Evaluation of the project “Strengthening the role of women in peacebuilding through natural resources management at the community level in the rural areas of the governorates of Sana’a and Lahaj in Yemen”
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Project code: UNJP/YEM/038/PBF
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The FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) would like to thank all those who contributed to this evaluation, led by Ms Mireia Cano as Principal Consultant and Wameedh Shakir as National Consultant, with Júlia Palik as Research Assistant. The evaluation was managed by Mr Omar Awabdeh from OED.

The evaluation was carried out with the invaluable assistance of FAO and International Organization for Migration (IOM) Yemen offices staff. Special acknowledgments go to Dr Walid Saleh, Chief Technical Adviser, as well as Ms Yelena Gyulkhandanyan, IOM Grants Officer.

The evaluation benefited from the inputs of many other stakeholders, including government officers, members of the water user associations and people from the community and organizations in the locations visited. Their contributions were critical to the team’s work and are deeply appreciated.
**Acronyms and abbreviations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CFW</td>
<td>Cash for work</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRC</td>
<td>Conflict Resolution Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil society organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organization for Migration</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>PBF</td>
<td>Peacebuilding Fund</td>
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<td>SBP</td>
<td>Sana’a Basin Project</td>
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<td>WUA</td>
<td>Water user association</td>
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<td>WWUG</td>
<td>Women water users group</td>
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</table>
Maps of Yemen

Figure 1: Project target areas in the North

Source: Evaluation team, modified to comply with United Nations (UN), 2004.

Figure 2: Project target areas in the South

Source: Evaluation team, modified to comply with United Nations (UN), 2004.
Executive summary

1. The project ‘Strengthening the Role Of Women In Peacebuilding Through Natural Resources Management at The Community Level in the Rural Areas of the Governorates of Sana’a and Lahaj in Yemen’ (UNJP/YEM/038/PBF) was funded by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) with a budget of USD 2 000 000. The project was implemented jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) between January 2018 and June 2019.

2. Yemen is one of the Arab world’s poorest nations and one of the most water-stressed countries in the world. The conflict that starts a few years has damaged much of the country’s critical water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure, exacerbating the problem. The project produced a good analysis of the different water conflicts in Sana’a and Lahaj and measures to address them in line with traditional resolution mechanisms.

3. The focus of the PBF project design and implementation on local peace prospects is highly relevant in Yemen. The overall conflict shows no sign of resolution, and while peacebuilding efforts happen at national level, communities in the rural areas remain key to the repair of the social fabric and the improvement of their own livelihoods for a sustainable and lasting peace.

4. Women have traditionally played a role in water conflict resolution in rural areas. The most transformative change the project has achieved is the institutionalization of this role through the WUAs so that women gain further acceptance within their communities. FAO and IOM should have better gender analyses and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems in place, and should insert the project in longer term gender equality programming that can provide a framework to sustain its gains.

5. FAO and IOM should further explore the catalytic effect of this project in sustaining local peace prospects, particularly with an enhanced role for women in conflict resolution, and should build a necessary link to the national peacebuilding efforts. This could be done through a cascading programming, i.e. two-three PBF projects to be designed and implemented sequentially so they can have a better chance to contribute to higher order outcomes. At global level, PBF can include natural resource governance in their strategic plan by devising a standalone Outcome on natural resource governance.

6. Youth were not explicitly targeted in conflict resolution activities but they represented the majority of the beneficiaries of cash for work (CFW) activities. Although the project aimed at decreasing the number of youth joining the armed groups, the attribution rate has not been established except for anecdotal evidence. FAO and IOM should have a targeted approach if they are to work on youth, peace and security. They should also do a thorough assessment of the socioeconomic impacts of CFW on the Yemen context before rolling about a programme-wide CFW or cash transfer activities in Yemen. Moreover, they should carry out an analysis of the causes of CFW delays in payment and dissatisfaction of
beneficiaries to ensure all beneficiaries have been paid by the end of the project, preventing the problem from reoccurring in future projects.

7. The successful resolution of water conflicts and the restoration of water infrastructure through the CFW component had a direct effect on increased crop production and income of farmers. The measures in place to promote the sustainability of the project and the continuation of improved agriculture once the project has come to an end rely on the increased capacity of WUAs to use their conflict resolution skills, maintain the sites and find further support.
1. **Introduction**

1. This is the final evaluation of the project ‘Strengthening the Role Of Women In Peacebuilding Through Natural Resources Management at the Community Level in the Rural Areas of the Governorates of Sana’a and Lahaj in Yemen’ (UNJP/YEM/038/PBF). The project was funded by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) with a total budget of USD 2 000 000; it started in January 2018 and ended on 31 June 2019. It was implemented jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and aimed at supporting women and youth’s participation at the communal level using land and water conflict resolution as vehicle for improving the prospects of local peace. The project focused on creating discussion platforms, and providing training and support to women and youth groups in the rural areas.

1.1 **Purpose of the evaluation**

2. This final evaluation serves a dual purpose of accountability and learning. The terms of reference (TOR) required this evaluation to document lessons, identify good practices and challenges that can inform the design and implementation of follow-up projects in the context of improving the prospects for local peace, conflict resolution and contribute to the longer term goal of enhanced social cohesion.

1.2 **Intended users**

3. The evaluation targets the following users: FAO, IOM, PBF, project implementing partners and international partners. This is the first time FAO acts as the lead agency in a PBF project to be evaluated by the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED). Therefore findings and lessons learned may inform future PBF proposals as well as other projects in Yemen and relevant contexts, particularly focusing on the links between natural resource management and conflict resolution, gender equality and peacebuilding.

1.3 **Scope and objective of the evaluation**

4. The evaluation focuses on women’s role in improving the prospects for local peace and conflict resolution. The main objective is to assess the extent to which the project helped rural communities to better manage the natural resources (land and water), strengthen the participation of women in conflict resolution mechanisms at the local communities level, with a longer term goal of enhanced social cohesion.
The evaluation is confined to the medium-term objective of strengthening the participation of women in conflict resolution mechanisms at the local communities level. The evaluation covered the key activities undertaken by both FAO and IOM from January 2018 to June 2019 (18 months). It also assesses the project coordination mechanisms, monitoring and communication, as well as the linkages with the broader response operations of FAO and IOM in Yemen, within the UN Strategic Framework for Yemen 2017-2019.

The evaluation is guided by the PBF Global Results Framework, particularly the area of Conflict Prevention/Management and to a certain degree the Employment for the cash-for-work component (CFW), under Priority Area II (Promote coexistence and peaceful resolution of conflict).

The evaluation takes into account FAO’s corporate policy priorities as stated in the Corporate Framework to support sustainable peace in the context of the 2030 Agenda, which aims to transform FAO’s engagements in conflict-affected situations into deliberately focused, strategic and evidence-based approaches that support sustainable peace.

The evaluation questions are presented in Box 1.

Box 1: Evaluation questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation questions (EQ)</th>
<th>Design and approach</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EQ1. To what extent are conflict resolution pathways and underlying assumptions integrated in the design and implementation of the project?</td>
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<tr>
<td>EQ2. Did the project foster collaboration among key stakeholders and implementing partners? Including the linkages with the broader response operations of FAO and IOM in Yemen?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peacebuilding and conflict resolution</td>
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<tr>
<td>EQ3. To what extent did the project reduce conflict over water resources in the targeted areas?</td>
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<td>EQ4. To what extent did the project change the role and position of women to reduce conflict over water resources in the targeted areas?</td>
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<tr>
<td>EQ5. To what extent did the project leverage youth participation in community-led agriculture activities?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Water governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>EQ6. What effect did the restoration of critical infrastructure have on improving water accessibility and use?</td>
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1.4 Methodology

The evaluation was conducted between June and September 2019. The evaluation process adhered to the principles outlined in the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluations in the UN System, and aligned with the OED’s Manual on evaluation guidelines and practices.

