surfaced regarding how these came about, the impact they are having, and visions for resolving them. To address rights-based needs and pursue reconciliation, it is important to recognise that each community has specific options, actors, and means.

Issues are interconnected. It may be tempting, as a confidence-building measure, to take an episodic approach from one location to another. However, the consultations highlighted that developments in one governorate have a knock-on effect on conflict, economic and social dynamics in others, and that grievances are interdependent and interrelated.

Meaningful engagement is possible. There is ample demand, space, and time for conflict resolution efforts to genuinely engage the broader Yemeni population in securing a sustainable and just peace. In fact, one of the striking features of the project is the intense interest – even hope – that at this stage in a disastrous conflict and dire crisis, common efforts can still save and rebuild the country. There are viable and more effective ways than a 'seat around the table' to ensure that their views are represented meaningfully. This initiative importantly demonstrated that the gender-sensitive and inclusive engagement of women and youth is possible and valuable, even under the restrictive security and social conditions present in Yemen. Meaningful bottom-up participation has so far been missing from the process.

Local networks hold enormous potential. Investing in local community networks and platforms for exchange and dialogue to facilitate reconciliation is, unsurprisingly, a key step towards strengthening the country's damaged social fabric. However, the results of this study also reveal less immediately obvious benefits. First, more than three-quarters of those engaged did not feel that their needs were currently being effectively expressed or represented in political avenues. Second, social media and friends ranked much higher as primary sources of news and information than traditional avenues. Community networks will therefore stimulate and serve as tools for strategic communication and building legitimacy and buy-in for a peace settlement.

Reconciliation is a multifaceted concept. As in other contexts, the idea of reconciliation is widely used by participants but without sufficient regard for the multivariate ways in which it is understood, both in theory and in practice, by those who would engage in or benefit from it. For example, the Arabic term *musalaha* was used in the context of the consultations to convey important nuances about dealing with individual or collective trauma, pathways of recourse and addressing grievances, and methods of moving forward. Without deeper understanding of what reconciliation means to distinct local communities in practice, and how best to pursue it with methods they consider appropriate, there is a real likelihood that peace efforts will not produce the necessary fruits to sustain the process.

Citizens seek institution-led solutions. For a society that has experienced several recent conflicts (and is currently in the midst of one), exacerbated by an acute humanitarian crisis and breakdown of state

institutions, there is a surprising but encouraging base of hope in institutional solutions in Yemen. Respondents across all nine governorates expressed a preference for a strong central government with democratic and effective institutions to guarantee citizens' rights.

Reverse negative economic trends as a tangible peace dividend. Understandably, participants were extremely affected by a variety of immediate and longer-term issues related to access to basic services, income and the economy – not least due to the currency devaluation. There is a clear expectation that a peace deal would reverse some of these trends. This presents an opportunity, if carefully designed, to foster tangible peace dividends that can respond to expectations and make a practical and meaningful difference to the population, thereby increasing local peace buy-in and the prospects for reconciliation.

Environmental concerns are urgent and important. It is important to recognise the role that environmental factors have played in exacerbating the grievances expressed by Yemenis – in relation to basic services, conflict causes, internal displacement, or livelihoods – and in terms of future risks. They cover both living conditions (e.g. waste management, water pollution and dealing with debris) and natural resources (e.g. resource management, deforestation and desertification). These factors need to be examined further as they directly underpin challenges and, if leveraged well, opportunities for sustainable conflict resolution.

Tribal mechanisms do not attract support as the basis for reconciliation efforts. Even though tribal mechanisms helped mitigate the negative effects of the war in some governorates, most Yemenis consider the use of traditional methods of reconciliation insufficient. In those governorates, tribal leaders and dignitaries possess a level of influence within their communities and can help support peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts. However, the scale and nature of human rights violations and violence in the current context indicate that such avenues are not embraced as a solution.

Recommendations

The lessons and findings from this process generate two primary recommendations for a sustainable and inclusive peace in Yemen.

First, processes that are currently pursuing a resolution to the conflict must find a way to engage meaningfully with all levels of society.

Second, for such engagement to be meaningful, it must:

- Engage ordinary citizens, not just elites, or former powerbrokers or diaspora representatives;
- Entail a relatively granular local footprint, not just regional or governorate headquarters;
- Ensure that all concerns, findings and suggestions are effectively channelled into formal talks.

In the next phase of the Pathways for Reconciliation in Yemen initiative, the Institute will develop a platform to enhance such engagement in at least the nine governorates focused on here.

Methodology

This report presents the results of work conducted in the nine governorates of Shabwah, Taiz, Al-Hodeidah, Al-Maharah, Aden, Ma'rib, Sana'a, Al-Dhale'e and Hajjah. The project is active in a carefully selected **36 districts** out of a total of 333 – more than 10% of the country's total.
The engagement was conducted entirely by Yemeni personnel who were trained and directed by Yemeni experts with the Institute's support. A steering group of three experienced Yemeni colleagues led and trained a team of 58 researchers (of whom 33 per cent were women) and two support officers to conduct the field work, which required a great deal of ye in the context of the conflict and the Covid-19 pandemic.

The field research consisted of four types of interventions: surveys, interviews, focus groups and community dialogues. Most direct engagements took place through **13,759 structured surveys**. Though people were randomly selected to participate in the survey, in order to obtain a representative sample, the target parameters were as follows: at least 30 per cent women; diversity of age groups and education levels; and a mix of 'ordinary citizens', educated citizens, and local civil society. The surveys, each of which lasted approximately an hour, contained five sections and 40 questions addressing a range of issues including perceptions about urgent needs, post-war priorities, attitudes about (and understandings of) reconciliation, who is responsible for the human rights violations that have occurred, and how these might be addressed.

Trained local researchers conducted a total of **1,466 individual interviews**, which comprised 26 open-ended questions; interviewees were not obligated to answer every question.

The project also convened **36 focus groups** i.e. 4 per governorate. In each governorate, there were four separate groups; each comprised 5–10 women, activists, journalists or youth representatives. The focus groups were asked to consider and discuss a set of 10 questions.

Finally, after these steps had taken place and interim findings gathered, **nine community dialogue conferences** (i.e. one per governorate) were facilitated virtually or in hybrid settings. The steering committee and Institute convened mid- to high-level government officials, political leaders, traditional and tribal leaders, military officials and prominent governorate figures. An average of 40 participants were asked to answer and discuss a set of six questions covering a range of issues raised in the previous three consultation tools (i.e. survey, interviews, and focus groups). These dialogues were the most open forum for discussions and included people with diverse backgrounds and often opposing views.

The nine governorates were selected based on the following criteria:

- severity and diversity of conflict dynamics
- local polarisation and contentions linked to the presence of conflict parties
- balanced representation of northern and southern governorates as well as local groups
- availability of potential local partners and feasibility of carrying out consultative activities
- lack of similar assessments on rights-based issues
- trust deficits between local communities and local leaders

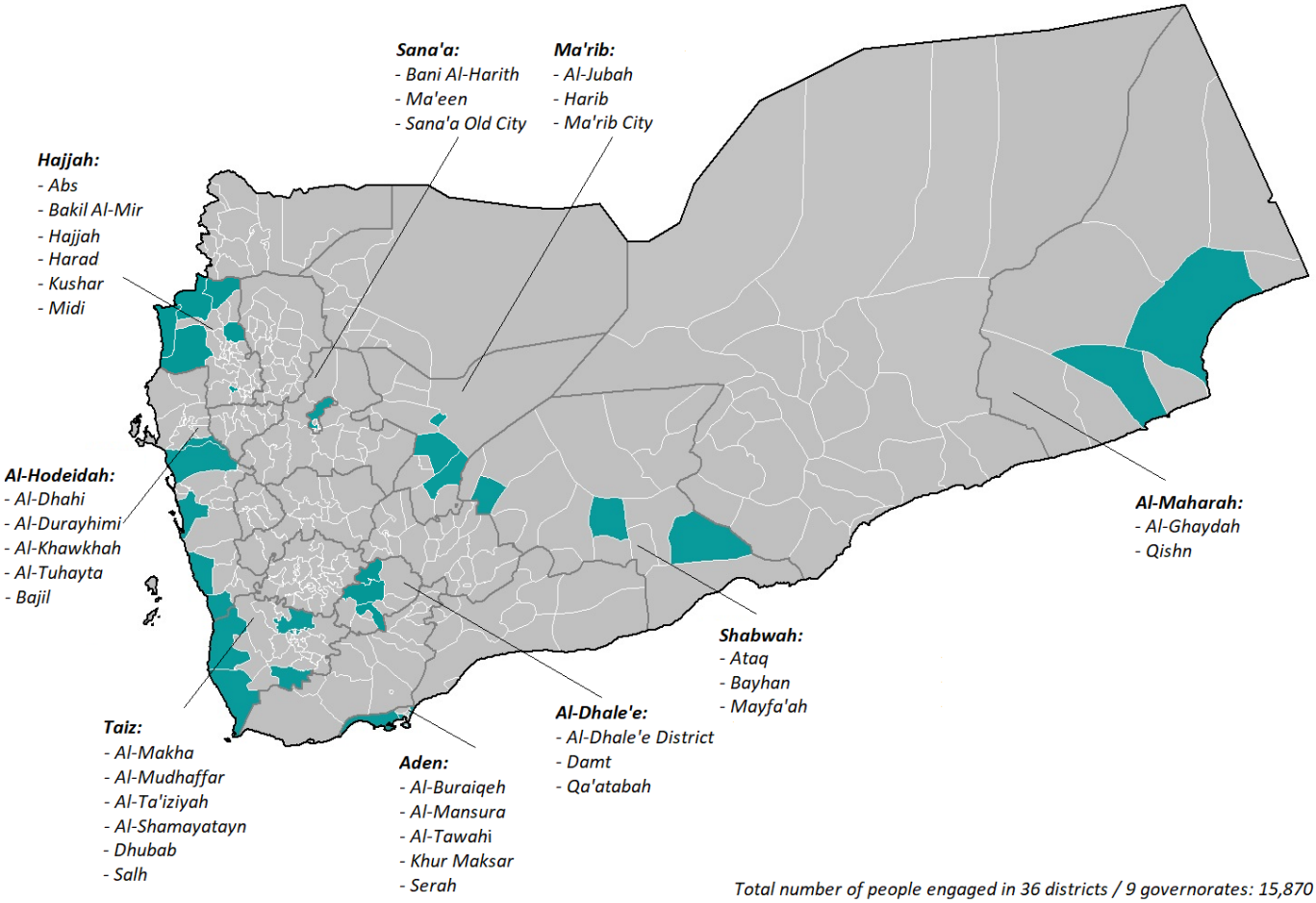
Within those governorates, districts were selected based on the density of the population and operational accessibility.

