



Adolescents and Youth and Means of Empowering them Economically and Socially



The Editorial

Young people are the key primary social and economic driving force in every society, and they are called the "bearers of the 2030 agenda banner"¹ given their pivotal role not only as beneficiaries of actions and policies as part of the SDGs agenda, but also as implementation partners.

Youth empowerment is an integral part of the development agenda, and thus, providing opportunities and protection for them would guarantee the realization of a comprehensive and sustainable development. They also represent a positive productive force in effecting change at the community level to push the drive of development and transformation for the better. The period since the beginning of decade two of the third millennium - marked by widespread protests engulfed many Arab countries or what is called the "Arab Spring" revolutions – is one of the most critical periods that pushed the issues of adolescents and youth to the forefront of the public scene and won the interests of governments as well as research centers and decision-making circles as a productive economic power and an influential political force in the general course of transformation and societal development. Before that, young people were seen as being an age group, not a productive power.

No adequate attention paid to them, nor care and societal empowerment at the economic, social and political levels. This led to a sweeping feeling of deprivation, marginalization and loss of hope for the future, decent life, freedom or aspiration towards prosperity, justice, equality and civil state. This is also applicable to young people in Yemen, who were at the forefront of the change movement that the country witnessed in 2011, driven by the spirit of optimism and aspiration for better empowerment to contribute to building the desired modern state, developing the country's economy and enjoying a decent and life and economic prosperity. Nothing of that materialized and their dreams and aspirations dashed for a while, and so the dreams of all Yemenis, due to the new situation that Yemen has slipped to.

Nevertheless, hope remains pinned on the adolescents and youth² who account for about 32% of the total population in Yemen in 2020³ – they make up the majority of the workforce - and for the promising future that can be created out of suffering and conflict. Furthermore, with generations of young people joining the development drive, science and creativity as a result of decades of investments, this would definitely bear fruit.

It is worth to note, however, there have been some interests that had begun to take shape, including economic empowerment of youth through the formulation of the National Strategy for Youth Employment 2013, which coincided political empowerment of youth and participation in the National Dialogue Conference and other public events.

Unfortunately, all these moves were aborted by the negative developments in Yemen, as they continue gripping the country until now.

This issue of the YSEU bulletin sheds light on the issue of economic and social empowerment of adolescents and youth in Yemen, and explores the creative energies and vitality this segment of the population has, as well as the economic and social roles by some national institutions and civil society organizations concerned with youth economic and social empowerment. The issue also introduces a set of proposals that may potentially contribute to enhancing the economic and social roles of adolescents and youth in Yemen during the stage of peace building, reconstruction and development.



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Facts and Indicators

32%*

the ratio of adolescents and youth to the total population in Yemen (2020)

32%*

is the unemployment rate in Yemen (2019)

66% of Population**

people in need of humanitarian assistance" 20.7 Million"

51%*

the ratio of population under 25 years of age to the total population(2020)

6.4%*

of Yemeni citizens have bank accounts

16.2 Million People**

will go hungry in 2021

44.8%*

of young people are out of the education and training system and the labor market (2013)

9%*

of private enterprises obtained loans (2019)

3 Million People**

the number of internally displaced people (IDPs)

* Source: All facts and indicators included in this issue are referred to with their sources.

** OCAH; Humanitarian Needs Overview; Yemen, February 2021.

¹ UN/Peace, Dignity and Equality on A Healthy Planet <https://www.un.org/ar/section/issues-depth/youth-0/>

² The classification of adolescents and youth was based on the United Nations definition of this category, which starts from the age of ten to twenty-four. For More Information please visit: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Middle East and North Africa (Generation 2030), April 2019, <https://www.unicef.org/mena/reports/mena-generation>

³ The National Population Council and Central Statistical Organization, Population Projections 2000-2025.

I Why economic and social empowerment of adolescents and youth?

Economic and social empowerment of adolescents and youth is defined as “taking the reins of the social, economic, political and cultural verticals of life” in a way that would contribute to doubling their capabilities and reaching their full potential⁴.

In other words, empowerment is one of the developmental tools that allows this important segment of the population to express themselves better and invest their capabilities in the various fields, while respecting their will to change. In addition, it promotes their economic and social participation, prepares them to join labor market, and contributes to the production and development drive by opening broad horizons for pioneering ideas meant to realize their personal and societal aspirations, and overall to serve and advance their societies.

The concept of economic and social empowerment is highly significant in the context of development thinking, as it represents a basic building block and a prerequisite for all-community development. Adolescents and youth are the vim of every society, the spirit of life and development. They represent the permanent spring of the nation as well as authentic and effective tool in the construction and development being prone to change and development, and for being half of the present and all of the future.