The evaluation team was composed of a Principal Consultant and a National Consultant, with the support of a Research Assistant. The team worked in close collaboration with the Evaluation Manager at OED and was also supported by the FAO and IOM offices in Yemen. Field facilitation was provided by the Project Management Unit (PMU).
11. The evaluation took place in three phases: i) an inception phase between June and July; ii) a data collection and analysis phase in July and August; and iii) a reporting and validation phase in October.

12. The evaluation used a set of qualifiers/filters to assess the performance of activities and the contribution of results:
   i. catalysing programming opportunities for further peacebuilding work;
   ii. adapting or mainstreaming peacebuilding actions and approaches in other projects;
   iii. creating community-based networks that serve as platforms for facilitating other peacebuilding work;
   iv. promoting innovative forms of peacebuilding action;
   v. promoting increased inclusiveness of stakeholders (youth and women), increased commitment of stakeholders and an increasingly shared unified framework among stakeholders for peacebuilding;
   vi. assessing stakeholder’s capacity to respond in a timely manner to political opportunities.

13. The primary data collection phase included individual semi-structured interviews with FAO and IOM staff. For the field level, the evaluation team visited eight villages in the North of Yemen and seven villages in the South of Yemen. The evaluation team did a stakeholder mapping and identified three groups of key informants. Interview protocols for the different groups were developed accordingly:
   i. Group 1: Water user associations (WUAs) members of the Board, Women’s groups and Conflict Resolution Committees or local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) if no WUA present.
   ii. Group 2: Youth beneficiaries of the cash for work (CFW) component.
   iii. Group 3: Outer communities (not direct beneficiaries: older people, youth, local authorities, extension workers, sheiks etc.).


1.5 Limitations

15. The evaluation was limited by a lack of project monitoring data collected regularly during the project, and evidence to support many of the project results. This was particularly noticeable as for data to report on key impacts expected from the project on the following: an increase in water for irrigation; improvement in livelihoods/income; perceptions on acceptance of the role of women in leading conflict resolution activities; perceptions of an increase in social cohesions; and reduction in number of young men joining the militia/armed groups. Statements made in the progress reports did not necessarily provide clarity on the links between activities and outcomes.

16. Security in Yemen remains a serious challenge. The Principal Consultant was unable to visit Yemen and therefore was dependent on the fieldwork conducted by the National Consultant. Thorough reports by the National Consultant and regular communication with
the Principal Consultant served to partly compensate. Also, smooth field coordination by both FAO and IOM ensured that there were no security incidents during the field visits, despite the fact that the visits in the South coincided with violent attacks and airstrikes in Aden. There were two sites the National Consultant could not visit: i) Bait Hather, due to payment delays that caused a dispute between the implementing partner, SAM NGO, and the community, so the interviews took place in Sana’a; and ii) Sa’wan Village, where two members of the WUA Board were in jail for accusing the Houthi authorities of stealing the project water pipes. After FAO intervened through WUA and the tribal leaders, the two members were released.

1.6 Structure of the report

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 presents the background and context of the project. Findings are found in Chapter 3, based on evaluation questions. Chapter 4 presents lessons learned, followed by Conclusions and recommendations in Chapter 5.
2. **Background and context of the project**

2.1 **Description of the context**

18. Yemen has witnessed a decline in the humanitarian and livelihood conditions following the socio-political unrest and armed conflict that erupted in 2015. The current civil war in Yemen is waged between multiple actors, including the Government of Yemen, the Houthi rebels (Ansar Allah) and various armed groups. According to the Displacement Tracking Matrix of the International Organization for Migration, 80 percent of the population is in need of protection or assistance and 3.6 million people are internally displaced. The conflict amplified the already existing and protracted humanitarian crisis characterized by years of widespread poverty, economic stagnation, poor governance, weak rule of law, female illiteracy, and ongoing instability. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report (December 2018) noted that over 20 million Yemenis (67 percent of the population) would be facing severe food insecurity in the absence of humanitarian aid, with more than 238,000 people in 45 districts at risk of famine.

19. Apart from increasing widespread food insecurity, armed conflict has also damaged much of the country’s critical water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure, exacerbating the underlying water scarcity dilemma Yemen has long faced. Water scarcity is both a consequence and a cause of conflict. As stated in the Context Analysis in support of the PBF project, the conflict is a driver of disputes and conflicts. Sana’a University found that between 70 and 80 percent of all rural conflicts in Yemen are associated with water. A recent internal Interior Ministry report estimated some 4,000 violent deaths annually due to water and land related disputes. Conflict reduction specialists working for the Yemeni quasi-governmental Social Fund for Development (SFD) described an area in Sana’a governorate where land and water conflicts were resulting in around two armed violence deaths per week, including while conflict reduction training was being carried out. In addition to mortality and morbidity, violent land disputes - and associated revenge norms - result in potentially productive land remaining unused, the destruction of valuable crops, and the delay or cancellation of new investments. Water disputes can lead to water supplies being impeded or even cut.

20. Social conflict dynamics, together with land and water conflicts, are complex phenomena involving long-standing customs and impacted by wide-ranging socioeconomic and political changes. Some of the key dynamics affecting the likelihood and escalation of land and water conflicts include a widening ‘governance gap’ between the state and customary regulation, collective responsibility and revenge norms, small arms proliferation, and the existence of powerful vested interests.

21. Conflict resolution in Yemen is carried out in multiple forms, i.e. by formal state institutions and tribal customary law. Conflict resolution processes are taking place in at least two different channels: the formal legal system (although we cannot talk about such a structure since 2015) and tribal customary law (urf). In the latter, the most important building blocks
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22. Gender relations in Yemen are shaped by diverse religious, cultural, social and political traditions across the regions, between rural and urban areas, and between different tribes and generations (CARE, 2015; Gressmann, 2016). The North has been traditionally more conservative than the South (CARE, 2015: 1). Historically women have generally had less power in society than men and have been the primary caregivers at the household level (CARE, 2015; Gressmann, 2016; Heinze, 2016). Yemen ranks last out of the 144 countries included in the 2016 World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Index, a position it has held for the last ten years. Similarly, in the 2019 Equal Measures 2030 Gender Index Yemen ranks 126th out of 129 countries. The current conflict has at least two important consequences on gender issues: first, women and girls have been disproportionately affected by the conflict in terms of displacement, gender-based violence, early marriage, and lack of access to education and healthcare as well as humanitarian assistance due to high levels of illiteracy, among others; second, women gained an unprecedented momentum to be included in political processes during and after the 2011 protests, with the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) and the constitution drafting process: women were included in the Technical Preparatory Committee for the NDC. The NDC consisted of 565 members, amongst whom 164 (29 percent) were women. Women had their independent delegation (along with youth and civil society). The political delegations to the NDC were mandated to include a 30 percent quota of women. The most important outcomes were: 30 percent quota for women in all state authorities; raising the legal age of marriage to 18; guaranteeing full and equal legal status for women; and provisions forbidding discrimination against women in public service employment. Yet, NDC results have not been implemented due to conflict renewal and escalation. The 2018 peace talks in Sweden included only one woman representative, Rana Ghanem (Assistant Secretary of Yemen’s Nasser Organization and member of the delegation of the Government of Yemen) and the resulting Stockholm Agreement has no reference to women. Engaging with women, youth and civil society organizations (CSOs) remains a core area of work for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen (OSESGY).

23. The Yemeni youth also played a central role in the 2011 political demonstrations and they have been represented in the National Dialogue Conference. Nevertheless, the current conflict also affects this population group. Empirical studies have repeatedly showed that countries with a high proportion of young males (“youth bulges”)¹ are more prone to

¹ Youth bulges should be measured by evaluating the population ages 15–29 as a fraction of total adult population.
conflict and domestic violence. (e.g.: Urdal, 2006; Collier *et. al*, 2006; Goldstein, 2001). The impact of youth bulges is more significant when economic opportunities are lacking, and thus a large share of the population is left unemployed and “available” for recruitment by insurgent groups (Urdal 2006). Currently, Yemen meets both conditions: approximately 21 percent of the country’s population (28.6 million people) is aged between 15 and 24 (CIA, 2019) and youth unemployment accounts for 50 percent.