Project Snapshot

The project has two main goals. The first is to identify and understand citizens' needs, wishes and rights in the pursuit of peace. The second goal is to assess whether tailored approaches may be required based on experiences and dynamics in specific areas.

The project explored these topics using a combination of surveys, interviews, focus groups and community dialogues. This report presents the results and conclusions organised by theme. Figure 1 summarises the project locations.

FIGURE 1. PROJECT LOCATIONS



Total number of people engaged in 36 districts / 9 governorates: 15,870

A total of **15,870 individuals inside Yemen** were engaged across Taiz (2,204), Shabwah (1,433), Aden (1,659), Al-Al-Hodeidah (2,532), Al-Maharah (1,081), Ma'rib (1,539), Sana'a (1,474), Al-Dhale'e (1,282) and Hajjah (2,666) governates. Close to 40 per cent of the participants were women, a significant success, especially given the operational circumstances. Approximately 60 per cent of the participants were under the age of 35, reflecting Yemen's young population. Table 1 presents the breakdown per engagement method and location.

TABLE 1. PROJECT PARTICIPANTS BY GOVERNATE

Shabwah (3 Districts)	Male	Female	Total
Survey	771 (64.5%)	423 (35.5%)	1,194
Interviews	109 (81.9%)	24 (18.1%)	133
Focus Groups	25 (73.6%)	9 (26.4%)	34
Community Dialogues	60 (83.3%)	12 (16.7%)	72
Total in Shabwah	**965 (67.3%)**	**468 (32.7%)**	**1,433**

Taiz (6 Disctricts)	Male	Female	Total
Survey	1,128 (56%)	884 (44%)	2,012
Interviews	104 (90.4%)	11 (9.6%)	115
Focus Groups	13 (39.4%)	20 (60.6%)	33
Community Dialogues	37 (74.1%)	7(15.9%)	44
Total in Taiz	**1,282 (58,1%)**	**922 (41.9%)**	**2,204**

Al-Maharah (2 Districts)	Male	Female	Total
Survey	502 (55%)	404 (45%)	906
Interviews	75 (61%)	48 (39%)	123
Focus Groups	26 (74.3%)	9 (25.7%)	35
Community Dialogues	14 (82.4%)	3 (17.6%)	17
Total in Al-Maharah	**617 (57%)**	**464 (43%)**	**1,081**

Aden (5 Districts)	Male	Female	Total
Survey	758 (54.2%)	640 (45.8%)	1,398
Interviews	151 (83.8%)	29 (16.2%)	180
Focus Groups	18 (56.3%)	14 (43.7%)	32
Community Dialogues	33 (68.4%)	16 (32.6%)	49
Total in Aden	**960 (57.9%)**	**699 (42.1%)**	**1,659**

Al-Hodeidah (5 Districts)	Male	Female	Total
Survey	1,378 (63%)	812 (37%)	2,190
Interviews	202 (78.3%)	56 (21.7%)	258
Focus Groups	20 (51.3%)	19 (48.7%)	39
Community Dialogues	38 (84.5%)	7 (15.5%)	45
Total in Al-Hodeidah	**1,638 (64.7%)**	**894 (35.3%)**	**2,532**

Ma'rib (3 Districts)	Male	Female	Total
Survey	902 (65.8%)	469 (34.2%)	1,371
Interviews	104 (96.3%)	4 (3.7%)	108
Focus Groups	18 (72%)	7 (28%)	25
Community Dialogues	30 (85.7%)	5 (14.3%)	35
Total in Ma'rib	**1054 (68.5%)**	**485 (31.5%)**	**1,539**

Sana'a (3 Districts)	Male	Female	Total
Survey	543 (43.8%)	697 (56.2%)	1,240
Interviews	92 (63.4%)	53 (36.6%)	145
Focus Groups	17 (56.7%)	13 (43.3%)	30
Community Dialogues	40 (67.8%)	19 (32.2%)	59
Total in Sana'a	**692 (46.9%)**	**782 (53.1%)**	**1,474**

Al-Dhale'e (3 Districts)	Male	Female	Total
Survey	772 (68.8%)	350 (31.2%)	1,122
Interviews	83 (77.6%)	24 (22.4%)	107
Focus Groups	14 (51.9%)	13 (48.1%)	27
Community Dialogues	23 (88.5%)	3 (11.5%)	26
Total in Al-Dhale'e	**892 (69.6%)**	**390 (30.4%)**	**1,282**

Hajjah (6 Districts)	Male	Female	Total
Survey	1,580 (67.9%)	746 (32.1%)	2,326
Interviews	251 (84.5%)	46 (15.5%)	297
Focus Groups	17 (70.8%)	7 (29.2%)	24
Community Dialogues	15 (78.9%)	4 (21.1%)	19
Total in Hajjah	**1863 (69.9%)**	**803 (30.1%)**	**2,666**

In summary, the total number of persons engaged per governorate is as follows:

Governorate	Male	Female	Total
Shabwah	965 (67.3%)	468 (32.7%)	1,433
Taiz	1,282 (58.1%)	922 (41.9%)	2,204
Al-Maharah	617 (57%)	464 (43%)	1,081
Aden	960 (57.9%)	699 (42.1%)	1,659
Al-Hodeidah	1,638 (64.7%)	894 (35.3%)	2,532
Ma'rib	1,054 (68.5%)	485 (31.5%)	1,539
Sana'a	692 (46.9%)	782 (53.1%)	1,474
Al-Dhale'e	892 (69.6%)	390 (30.4%)	1,282
Hajjah	1863 (69.9%)	803 (30.1%)	2,666
Total (36 Districts)	**9,963 (62.8%)**	**5,907 (37.2%)**	**15,870**

A variety of methods and formats were used to collect the data presented here to ensure the views gathered extend far beyond the usual political, business and intellectual voices to capture citizens' authentic needs and perspectives. The surveys and interviews provided unfettered views. The more public the forum became, the more social and cultural norms tended to determine how forthright people were. Community dialogues were to some degree dominated by the more powerful voices in the social and political hierarchies. This dynamic was less pronounced in the focus groups since they were composed of similar types of people.

Operational Context

This section briefly overviews the dynamics in each of the nine governorates and some of the operational challenges and considerations they faced at the time of the consultations.

Shabwah

Shabwah is a sparsely populated, resource-rich governorate in southern Yemen. Its tribes were often involved in past skirmishes with the government over access to oil and gas infrastructure, ports and other resources.[2] Along with Hadramawt and Ma'rib, Shabwah accounts for a significant portion of Yemen's oil and natural gas production, which is of immense strategic value for the warring parties. Large parts of Shabwah remain under the control of the Internationally Recognised Government of Yemen (IRGY); the government's relevance and leverage in the conflict are largely contingent on those three regions. In August 2019 the IRGY lost control of Aden, the country's temporary capital, to the Southern Transition Council (STC). The STC and the Houthis are vying for control of Shabwah to help make their 'post-war' visions of Yemen economically viable. The Houthis recently launched a massive assault; as of September 2021, the battle intensified and three districts in Shabwah fell under their control, with increasing tension between IRGY and STC in the remaining districts.[3]

Shabwah has a small population of approximately 658,000 – approximately 95 per cent of whom require assistance according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The governate's health services are provided through public hospitals and health centres, which receive limited support from the central government and local authorities. These services do not meet the needs of the population due to a lack of medical staff and equipment and inadequate financial allocations.[4] Consultations in Shabwah were conducted during a relatively peaceful period. Due to a lack of technical capacity and resources, a hybrid community dialogue conference was organised in Ataq.

Taiz

Taiz is one of the country's most populated governorates; approximately 2.6 million people live there, though the population has likely dwindled due to the conflict. It has experienced more armed conflict than other governates: casualties in Taiz comprise one-fifth of the death toll in Yemen between 2015 and 2019.[5] While the IRGY nominally controls some areas of the governorate, Taiz has in effect been under a siege imposed by the Houthis since 2015 that has disrupted the distribution of and access to humanitarian and medical assistance for thousands of residents.

Vital medical units in Taiz have been destroyed by on-going Coalition–Houthi confrontations, leading to widespread disruptions in access to services. There are only two public hospitals and one military hospital that serve the entire population. These receive some support from international non-governmental organisations, but are still short of medicines. Due to the decline in health services and a scarcity of clean drinking water, there have also been major epidemics of infectious diseases such

[2] https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/map-Shabwah-tribes
[3] https://debriefer.net/en/news-27086.html
[4] https://yemenlg.org/governorates/Shabwah /
[5] https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/11/taiz_city_profile.pdf

as cholera.[6] Traditionally, Taiz has a more diversified economy than most Yemeni governorates; it specialises in agriculture and animal husbandry, and a significant workforce is engaged in fishing along the Red Sea coast and working in a number of industrial plants.[7]

During the consultations in Taiz, there were multiple fighting fronts within the governorate. Fighting would often and sporadically break out, and shelling would suddenly hit various parts of the city, causing short-term pauses and delays in the local teams' operations.