In Yemen, the issue of economic and social empowerment of adolescents and youth remains a key priority in the framework of economic growth, as well as comprehensive and sustainable development, mainly due to a set of reasons and justifications listed below:

1. Adolescents and youth in Yemen, a demographic spurt and limited participation

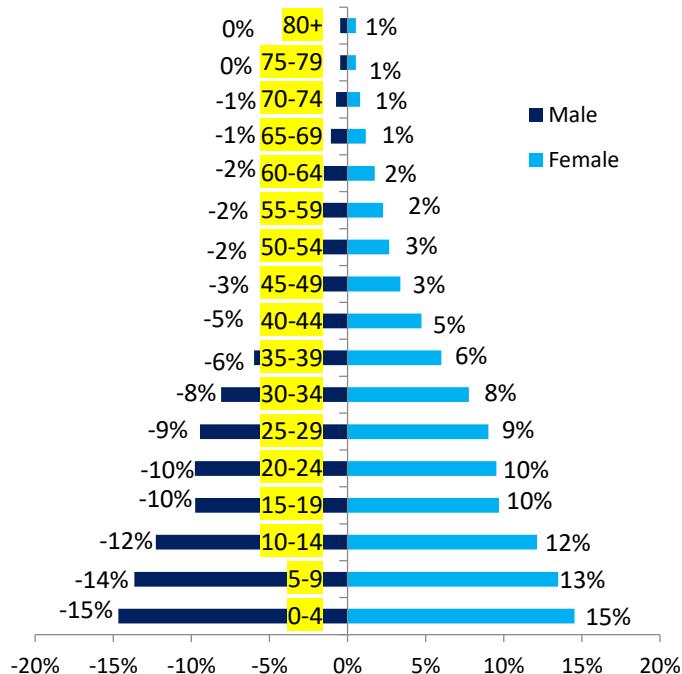
Population projections in Yemen (Figure 1) show that the ratio of this group reached about 32% of the total population in 2020. This indicates the extent to which this group is important in every society, and their growing needs at the economic, social and service spheres, how can societies benefit from their potentials as an essential tool for development now and in the future. Additionally, the age group below ten years remains an importance of population, while the group less than 25 years old makes up to about 51% of the total population, i.e. putting extra economic, social and security development challenges for the Yemen, as they need to be provided with basic requirements, especially in light of the current volatile political and security conditions and the ongoing conflict.

Historically, Yemen has been characterized by persistent developmental structural challenges whose severity continues to grow and increase day after day, more specifically the widespread illiteracy, rising poverty and spiking unemployment rates, which has limited the participation by youth and adolescents in the development process in the past, and more likely in the future.

Some statistical reports⁵ indicate that the proportion of young people outside the education and training system as well as the labor market made up for 44.8% in 2013, while the unemployment rate among youth in the same year stood at about 33% (74% for females and 26% for males), and this is mainly due on one hand to the fact that education systems failed to prepare adolescents and youth for the labor market, as well as weak growth and economic development rates for that period on the other.

It worth to be noted, however, that of the total young workers, a significant portion of them work for others (50.3%), while about 27% work in family businesses (informal sector), mainly agriculture. Meanwhile, the ratio of self-employed youth mostly in the informal sector, accounts for about 20.1%, and that young employers make up for only 2% of the total young workers.

Figure (1):The Population Pyramid in YEMEN 2020



Source: The National Population Council and Central Statistical Organization, Population Projections 2000-2025

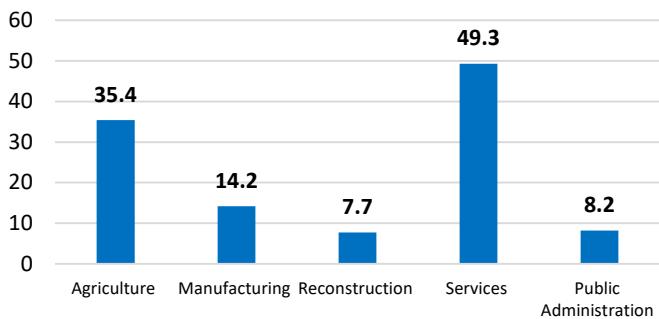
⁴ Conrad Adenauer Foundation and Masawa Center for Civil Society Development: Economic empowerment of Youth in Light of Syrian Asylum, Amman 2015.

⁵ International Labor Organization and Central Statistical Organization, Labor Force Survey 2013-2014.