24. Economic hardship resulting from unemployment and youth bulge have been further exacerbated by the massive devaluation of the Yemeni riyal and the non-payment of the salary of approximately 1.2 million public sector employees since 2016 (World Bank 2018:1). In the same year, the Central Bank of Yemen has been relocated from Sana’a to Aden (Harden & Knights, 2019; MSF, 2017; OCHA, 2018).

2.2 **Description of the project**

25. The project ‘Strengthening the Role of Women in Peacebuilding through Natural Resources Management at the Community Level in the Rural Areas of the Governorates of Sana’a and Lahaj in Yemen’ (UNJP/YEM/038/PBF) builds on two main pillars from the FAO Yemen Sana’a Basin Project (SBP) funded by the Netherlands Embassy in Sana’a basin between 2015 and 2018. The initial evaluation found that by promoting modern irrigation systems and improved, climate-smart cropping practices, SBP was relevant to the many farmers seeking alternatives to their current cropping systems based on accessing increasingly expensive groundwater. With the support of the SBP project, WUAs were established (8-20 farmers practicing rainfed agriculture). The evaluation concluded that the WUAs were integral in guiding their members to adopt new and improved irrigation and cropping practices in their farming systems, and reduce their groundwater needs. Moreover, women were integrated, but not institutionalized, into these governance structures and decision-making processes for the future development plans of their communities. The two pillars are the 38 WUAs built by the project and the successful resolution of the 17-year dispute over the Al-Malakah Dam described below:
Capitalizing on the SBP results, FAO and IOM submitted a proposal to the PBF. FAO was responsible for the overall implementation of the project in close partnership with IOM and local authorities. IOM supported the cash for work, and the procurement of assets and items needed to reach the rehabilitation works identified by the conflict resolution bodies as well as by the women associations.

The project aimed at supporting three outcomes:

i. **Outcome 1**: Reducing conflict over water resources should lead to the increase of water for irrigation, improving the communal livelihoods that promote peacebuilding among communities.

ii. **Outcome 2**: Support gender-responsive community reform efforts to empower gender equality and equity.

iii. **Outcome 3**: Enhance community confidence building/social cohesion, increase economic returns and employment opportunities by reducing the number of young men joining the militia, and/or terrorist groups.

The outputs of the project were:

i. **Output 1.1**: Land and water conflict in targeted areas is reduced.

ii. **Output 1.2**: Widening ‘governance gap’ between the state and customary regulation, collective responsibility and revenge norms in targeted areas is reduced.

iii. **Output 1.3**: Local Community Conflict Resolution bodies and mechanisms in targeted rural communities are strengthened.

iv. **Output 2.1**: Women water users groups (WWUGs) are more confident in their abilities to resolve conflict over water Resources.

v. **Output 2.2**: Communities are more accepting of the role of women in taking lead in resolving conflict.

vi. **Output 2.3**: Communities confidence in women is increased.

vii. **Output 3.1**: Terraces, *wadi* banks protection and soil erosion control measures are improved.
viii. Output 3.2: Traditional water harvesting systems (underground cisterns and open pits in wadi beds) are rehabilitated.

ix. Output 3.3: Availability of water in the targeted communities is increased, leading to a reduction in conflict over water.

29. The project's theory of change (TOC) established that conflicts over water contribute to a vicious circle that both erodes cross-communal relations and creates barriers to farming. Furthermore, these conflicts are compelling farmers into local militias and extremist groups because of the lack of livelihoods options, which further erodes communal relations/social cohesion. Reducing or removing these disputes should enable farmers to maintain their livelihoods and bolster social cohesion. Due to their more neutral role in society (derived in part from their historic exclusion from political or decision-making power, thus not identifying them as a threat to male power), women are accepted as more honest brokers in local disputes and are better able to negotiate small-scale settlements. The target groups were then established as women groups, youth and the wider rural local communities (FAO Project Proposal).

30. At the start, the project team carried out consultations in both Sana’a and Lahaj to identify the most pressing water-related conflicts in the targeted communities, through group discussions with the parties in conflict and the affected people. As a result, the community analysed 14 water-related conflicts (seven in Sana’a and seven in Lahaj) and resolutions to the conflict were debated. To document the resolution, a tribal decree for each of the sites was drafted, signed and sealed by the parties and endorsed by the local councils. The project technical team along with WUAs designed the agreed upon engineered solution, drafted the Bill of Quantity and signed off letters of agreement to support the implementation of the pact between the WUAs – or civil society organizations in the absence of WUAs - and FAO in Sana’a, IOM in Lahaj. The agreed water infrastructure was then built through the CFW component of the project – the first of its kind for FAO in Yemen, managed by the WUA and supervised by FAO engineers.
3. Findings

31. The evaluation findings are presented in response to the main evaluation questions, based on evidence obtained from analysed and triangulated data from relevant sources. Gender is addressed not only as a cross-cutting issue but also as a main topic for the project, and where possible other cross-cutting issues such as human rights, environment, climate change and partnerships are addressed under the evaluation questions.

EQ1: To what extent are conflict resolution pathways and underlying assumptions integrated in the design and implementation of the project?

32. The project TOC mentioned above misses a series of ‘if/then’ statements that describe the outcomes that will result from the project and account for underlying assumptions and risks. Therefore this evaluation report focuses on the series of conflict resolution pathways and underlying assumptions described in the project proposal: first, the attention to water conflicts and how resolution mechanisms can lead not only to access to water but also to further cooperation among local communities; second, the focus on women’s coping mechanisms, resilience and ability to carve out spaces of agency – hence contradicting the predominant portrayal of Yemeni women as passive victims; and third, the role of the youth and how generating employment opportunities may improve their livelihoods and deter them from leaving their lands and joining the parties in conflict.

Finding 1. The project was the first PBF project to be led by FAO and constituted a breakthrough for FAO and IOM work in promoting local peace prospects. It proved instrumental to the second generation of PBF proposals, which now count with stronger conflict analysis and theory of changes.

33. The conflict assessment and gender analysis described below would then provide further elements to inform project implementation. The Assessment of Conflicts over Water Resources was prepared in June 2018, six months after the project commencement date, to assess the cause and nature of conflicts over water resources. The study surveyed the representatives of 20 WUA in Sana’a, Amanat Alisimah and Lahaj governorates to identify the frequency, key parties, nature and root causes of conflicts, the effect of water conflicts on local communities, the role and history of WUAs in conflict resolution as well as women’s roles (supplemented by a gender analysis referred to below). The assessment was late and not very comprehensive but it proved instrumental for the second generation of PBF’s proposals – like PBF II – which feature a stronger conflict analysis, stemmed from the increased capacity of FAO on conflict analysis and learning: they include a series of ‘if/then’ statements, a description of the context and its drivers, a stakeholder analysis as well as an analysis of local conflict lines. This serves as a baseline of the intervention area’s context.
Findings

An endline assessment of conflicts was prepared in August 2019 and surveyed representatives of WUAs, WWUGs, CFW beneficiaries and community leaders in the targeted areas within Sana’a and Amanat Alasimah governorates only.

34. Towards the last year of the project, a gender analysis was carried out together with the conflict assessment. The study provides some relevant information about women and men’s role in harvesting, distribution of water tasks and conflict resolution. It also provides sex-disaggregated data for production and reproduction roles in Sana’a and Lahaj, albeit limited and with no analysis or explanation on how these results will inform project activities.

Finding 2. The project was ambitious in terms of its design, it described higher levels of pathways and took into account local drivers of conflict and peace, but missed the “middle” i.e. what short changes need to take place to pivot the prospects of local peace. Nevertheless, the conceptual framework behind the project demonstrates a successful new model.