Al-Maharah

Al-Maharah has experienced less violence during the conflict than other governorates. Due to its geographic position, it is a focal point in ongoing regional rivalry between Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar and Oman, each of which seeks to entrench its influence.[8] Since the 2015 outbreak of the Yemeni conflict, Al-Maharah has remained predominantly under the control of the IRGY led by President Hadi, although it is currently governed with heavy influence from Saudi Arabia. Tribes in the governorate adhere to a code of conduct that historically helped mediate disputes and contain conflict. Regional competition for influence, however, has threatened the stability of this otherwise relatively stable part of the country.

Al-Maharah is the second-largest governorate in Yemen but is also the least populated. Nearly half of the population (250,000 of 650,000) are internally displaced persons (IDPs) from all over the country.[9] Deteriorating basic services and dwindling resources are further increasing the number of people who need assistance. During the consultations, participants repeatedly complained that the influx of IDPs is leading to demographic changes, straining local resources, and contributing to rising tensions within the local community.

While there was no active fighting during the consultations in Al-Maharah, a government-issued circular banned meetings and crowds to curb the spread of Covid-19. This made it more difficult to engage participants across the targeted districts. Furthermore, due to the scarcity and pricing of internet connectivity, as well as low technical capacities, a team member had to travel there and organise a hybrid community dialogue conference in Al-Ghaydah.

Aden

Aden, with approximately 850,000 inhabitants, is located in the southwestern tip of Yemen on the coast of the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea. After Sana'a, it is the most politically and economically significant governorate. It is home to the Port of Aden, one of the country's main ports, and for two decades was the political capital of what was then the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen.

In March 2015, the Houthis, then allied with former President Saleh, invaded Aden weeks before President Hadi declared it the temporary capital. In July 2015, the Popular Resistance Forces, with the

[6] https://phr.org/our-work/resources/i-ripped-the-iv-out-of-my-arm-and-started-running-attacks-on-health-care-in-yemen/
[7] https://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Papers/2020_BerghofMappingLocalGovernanceYemeniGovernorates_EN.pdf
[8] https://sanaacenter.org/publications/analysis/12284
[9] https://carnegie-mec.org/2020/03/09/ar-pub-81219

support of the Saudi-led coalition, expelled the Houthis from Aden. Shortly afterwards, the interests of the IRGY camp and the southern forces demanding secession collided, leading to the official creation of the STC in 2017. The IRGY attempted to assert its authority over the STC for a short period of time before the latter took full control and pushed the IRGY out of Aden in January 2018. In 2019, Saudi Arabia facilitated reconciliation efforts between the IRGY and the STC, and the Riyadh Agreement was signed. Its provisions include the creation of a power-sharing government between president Hadi, the STC and other southern Yemeni political forces, the joint appointment of state officials in the southern governorates, and the amalgamation of both sides' military forces. Since its signing, progress on the Riyadh Agreement has stalled on multiple occasions; it remains only partially implemented.

The IRGY recently returned to Aden in the hope of completing the implementation of the agreement. However, mistrust and tensions have continued to rise between the two parties. Amid these disputes, Aden is experiencing a deterioration of services, especially electricity and water cuts, a deteriorating health sector, the spread of insecurity due to the presence of armed militias, frequent armed clashes, and economic decline.

Al-Hodeidah

Al-Hodeidah is considered one of the most important northern Yemeni governorates due to its strategic location on the coast of the Red Sea and a population of approximately 3 million. It is one of the wealthier governorates, rich in marine, livestock and agricultural resources. Although often referred to as Yemen's 'food basket', its people live in extreme poverty for a number of reasons, including financial mismanagement and heavy centralisation. Most of those who control land and resources in Al-Hodeidah are public officials appointed from elsewhere; locals see themselves as marginalised.

In October 2014, the Houthis took control of Al-Hodeidah, in part because the governorate is home to one of northern Yemen's most important seaports – which has generated revenues that have been used to finance the Houthis. Al-Hodeidah's strategic value also derives from its proximity to international shipping lanes in Bab al-Mandab – one of the most important global trade corridors. In 2018, the IRGY, supported by the Saudi-led coalition, launched a large-scale military operation to recapture Al-Hodeidah and its strategic port from the Houthis. However, after taking control of large areas along the western coastal strip, passing through the strategic Durayhimi district (the southern gateway to the city of Al-Hodeidah), the international community intervened to end the military campaign, fearing it would lead to shutting the seaport through which most aid to the country passes, and that it would exacerbate the humanitarian crisis. The Houthis and the IRGY signed the Stockholm Agreement in Sweden in December 2018, which formally ended the fighting and the IRGY military campaign, but light skirmishes and flare ups between the two forces continue at the time of writing.

The *FSO Safer*, a rusting oil storage facility off the coast of Al-Hodeidah, is another cause for major concern for the governorate and Yemen at large. The tanker, which has had little or no maintenance for years, is on the verge of leaking and causing an environmental catastrophe. Estimated to hold 1.14 million barrels of crude, a leak from the tanker could spill four times the amount of oil leaked by the Exxon *Valdez*. Yemen has no capacity to deal with such a leak, and aside from the huge environmental cost, the port through which much of the aid is coming would most likely be shuttered.

Operating in Al-Hodeidah was exceptionally difficult because the territory is highly contested. Researchers were treated with suspicion, and there were multiple checkpoints and landmines. Although the researchers took several precautions, one local team member narrowly avoided a landmine (indicative of the general difficulties encountered when traveling by car in some locations), and another was briefly detained for questioning.

Ma'rib

For the past 6 years, the centrally located governorate of Ma'rib has been the last remaining IRGY stronghold in northern Yemen. Over the course of the conflict, Ma'rib has experienced relative stability with the exception of sporadic fighting between the Houthis and the Saudi-backed coalition when the group repeatedly attempted to capture the governorate. Since January 2020, however, the Houthis have significantly intensified their efforts to capture the strategic governorate.

Ma'rib has an estimated population of over 2 million, more than half of whom are IDPs.[10] The strong tribal identity in Ma'rib has been a major factor in regulating society in the absence of effective support from the central government. Local authorities in the governorate comprise tribal leaders and officially appointed staff aligned with the IRGY. As such, it has a relatively unique and effective decentralised model of local governance bolstered by the unity of the population, tight-knit security and economic resources.[11]

Ma'rib is more self-sufficient than many other governates and has better access to basic services and resources, partly because it was spared from much of the fighting and disruption during the war. It also enjoys a degree of financial independence. Unlike other governorates, it has exclusive control over the Ma'rib branch of the Central Bank (with no oversight from Aden) and manages to retain income from oil and gas sales as well as the Al-Wadiyah border crossing.[12]

During the consultations, the Houthi assault on Ma'rib had just intensified. There were intermittent disruptions in internet connectivity, which led to operational delays and communications difficulties with the local teams and interfered with their ability to upload the raw data from the field work. Moreover, security measures were tight, and even though permits for the consultations were produced, a member of the team was interrogated (but came to no harm).

Sana'a

Sana'a has been an embattled city within Sana'a governate since the escalation of the conflict in early 2015. It has witnessed three major battles (in 2011, 2014 and 2015), and was intermittently targeted by airstrikes and other ground attacks resulting in tremendous loss of human life and widescale material damages. In September 2014, the Houthis entered Sana'a and within months gained control over most of the governorate. Historically, Sana'a has been a main destination for IDPs, many of whom left rural areas due to a lack of jobs and climate-related factors like water scarcity and droughts.[13]

[10] https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/20210726_acaps_yemen_analysis_hub_Ma'rib_scenario.pdf
[11] https://yemenlg.org/governorates/Ma'rib/
[12] https://yemenlg.org/governorates/Ma'rib/
[13] https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/11/sanaa_city_profile.pdf

According to OCHA, there are nearly 1.1 million people in need of assistance in the governorate, which constitutes approximately 80 per cent of its population.[14] The conflict has caused significant damage to health facilities; the remaining facilities have too few health workers and many patients coming from neighbouring governorates, leading to strained capacities. The closure of Sana'a airport to all commercial flights in August 2016 prevented those in need of specialised medical care from seeking assistance abroad.

The biggest challenge associated with the field work in Sana'a was the fear of arrest and interrogation. However, the team ensured a smooth flow of local consultations by securing permits ahead of time.

Al-Dhale'e

Al-Dhale'e was created after the unification of the country in May 1990. It was created by combining border districts of both former Yemeni states (North and South). However, it played an important role in balancing unity and some southern demands for secession, which began to appear more clearly after the 1994 civil war and the emergence of the Southern Movement in 2007. With a population of about 800,000 people, Al-Dhale'e has a high density and is known for its polarised local dynamics.

Historically, Al-Dhale'e has represented one corner of the triangle of military power in the South (Al-Dhale'e, Yafa, Radfan). In the past, the former President Saleh's regime was keen to use force to silence the governate and its escalating demands to secede from the North. The violent military leader, Abdullah Dabaan, exercised remarkable repression which reinforced negative attitudes towards unity. In 2015, as the Houthis advanced towards Aden, Al-Dhale'e became a target and a transit point, but they were successfully repelled towards the North early in the conflict. However, the Houthis still pose a serious threat to several areas of Al-Dhale'e, with continuing clashes and attacks in an attempt to invade the governorate again.

Security was a concern during the field work in Al-Dhale'e due to the roadblocks and proximity to clashes between the Houthis and IRGY.

Hajjah

Situated north of the capital Sana'a, Hajjah is one of the governorates most affected by the conflict. It has experienced increasing violence since 2015 due to the expansion of the Houthi movement. Though some tribes in Hajjah oppose the Houthis, the latter were able to consolidate control over large swaths of the governorate and crush pockets of resistance through military power and financial incentives provided to some tribal leaders. Hajjah is strategically important to the Houthis as it is adjacent to their main stronghold in Sa'ada, the Red Sea, and part of the coastal and strategic Al-Hodeidah governorate.