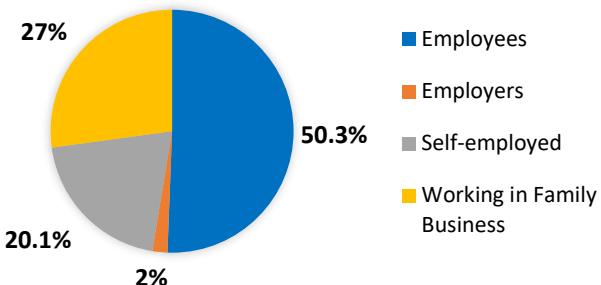
Analysis of the distribution of young people across the various economic sectors shows more concentration in the services sector (49.3%) of all employed youth, followed by the agricultural sector (35.4%), then the manufacturing sector (14.2%), while the rest work either for the construction sector or as public servants (8% each)⁶. The rise in youth employment in the public and agriculture sectors is may be due to the fact that these two sectors are traditional sectors that do not require specific skills or expertise and specializations. This can be further illustrated through an analysis of the educational characteristics of young employed people. Despite the notable progress made in the various education systems, and the increased number of young people enrolled and graduated from educational institutions over the past decades, however, statistics show that 75.3% of the young workers are illiterate or have completed only primary education, about 22.8% are high school graduates and only 1.6% have university or higher degrees, i.e. a misalignment of skills and competencies with actual labour market demands, forcing higher number of young people to join the informal sector that makes up for about 83.4% of the total youth engaged in economic activity⁷.

Figure (2) Youth Status by Employment and Employing Economic Sector %

Youth Employment by Economic Sector %



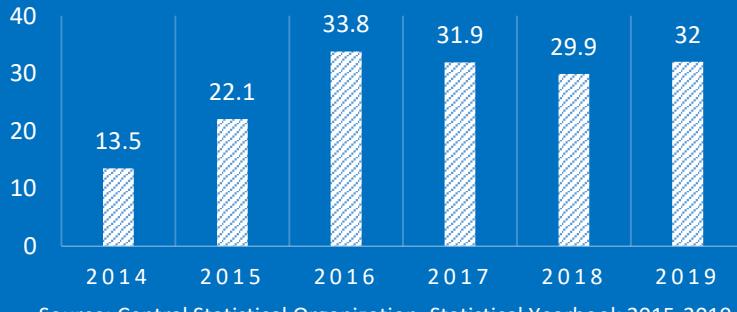
Situation of Youth by Employment Status %



Source: LFS 2013-2014

Job losses and limited new employment opportunities during the period (2014-2020) can said to be among the most important direct consequences and repercussions of the ongoing conflict and war in Yemen, as the unemployment rate in the economy in 2019 dropped to record levels (32%)⁸ of the total workforce compared to about 13.5% in 2014 (Figure No. 3). Such a situation requires a multi-disciplinary action to reduce unemployment and provide jobs.

Figure (3):unemployment Rate in YEMEN (%)



Source: Central Statistical Organization, Statistical Yearbook 2015-2019.

2. Limited opportunities for adolescents and youth to access economic resources and own productive assets

Adolescents and youth in Yemen still have limited access to economic resources and ownership of various financial and productive assets that would secure them sustainable and regular livelihoods, especially access to the formal economy (entrepreneurship, bank accounts and loans), in addition to job opportunities in the formal economic sector. Some reports and surveys⁹ indicate that ownership of commercial and industrial enterprises among young people under 30 years of age did not exceed 6% of the total private enterprises in Yemen until 2015, a very small percentage

⁶ ibid

⁷ ibid

⁸ Unemployment among young men and women is higher than the general rate of 32%, because young men and women represent the bulk of axed workforce during the war, in addition to the fact that many new entrants (youth) to the labor market do not get adequate jobs, and therefore, are considered unemployed.

⁹ Small and Micro Enterprise Promoting Service, Yemen Business Climate Survey Findings 2019.

that is not commensurate with the size of this segment of population nor capabilities they have. Access to formal financial services remains the key challenges facing Yemenis in general and adolescents and youth in particular, which means limited access to the resources necessary to finance their economic enterprises. Many sources¹⁰ indicate that the bulk of Yemeni population do not use financial services, and that only 1.8 million people had bank accounts as until the end of 2017. Meanwhile, the World Bank estimates that only 6.4% of Yemenis have bank accounts (2% women and 11% men)¹¹, the lowest in the world. In addition, a very limited number of private enterprises - not exceeding 9% of the total private enterprises - have obtained loans in 2019¹².