35. Progress on the implementation of the project was reported to PBF through two progress reports, the first in June 2018 and the second in November 2018. However, the progress reports focused on activities and didn’t include sex- and age-disaggregated data in the reports to show how many women and men were actually involved in the implementation; neither did it provide more details on the impact of the new associations and the new agreements made in terms of increasing women’s access to water resources, as a result of the preliminary conflict resolution.

36. The new approach/model is successful to contribute to the overall ongoing peacebuilding processes in Yemen despite an aspiring design that stipulated a change to social cohesion and detained youth from joining the war parties; a weak TOC, conflict assessment; gender analysis and project progress data, the resolution of water conflicts at the local level, and the broader communal natural recourse sharing and management. The project justifies this new approach by arguing that while most of the efforts of the international community and donors are focused on the overall conflict, which at this stage show little to no sign of resolution, deeper chronic conflicts continue to exacerbate the social fabric of the country at the communities level, yet a stable country at the level of the rural communities can strongly contribute to lasting solution for a viable peace. The evaluation questions below explore this in further detail.

EQ2: Did the project foster collaboration among key stakeholders and implementing partners? Including the linkages with the broader response operations of FAO and IOM in Yemen?

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2 A vivid illustration of the lack of progress at the national level conflict resolution was the most recent fragmentation of the conflict in August 2019 coinciding with one of the field missions for this evaluation when the relatively stable Aden was overtaken by the Southern Transitional Council.
Finding 3. The partnership between FAO and IOM for this project started with a low level of engagement from the part of IOM but ended up with a satisfactory collaboration, proven by a renewed partnership in subsequent PBF proposals. In Yemen, the project aligned with the broader operations of FAO and IOM as well as the United Nations Country Team Humanitarian Plus priorities. Beyond Yemen, the project partially aligned with FAO’s Corporate Framework to support sustainable peace in the context of the 2030 Agenda and IOM’s global Transition and Recovery approach.

37. The project was endorsed by the national government through the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MAI) in Aden, as well as the Houthi’s MAI in Sana’a and the National Authority for the Management and Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Recovery (NAMCHA). FAO and IOM as project co-implementing partners held regular meetings with the MAI to inform on project progress.

38. The partnership between FAO as the lead agency and IOM as implementing partner was based on FAO being responsible for the overall coordination of the project in close partnership with IOM and local authorities, while field implementation was geographically divided between FAO in Sana’a and IOM in Lahaj. The geographical split was determined by the operational presence of each agency, whereby FAO operates mainly in the North from the Sana’a head office, and IOM has a sub-office in the South (Aden) and has operational reach in Lahaj. Nevertheless, at the start of the project, IOM had a low level of engagement with project activities, as it was primarily responsible for field activity implementation according to the work plan. As a result, and in line with the project document, FAO took over community mobilization and sensitization activities at the start of the project in both the North and the South, which included conducting assessments and forming the WUAs based on their experience with the previous SBP project. The progress reports present activities without separating them by implementing agency so it is only through interviews with FAO and IOM staff that the evaluation has been able to establish the level of collaboration between co-implementing partners. While FAO led the community mobilization and sensitization activities in the inception phase, IOM delegated dedicated staff to the project in Sana’a and Aden/Lahaj, and recruited a Project Coordinator/Grants Manager in Sana’a to support direct project implementation in the field. Proof that the partnership was satisfactory is the renewed collaboration for subsequent PBF proposals (PBF II has already been approved and PBF III has been submitted with supplementary funding from the Japanese Embassy in Yemen).

39. In response to the conflict, severe economic decline and collapsing essential services, FAO in Yemen concentrated its efforts on humanitarian emergency with the Plan of Action – Strengthening Resilient Agricultural Livelihoods (2018-2020). The project aligns with the three pillars of the Plan of Action: Pillar 1 on emergency support to the most vulnerable rural and peri-urban households, particularly regarding the cash for work component; Pillar 2 on support to the sustainable restoration and diversification of agricultural livelihoods and agri-food systems; and Pillar 3 on improved coordination of planning, programming and support for food security, nutrition and agricultural livelihoods.
40. Published in 2018 when the project was already under way, the project partially integrates the main tenets of FAO’s Corporate Framework to support sustainable peace in the context of the 2030 Agenda. The Framework aims at guiding the Organization in carrying out its mandate in its areas of competence and comparative advantage, i.e. food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture, towards a more deliberate and transformative impact on sustaining peace. Specifically, the Framework aims to transform FAO’s engagements in conflict-affected situations into deliberately focused, strategic and evidence-based approaches that support sustainable peace.

41. The project is part of IOM Community Stabilization interventions in Yemen aimed at building local capacity to restore service provision and communal assets that meet the needs of local populations in a sustainable manner. Through Community Stabilization interventions, IOM also aims to mitigate factors that lead to instability such as conflict, low government capacity to address needs, and lack of livelihood opportunities that lead to negative coping means. At the time of writing this report IOM Yemen is in the process of assessing local contexts, needs, drivers of instability as well as factors contributing to effective recovery, which will lead to developing an overall operational strategy as well as a Community Stabilization strategy for Yemen.

42. The project was implemented in complementarity with IOM humanitarian WASH and food security operations in Lahaj. As part of project complementarity, IOM used alternative funding to rehabilitate the main water gate for the channel that feeds into the channels of the six WUAs supported through the project, which further increased access to water for PBF project beneficiaries. Furthermore, the project aligned with IOM’s geographic priorities in Yemen, which include locations with large numbers of displaced persons and host communities with acute needs. Lahaj is a strategic location for IOM interventions as the governorate maintains high numbers of internally displaced persons and returnees – 69,492 and 79,470 respectively (Yemen Area Assessment, Round 37, March 2019). Lahaj is also on a migration route and an important location for migrant response.

43. At global level, the project aligns with IOM Transition and Recovery approach (Stabilization and Recovery work stream) aimed at (re)establishing conducive conditions for social and economic recovery by contributing to the restoration of basic rights (in the project, water being a basic right under the Yemeni Water Law) and promoting social cohesion, improved livelihoods and service delivery. Programmes are based on the rationale that contributions to stability will reduce the risks of recurring crises, further displacement, irregular migration pressures and/or lay foundations conducive to long-term development and resilience to destabilizing influences in the future. In 2018, IOM had 129 active stabilization projects worldwide across 43 different countries.

44. The resolution of water conflicts addressed by this project fits within the wider UN Strategic Framework for Yemen 2017-2019. During the Consultative Meetings for Yemen in Larnaca (2015) the United Nations and other international actors were requested to broaden their assistance from purely humanitarian relief and to focus more on priorities that deal with
basic social services, economic and social resilience, security and peacebuilding. It is with this in mind that the United Nations Country Team in Yemen developed a Strategic Framework that seeks to respond to the Humanitarian Plus priorities in a strategic and coordinated manner. Its goal is stated as “to mitigate the impact of the current conflict on the social and economic conditions in Yemen, and on the capacity of state institutions while contributing to ongoing peacebuilding efforts”.

EQ3: To what extent did the project reduce conflict over water resources in the targeted areas?

Finding 4. The project missed a precise definition of conflict but designed relevant tools for the conflict assessment process and delivered successful trainings to the gender-balanced Conflict Resolution Committees (CRCs) of the WUAs in Sana’a and Lahaj, therefore producing a good analysis of the different water conflicts in the North and in the South and measures to address them in line with traditional resolution mechanisms.