Hajjah has an estimated population of 2.1 million people, 91 per cent of whom live in rural areas.[15] Since it borders Saudi Arabia, it serves as a station for human trafficking, and is affected by the widespread smuggling of Yemenis and African refugees. Ongoing hostilities have had a major humanitarian impact; nearly half the population is in crisis according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification released in December 2019, and 28 of the province's 31 districts are in a state of

[14] https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20180120_HRP_YEMEN_Final.pdf
[15] https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/78969

emergency.[16] Crossfire between the two sides has also prevented families from travelling between districts to receive humanitarian assistance.

The field work in Hajjah was challenging due to security concerns related to the travel of the researchers and the large size of the governorate. Matters were further complicated by the scarcity of resources and internet access. Nevertheless, the local teams were able to slowly conduct consultations in six districts, the largest number of any governorate in the study.

[16] https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/IPC_Yemen_AFI_Hotspot%20Analysis_2019JulySept.pdf

Main Findings

Identifying Urgent Needs in the Short Term

The urgent needs were broadly similar in all governorates. Five main issues were identified: ending the 'national conflict' between the Saudi-led coalition and the Houthis, ending conflict at the local governorate level, identifying a roadmap for long-term peace, improving basic services, and restoring and protecting the environment (Table 2). Indeed, if there is one striking feature from the survey results, it is that eight out of nine governorates noted environmental concerns (living conditions and natural resource issues) as either their first or second priority.

The study did not seek to oversimplify the complex situation, but to assess whether there were competing, contradictory or overlapping views.[17] Perhaps unsurprisingly, across all governorates, all five issues were seen as both urgent and important. In seven of the nine governorates, ending the national conflict ranked at the top; this was considered a matter of utmost urgency by almost all participants in the consultation process. After that, the most immediate issues identified in these governorates were restoring and protecting the environment and accessing basic services. Study participants identified restoring and protecting the environment (which was interpreted to include issues related to waste management, water quality and destroyed buildings in addition to nature and natural resources) as the main priority in Ma'rib, Al-Maharah, Taiz and Aden, followed by ending the national conflict. Taiz has experienced a high intensity and duration of hostilities and destruction, yet still ranks environmental concerns highly. While ending local violence between factions was considered important, it was perceived as a lower priority than ending the national conflict or establishing a roadmap for long-term peace in all governorates.

TABLE 2. URGENT NEEDS, BY GOVERNATE

Governorate	Priority #1	%	Priority #2	%	Priority #3	%
Shabwah	Ending the main war	22.1	Environment	21.9	Improving basic services and normalising life	20.6
Taiz	Environment	20.6	Ending the main war	20.5	Improving basic services and normalising life	19.9
Al-Maharah	Environment	21.6	Ending the main war	21.4	Improving basic services and normalising life	20.7
Aden	Environment	23.3	Ending the main war	20.1	Improving basic services and normalising life	20.1

[17] The report highlights top responses rather than lengthy and complex sets of data. For many questions, a plurality (rather than a majority) expressed these opinions. Given the multifaceted nature of the conflict and context, the wide range of issues and large sample tend to result in narrow margins. This is indicative of the diversity of participant concerns and the large number of groups engaged in the process. Nonetheless, it is informative to compare differences and similarities between locations and priorities.

Al-Hodeidah	Ending the main war	21.6	Improving basic services and normalising life	20.7	Identifying a national roadmap for long-term peace	19.7
Ma'rib	Environment	21.4	Ending the main war	21.2	Improving basic services and normalising life	20.1
Sana'a	Ending the main war	23.2	Environment	22.3	Improving basic services and normalising life	20.4
Al-Dhale'e	Ending the main war	26.3	Environment	20.3	Identifying a national roadmap for long-term peace	18.9
Hajjah	Ending the main war	25	Environment	21.1	Improving basic services and normalising life	20

The focus groups and community dialogues permitted greater space for discussion, and participants identified additional issues. In all nine governorates, participants emphasized that ending the war and the associated hostilities was an urgent priority; however, there were important differences regarding which parties was perceived to be the main aggressors and the degree to which the international community should try to pressure them. The community dialogue forum in Sana'a was particularly critical of foreign interference in Yemeni affairs, even in the context of assisting peace negotiations, whereas participants in other locations preferred much greater international attention applied to warring sides and armed militias. In some cases, such as Al-Dhale'e and Shabwah, focus group and community dialogue participants wanted international actors like the UN or EU to compel the parties into a mandatory truce which could then be monitored, ideally with some form of punishment for violations.

Among the needs expressed in all governorates, access to basic rights (food, water, electricity, medicine, security and education) was widely mentioned as a pressing necessity to be addressed even before the end of the war. Participants emphasised restoring electricity supplies, as a higher death toll was being registered due to the heat. Common priorities included opening safe corridors and ensuring the freedom of movement (within and across governorates) to achieve economic recovery, and addressing the deterioration of the Yemeni currency, which is expected to impact the humanitarian crisis. These priorities were followed by facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid and ending the shelling of civilian neighbourhoods. Concerns about the humanitarian situation and basic services were particularly pronounced in discussions in Hajjah, because it is so densely populated, and in Al-Hodeidah, which was experiencing conflict at the time.

Each governorate also expressed the urgency of addressing specific issues related to its context. In Taiz, the vast majority of participants stressed the need to lift the Houthi blockade and to remove mines, end the random shelling of civilian neighbourhoods, and disarm the militias. In Shabwah and Aden, participants stressed the need to immediately resolve the conflict between the government and the STC, which they said is ripping the social fabric apart and creating further strife. Furthermore, in Aden and Al-Hodeidah, respondents unanimously called for the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement and UN resolutions. In Al-Hodeidah, participants demanded that the situation with the

Safer oil storage facility is urgently addressed, as it represents an impending environmental disaster that would be catastrophic for the governate and the country as a whole. For participants from Al-Dhale'e, Hajjah, Al-Maharah and Ma'rib, priorities included addressing the needs and eventual return of displaced persons. In the Al-Maharah interviews and focus groups, the influx of IDPs was cited as a significant source of concern due to instability fuelled by demographic changes and the inability of the local infrastructure to serve everyone's needs. In addition, Hajjah focus group and community dialogue participants were especially concerned about the conflict's impact on youth and children –in terms of both mobilisation to join the fighting and the entrenchment of sectarian or religious divisions in the next generation. Such concerns were voiced in interviews and focus groups even in Sana'a, where the more open format presumably permitted some degree of criticism of Houthi governance.

Longer-Term Priorities When the War Ends

While the distinction between urgent and longer-term priorities may seem relatively subtle, and there was indeed overlap in the framing of the questions, the goal was for respondents to imagine a future situation after the most immediate issues are dealt with. The study encouraged them to move beyond the primary need for a sustainable ceasefire to identify concerns that need to be addressed in order for peace to last in the short to medium term.

The questionnaires asked respondents to consider several areas of activity after the war stops: provision of basic services, job opportunities, reconstruction, compensation, legal guarantees to respect human rights and protect against abuse and prosecution, reform of judicial and state institutions, development of the education sector, and environmental protection and restoration. Respondents could select multiple areas and indicate the level of importance they attached to them. While the information gathered is rich and complex, the conclusions were often relatively predictable, given the severity of the ongoing conflict and the context of acute humanitarian hardship (Table 3).[18] Many issues were deemed critically important to the public at large. Providing basic services was the most urgent priority across all governorates, followed by a claim for equal job opportunities in Ma'rib, Shabwah and Al-Hodeidah, and the need to compensate those affected in Sana'a, Hajjah and Al-Dhale'e. Taiz was the only governorate in which calls to reform the judicial system and police were considered the second-most urgent priority. In Aden and Al-Maharah, the demand for basic services was followed by an emphasis on an improved education sector.

TABLE 3. LONGER-TERM PRIORITIES, BY GOVERNATE

Governorate	Priority #1	%	Priority #2	%	Priority #3	%
Shabwah	Basic services	16.2	Equal job opportunities	13.1	Compensation	12.8
Taiz	Basic services	15.3	Reform of judiciary and police institutions	13.2	Education	12.8
Al-Maharah	Basic services	12.9	Education	12.7	Equal job opportunities	12.7

[18] As in Table 2, only the top responses are presented here. Many respondents selected other options, but less frequently.

Aden	Basic services	14	Education	12.9	Equal job opportunities	12.7
Al-Hodeidah	Basic services	13.4	Equal job opportunities	12.6	Compensation	12.6
Ma’rib	Basic services	13.8	Equal job opportunities	13.1	Compensation	12.8
Sana'a	Basic services	15.6	Compensation	14.5	Education	13.2
Al-Dhale’e	Basic services	19.9	Compensation	14	Equal job opportunities	13.5
Hajjah	Basic services	16.8	Compensation	14.1	Equal job opportunities	13.6

Developing the education sector, equal job opportunities, and compensation and reconstruction were urgent and indispensable priorities in all governorates. Demands for institutional reform and reconstruction, while significant, were noticeably lower than for basic services and education.

While all the issues across the nine governorates received a high degree of attention and importance, in Al-Maharah all categories were seen as equally urgent. In Al-Dhale’e, the demand for basic services outweighed all other responses by a significant margin. In contrast to the findings on immediate short-term needs, restoring and protecting the environment was considered a less urgent priority. This warrants further examination to better assess whether the sense of urgency in responses is connected to repairing the destruction caused by the war or to broader environmental factors like the impact of climate change and environmental degradation. Providing legal guarantees for respecting human rights and providing protections against abuse and prosecution were considered equally urgent as protecting the environment.

The more open-ended field interviews, focus groups and community dialogues allowed participants to further elaborate and expand on their priorities. Across the governorates, participants in the consultation process expressed the importance of normalising life and believed that immediate attention should be paid to addressing the poor economic and living conditions, as well as paying public salaries. Concerns about the currency devaluation were shared in virtually each governorate’s community dialogue, though sometimes they were seen as an immediate priority and at other times as a longer-term one related to economic recovery and stability. In the steps towards reconciliation, participants said the focus should be on ensuring the return and safety of IDPs, prisoner releases, removing land and sea mines, and ending human rights violations, followed by large-scale reconstruction and the resumption of state-led development projects, paying special attention to improving the education sector.

