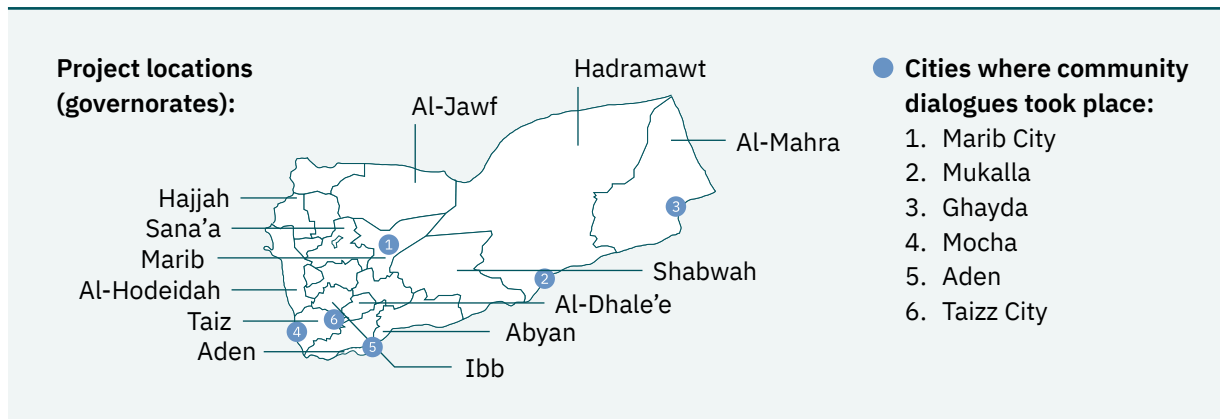


Evaluation Synthesis: Yemen Project

Environmental Pathways for Reconciliation in Yemen



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Dialogue on addressing climate security risks and improving environmental governance **builds trust and strengthens relationships** – both among communities, as well as between political actors and national decision-makers – creating unique entry points for multi-track peacemaking in Yemen based on jointly tackling shared environmental issues.
- Applying a **bottom-up approach in environmental peacemaking**, elevating voices of often marginalised social groups with national policy-makers, can be an effective way to put their needs and priorities of vulnerable people as relevant and legitimate.
- Operating across community, technical and national levels (from Track 1.5 to Track 3) enables **local perspectives to inform national and international agendas**, such as UN-led efforts to implement a Roadmap for Peace in Yemen.



Promoting trust and cohesion: Feedback from 14 community dialogues on climate security indicated that **91%** of participants felt more connected to others.



Understanding climate security risks and peace: Consultations with over **3,600 Yemenis** found that **82%** prioritise addressing climate risks amid the ongoing conflict, with most emphasising the need to include environmental issues in peace negotiations – providing a clear mandate for integrating environmental concerns into peace and governance efforts.



Supporting an inclusive peace process: The project expanded participation among underrepresented groups, with female staff facilitating dialogues, and encouraging other women – who comprised 43% of consultation participants and 28% of community dialogue participants – to share their perspectives and experiences.

Project Overview

After more than 10 years of armed conflict, diplomatic efforts have yet to find a resolution to the war in Yemen. Worsening environmental degradation and the intensifying impacts of climate change are exacerbating the conflict. Warfare has inflicted severe damage on infrastructure and farmland, and has caused widespread pollution across the country. Moreover, the conflict has weakened the capacity of public authorities to manage natural resources, protect ecosystems and advance adaption measures in response to climate change impacts such as droughts and flash floods. These dynamics fuel increasing competition over natural resources and socio-demographic challenges such as displacement, which undermine social cohesion and trust in the capacity of public institutions to prevent and resolve environmental issues.

Since 2022, the **Environmental Pathways for Reconciliation (EPfR)** project, implemented by the European Institute of Peace (EIP), has been exploring how the environment can serve as an entry point for conflict resolution, prevention and reconciliation in Yemen. EPfR supports local, national and international actors in responding to security risks linked to unsustainable natural resource management, environmental degradation and climate change through technical dialogue, integrated analysis and advice. Key activities have included:

- a national environmental peacemaking consultation process across 13 governorates to identify the most pressing conflict-related environmental risks, providing a strong foundation for policymakers to improve local security and living conditions;
- community dialogues to build trust and identify feasible solutions that strengthen local resilience;
- technical dialogues with national decision-makers to define priorities and identify entry points for stronger cross-institutional cooperation;
- practice-orientated analysis and advocacy to inform and support peace efforts.

By deepening understanding of the links between climate and environmental security, and creating inclusive spaces for cooperation, EPfR has **strengthened trust and resilience to both conflict and environmental risks**, laying the foundation for a sustainable and inclusive peace in Yemen.