45. Based on the 5W Conflict Analysis Matrix designed by Search for Common Ground, FAO adapted a Guidance tool for the conflict assessment process. The objectives of the conflict assessment were the following: i) understand the evolution and the dynamics of the conflicts; ii) identify the entry points to resolve the water-related conflict from the technical aspect; and iii) ensure FAO/IOM and partners adopt the Do-No-Harm approach in their intervention. The WUAs and in their absence the CSOs were asked to form a CRC consisting of a team of four persons (two women and two men) to be in charge of collecting data about the existing conflicts in the area. They would hold conflict assessment meetings using the mentioned tool with male and female key stakeholders in the communities to identify the current conflict situation in the targeted areas, the most pressing water-related conflicts and their exact locations as well as the conflict parties (including primary, secondary and third parties) with their interests and needs. The CRC’s would then share the information with FAO and meet with the water engineers to propose solutions for each identified conflict, only to be validated in further meetings with the key stakeholders, WUAs/CSOs and to be included in a conflict assessment report as accepted by the parties.

46. Two training sessions for CRCs took place in 2019 (one in Sana’a and one in Adan) with a total of 20 men and 23 women from the CRCs, plus a female representative from the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation and a representatives from Al-Malakah WUA. A third person represented the youth (people between the age of 15 and 24). The trainings had a participatory approach and included five modules on the following: Theoretical background/Introductions; Understanding Conflict and Styles of Conflict Management; Conflict Resolution models and introduction to conflict-sensitive approach; Communication techniques and Gender; and Do-No-Harm Approach. The Al-Malakah dam success story was represented by four women who led the initiative to solve that conflict. The evaluation found good evidence in the participants knowledge about conflict resolution model and different styles of conflict management was noticeable.

47. Nevertheless, challenges were reported in relation to female participation. The mixed gender workshop might be one of the reason of the low participation of women in the
discussions, especially being the first workshop training women had ever attended, unlike the male participants who have been more exposed to trainings and conflict-resolution. Even though the trainer tried to engage female participants in the discussions and exercises, this did not work with some of the female participants. The evaluation team found that some of WUAs were not serious in nominating the female participants for the training and the CRCs, as they were two very young female participants newly graduated from secondary school. A gap in the M&E methodology for this project is that all indicators are quantitative, i.e. measuring the success of women’s inclusion in conflict resolution by providing the percentage of WWUGs trained and not providing any qualitative data on the satisfaction with the training, the appropriateness of the methodology or the effectiveness of female participants using the techniques learned from the workshop in real life. This raises an important challenge for this evaluation in assessing the quality of women’s participation in trainings, conflict resolution and CFW activities beyond numbers and quotas, an issue that is highlighted below in Question 4.

48. The project documents include a matrix of the selected 14 conflicts with a brief description of the nature of the conflict, the proposed solution, the beneficiaries and the budget. In the absence of a precise definition of conflict the project uses a broad category including conflicts of different levels (between farmers, villages, men, women or between women and men, etc.) and different intensity (from a verbal dispute to the use of weapons). These different types of conflict provide different entry points and opportunities for the CRCs and require the project to analyse them. For example women can directly mediate conflict between women, yet they assume more of an indirect/bridge-builder role when mediating conflict between men.

49. The project worked on these conflicts following traditional community-based dispute resolution mechanisms. These mechanisms are an effective and efficient means of conflict resolution in Yemen to resolve water-related disputes, but the project identified several issues that have weakened them and therefore require assistance: i) the absence of effective water irrigation systems due to poor maintenance and lack of functioning state services; ii) population growth, including ill-planned displacement in certain areas with inefficient sanitation systems and the consequent sewage outflow to the water streams, or simply lack of water for the more remote residents; iii) conflict insensitive interventions by different actors of water-related projects provoking conflict in peaceful communities; and iv) increasing water scarcity leading to, for example, changing the depth of the wells.

50. The conflict assessment revealed several differences in the nature of water conflicts in the North and the South, requiring the CRCs to adapt their measures accordingly. In the North most conflicts (frequently with the use of weapons) arose over the use of water from dams or water canals, leading to Sheiks banning any use. Based on beneficiary interviews, women had to walk long distances to find alternative sources of ground water from wells. The interviews also revealed some potentially harmful practices of the Sheiks being the key party to the facilitation of conflict resolution processes in the North: the first refers to the inequalities in access to conflict resolution since Sheiks often ask the parties to deposit a
valuable (i.e. jewellery) to ensure their commitment to finding a solution, and even if valuables are returned once a solution is found the poorest might not have any valuable to deposit in the first place; the second is that often Sheiks move to Sana’a and no longer reside in their villages, potentially delaying or leaving a vacuum on the resolution of conflicts.

51. In the South conflicts between upstream and downstream communities were less violent due to strong kinship networks between farmers, but the line of authority was less clear since more parties were involved in the resolution including local authorities, police, agricultural cooperatives, etc.

Finding 5. The endline assessment, key informant interviews and the validation of case studies by the evaluation team show that the WUAs had a positive role and targeted water conflicts were all effectively reduced. Despite current peaceful coexistence, evidence of increased social cohesion and sustainability of conflict resolution remains anecdotal.

52. Both FAO and IOM prepared a series of case studies describing the conflict in the different locations for the North and the South respectively and the successful resolution measures; these were validated by the evaluation team. The key informant interviews also testify to the success in the reduction of water conflicts, and the endline assessment of conflicts highlights that the objective of reducing the water conflicts in the targeted area was achieved. Further to the baseline study in the past 12 months, water conflicts recorded is less than 5 in each district in both the governorate of Sana’a and Amanat Alasimah; and based on the endline study, the water conflict was reduced by 53 percent (0 percent during the baseline). Almost all survey responses indicate that FAO activities with local community initiative had helped reduce the number of water conflicts (Endline assessment: 8).

53. The evaluation found the mechanism introduced by the project for the use of water from dams and canals is referred to as *Marqum Kbeli*, which envisages equal share of ground water among groups of neighbouring landowners. These are supervised by an elected person based on an agreement accepted by local communities and described as fair and efficient. Another proof of its efficiency is that it worked as a catalyst for other communities to seek FAO assistance (tribes from outside the geographic project locations contacted FAO to intervene in the areas to resolve outstanding conflicts over their water resources).

54. The evaluation found that water resources in the target areas within Sana’a and Amanat Alasimah are managed by WUAs, reactivated and supported by FAO. In the South, key informants explained that the WUAs established in 2003 by the World Bank were not functioning and were reactivated by the project. One unanswered question concerns the integration of daily wagers in the WUA in the South. Members of this group do not own land and are still perceived as the descendants of the former slaves, therefore marginalized and extremely poor.

55. Key informant interviews confirmed that communities were now peaceful, and few even described relationships as excellent. In some cases, interviewees explained that they have
signed, adhered to and implemented reconciliation agreements. Nevertheless, the project indicators did not provide any qualitative information on potential changes in the level of peace prospects that would have aroused from the resolution of sometimes decade-long water conflicts, and contributed to community level stability. In the South, the evaluation found evidence on the trust component of local peace. Informants said that they used WUA to resolve their conflicts instead of directly approaching the sheiks.

56. The evaluation team corroborated the measure that project staff were asked about regarding the sustainability of conflict resolution in the areas of intervention. After the end of the project they mentioned the following measures they had put in place: the creation of lasting water infrastructure; the provision of tools for maintenance; the skills gained by the CRCs; and most importantly parties understanding of the benefits of the lack of conflict and the resulting improved access to water. FAO and IOM continue to support some WUAs through other projects and they also mentioned that the WUAs are now better equipped to benefit from projects by other international organizations.

**EQ4: To what extent did the project change the role and position of women to reduce conflict over water resources in the targeted areas?**

**Finding 6.** The contextual differences between Sana’a and Lahaj and the role of women in project interventions play an important role in agriculture. Women have traditionally been involved in indirect ways in conflict resolution.

57. The project operated within the specific contextual differences on gender roles and dynamics in the North and the South, partly described by the Gender Analysis with data on the differences in productive and reproductive activities of men and women in Sana’a and Lahaj as well as the specific challenges of women’s participation in decision-making in the WUAs in Lahaj. When assessing the communities readiness to accept women as agents of change, the North had the advantage of counting with the success story of the Al-Malakah dam. The Al-Malakah WUA women took the lead in the consultative meetings to promote women’s role in conflict resolution in the newly targeted communities. The first progress report states that while men showed some resistance in the beginning, Al-Malakah women demonstrated strong leadership and communication skills that succeeded in gaining their trust.