Most survey and interview participants agreed that addressing people's priorities will pave the way toward successful reconciliation efforts. They stressed that implementing peace at the lower levels (local communities) would impact and gradually lead to reconciliation at the national level. Participants in most focus groups observed that insufficient attention is paid to the demands of the general public; many argued that peace and reconciliation efforts start at that level. Participants also noted the importance of building confidence between the conflicting parties to achieve peace, and rehabilitating those affected by the war psychologically and socially.

Participants also highlighted concerns that were unique to particular governorates. For instance, in Al-Hodeidah they underscored the need to address the challenging circumstances faced by fishermen; the war has forced them to cease fishing due to ongoing fighting, security restrictions and sea mines. This has had a devastating impact because fishing was previously a main source of livelihood for thousands of families; some are now starving. The disarmament of non-state armed groups was mentioned in several community dialogues, including Aden, Hajjah and Ma'rib, as one of the main challenges after a potential peace deal. As expected, the question of how to address southern demands for autonomy or secession featured prominently in discussions in the southern governorates. The approaches differed, but this question was seen as relevant to both the sustainability of future peace deals and to demands to remedy past injustices and marginalisation.

Other Peacebuilding Challenges

In addition to needs, survey respondents identified which of the seven options provided constitute the most important obstacle to peacebuilding other than war in their area. The margins between answers were small, with a maximum variance of 7 per cent between the issues selected as the most vs. least important challenges. Across the nine governorates, the challenges that were most often in the top three were lack of income, corruption of local leaders and instability/lack of security (Table 4).

TABLE 4. MAIN OBSTACLES TO PEACEBUILDING, BY GOVERNATE

Governorate	Challenge #1	%	Challenge #2	%	Challenge #3	%
Shabwah	Tribal revenge issues	15.9	Lack of sources of income	15.1	Corruption of local leaders	14.8
Taiz	Lack of sources of income	15.5	Instability/lack of security	15.3	Corruption of local leaders	15.2
Al-Maharah	Tribal revenge issues	14.5	Conflict over land	14.4	Marginalisation	14.3
Aden	Instability/lack of security	15.4	Corruption of local leaders	15.3	Conflict over land	14.8
Al-Hodeidah	Lack of sources of income	14.9	Marginalisation	14.9	Corruption of local leaders	14.4
Ma'rib	Lack of incentives to forgo arms	15.1	Lack of sources of income	14.6	Instability/lack of security	14.4
Sana'a	Lack of incentives to forgo arms	15.9	Corruption of local leaders	15.2	Instability/lack of security	14.8
Al-Dhale'e	Instability/lack of security	16.9	Lack of sources of income	16.9	Marginalisation	16.8
Hajjah	Lack of sources of income	15.4	Lack of incentives to forgo arms	14.6	Tribal revenge issues	14.6

While there was significant overlap between what different governorates considered to be challenges to peacebuilding, some stood out as unique. For instance, none of the most popular answers featured in Al-Maharah's top three challenges, which were tribal revenge, conflict over land and marginalisation. This reflects the context of the governorate: it is less directly affected by the conflict than the others, and has experienced a strong influx of IDPs and attempts at interference from

external regional actors, thereby exacerbating concerns around land and tensions related to local tribes and tribal confederations. Issues related to tribal revenge were also in the top three in Hajjah and Shabwa, which also have a stronger tribal presence. In the other governorates tribal revenge issues were deemed one of the least significant challenges of the options presented.

The results from Aden highlight the nexus between the corruption of local leaders and conflict over land in this governorate, which witnessed widespread land grabbing after the 1994 civil war, in the aftermath of the Arab Spring as well as after the post-2015 expulsion of the Houthis; corruption of individuals and institutions fuels the issue. Although the margins are quite small, the issue of conflict over land featured less prominently than expected, apart from in Aden and Al-Maharah. Marginalisation very strongly resonated as a cross-cutting issue throughout the needs mapping and consultation process, and thus features as a top three challenge to peacebuilding in Al-Maharah, Al-Hodeidah and Al-Dhale'e.

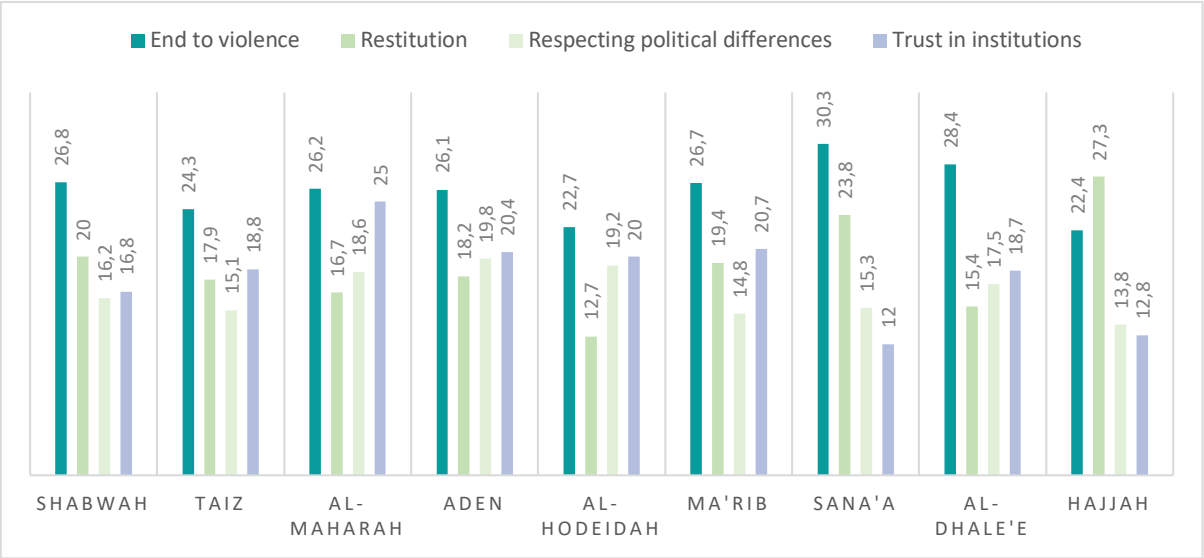
In addition, a large majority of survey respondents (70–91 per cent) strongly agreed that a peace deal between the warring factions would help improve basic services and increase opportunities for a better livelihood in the short term. In seven of the nine governorates, most respondents assessed the current quality of services as poor; they were deemed to be slightly better in Taiz and Sana'a. On several occasions, participants in focus groups and community dialogues said it was impossible to talk reconciliation 'on empty stomachs' and/or 'in the dark' (due to a lack of basic services). Combined, this shows that there are needs related to basic services, and expectations that a settlement between the warring parties will improve the provision of services. This presents an opportunity as well as a need to identify (and invest in) short-term peace dividends, which can help fulfil community expectations from the settlement and affirm that it is in their interest to stick with peacebuilding efforts and withhold support from potential spoilers.

The Meaning of Reconciliation

This initiative was inspired by a desire to explore what local reconciliation would look like in Yemen. It was informed by a hypothesis that it would mean different things in different places given the history and dynamics of the war. However, the results indicate that the perceptions about reconciliation are broadly similar in all governorates.

Respondents were offered eight ways of thinking about reconciliation, which were selected as indicators of what might be called 'thin' and 'thick' reconciliation. At the thin end of the spectrum, simply ending the violence could be seen as reconciliation, an opinion shared by 22–30 per cent of participants (see Figure 3); in all but one governorate this answer scored the highest. At the other end of the spectrum, the most demanding ('thickest') manifestations would include establishing genuine respect for political differences and trusting state institutions. Acknowledgement, restitution and remorse came in between, as did the idea that reconciliation might involve coming to terms with one's own pain and loss – ideas that often appear in various forms in transitional justice efforts. In Hajjah the primary understanding of reconciliation was restitution (27 per cent). What is intriguing and even encouraging is the spread of answers on the other ideas.

FIGURE 2. MEANING OF RECONCILIATION, TOP FOUR ANSWERS PER GOVERNATE



After ending the violence, the two most popular notions of reconciliation were building trust in state institutions – perhaps one of the most sophisticated and demanding ideas – and restitution. In Al-Maharah, building trust in institutions was only 1 per cent behind ending violence (26 vs. 25 per cent); it ranked second in Ma'rib, Al-Dhale'e, Taiz, Aden and Al-Hodeidah.

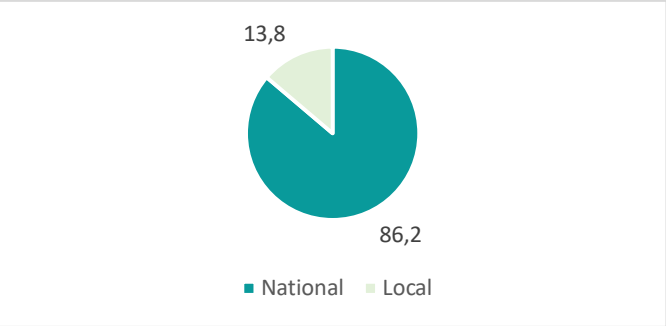
Restitution often figures prominently in concepts of reconciliation, as victims may interpret this as a tangible form of recompense. In Hajjah, restitution ranked first, and in Sana'a and Shabwah it was identified as the second-most popular idea of reconciliation. Respecting political differences ranked third in Al-Maharah, Al-Dhale'e, Hajjah, Al-Hodeidah and Aden. Most individuals will want or seek multiple approaches to reconciliation.