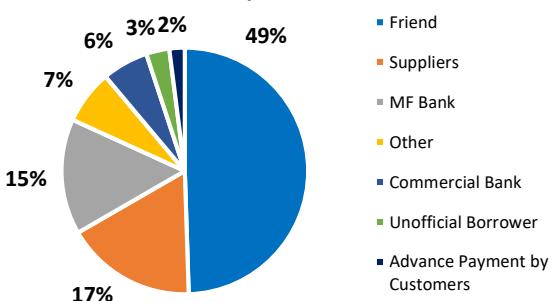
Moreover, the share of the formal banking sector (Commercial banks, small financing banks) was limited and did not exceed 21% of the lending sources to the private businesses compared to 79% for the conventional sources¹³, including families, friends, suppliers and others. This is mostly due to poor banking awareness among the population and the culture of cash-based transactions as a result of widespread illiteracy, poverty and weak legal and judicial environment, as well as the lacking flexibility and ability of banks to cope with shocks, given limited business scope and small size of the existing banks. Lack of supportive institutions and financial markets do also play a part.

3. Political and Social Instability and fragile Socio-Economic Policies

The volatile political and security situation as well as inefficient economic policies have compounded the already existing challenges facing adolescents and youth in Yemen. These conditions have impaired access to quality education that responds to the labor market needs, and triggered a sense of mistrust and undermined optimal investment, especially in human capital. Moreover, there are other risks posed by the conflict and war, including recruitment of adolescents and youth to join the battlefields.

If the weak economic and social policies used to be applied during the past decades persist, though they inequitably addressed adolescents and youth issues, especially young women, the poor, refugees and people with disabilities – mainly in the areas of health protection and education – or lack thereof, this would greatly and negatively undermine the ability by these groups to realize their full potential and to become productive force in the society and the economy.

Figure (4) Borrower Private Businesses by Enterprise %



Source: SMEPS, Yemen Business Climate Survey Findings 2019.

A photo showing a group of adolescents outside the education system doing hard jobs



II Challenges Facing Adolescents and Youth

The challenges facing adolescents and youth are on the rise, whether related to structural and chronic challenges or to unstable security and political conditions in the country, with the ensuing tensions and risks, including armed violence and victims of the conflict. In addition, displacement by millions of IDPs who fled their homes, loss of property, suspension of salaries for a significant proportion of public servants, declining basic services, the rising economy of the war, devaluation of the local currency, and the recurrent fuel crises, which increased the overall vulnerability, and caused many adolescents and youth to drop out from schools and seek jobs instead, and perhaps engage in the war or assume arduous and stressful jobs, not commensurate with the capabilities or energies of people at such age. Major ramifications and repercussions shouldered by adolescents and youth in Yemen can be summarized as follows:

¹⁰ Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, Liquidity Crisis and Exchange Rate Fluctuations and Their Impact on Humanitarian Operations in Yemen, April 2018.

¹¹ Samantha Constant and Elizabeth Mayer, Promoting Financial Inclusion and Access to Solar Energy Among Women in Yemen, World Bank Blogs. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/ar/energy/promoting-financial-inclusion-and-access-solar-energy>

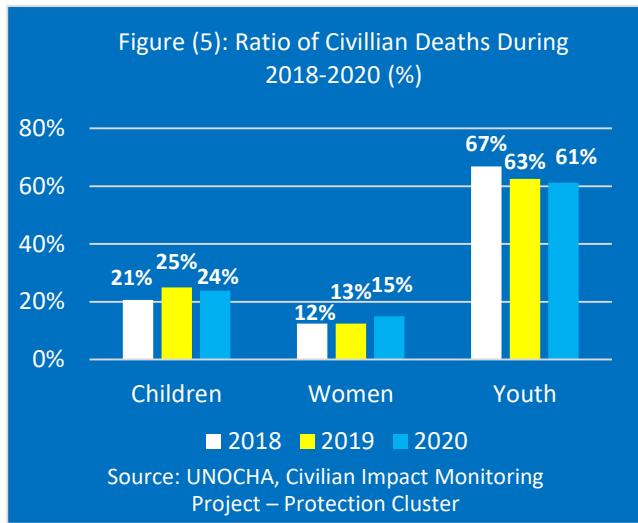
¹² SMEPS, Op. cit.

¹³ Op. cit.

1. Adolescents and Youth Most at Risk in Contexts of Conflict and War

Adolescents and young people in any country are the most affected group by the conditions of conflict and war and the most exposed to the ensuing risks, whether directly as victims of murder, injuries, displacement, or indirectly due to deteriorated health, educational and agricultural systems or poor living conditions. Despite the fact that all population groups are affected by such circumstances, yet.