58. The North also counted with the WUAs established by the SBP, where the Facilitation Manual for WUAs Establishment in Sana’a Basin developed by FAO and approved by the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation explicitly mentions that a gender balance modality shall be fully respected and addressed ensuring that women and youth are well represented in all forms, starting from the programme staffing and facilitators selection; and within the preparatory/planning teams, farmer groups, WUAs general assemblies and boards of management. Since the WUAs in the South had not been revitalized after being created by a World Bank project in 2003, one of the first steps in the PBF project in Aden was to reformat them using the WUA Facilitation Manual.
Finding 7. The most transformative change the project has achieved is the institutionalisation of women’s role in the resolution of water conflicts through the WUAs so that they gain acceptance within their communities. Nevertheless, for a sustained gain on gender transformative results the project would have benefited from a more solid gender analysis and M&E system within a longer-term gender equality programming both within FAO and IOM.

59. The PBF project established the WWUGs and set a quota of 30 percent of women on the WUA Boards, selecting two women and two men to be part of the Conflict Resolution Committee in every WUA. This is the most transformative change the project has achieved: institutionalizing the role of women in the resolution of water conflicts through the WUAs. The role of women is not new; what is new is the institutionalization of this role in the WUA, requiring their formal approval of board decisions and their formal participation in conflict resolution trainings and processes afterwards. The evaluation team found that the institutionalization of the WWUG and CRC function and composition is accepted by the local communities and has the possibility to be sustained.

60. Being new means it is not free from challenges: i) one challenge is in ensuring the systematic achievement of the 30 percent quota. According to the second progress report, 18 WUAs had reached the quota by November 2018, but the evaluation team did not receive any further data on whether these numbers changed during the project, and interviews in the South pointed to less women acting as board members in the South; ii) a second challenge is in measuring the quality of women’s participation in the Board and whether this translates in further confidence in themselves, since the project indicators do not appropriately measure this. It is only partly compensated by the series of communication materials (including two videos, case studies and project photos) featuring empowered women board members. Examples of tensions were shared by project staff mentioning that women board members would call them when they were forced to sign something they did not agree with, and FAO would need to intervene; iii) a third challenge involves the disaggregation of women in conflict resolution since it became clear that only women in higher status – either educated or farm/landowners – were selected into the WUA CRCs. This might lead to/enhance horizontal inequalities, but it might also reduce project effectiveness by excluding some key players in conflict resolution, like the women daily wagers in the South who due to their lower status have access to the men and traditionally play a role in conflict resolution.

61. The project’s goal to empower women as key stakeholders in water conflict resolutions fits within FAO and IOM’s respective gender policies and work globally and in Yemen. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that the project interacts nor benefits from the accumulated gendered data, and analysis and experience from other projects. What is missing to respond to the challenges above is inserting the project in longer-term gender equality programming that can provide a framework to sustain its gains.
Finding 8. With a clear contribution to the Special Envoy’s Initiative, the catalytic effect of this project in sustaining local peace prospects particularly with an enhanced role for women in conflict resolution remains to be further explored and a necessary link is to be built to the national peacebuilding efforts.

62. The project proposal describes how under the leadership of Special Envoy (SE) Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, the United Nations has adopted an incremental and flexible strategy to seek confidence-building measures, secure credible agreements and their effective implementation, build consensus on the parameters for a comprehensive ceasefire, and return to political negotiations for the resumption of an orderly and peaceful political process. It describes how the SE initiative also targets Structures for Informal Local Governance, whereby in the absence of government, localities have developed their own structure for security and some service delivery. While these present a significant risk, they demonstrate that localities have the capacities to support localized ceasefire and temporary governance arrangements. Also, the SE focuses on the tradition and culture of dialogue, mediation and non-violent conflict resolution, as in the Yemeni society there are a number of recognized and accepted systems for mediating dispute. Whilst these have been undermined in recent years, they remain a basis from which local agreements may be initiated and managed. The achievements of this project in terms of the innovative approach of promoting local peace prospects (Finding 1), the effectiveness of the conflict resolution mechanisms (Finding 5) and institutionalizing the role of women in conflict resolution (Finding 7) clearly contribute to the SE initiative. Apart from the extra funds that PBF II and III have raised from other donors, as stated above, at the time of writing this report there are no particular longer-term engagements by development organizations nor funding mechanisms available to address local conflict over land and water in Yemen, let alone with an enhanced role for women in conflict resolution. Therefore the catalytic effects deserve to be further explored.

63. Although the project only lasted 18 months and therefore was too short for a meaningful contribution to national peacebuilding efforts, there is no evidence of any activity that would contribute to the expected direct and positive impact on the sustainability of the peacebuilding process – as stated in the project proposal. This relates to the gap described under Evaluation Question 1 of a weak TOC, with no pathways identifying how the local peace prospects will contribute to the national peacebuilding efforts through concrete activities, indicators and results. Considering the current national peacebuilding efforts and the role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, the project proposal rightly identifies that more voices are needed than only those of the elite women in Sana’a. The key element to be linked to the national peacebuilding efforts would be the institutionalization of women’s role in conflict resolution. The project keeps the SE Office and its Gender Adviser informed and shall share this evaluation report; however, there is no activity in the current project aiming at capturing lessons learned to promote women’s participation in the national peacebuilding process.
EQ5: To what extent did the project leverage youth participation in community-led agriculture activities?

Finding 9. Youth were not explicitly targeted in conflict resolution activities, but they constituted the majority of the beneficiaries of cash for work activities. The attribution rate of them not joining the armed groups has not been established except for anecdotal evidence.

64. Women and youth are presented as one category in several of the project documents despite being two very different groups with their own needs and defined roles in the context of the war in Yemen. The Gender Analysis, for example, goes from describing the roles of women to issuing recommendations on youth engagement, without having done any assessment on the specific challenges the youth face. The first progress report mentions that developing the capacity of women and youth on conflict resolution skills had started and will continue throughout the project period, but while the trainings focus on women as agents of change, the evaluation team has not found any evidence that there was a focus on youth beyond limited participation in the trainings and their mere presence in subsequent meetings with the communities to discuss conflicts and ways to resolve them. The evaluation learned that the youth attended traditional qat meetings where conflicts are discussed, and they would observe and learn. In addition, in Yemeni culture advice and guidance of older people is more influential and listened to than that of the youth, because the community views them as wiser and more experienced. Thus, to make sure that the CRCs are listened to and well accepted by community members, the project included older people.

65. The youth (and predominantly male and able youth) were more explicitly targeted for CFW activities. The selection criteria presented in the Letter of Agreement included youth over the age of 21 or persons from vulnerable households based on the IPC previously carried out by analysis for each area and smallholder farmers whose productive capacity has been affected by reduced water availability in accordance with the pre-set criteria (land ownership, economic situation, number for family members). People living with disabilities were not engaged while the families with disabled, pregnant and lactating women, chronically ill, orphans and widows were considered a priority. The table below provides data on the number of beneficiaries per location, disaggregated by sex and youth category, showing a strong representation of youth (between 25 and 45 percent), and particularly young men. Although there is no analysis of the causes, only one interview pointed to the lack of identification papers as a potential challenge affecting more young women.
Table 1: Cash for work (CFW) beneficiaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location/age categories</th>
<th>Adult population</th>
<th>Youth</th>
<th>% Youth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Jahshi</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bait Hader</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Malkah</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shehab Asfal</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sawan</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bait Al Maklad</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Zayah</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

66. According to the interviews, young men and women beneficiaries engaged in different tasks and had different timetables to work at the sites to avoid working side by side. Women supervised field activities, filled in work progress reports and labour time sheets, they were responsible for the first aid kits and sometimes they were also engaged in physical labour, even though men mostly did the harder tasks.