In considering established ideas of transitional justice and its aims, there was remarkably little appetite for the idea of reconciliation based on holding accountable those who had done wrong. In no governorate did the idea attract more than 7 per cent support. Even the notion that reconciliation might involve dealing with one's own pain and experience attracted more support in all five governorates. While relatively few people overall identified this as the preferred understanding of reconciliation (maximum of 11.6 per cent), it registered fifth out of eight options in eight of the nine governorates, above acknowledgement and remorse in each area. Al-Dhale'e is the exception, where acknowledgment scored higher. While much more analysis is needed, these figures coincide with a growing perception of the need to take post-war mental health and trauma more seriously. Interviewees in Al-Maharah suggested creating programmes and a project to deal with the psychological effects of the war that could also encourage reconciliation among all segments of society. When given the opportunity to discuss in a more open format, like the community dialogues and focus groups, participants in most governorates distinguished between intra-Yemeni reconciliation and external reconciliation with and between regional actors.

In all nine governorates, a strong majority (79–92 per cent) favoured national-scale reconciliation rather than local only (Figure 4). For instance, many interviewees from Sana'a leaned towards national reconciliation (as opposed to local) and believed this would lead to or at least support regional and local reconciliation. In some ways contrasting this finding, interviewees from Shabwah affiliated with

the STC considered southern independence a prerequisite to reconciliation. Similarly, some interviewees from Al-Dhale'e reiterated that there is no returning to a united Yemen, and maintained that part of the recourse should be a political agreement that gives the 'South' its independence. Interviewees in Shabwah, Aden and Al-Maharah, although recognising the need for context-specific solutions, indicated an interest in other countries' experiences of reconciliation.

FIGURE 3. NATIONAL VS. LOCAL RECONCILIATION



NOTE: PERCENTAGES ARE BASED ON ANSWERS TO SURVEY Q26: 'ARE YOU MORE INTERESTED IN ACHIEVING RECONCILIATION ON A NATIONAL SCALE IN ALL OF YEMEN OR ACHIEVING IT ON A LOCAL SCALE ONLY?'

Feelings of political and economic marginalisation led focus groups in Shabwah and community dialogues in Al-Maharah to emphasise the importance of fair representation and involving all political forces in the path to reconciliation. Similarly, interviewees from Hajjah, who consider their governorate to be one of the most marginalised, proposed addressing this issue by ensuring participation, representation, and sharing local and national resources. Sana'a interviewees expressed a great willingness to participate in a comprehensive national reconciliation process in the hope of ending the discrimination and regionalism fuelled by the war. According to the focus groups there, racial discrimination has spread throughout the governorate, leading to the marginalisation and exclusion of those who are not Hashemites, and the replacement of public officials with unqualified Houthi elements.

Despite the tribal nature of some parts of Yemeni society, most respondents in roughly half of the governates (five of nine) did not believe traditional/local methods of reconciliation were sufficient to deal with human rights violations and move beyond the conflict; in none of the nine governorates did the majority consider them more than partly sufficient. Interviewees in Aden and Al-Hodeidah did not support the adoption of traditional methods of reconciliation. In Shabwah and Al-Maharah, interviewees cited tribal revenge and other expressions of tribalism as hindering reconciliation. In Al-Maharah and Ma'rib, interviewees indicated that tribes, through the sheikhs and social dignitaries, could still play a role in reconciliation and even in addressing human rights violations.

Interviewees from Hajjah expected several factors to impede peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts including tribal revenge, partisan fanaticism, continuation of human rights violations, and the Houthis' rejection of all political solutions. In the Sana'a focus groups, 'war merchants' were listed as possible spoilers of reconciliation efforts due to the risk that they seek to preserve their own interests and keep the war economy going. They also highlighted that the long war further complicates matters as grievances persist within communities. The focus groups in Sana'a and Al-Dhale'e both criticised the focus of the United Nations and the international community on the leaders of the parties to the conflict and their lack of attention to the demands of the general public who are most affected by the

war. According to most of the participants from Al-Dhale'e, the best way to achieve reconciliation and consolidate the peace process would be to identify the needs of those affected by the war and include their demands and views in the peace process.

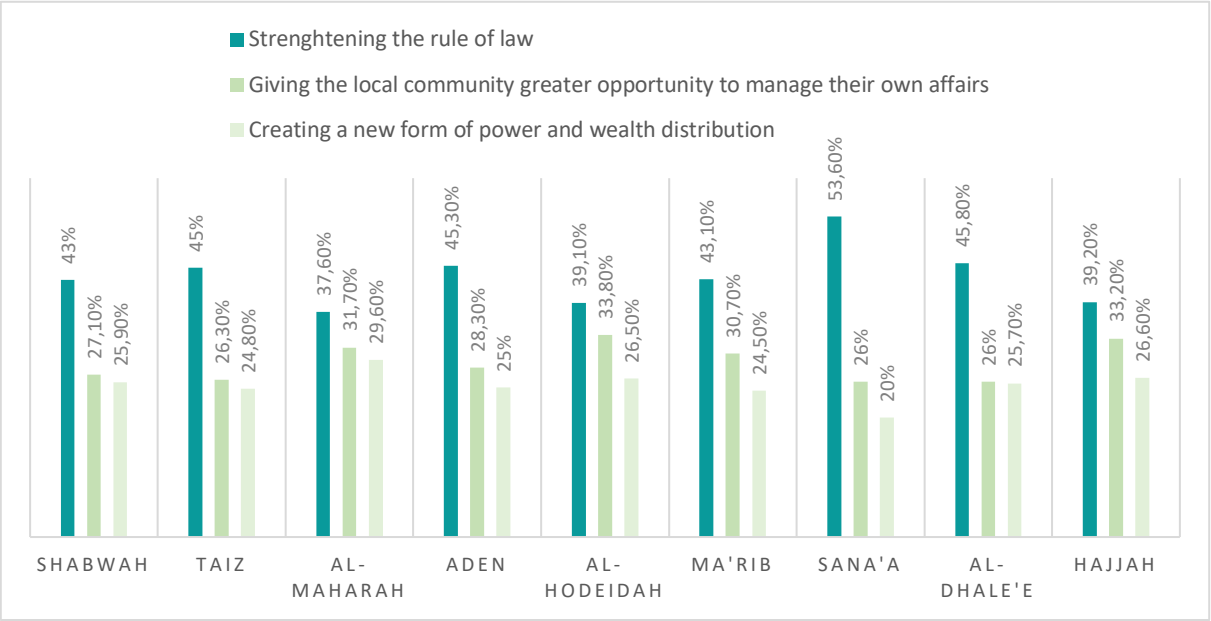
Perceptions of the Quality of the Rule of Law

In addition to asking about current and future priorities, the surveys focused on a range of inter-connected issues: the meaning of reconciliation; questions of compensation, accountability and justice; the state of the rule of law; and key state institutions.

Perhaps the least surprising finding in all but one governorate was in response to the question about the quality of the rule of law in the respondent's area: more than 40 per cent gave the lowest grade possible (poor) and in none of these governorates did more than 25 per cent indicate any degree of approval of or satisfaction with the quality of the rule of law (Figure 2). In Aden, Shabwah, Hajjah and Al-Dhale'e, approximately 60 per cent gave the lowest grade. The crisis of confidence in the quality of the rule of law in these governorates is profound. The findings in Ma'rib contrasted starkly with the other eight governorates: over 70 per cent assessed the quality of the rule of law as good, very good or excellent. Still, at least 50 per cent of survey respondents across seven of the governorates, including 67 per cent in Shabwah and 66 per cent in Al-Dhale'e, perceive the judiciary as the best vehicle for achieving justice. In Sana'a, only 38 per cent of respondents displayed the same level of trust in the judiciary.

The lack of rule of law has had a knock-on effect on other facets of Yemenis' lives. This was strongly reflected in the survey results related to political and/or economic marginalisation. Survey respondents in all nine governorates felt there was political and/or economic marginalisation on a regional basis. In seven governorates, over three-quarters of respondents shared this option; in Aden and Al-Dhale'e it was as high as 88 per cent. Somewhat lower numbers were reported in Al-Hodeidah (68 per cent) and Ma'rib (59 per cent). According to the survey respondents, strengthening the rule of law would be the primary means of addressing political and economic marginalisation across all nine governorates. In Sana'a, the majority of respondents considered this the preferred means.

FIGURE 4. WAYS TO ADDRESS POLITICAL OR ECONOMIC MARGINALISATION, TOP THREE ANSWERS PER GOVERNATE



Focus group participants from Al-Dhale'e also highlighted the problems of marginalisation, exclusion, corruption and regionalism, which they said are the main root causes for the tragedies and injustices experienced by the South in general and Al-Dhale'e in particular since the 1990 unification and 1994 war that followed.

During the interviews, focus group discussions and community dialogues, study participants were able to convey in more depth how the poor quality of the rule of law had affected their governorates. In Aden, for instance, focus group participants shed light on serious issues pertaining to land and property looting within the governorate. Participants in a community dialogue conference in Al-Hodeidah maintained that law enforcement is key to ensuring equal opportunities for leadership positions, jobs and distribution of wealth amongst the different factions there. Focus group participants from Sana'a suggested concentrating on citizens' rights and needs as a first step towards achieving peace. Enhancing law enforcement and the overall quality of the rule of law in Yemen, as well as reducing corruption, were thus seen as factors that would immensely help improve overall conditions across all governorates.

Justice and Accountability

In countries emerging from war, there is often a strong demand for justice among those who have suffered directly. There is also often a chasm between the demand for justice and the perceptions among those demanding it about the quality of the rule of law and the state's judicial institutions. One way of understanding this gap is that the pressing and urgent demand for justice does not mean that people expect it will happen. This seems to be part of the picture that emerges on views about accountability.

Although tribal traditions remain strong in some parts of Yemen, there is little or no support across all nine governorates for the idea that human rights violations should be addressed through traditional customs and traditions, even in governorates with a historically strong tribal tradition and presence such as Al-Maharah and Ma'rib. Participants in the focus groups in Ma'rib, however, highlighted that it is possible to benefit from tribal customs and the assistance of sheikhs to support the achievement of reconciliation and justice, but that priority should be given to building and reinforcing state institutions and the judiciary to achieve accountability in an impartial and depoliticised manner.