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My conviction has grown about the importance of environmental issues in creating local conflicts and promoting local peace. I can now help enhance community awareness of environmental issues, their importance in promoting peace and how they affect people's lives. The environment is the first and most critical issue – it is the foundation of stability, peace and economic progress.

– Community dialogue participant from Marib

Key Outcomes and Insights

An interim evaluation¹ of the first two phases of the project (late 2022 to 2024) demonstrates that integrating climate and environmental security into peacemaking can create new opportunities for dialogue, building trust, collaboration and reconciliation in Yemen – from the local to the national level. Key findings include:

IMPROVED UNDERSTANDING OF HOW CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS INTERSECT WITH CONFLICT-INFORMED, HIGH-LEVEL PEACE PROCESSES.

A large consultation, involving over 3,600 Yemenis across 13 governorates,² found that 52% of participants had experienced tensions or conflicts related to environmental or natural resource issues, most commonly concerning water, land, pollution and energy; 82% viewed addressing climate risks as important amid the ongoing conflict; while around 60% favoured including environmental considerations in conflict resolution processes. These bottom up insights increased interest and receptivity among national and international actors engaged in the Yemen Peace Roadmap. In addition, the insights informed briefings and Track 2 coordination, encouraged the integration of climate and environmental security into peace efforts, and illustrated pathways from grassroots evidence to Track 1 and Track 1.5 engagement.

DIALOGUES WITH COMMUNITIES AND WITH NATIONAL ACTORS ABOUT CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY CONTRIBUTED TO BUILDING TRUST AND SOCIAL COHESION.

The project held 14 community dialogues across five governorates³ with 207 participants from civil society, local authorities and traditional leaders to discuss environmental and climate security risks, and co-design responses. Follow-up surveys with the participants indicated an increase in awareness of environmental risks to security, interest and capacity to act. Over 90% of participants reported feeling more motivated to engage in environmental or peacemaking efforts, and 72% felt more enabled to address environmental issues in Yemen. The dialogues also built trust, with 91% reporting improved connections with others. In Al-Mahra, Hadramawt and Marib, participants achieved informal agreements on the most-pressing environmental risks affecting livelihoods and peace. In addition, several local authorities requested further dialogues in other cities, and local leaders sought mediation support on disputed issues related to oil and sanitation, signalling uptake beyond the participating actors.

Nevertheless, a decade of armed conflict has led to the disintegration of Yemen's institutions, eroded governance capacity, and weakened policies and programmes aimed at addressing environmental issues and risks at the local and national levels. Overcoming these barriers requires interdisciplinary integration and partnerships to gradually rebuild accountable institutions and governance grounded in community needs and led by local actors. As a first step, the project's dialogue with technical and political actors at the national level have demonstrated the convening power of environmental issues to identify shared needs, interests and priorities, build relationships across political divides and decision-making sectors, and ultimately strengthen integration across governance structures.

1 The evaluation used a systematic mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, including surveys, key informant interviews, participation tracking and project documentation. It also reviewed requests and feedback to the European Institute of Peace. All data was assessed across five categories: effectiveness, relevance and responsiveness, coherence, sustainability, and gender and inclusivity.

2 Target governorates were selected based on environmental, geographic and political diversity to maximise representation, as well as cultural, demographic and political significance. Participants represented a wide range of demographics, including men and women of different ages, education attainment and occupations.

3 Implemented in Aden, Al Mahra, Hadramawt, Marib and Taiz (including Mocha and Taiz City).



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INCLUSIVE, BOTTOM-UP APPROACHES ENHANCED THE CREDIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PEACEMAKING.

Prioritising the participation of women, young people and other marginalised groups strengthened local ownership, and established the credibility and viability of the project's environmental peacemaking approach among local and national actors. Women comprised 43% of consultation participants, exceeding the target, and 28% of community dialogue participants, despite significant barriers such as the underrepresentation of women in technical and political decision-making, and mobility restrictions. Broad participation helped highlight locally grounded priorities and conferred legitimacy on engagements with higher-level decision-makers, who often overlook these groups, demonstrating the potential of climate and environmental issues to drive broader inclusion. Notably, community members involved in the Pathways for Reconciliation Platform have initiated extended consultations to map environmental disputes, while traditional leaders in Marib have pursued funding for environmental mediation – both signs of community buy-in and mobilisation from deliberation to problem-solving.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Continuous monitoring has been essential for enhancing the project's responsiveness and generating insights relevant to the wider field. The project has identified the following key lessons and recommendations for integrated programming:

LESSON 1:

DEDICATED DIALOGUE SPACES ON SHARED ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CONCERNS PROVIDE A LESS POLITICISED, TECHNICAL FOUNDATION FOR ENGAGEMENT, TRUST, SOCIAL COHESION AND COOPERATION.