67. The project proposal describes youth as believing they have no other options but to either stay home or join armed groups because of their financial opportunities, although the evaluation team considers this description to be done in a very generic way to fit the project rationale rather than portraying an accurate description of youth and their choices in rural Yemen. The project then proposes that an increase in economic returns and employment opportunities will result in reducing the number of young men from joining the militia (war parties) and/or terrorist groups. Since recruitment into armed groups is a sensitive topic in the current conflict in Yemen, it was not evaluated, plus the project did not include any indicator to measure it beyond participation in CFW activities.

Finding 10. FAO and IOM missed a great opportunity to assess the impact of cash on livelihoods and on what/how beneficiaries use the money.

68. Apart from the conflict sensitivity of the evaluation itself, there is the technical challenge of attribution. The evaluation team considers that while economic returns/employment opportunities can act as a deterrent to join the armed groups, the CFW activities for the project were limited both in time and in amount so they could not even act as a medium-term solution to the lack of employment. The evaluation found that CFW modality for FAO and IOM in Yemen is a new approach only deployed under this project. Despite the broader experience of FAO in delivering and assessing CFW activities in a number of conflict-affected countries, the Yemen experience would have offered a much-needed learning opportunity to actually test and measure the benefits of CFW in the Yemen context. Given the limited scope of CFW activities under this project, conducting a real time evaluation of the potential impact pathways of injecting direct cash on livelihoods of households could have been manageable. The evaluation learned that FAO intends to expand its CFW activities across its emergency response operations.
69. There is no systematic analysis of how beneficiaries used the cash, but Whatsapp communication between the beneficiaries and project staff shows they used it mainly for food. and some for medicine or livelihoods, i.e. contributing to buying a sewing machine. Beyond economic gain, there are also several factors contributing to the decision to join or not the armed groups that are not considered here, from ideological to structural ones, i.e. one interviewee mentioned that young people previously employed in farming had joined armed groups since high diesel prices prevented them from continuing the farming work.

70. Based on interviews with FAO staff, the evaluation team documented the case study below with a suggested decrease of youth joining armed groups:

**Box 3: Saawan District case study**

FAO intervened in Sanaa’s Saawan district, where the residents used to rely on floodwaters in the valley for irrigation and household use through shallow wells. This all began to change in 2009 when the government completed the construction of two dams in the area. The hitherto plentiful shallow wells all dried out and there was no more water for irrigation in the lowlands. Conflict erupted between the farmers living in the uplands and those in the lowlands. After the project organized several meeting with the conflict parties, they agreed that it was necessary to build a network of pipes to supply water from one of the dams to the lowlands so that they too could have water. The communities provided the labour for the work and received payment through the cash for work modality.

It was raised by FAO staff that in Saawan the Houthi project supervisor had complained to the NAMCHA and tried to stop the work because he said that youth were no longer interested in joining their party to the conflict. This is the one site were implementation is delayed, and after the fuel shortage and the consequent difficulties to pump water, the community is arguing with the supervisor to continue with the work in order to be able to have access to water.

**Finding 11.** The delays in cash payments was the most prevalent commonality across all interviews and in the complaints to the communications with communities feedback mechanism, threatening the trust created by the successful conflict resolution mechanisms. The evaluation team has not found evidence that this problem has been sufficiently resolved.

71. The complaints by the beneficiaries interviewed for this evaluation centred around two issues: first and foremost, the delay in payments; and second, the perceived insufficient compensation for the type of work requested. The communications with communities feedback mechanism by IOM received the same complaints. Project staff explained to the communities that the weekly wage arrangement would substitute the more common daily wage arrangement used by labourers in the areas of intervention. Interviews with FAO and IOM staff also revealed that the rate used was calculated using higher urban rates instead of lower rural rates. Nevertheless, communities reported delays in payment from a few weeks to up to three months, and dissatisfaction with the rates. Although complaints were usually resolved, at the time of the field mission for this evaluation some beneficiaries had not yet received their payment. In an extreme case in Bait Hadher village the project even had to be put on hold due to a dispute around payment delays between FAO’s implementing partner, SAM NGO and the community.

72. For FAO, this was the first time carrying out a CFW intervention without relying on existing systems/providers used by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and World Food
Programme (WFP). FAO and IOM explained that they have due mechanisms in place for the CFW component of the project: the project makes regular verifications through a call centre to make sure beneficiaries get the amount as per the tables prepared by the field monitors, then prepare the schedule of payments and finally the banks receive the order to release the funds/payments. FAO explained that sometimes there are delays in getting the tables from the field, for example if some workers do not agree with the money allocated for the amount of work and the field monitors have to review that the tables prepared are in line with the work achieved and days worked. There are also structural changes, as: unreliable bank transfers, lack of experience by the banks, even shifting security threats can cause delays. Nevertheless, the lack of a proper identification by the project of the complete array of causes and potential solutions to the delay in payments is considered by the evaluation team to damage the project, threatening the trust created by a well-accepted conflict resolution mechanism.

EQ6: What effect did the restoration of critical infrastructure have on improving water accessibility and use?

Finding 12. The successful resolution of water conflicts and the restoration of water infrastructure through the CFW component had a direct effect on increased crop production and income of farmers. The measures in place to promote the sustainability of the project and the continuation of improved agriculture once the project has come to an end rely on the increased capacity of WUAs to use their conflict resolution skills, maintain the sites and attract further support.

73. According to the endline assessment, the most commonly expressed opinion as per Table 2 below regarding the impact of conflict resolution over water resources (and the restoration of infrastructure) was related to increase of agriculture produce. Several people interviewed confirmed that better access to water translated into improved livelihoods. More concrete data has not been collected by the project.

Table 2: Impact of water conflict resolution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th># of respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased crop production and income of farmers</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reclamated lands</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased crops production</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone has access to water</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased ground water table</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied people</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved agriculture production</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

74. In order to sustain the gains of the project and the continuation of improved agriculture at the end of the project, the second progress report suggested an exit strategy with strong consideration given to sustain the efforts of the WWUGs, empowering the local water authorities for enforcing regulations, and creating a community fund for the continual rehabilitation of water infrastructure beyond the duration of the project. Providing comprehensive trainings to the members of these communities would also support
sustaining the results of the proposed project. Towards the second half of implementation, transfer of relevant responsibilities from the Project Management Unit to WWUGs and local water authorities would be implemented for a smooth transition of responsibility. Although the evaluation has not been able to verify the state of enforcement of regulations or the availability of a community fund, interviews do testify to increased skills on conflict resolution and water management that would promote sustainability of the project gains. According to FAO and IOM, both themselves and other organizations support WUAs through other projects, and WUAs have a good network of support from international NGOs implementing activities related to water, health and other humanitarian activities as part of the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC) so they are not dependent on FAO/IOM only. In the South, because of the larger scale of infrastructure, the project has provided the necessary equipment to help them maintain the canals, and again there are some entities working on maintenance of water infrastructure to avoid future conflicts.
4. **Lessons learned**

75. The PBF I has two main lessons learned that should inform the second generation of PBF projects.

76. The first lesson learned is that despite not having a comprehensive TOC, conflict assessment or gender analysis, the project identified the right drivers and root causes of local conflicts and paved the way for a second generation PBF projects. Apart from reflecting FAO’s enhanced conflict analysis capacity, these second-generation projects are to be designed and implemented sequentially so they can have a better chance of contributing to higher order outcomes. The sequencing also applies to other FAO and IOM projects in Yemen, both at local and national level, in order to connect local peace prospects with national peacebuilding efforts. Peace is a complex puzzle where only the myriad of pieces put together will provide a clearer picture of what the project has achieved and how results can be sustained.