In all governorates, respondents considered the judiciary to be the primary avenue to achieve justice. In Shabwah, Aden, Al-Maharah and Al-Dhale'e over 60 per cent of participants indicated that normal criminal courts should handle any violations. The role of the criminal justice system in Taiz, Al-Hodeidah, Ma'rib and Hajjah was viewed with slightly less enthusiasm, however; around 50 per cent endorsed this option. In Sana'a only 38 per cent of respondents consider the judiciary the preferred vehicle for justice; community accountability was a close second with the support of 32 per cent of respondents.

The idea of community (rather than traditional tribal) accountability processes attracted significant interest in five other governates besides Sana'a (Shabwah, Al-Maharah, Aden, Al-Hodeidah and Ma'rib); in Al-Hodeidah, almost 30 per cent indicated that this was the most appropriate way to address violations. In Al-Maharah, Aden and Ma'rib around 20 per cent of respondents favoured this idea. Overall, there was relatively little appetite for the idea of establishing special committees to address serious violations. Only in Al-Hodeidah did more than a quarter of survey respondents

demonstrate significant interest in this idea. Establishing special committees was the second-most preferred option in Taiz (19 per cent) and Al-Dhale'e (13 per cent) with quite low levels of support.

On the one hand, a large portion of interviewees in Shabwah, Al-Maharah and Aden supported holding violators accountable for their actions, but did not believe Yemen's current judicial system is capable of doing so. Sana'a focus group participants highlighted that the judiciary is being used as a political tool in the current conflict. They called for fair and transparent trials, as well as the release of all detainees, abductees and prisoners. On the other hand, some focus group participants from Shabwah and interviewees from Aden seemed to fear that holding the violators accountable might prolong the war and complicate the reconciliation process. There was no consensus among interview, focus group and community dialogue participants across the different governorates on what type of institution or body should address the violations.

Interview, focus group and community dialogue participants across governorates expressed an interest in transitional justice, specifying the need for context-specific mechanisms. Focus group participants from Al-Dhale'e, for instance, believed Yemen requires transitional justice to move from a state of war to peace, but emphasised that its shape and design should be agreed upon after consulting with all Yemeni factions, and that its success requires international supervision of its implementation. In Taiz, interviewees perceived transitional justice as a prerequisite for reconciliation and a tool to prevent future violations. Focus group and community dialogue participants in Aden even pointed out that a failure to implement transitional justice mechanisms in previous conflicts, especially in the South, has led to the current lack of sustainable peace and failed reconciliation. According to focus group participants from Ma'rib, implementing transitional justice mechanisms will be necessary in order for any proposed political peace agreement and initiatives to be accepted by the broader society, especially among citizens affected by the war.

Focus group participants in Al-Maharah believed there was a long way to go before any transitional justice mechanisms can be implemented. Focus group participants from Aden similarly noted that it would be necessary to reform state institutions to create a suitable environment for their implementation. There was a wide variety of understandings and suggestions in discussions of what transitional justice could entail. In both the focus groups in Taiz and the community dialogues in Al-Maharah, participants suggested that those who are convicted of violations should be barred from holding public office. Community dialogue participants in Aden and focus group participants in Ma'rib and Sana'a suggested creating special and independent committees to investigate the facts. Community dialogue participants in Aden also highlighted the need for advocacy on human rights issues, and supported the creation of national mechanisms offering redress for victims of the war and reparations for those affected. In Sana'a and Hajjah, community dialogue participants stipulated that transitional justice is only possible after trust in the rule of law has been established.

Identifying those Responsible for Violations

Respondents clearly hold the Houthis responsible for rights violations during the conflict in seven out of nine governorates (Ma'rib, Al-Dhale'e, Shabwah, Al-Hodeidah, Al-Maharah, Taiz and Aden). In Sana'a and Hajjah, the Saudi-led coalition was identified as the lead, followed by the Houthis (Table 5).

TABLE 5. RESPONSIBLE PARTIES FOR VIOLATIONS, BY GOVERNATE

Governorate	Houthis	STC	Saudi-led coalition	Unidentified militias	Terrorist organisations	Government forces	Other
Shabwah	**34.1**	6.3	9	12.9	13.6	18.8	5.3
Taiz	**41.9**	14.8	13.6	13.3	5.5	7.8	3.1
Al-Maharah	**38.9**	10	21	11	12.1	4.8	2.2
Aden	**43.7**	11.3	11.2	12.8	9.9	8	3
Al-Hodeidah	**47.7**	2.2	32.1	5.1	1.2	1.7	10.1
Ma'rib	**60.2**	22.2	7.3	4.5	2.9	1.9	0.9
Sana'a	22.4	8.9	**33.6**	9.2	7.1	15.3	3.5
Al-Dhale'e	**41.5**	8.7	13.5	9.7	10.4	13.3	2.8
Hajjah	30.1	6	**33.7**	12.6	5.3	11.7	0.6

During the consultations, Houthi assaults on Ma'rib intensified; in this governorate, the highest number of respondents (60 per cent) identified the Houthis as the primary perpetrators. Also in Ma'rib, the STC ranked second (22 per cent) and was named more often than in any other governorate. The surveys revealed that the lowest rate at which the Houthis were seen as perpetrators was in Sana'a (22 per cent). In Al-Hodeidah, almost 48 per cent identified the Houthis as responsible; the Saudi-led coalition followed with a significant 32 per cent. Al-Hodeidah stands out from the other governorates in this regard as a conflict ostensibly between these two sides.

The Saudi-led coalition was also seen as a significant contributor to rights violations, in second place (21 per cent) after the Houthis (39 per cent) in Al-Maharah; significant but much less attribution was spread among a number of other actors including unidentified militias, terrorist groups, and the STC. This is interesting, as the Houthis never reached Al-Maharah, and the governorate generally has not witnessed large-scale battles, but it seems the war has impacted local residents and influenced perceptions of which party could be the main perpetrator of human rights violations.

While the Houthis were identified as the leading offender in seven governorates by plurality, the issue is not simple. Although the respondents named individual groups of perpetrators, many of these are/were to varying degrees part of the same alliance and/or in the same political and military camp. For instance, although the Houthis were fought off and expelled from Shabwah, over 27 per cent of the participants surveyed from the governate attributed responsibility for violations to government forces and the Saudi-led coalition – slightly less than those identifying the Houthis as responsible. In Taiz, Aden and Al-Dhale'e, the additional actors named besides the Houthis were the STC, government forces, the Saudi-led coalition, terrorist organisations and militias. In all three governorates, the combined numbers for those four groups were greater than the total attributing responsibility to the Houthis. In short, while it may seem logical to expect people to name a single actor as the main perpetrator in certain areas, many people believe several different actors are responsible for violations and atrocities.

It is a complex picture, and one in which people seek to make clear allegations about who is responsible, and for what. The responses of the interviewees from Hajjah, for instance, on who they

believe is responsible for violations seemed to vary according to their affiliation and bias towards various parties to the conflict. IRGY supporters held the Houthis responsible for certain violations, while those belonging to the Houthi group held the Saudi-led coalition and IRGY who launched an 'aggression' in the governorate responsible for the same violations.

Across governorates, people held unidentified militias and armed groups responsible for some violations. This is a consequence of the splintering effect of the war, whereby the absence of a central government has led to largely ungoverned spaces that provide a perfect ecosystem for the proliferation of armed groups and militias in addition to the main conflict parties.

Approximately half of the participants in the surveys administered in Al-Dhale'e, Ma'rib and Sana'a responded that they, members of their family, or people they know were subjected to human rights violations, with even higher rates in Hajjah (68.5 per cent) and Taiz (58.1 per cent). These governorates were hit hard by the conflict and continue to experience varying degrees of active fighting.

A significant number of survey respondents across governorates (72–86 per cent) did not report human rights violations. In Taiz, interviewees cited the frequency of such violations, which they said were committed by all parties to the conflict (not just the Houthis), as one of the reasons why they did not report them. In Shabwah, interviewees specifically cited mistrust of institutions as the reason for not reporting violations. In Sana'a, Hajjah and Al-Dhale'e many interviewees mentioned that they were content with documenting and sharing information through (social) media. Despite the lack of reporting, however, most interviewees across the nine governorates agreed that it is important to document such violations in order to prevent their recurrence and help enhance the prospects for peace and reconciliation. Yet some interviewees, in Aden for instance, cautioned that documenting violations would hamper peace efforts and prevent Yemenis from 'turning a page on the past'. Several interviewees in Ma'rib and Al-Dhale'e suggested the contrary. Again, this reveals a complex picture that depends on the local context.

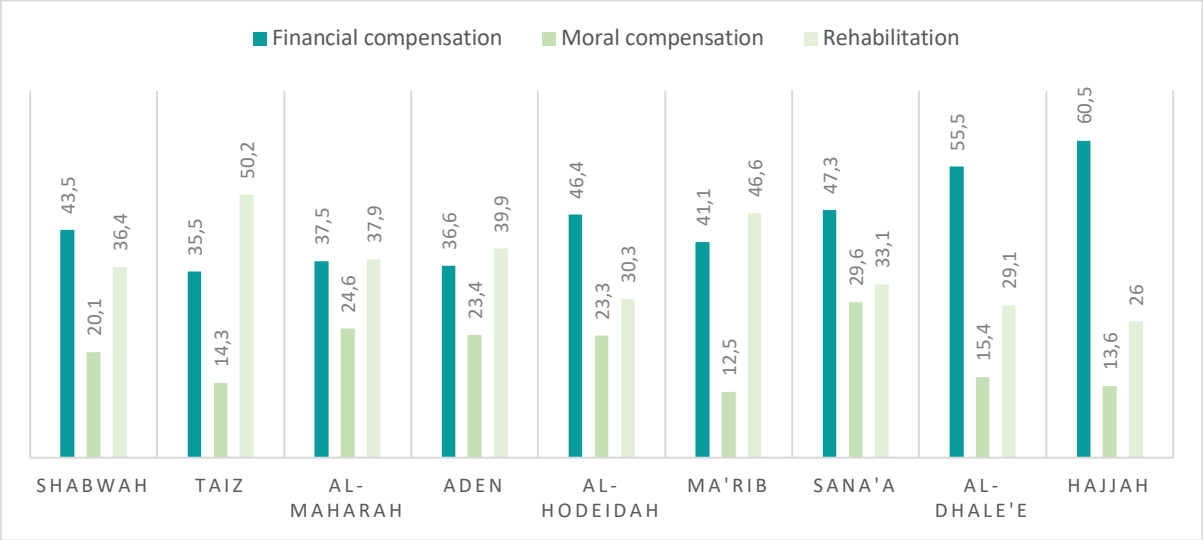
Compensation

As mentioned above, the idea of restitution as a central element of reconciliation is relatively strong. Based on historical experience, even if people do not frame it as a prerequisite for reconciliation, it is always one of the most significant demands of those who have suffered during war. How do they get their land, farms and businesses back? To what extent, if any, can relatives be compensated for the loss of loved ones? How can those seriously injured or chronically ill receive some form of tangible recognition? If securing a meaningful peace in the short to medium term requires identifying deliverable peace dividends, then restitution and compensation almost certainly must figure in those plans.

