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# YEMEN GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Gender equality and women's empowerment are fundamental to the realization of human rights and sustainable development outcomes.

In Yemen, USAID improves the lives of women and girls by expanding economic opportunities, community leadership, and access to education, health, water, and sanitation services, leading to transformational change within their communities.

## ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

USAID increases women's economic independence in Yemen through job creation, placement, and training support which give women competitive skills in the labor market. Through support to women's business associations, USAID promotes more gender-equitable participation in economic policy dialogue and decision-making. Technical assistance to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and workforce development programs helps women secure new and better investment and employment opportunities and increase their household incomes. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2021, USAID helped more than 500 Yemeni women get jobs in healthcare, education, and manufacturing. USAID initiatives provide women with better access to loans and other financial products to support women-owned SMEs; USAID provided more than \$1.34 million in loans to women in the last year. USAID training and technical assistance in the agricultural and fisheries sectors is creating viable and sustainable livelihoods for women. In the last year, USAID provided training on agricultural productivity and food security to more than 3,500 women.

## COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

USAID prioritizes the inclusion of women in community engagement to ensure their voices contribute to resolving local grievances and strengthening social cohesion. To ensure women's viewpoints, concerns, and priorities are considered, USAID facilitates women-inclusive discussions with government, tribal, political, and religious leaders; incorporates gender advisers, female community organizers, and female project staff in leadership roles; organizes women-specific community outreach events; and integrates men in advocating for women's rights. Through small grants, USAID supported 15 initiatives in the last year to increase the participation of women and youth in community peacebuilding initiatives and civic engagement.

## ACCESS TO SERVICES

### EDUCATION

In Yemen, the odds are stacked against a girl's access to education—from high rates of child marriage among girls contributing to the gender gap in dropout rates<sup>1</sup>; prioritizing boys' education over girls'; plummeting girls' enrollment rate compared to that of the boys';<sup>2</sup> a lack of female teachers; shrinking space for girls' education in areas controlled by conservatives and extremists; girls' more-limited transportation options;<sup>3</sup> a lack of functioning toilets in schools; and increased risks of gender-based violence in schools. USAID's education programs help address these challenges by improving access to quality education for all. USAID supports families and communities to create safe learning spaces that prioritize the needs of women and girls; training parents and community members on child protection with a special focus on girls and gender inclusivity in both formal and non-formal education settings; and providing remedial/alternative learning programs, which increase enrollment and retention for girls. In FY 2021, USAID education assistance supported 94,493 female learners; established 38 girls groups and 44 student councils through election processes in 82 schools, providing opportunities for female leadership; and provided critical safe spaces to discuss issues such as forced early marriage and gender-based violence. USAID-funded remedial education classes reached 6,353 at-risk students, over half of whom are girls.

### HEALTH

Among the most-significant issues limiting women's access to health services is a lack of female healthcare professionals.<sup>4</sup> When female health workers are absent, women are less likely to seek services or travel long distances. High fertility levels and limited obstetric and reproductive health services contribute to maternal morbidity and mortality. USAID improves maternal and child health by improving reproductive, maternal, infant, and child health service delivery; engaging with communities to build confidence in the health system; and addressing underlying systemic issues that impede health service delivery. To increase access to and use of health services by women, USAID supports the health

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<sup>1</sup> 36% of girls have dropped out of school compared to 24% of boys. OCHA. 2019 Yemen Humanitarian Needs Overview, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> The rate of girls aged 6 years enrolled in schools is only 40 percent, compared to 63 percent of boys, whereas the enrolment rate of girls in higher education is only 1.1% of the total number of girls in Yemen. GIZ. Promotion of Women's Participation in the Peace Process and Post-Conflict Agenda, August 2018.

<sup>3</sup> USAID studies have noted that boys can more-easily hitch a ride with strangers or hang off the back of a bus.

<sup>4</sup> In 2018, according to the Ministry of Health, only 28 percent of health-care workers were female.

care workforce by training female health providers, including community health workers and midwives. USAID supports stronger linkages and referrals between health facilities, enabling beneficiaries, especially women of reproductive age, to access important services normally unavailable in their communities. In addition, in FY 2021, USAID funding provided more than 182,000 women with access to modern contraceptive methods.

## **WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE (WASH)**

The current crisis has exacerbated the pre-conflict lack of access to clean water and led to an unprecedented cholera outbreak, USAID rehabilitates WASH infrastructure to help provide access to safe water and sanitation facilities for women and girls, which in turn improves their access to education, health services, and economic opportunities as well as providing more safety, privacy and dignity. Women traditionally collect water, a responsibility that interferes with school and work and is often a dangerous task. Upgrades to water, sanitation facilities, and household latrines free up time for studies and employment, while reducing their exposure to gender-based violence along the trail to the water source. In FY 2021, USAID increased access to safe water and sanitation in conflict-affected areas by rehabilitating water and sanitation systems and constructing household latrines for more than 16,000 women and girls. Hygiene awareness sessions for more than 14,500 women accelerated positive behavior change at the individual, family, community, and institutional levels.