77. The second lesson learned is how a project with a USD 2 million budget of 18-months duration can plant the seeds for transformative change. The project acknowledged the traditional mediation role of women in their communities and building from the Al Malakah success story from SBP it institutionalized that role in WUAs. The second generation PBF projects should be embedded in a longer term gender equality strategy with in-depth gender analysis and taking into account the different gender dynamics in the North and the South. A separate strategy for the involvement of youth in peace and security would be required.
5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1 (EQ1). The focus of the PBF project design and implementation on local peace prospects is highly relevant in Yemen. The overall conflict shows no sign of resolution, and while peacebuilding efforts happen at national level, communities in the rural areas remain key to the repair of the social fabric and the improvement of their own livelihoods for a sustainable and lasting peace. FAO and IOM took a calculated risk to work on behaviour/social change to increase the prospects of local peace through natural resource governance in high-risk and hard-to-access contexts.

Conclusion 2 (EQ2). Following a geographical split with FAO in the North and IOM in the South, the good collaboration between the two agencies, the complementarity of the project with their respective broader operations in the areas of intervention, and the project’s alignment with wider and longer-term strategies and approaches both in Yemen and at global level for sustainable peace and transition and recovery contributed to the success of the project with important findings and lessons learned.

Conclusion 3 (EQ3). The project targeted seven locations in the North and seven locations in the South to assess the water conflicts, understand the different gender roles, and engage the youth to improve access to water. Respect for traditional conflict resolution mechanisms paired with the injection of cash and the technical advice from FAO WASH engineers for the reconstruction of water infrastructure was successful in reaching an effective resolution of water conflicts.

Conclusion 4 (EQ4). By capitalizing on women’s traditional role in conflict resolution as bridge-builders and on the success story of the Malaka dam, the project not only mainstreamed gender but had a transformational impact by being the first to institutionalize women’s role in the WUAs. The next bridge to cross is from the local to the national level.

Conclusion 5 (EQ5). Young men and women were targeted for CFW activities, with different tasks and/or at different times and sites. Although the water infrastructure was restored, there is no mechanism in place to measure how this project component deterred the youth from joining the armed groups, nor any in-depth analysis or technical expertise on engaging youth.

Conclusion 6 (EQ6). With beneficiaries reporting increased crop production and income at the end of the project, key measures are required to sustain the gains. The main ones put in place by the project are training of WUA members on both conflict resolution and water management, the institutionalization of women’s role in conflict resolution and the provision of maintenance equipment. It remains to be seen how successful WUAs will be in attracting further support.

5.2 Recommendations

Since this was the first PBF project evaluated by OED where FAO was the lead agency, it is key that the findings and recommendations from this evaluation inform the design and
Recommendation 1. On the need for high-quality conflict analysis to inform programme design and implementation and further explore the innovative approach of resolution of water conflicts at the local level.

79. FAO and IOM Yemen should integrate the recent tools and methodologies developed by FAO on high-quality conflict analysis, theory of change and gender analysis for the design and implementation of future PBF projects; the conflict analysis, theory of change and gender analysis should be monitored and revisited/reviewed each year.

80. FAO and IOM Yemen should develop better M&E and reporting mechanisms including the collection of sex- and age-disaggregated data, the use of both quantitative and qualitative indicators and the development/use of specific indicators for results on social cohesion, women’s participation and youth engagement in local conflict resolution.

81. FAO and IOM headquarters should further explore the innovative approach of resolution of water conflicts, and the broader issue of natural resource governance at the local level, by seeking specific funding for piloting, impact assessments and improving learning loops to promote good practice both within FAO and IOM and externally in Yemen and other contexts, where relevant.

Recommendation 2. On the good practice of aligning PBF I with other interventions and approaches, plus further using PBF I as a catalyst.

82. FAO and IOM Yemen should aim at a cascading programming, i.e. two-three PBF projects to be designed and implemented sequentially so they can have a better chance to contribute to higher order outcomes.

83. FAO and IOM Yemen should continue aligning PBF projects with other interventions and approaches in Yemen at local, national and global levels.

84. FAO and IOM Yemen with the support of PBF in the absence of a country link should reinforce the project’s role as a catalyst: continue to improve the understanding of priority needs and vulnerabilities through better assessments and communication of findings to attract the attention of other national and international humanitarian actors.

Recommendation 3. On building on the effective conflict resolution mechanism in PBF I, doing no harm and measuring social cohesion.

85. FAO and IOM Yemen should build on the experience of assessing conflict for PBF I and finding conflict resolution mechanisms by using a more precise definition of conflict. This definition would allow CRCs to reflect upon different levels, parties and intensity of conflict, identify different entry points and opportunities as well as adapt tools and methodologies to the differences between the North and the South (in terms of legitimate authorities, socio-political organization of communities, gender dynamics, etc.).
Conclusions and recommendations

86. FAO, IOM and other humanitarian actors in Yemen should continue to support the positive role and effective work of WUA in conflict resolution, paying attention to the Do-No-Harm principle, i.e. further analysing the role of the sheiks, the exclusion of the most marginalized and the role of CSOs where WUA are not present.

87. PBF should make available to FAO and IOM a comprehensive set of indicators to measure community confidence/social cohesion (Outcome 3 in PBF I) to be used for future PBF proposals. At global level, PBF can include natural resource governance in their strategic plan by devising a standalone Outcome on natural resource governance.

Recommendation 4. On the need for high-quality gender analysis to inform programme design and implementation and further explore the transformative approach of institutionalizing women’s role in WUAs.

88. FAO and IOM Yemen should continue to engage gender experts in country and better seek and integrate the support from headquarters (for FAO: CPU, PBF, Gender Unit and others as required) on high-quality gender analysis for the design and implementation of future PBF projects, including a better analysis of the differences in gender dynamics in the North and the South to adapt programming accordingly.

89. PBF should clearly outline how 18-months interventions can strive to transform gender roles to address the causes of gender inequality and therefore contribute positively to peacebuilding processes while noting that effective social change requires long-term engagement of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors.

90. FAO and IOM Yemen should introduce more explicit links to their respective gender policies and gender equality programming in Yemen and globally to benefit from further alignment and expertise, as well as promote exchange of lessons learned and sustainability of project gains.

91. FAO and IOM Yemen should ensure that the institutionalization of women’s role in WUA is included in other PBF proposals in Yemen and globally, with necessary adaptations to the different contexts.

92. FAO and IOM Yemen should go beyond keeping the Special Envoy informed on project progress and use the findings and recommendations from this evaluation to promote further links between the local water conflict resolution work and national peacebuilding initiatives with the active participation of women.

Recommendation 5. On the need for targeted programming on youth, peace and security.

93. FAO and IOM Yemen should avoid mixing youth and women in the same category of beneficiaries since each population group has its specific roles, needs and capacities. In Yemen youth have played a key role both in conflict and in peacebuilding, therefore there is a need to engage them in conflict resolution through a targeted approach on youth,
peace and security. If a future PBF proposal involves youth, ensure targeted programming using youth specific United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions, frameworks, methods, tools and interventions.

94. FAO and IOM Yemen should conduct a thorough assessment of the socioeconomic impacts of CFW on the Yemen context before rolling about a programme-wide CFW or cash transfer activities in Yemen, as well as carry out an analysis of the causes of CFW delays in payment and dissatisfaction of beneficiaries to ensure all beneficiaries have been paid by the end of the project and avoid having the same problem in future projects.

Recommendation 6. On the need to ensure sustainability of the project gains and the positive role of WUAs.

95. FAO and IOM Yemen should continue to build key measures to sustain the project gains and the positive role of WUAs (link with Recommendations 2 and 3).
References


**Christiansen, Connie.** 2018. *How Yemeni Women are Fighting the War* [web article]. In: *The Conversation* [online]. Accessed at: https://theconversation.com/how-yemeni-women-are-fighting-the-war-89951


Bibliography


### Appendix 1. People interviewed

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### Field interviews

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Annexes

Annex 1. Terms of reference