Youth are more likely to be killed due to involvement in the conflicts and wars or taking part in the armed confrontations. UN reports¹⁴ suggest that the conflict in Yemen has claimed 233 thousand lives as of the end of 2019 (102 thousands directly and 131 thousand indirectly), let alone the irremediable negative effects. Several studies and statistics indicate that the death toll of those engaged directly in conflict has exceeded 100 thousand¹⁵; most of them are young people. Statistics by the Civilian Impact Monitoring Project show that youth make up for the highest number of civilian casualties during the war, compared to (61% - 67%) for children and women, respectively. Furthermore, young people account for the largest proportion of the kidnapped, detainees and prisoners (tens of thousands)¹⁶, which means that this group has borne the brunt of the ongoing conflict and war.



2. Limited Access to Basic Services

Findings of the 2018 MCLA about access to basic needs and services in Yemen by the assessed population revealed a context in which a large segment of the population was unable to realize their basic rights due to limited access to education, healthcare, WASH services and livelihoods. Lacking access to sustainable and regular livelihoods was the most common issue cited by up to 50% of the people¹⁷.

On the education side, and despite the remarkable quantitative expansion that this sector has witnessed over the past decades, including higher number of students in all cycles of education (Basic, secondary and university), yet, the sector still suffers major obstacles and bottlenecks, most notably: established inequality in education, whether gender-based (male-female) or in terms of education quality (public-private), in addition to the generally poor education system as compared to countries in the region or globally, including poor education outputs. It worth to be noted, however, that Yemen still has the highest number of school age children outside the educational system in the Arab region @ 1.6 million children, most of them females, representing about 20% of the total OOSC in the Arab world¹⁸. Likewise, illiteracy rates are still high, especially among women, which stands at about 60%¹⁹.

A photo showing access difficulties to water in Yemen by large portion of population



As for health services, the health sector is strained by severe weakness and disparities in the provision of health services from one region to another and across rural and urban areas, as more than half of the population lack access to healthcare. Infectious diseases are the primary cause of death, while respiratory infections and diarrheal diseases account for about 43% of deaths. Yemen ranks behind at the regional level in terms of the ratio of doctors, hospital beds and health workers to the total population, as well as in terms of the health-spending index, which is only 4% of GDP.²⁰

¹⁴ Jonathan D. et al, Assessing the Impact of War on Development in Yemen, UNDP, Sana'a 2019.

¹⁵ Acled Resources; War in Yemen, <https://acleddata.com/2020/03/25/caled-resources-war-in-yemen/>

¹⁶ No statistics exist on the real number of prisoners and abductees in Yemen, but the talks in Sweden included a clause on the swap of about 25,000 prisoners and abductees between the Houthis and the internationally recognized government. Only a limited number of whom (not more than 2000) already released. In addition, continued military operations increase mean additional prisoners and abductees from both sides.

¹⁷ Multi-Sector Location Assessment 2018, OCHI, UNHCR and IOM.

¹⁸ Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, Socio-Economic Updates Bulletin, Issue 6, August 2015.

¹⁹ Central Statistical Organization, Statistical Yearbook 2014.

²⁰ Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, Socio-Economic Updates Bulletin, Issue 7, September 2015.

It is worth noting that the conditions the country is going through have doubled the challenges faced by the citizens, including adolescents and youth, as to obtaining public services. A significant portion of the population fell short of meeting their basic needs, including education, health care and WASH services. Until the beginning of the year 2020, World Bank reports²¹ indicate that about 35% of educational facilities have been partially or completely damaged, while many others have been used to shelter IDPs. In the meantime, part of the staff had either to displace or shift to other sectors, due to security reasons and suspension of salaries, which further exacerbates the problem of dropout from school, especially among girls. Less than half of school-age children were able to enroll in school. The conflict also contributed to the deterioration of the already weak health system. Findings by the Health Resources Availability Monitoring System 2018 show that only 51% of health facilities are operating at full capacity, 35% of them are partially functioning and 14% have ceased operation, in addition to the spread of pandemics such as cholera, dengue fever and other fevers. The situation gets even worse now with the advent of the novel Coronavirus and the limited capacity of the health system to deal with the pandemic.

3. COVID-19 Pandemic and Growing Challenges

Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the challenges and difficulties already faced by the Yemeni population with all its segments and components, due to the direct negative toll that this pandemic has brought to the various economic and social sectors, as well as the indirect effects associated with the spread of the pandemic at the regional and international levels. Major effects attributed to the pandemic on adolescents and youth can be highlighted in the following:

- Limited access to educational and training opportunities. The pandemic has led to the closure of schools, universities, technical and vocational training institutes during the second half of the 2019/2020 academic year, and it cut short the current school year 2020/2021. This has had a direct negative impact on the level of education attainment of adolescents and youth, especially if we consider insufficient resources to turn to through distance learning compared to many other countries. In addition, a significant proportion of adolescents and youth are outside the education and training system and, thus, need some support in this aspect. Moreover, the lockdown policies adopted by most countries around the world to confront the pandemic have denied many young people access to education opportunities abroad, which negatively impacted their education process.
- Jobs available to adolescents and youth, especially within the informal sector which employs the largest portion of people within this age group, have been severely affected, as previously explained. In addition to that, it can be said that the Covid-19 pandemic has thwarted efforts by young people to migrate and seek jobs overseas. Most countries of the world, including those hosting large numbers of Yemeni expats, have closed their borders for relatively long periods. On the other hand, remittances by Yemeni expats dropped by between 30-40%, causing severe economic and social impact on households dependent on such remittances.²²
- External/donor funding to cope with the humanitarian crisis in Yemen has been scaled down, which negatively affected this group due to the decline of activities and suspension of several projects funded by donors in favor of this group, especially economic and social empowerment projects. To know more about the declining external funding to Yemen with its humanitarian, economic and social implications, please refer to Issue 50 of the YSEU.

III Institutions Mandated with Youth Empowerment

Despite the modest economic and social performance by the various governments, qualification and empowerment of youth and adolescents in various spheres of life has topped the development agendas for the successive governments as part of their overall and sectoral development plans and strategies. All governments have formulated an independent youth development strategies mainly: The National Strategy for Children, Youth and Sports 2000-2004; The National Strategy for the Inclusion of Youth in Sport; The National Strategy for Childhood and Youth (2006-2015); and The National Youth Employment Plan (2014-2016). In addition, several institutions mandated with youth empowerment have been established within the framework of the general social protection component in Yemen, mainly the following:

²¹ World Bank, Yemen Dynamic Needs Assessment (DNA): Phase III, 2020.

²² Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, Socio-Economic Updates Bulletin, Issue 47, April 2015.

1. Social Fund for Development (SFD)

The Social Fund for Development (SFD) was established under Law No. (10) for 1997 and is considered the largest social safety net in Yemen, as it assumes an important role in social protection and poverty alleviation. The Fund also contributes to the development drive by improving access to basic services, promoting economic opportunities and poverty reduction, in addition to capacity building at the national and local levels as well as community structures. SFD implements four key programs with socio-economic nexus and job creation: Community and Local Development Program, Capacity Building Program, SMEs Development Program and the Labor Intensive Works Program (Cash for Work). Activities carried out by the Fund that seek to empower youth and create jobs include the following:-

- Empowerment for Local Development Program**

This program seeks to empower local authorities and communities to adopt participatory planning based on available local resources and in line with national development policies and strategies. During the second quarter of 2020, activities of the empowerment program varied, especially with the spread of Covid-19 threat, between 325 self-initiatives were supported, with a total estimated amount of about 17.3 million YER, 15 VCCs were reactivated including their development plans, bringing the total number of VCCs established by the program since the beginning of 2018 to 3,925 councils, in addition to 3,925 local development plans²³.

Table (1): Training and Institutional Support Sector Related Indicators

Indicator	Completed (2016- June 2020)
# of supported and implemented community initiatives	2847
# of active VCCs during the implementation of activities	3877
Jobs made available to young people	5088
Job opportunities for females	2601

Source: SFD/Quarterly Newsletter (April-June 2020)

- RUWAFD Program**

RUWAFD program supports and qualifies university graduates from rural areas as advocates for social development in their areas, including promoting experiences of the program beneficiaries via the program's website to enhance communication and update data about these groups. The total number of youth trained so far by the program has reached 6,497 (3,658 males and 2,839 females) from 20 governorates. Through RUWAFD Program, the Fund has also empowered young people economically through entrepreneurship, including promoting the project to employ RUWAFD youth in combating the Covid-19 pandemic. During the period May - June 2020, some 4,549 of the RUWAFD program graduates (including 2,439 females) have participated in the implementation of 4,600 self-voluntary initiatives in 15 governorates benefiting 292,544 people (including 117,777 are females).

Table (2): Cash-for-Work Sector Related Indicators

Indicator	Completed (2016- June 2020)
Total # of wage direct beneficiaries (workers)	238.08
# of females	65.929
# of IDPs/Returnees	46.876
# of youth	146.512
# of workdays generated	7.025.083
# of beneficiary families from cash-for-work activities	159.471
# of beneficiary families from service provision	2.277.738
# of beneficiaries who have access to adequate sanitation services	173.242

Source: SFD/Quarterly Newsletter (April-June 2020)

- Labor-Intensive Works Program**

This program targets poor communities in rural and urban areas with focus on areas with high numbers of IDPs and persons who lost their jobs due to the war. It seeks to avail local communities with incomes from work wages and provide community assets that would generate future benefits. This program is an integral part of the Social Safety Network and comprises several projects topped by the C4W project and feeder roads. As of the end of the second quarter of 2020, the total cumulative number of beneficiary families from the projects under this program (Cash-for-work sector) exceeded 375 thousand families. As for feeder roads, the cumulative number of temporary employment opportunities generated during the fourth phase by both completed and under implementation, projects reached 926 thousand working days²⁴.