Survey respondents were given a choice of three types of compensation: financial compensation, moral compensation (such as an apology), and rehabilitation (psychological or community rehabilitation). In five out of nine governorates (Shabwah, Al-Hodeidah, Sana'a, Hajjah and Al-Dhale'e) the largest number of survey respondents opted for financial compensation. In Hajjah and Al-Dhale'e, more than half of the respondents selected this option. In the remaining four governorates (Taiz, Al-Maharah, Aden and Ma'rib), psychological or community rehabilitation was preferred. However, only in Taiz did half of the respondents choose this option. While the idea of moral compensation did not compare with either financial or rehabilitative measures in any of the governorates, 13–36 per cent

of the respondents in each governorate identified this as their preferred type of compensation. In Shabwah, it ranked second.

FIGURE 5. TYPE OF COMPENSATION, TOP THREE ANSWERS PER GOVERNATE



NOTE: PERCENTAGES BASED ON ANSWERS TO SURVEY Q22: 'WHAT KIND OF COMPENSATION WOULD YOU SUGGEST?'

Interviewees in Aden were roughly equally divided over relying on compensation to achieve reconciliation. Opponents believed that compensation cannot restore the lives of those killed and insisted on punishing the perpetrators, but the majority believed that compensation can still play a role and prioritised financial and moral compensation (for example in the form of acknowledgment and apology).

In general, the manner in which participants engaged with the idea of compensation indicates that it requires further examination, including to understand how it relates to the prospects for different types of reconciliation. It is not uncommon for participants in such surveys and consultations to indicate that financial compensation is highly desirable because it is seen to have a direct positive impact, especially in the context of conflict and crises. However, the degree to which moral rehabilitation was emphasised in some of the governorates, as seen in Figure 5, makes it important to investigate what it means concretely – for both individuals and communities. This could, for instance, include mental health programmes for individuals or initiatives to reintegrate prisoners or combatants, including children, into communities.

Annex: List of Questions per Consultation Tool (in English)

Surveys

1. Sex
2. Age
3. Marital Status

4.a. Number of direct family members (children and parents)

4.b. Does your direct family rely mostly on you for income?

5. Level of Education
6. Profession
7. Monthly Income Level

8.a. Which governorate are you originally from?

8.b. If you moved from another governorate/directorate check any/all boxes explaining why

9. Political Affiliation
10. What are the sources that you rely on to get news and information?
11. What priorities do you see as most important today?
12. What would be the best mechanism to guarantee rights of citizens?
13. If and when the war stops, what are the urgent priorities – from your point of view – which should be emphasised and focused on?
14. Which impartial entities, countries or organisations, both local and international, would you welcome to support reconciliation and peace efforts in Yemen?
15. Do you feel that your rights and that of your family are respected in the current status quo?

16.a. Have you, a member of your family, or someone you know been subjected to a human rights violation?

16.b. If the answer is 'Yes', what kind of violation was this?

17.a. Which party do you suspect was the perpetrator of a violation that you, a member of your family or someone you know suffered?

17.b. Have you reported this violation?

17.c. If the answer is 'Yes', what was the authority that you informed?

18. From your perspective, how important are these notions as basic human needs in your own community?
19. In your area, what challenges hinder peace-building other than war?
20. In your opinion, what is the solution for overcoming human rights violations and turning the page of the past?
21. What is the best way to achieve justice?
22. What kind of compensation would you suggest?
23. Do you feel that there is political or economic marginalisation based on regional basis?
24. How is inequality and marginalisation best addressed in your opinion?
25. What does reconciliation mean to you? Please check any/all that apply.
26. Are you more interested in achieving reconciliation on a national scale in all of Yemen or achieving it on a local scale only?
27. Do you think that reconciliation will guarantee social cohesion between the Yemenis?
28. What are the best ways to achieve reconciliation?

29.a. Have you heard or read about experiences of countries where reconciliation succeeded?

29.b. If answered Yes above, where and what have you have you heard?

29.c. Do you think they may succeed in Yemen?

30.a. Are traditional/local methods of reconciliation sufficient to deal with human rights violations and turn the page?

30.b. Which kinds?

31. Do you believe that a peace deal between the warring factions will pave road to improving basic services and increase opportunities for a better livelihood in the short-term?

32. What is your assessment of the quality of services (municipal, electricity, waste management etc.) in your area?
33. What is your assessment of the availability of clean water in your area?
34. What is your assessment of the quality of educational services in your area?
35. What is your assessment of the quality of health services in your area?
36. What is your assessment of the level of freedoms in your area?
37. What is your assessment of the quality of the rule of law in your area?
38. Are you satisfied with the situation in general at present?
39. Are you satisfied with internet availability and ease of access to information?
40. According to your own experience, how easy is it to travel across Yemen?

Interviews

1. In your opinion, what are the most important people's priorities at the present time? In Yemen as a whole, and in your directorate/governorate?
2. In your opinion, what would be the most urgent people's priorities if and when the war stops? In Yemen as a whole, and in your directorate/governorate?
3. Which countries, entities or organisations would you welcome to support reconciliation and peace efforts in Yemen and why?
4. From your own point of view, why is it important to addressing the peoples' priorities in your area and would that help reconciliation efforts?
5. What are the types of human rights violations which are most urgent to address that occurred in Yemen, and specifically in your region during the current war?
6. Have you, or any member of your family, been affected by these violations?
7. In your judgement, who are groups or entities responsible for the human rights violations?
8. Have the violations been documented? If so, how and to which entity were they reported?
9. Do you think that the Yemeni people need to keep a record of the violations and that they should be remembered by public?
10. Would keeping a record of violations help the prospects of peace?
11. In your opinion, what are the most important human rights that need to be guarded in the context of Yemen?
12. What does reconciliation mean to you?
13. In your area, in addition to the war, what are the other challenges hindering peacebuilding and reconciliation?
14. Can you tell us a little bit about your work and how it may be currently contributing to peace and security in your area versus how would you like it to contribute to peace and security in the future?
15. There is a lot of talk about region-based political and economic marginalisation, do you think this is true? And if there was, how would you about in addressing it?
16. Would you personally be more interested in regional or national reconciliation, and why?
17. In your opinion, what are the best ways to achieve reconciliation locally, and nationally?
18. Have you heard or read about experiences of countries where reconciliation succeeded? If yes, can you tell us a little bit about it and if same can be applied in Yemen?
19. Can traditional/local methods of reconciliation address human rights violations and conflicts? Which kind of methods and which kinds of violations?
20. In your view, what would be the best solution to turn the page on the past and move forward?
21. Which is more important do you think, justice and accountability, or national reconciliation? Can you please elaborate why?
22. Does pursuing justice and accountability vs. national reconciliation require different actions? Can you please explain?
23. Do you support holding violators accountable for their actions? If so, how do you envision holding them accountable and what would be the mechanisms and frameworks to achieve that?

24. Do you believe that the judicial system is capable of prosecuting violators and holding them accountable?
25. Is it possible to rely on compensation to achieve reconciliation, and what kind of compensation would you propose?
26. What is your understanding of transitional justice, and do you think it can be relied upon in Yemen to achieve peace and ensure that past violations are not repeated?
27. In your opinion, what are the needs for the people in your area?
28. What is your assessment of the way those needs are being addressed?

Focus Groups

1. What is the priority that you consider most important at the present time, and what would be the immediate priorities when and if the war ends? How would you address that priority?
2. What are the most important human rights that you consider very important for the society and the citizen?
3. In your district/governorate, what are the challenges that hinder peace building other than the war?
4. There is a lot of talk about political and economic marginalisation based on a regional basis. Do you think this is correct, and how can this be addressed and the rebuilding of confidence among Yemenis?
5. What are the best ways to achieve local reconciliation and consolidate the peace process and how would it be different from a national approach?
6. Based on what you know of national reconciliation initiatives; how would you envision that being applied to and working in Yemen?
7. What are the mechanisms and frameworks that can be adopted to achieve justice and accountability?
8. Are there tribal leaders, individuals, sheikhs, or local entities, who are able to attain justice and accountability?
9. What do you think would be necessary to achieve reconciliation?
10. What is your understanding of transitional justice?

Community Dialogues

1. What is the priority that you consider most important at the present time, and what would be the immediate priorities when and if the war ends?
2. In your district/governorate, what are the challenges that hinder peace building?
3. There is a lot of talk about political and economic marginalisation based on a regional basis. Do you think this is correct about your governorate, and how can this be addressed and the rebuilding of confidence among Yemenis?
4. What do you think would be necessary to achieve reconciliation?
5. What are the mechanisms and frameworks that can be adopted to achieve justice and accountability?
6. How should transitional justice look in Yemen?

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