²³ Social Fund for Development/ Quarterly Newsletter (April-June 2020).

²⁴ Op. cit.

• 6 x 3 Project

The government has adopted a 6 x 3 approach to promote innovation for youth employment through savings. It consists of three phases that promote inclusion, ownership and sustainability with six main activities. This approach is designed to create conditions for women and men affected by conflict in order to shift from emergency employment to sustainable development, starting with cash for work, creating savings and planning businesses, ensuring sustainability through grants provided to small businesses. It also creates enabling environments for project beneficiaries to control development-related processes and related outcomes. This approach was first approved by the Cabinet and Friends of Yemen in September 2013, and it was considered a priority within the Mutual Accountability Framework MAF (Priority 9: Youth Employment) with a total budget of \$ 10,514,000 for a period of two years to be utilized as part of the youth empowerment economic project.

2. Microfinance institutions (MFIs)

The concept of microfinance was first introduced in Yemen at the end of 1990s as part of the social safety net that was established in conjunction with the economic reforms program supported by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which were designed to contribute to poverty alleviation and reduce unemployment by expanding the range of financial services provided to entrepreneurs and SME owners. The institutional structure of microfinance in Yemen comprises 12 national institutions and programs, and it is divided into two types of institutions: (1) Microfinance Banks, i.e. financial institutions that operate according to the financial sector regulatory frameworks and under direct supervision by the Central Bank of Yemen, (2) Microfinance Institutions, which are projects and initiatives carried out mostly by civil society organizations.

Performance data on microfinance banks and programs in Yemen indicate that they have achieved notable results - despite the difficult conditions facing the banking sector - in serving small enterprises and entrepreneurs, especially young people and women. Available data²⁵ indicate that these institutions achieved a mediocre annual growth during the period 2017 – 2019 in terms of loans granted (about 40%), where the number of loans increased from 15,616 in 2017 to about 30,332 in 2019. Meanwhile, the value of loans granted increased from 5.5 billion YER in 2017 to about 24 billion YER in 2019, with an average annual growth of about 109%.

During the second quarter of 2020, the total volume of active financial portfolios for MF programs and institutions reached about 26.2 billion YER, while active borrowers totaled 88.729 (34% women). In addition, grants of about 3.8 billion YER were allocated to finance technical support, training and institutional building of SMEs.

3. Yemen Education for Employment Foundation (YEFE)

Founded in 2008 as an independent local foundation and integral part of the EFE system operating in a number of Arab countries as well as the United States and Europe. The Foundation works to provide unemployed youth with the necessary education to obtain jobs and it represents a bridge of communication between the academic circles and the private sector to qualify students trainees with the skills demanded and required by employers. The Foundation relies on the funding provided by the local private sector and international financiers and works under the supervision of elite of businesspersons. The Foundation had its headquarters in Sana'a, two other branches, one in Taiz opened in 2009, and the other in Aden opened in 2012. The Foundation has so far trained over 3,480 trainees, employed more than 956 graduates in permanent jobs and over 1,003 graduates are self-employed.²⁶

4. Silatech Foundation (Economic Empowerment of Youth Project)

The project seeks to provide job opportunities for Yemeni youth in public service programs, in addition to job training and skills development, as well as vocational guidance and assistance in the area of entrepreneurship. During the period, 2015 – 2016, over 11,900 youth have directly benefited from the program, while 83,300 were indirect beneficiaries, including through improved livelihood opportunities. The project is funded by several agencies with support by the United Nations Development Program, Silatech and Spark and the governments of Japan, Korea and Germany. The project was designed to comply with the National Youth Empowerment Plan 2014-2016, which was approved by the Yemeni government end of 2013.

In a bid to improve the current economic situation in Yemen, alleviate poverty and improve the living conditions of needy young people and people below the poverty line, Silatech has managed to establish a Financial Grant Fund, which is implemented in partnership with Al-Amal Microfinance Bank. The fund targets more than 10,000 young people within the age cohort (18-35 years), in addition to providing training for 5,000 others, with a focus on Yemeni

²⁵ Social Fund for Development and the Yemeni Microfinance Network, microfinance in Yemen between the Raging War and Outbreak of the Novel Coronavirus Pandemic.

²⁶ PDF.CSS.escwa.org.lb Yemen Ar

women in particular, since they represent about 60% of the project's total beneficiaries. It also contributes to achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls through tailored programs directed specifically at women. Through this grant, attempts are made to contribute to meeting the needs of rural youth and support small productive projects that may help improve youth entrepreneurship, address their economic problems, reduce poverty and unemployment rates, including solving the issue of youth displacement from rural to urban areas in search of jobs.

The Foundation is also working on several other projects related to youth empowerment, such as the Youth Entrepreneurship Support Project and Financial Inclusion of Youth Project, which seek to avail the appropriate conditions for youth economic empowerment and prevent them from joining extremist or armed groups. Similarly, the Youth Loan Fund, which is implemented in partnership with Al-Amal Bank, intends to develop innovative financial services for youth, together with Agricultural Empowerment of Youth Project through solar power.

5. Other institutions

There are several institutions and civil society organizations working in the area of development, and they implement various projects to support and empower youth, on top of which: **Youth Leadership Development Foundation**, which was established with the objective of supporting young people to express their views and needs and participate in the development drive of Yemen. YLDF provides services to young men and women in Yemen, mainly to help them reach self-sufficiency and economic stability by qualifying them socially to enable them participate in all areas of economic life. Meanwhile, **ROWAD Foundation**, which was launched in 2013 by a number of Yemeni businesspersons, with the aim of engaging and empowering young people in the area of entrepreneurship and development. In addition, UNESCO's **Mobile Youth Initiative** seeks to empower young people in peace building and responding to the humanitarian crisis through information and communication technology. The initiative seeks to engage youth in computer science programming: code learning and problem solving (coding for learning), developing mobile applications that help overcoming sustainable development related challenges at the local level and develop an anti-conflict vision through creativity and innovation.

IV / Policies and Proposals to Promote Adolescent and Youth Empowerment

The previous sections show that adolescents and youth in Yemen are among the most at risk and most vulnerable groups in society, and that multiple challenges have contributed to the modest participation at all levels. However, a more forward-looking to the reality of adolescents and youth in Yemen could be ensured by capitalizing on the available elements of strength and working to overcome challenges and difficulties. There exists a sound organizational and institutional structure to build upon in the future to enhance the economic and social engagement of this segment of the society. In this context, we suggest the following:

At the institutional and organizational level

- Strengthen the capacities of governmental institutions that provide care for adolescents and youth by cementing aspects of partnership with international organizations and non-governmental civil society organizations mandated with development and youth empowerment.
- Integrate the diverse needs of adolescents and youth related to the labor market as well as economic and social empowerment and mainstream them into the state's economic development policies and development aid provided by the donor community. This can be achieved by linking all development and relief actions to the local market needs, including creating new and rapid job opportunities through support to SMEs, income-generating activities related to food production, and support for young people in acquiring productive assets, considering international development frameworks related to global human development, especially the sustainable development goals.
- Cooperate with business clubs to establish SMEs business incubators and youth projects, given their important role in helping young people to market their products and develop their productive and/or administrative capacities.

At the financial side

- Expand micro-finance programs and self-initiatives involving youth and facilitate their access to small soft loans. Such loans have to be linked to capacity building and skills development pertaining to feasibility studies, SMEs establishment procedures, micro-budgeting principles, calculating profits, loan repayment or business expansion. This also includes assisting young people to establish supportive initiatives that magnify their economic and social roles and contributions.

- The government should ensure equal access to financing by both male and female entrepreneurs alike, by taking the necessary measures that influence the supply and demand sides for financing, including steps to improve the knowledge and attitudes of financial institutions, raising awareness among male and female entrepreneurs about funding sources and tools, with women to be further encouraged to join the business owners networks.
- Formulate a National Strategy for Microfinance to promote the industry, integrate sustainable financial services for vulnerable groups to participate the development process and create a broad, diverse and inclusive financial sector. MFIs should also overhaul their procedures related to the size and quality of guarantees required from borrowers and shift from the concept of conventional collateral based guarantees to collective guarantees as an alternative.

At the Policy, Advisory and Technical Support Level

- Enhance access to technical and vocational training pathways and raise their quality, with civil society organizations, youth and community initiatives to raise awareness on the importance of vocational education and training, proper hygiene practices and human rights and societal issues of concern to adolescents and youth.
- It is important to work to engage adolescents and youth as essential actors/participants in the peacebuilding process (political negotiations) and reconstruction, in a way that contributes to improving their economic, political and security situations. Achieving this requires appropriate mechanisms to be adopted by the various United Nations agencies.
- Take advantage of the different mass media outlet to educate young people about the promising economic and social sectors, financing opportunities available to youth, and how to qualify and/or benefit from opportunities.



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