Such spaces help to build mutual understanding between different socio-demographic and political groups by identifying common interests and needs around natural resources, while also increasing knowledge of and building the capacity to address intersecting environmental, climate and conflict risks. By encouraging practical coordination between different groups, dialogue lays the groundwork for locally led responses and builds lasting confidence.

Recommendations for practitioners

Support dedicated dialogue platforms on environment, climate, peace and security: Environmental and peacebuilding organisations should expand investment in locally owned, sustainable spaces for regular dialogue between technical, political and civil society actors to address environmental and climate-related security risks. These platforms should prioritise building trust and resilience from the community to the national level.

Recommendations for policymakers

Mandate and fund multi-level dialogue on climate and environmental security risks as a part of peacebuilding: Policymakers aiming to achieve stabilisation in a context of multifaceted environmental security risks should invest in technical dialogue as an entry point to build trust and foundational reconciliation where political negotiations have stalled.

Integrate funding streams along development, humanitarian and peacebuilding priorities to support long-term resilience, while delivering short-term dividends: Providing light technical and capacity-building assistance to local and national authorities, local organisations, and communities, as well as convening technical and political actors can generate co-benefits on both peace and environmental dimensions. In addition, small-scale, locally allocated grants that complement multi-year dialogue processes help generate visible success stories, reinforcing trust and confidence in the process.

LESSON 2:

INCLUSIVE DIALOGUE REVEALS LOCAL CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITIES, ENABLING THE INTEGRATION OF THESE PRIORITIES INTO HIGH-LEVEL PEACE PROCESSES.

Engaging diverse societal groups shows how climate and environmental stressors – such as water scarcity, land degradation, pollution and access to energy – translate into local tensions and security risks, as well as what remedies communities view as feasible. These insights create a clear mandate to integrate environmental concerns into high-level peace processes. Inclusive participation deepens local ownership and aligns activities with lived realities, improving relevance, uptake and sustainability.

Recommendations for practitioners

Provide channels and formats for diverse local groups to express environmental needs, identify priorities and map pathways for action: By convening and consulting community members to map environmental stressors and drivers of conflict, prioritise remedies, and co produce action plans and project proposals, practitioners can increase community ownership and buy-in for technical solutions.

Create feedback loops that link local, national and international levels: Practitioners should support cross-track integration to ensure legitimacy and local ownership. This can be done by systematically involving local actors in design and implementation, channelling local needs and ideas to relevant national forums; connecting local actors to international donors; and maintaining two way feedback so communities can see how their input shapes agendas, decisions and implementation.

Recommendations for policymakers

Enhance local engagement and ownership in national environmental policy and peace processes: Policymakers and authorities should ensure the inclusive and meaningful participation of diverse societal groups in policymaking and peace efforts from Track 1 to Track 3. This can be achieved through structured, bottom-up consultation that reaches marginalised and hard-to-access constituencies, and through establishing feedback loops between local and national levels that validate priorities.



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Prioritise direct and accessible funding: By creating flexible funding instruments that are accessible to local actors across policy and programming levels, such as small-scale action grants, donors can leverage and enhance local capacities, and build trust in longer-term dialogue processes.

LESSON 3:

ENVIRONMENTAL PEACEMAKING CREATES ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIVERSE GROUPS, ESPECIALLY WOMEN.

Because environmental issues affect diverse groups, participation becomes more acceptable across social divides, highlighting the importance of action by local authorities, communities and individuals. Providing leadership opportunities for women – for instance, in dialogue facilitation – lowers barriers to participation, and ensures that peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts – from planning to decision-making and implementation – reflect a broader range of experiences and needs.

Recommendations for practitioners

Apply a gender-responsive lens to project planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring: Practitioners across the development, environmental, humanitarian and peace sectors should promote the equitable participation of women and other underrepresented groups in dialogue, planning and decision-making. This requires understanding barriers to participation through gender-sensitive conflict analysis and adopting flexible measures to address them, such as allocating budgets for family accompaniment and providing gender-sensitive facilitation training for enumerators.

Support the leadership of women to ensure programming reflects their needs and leverages their agency: Prioritising the involvement of female staff and experts in designing and leading project activities – particularly in areas with low female representation such as technical capacity-building on environmental topics, dialogue facilitation and high-level advocacy – can enhance women’s meaningful participation in programming, while fostering female leadership beyond the project.

Recommendations for policymakers

Support gender-responsive programming: Policymakers and donors should uphold guidelines for gender-responsive programmes and prioritise gender-related outcomes in programme impact. Encouraging practitioners to utilise evidence-based qualitative and quantitative impact-related indicators to capture women’s engagement and contributions strengthens inclusion. Furthermore, policymakers and donors can promote gender-sensitive budgeting by incorporating it into funding requirements and approving additional costs to facilitate the participation of women.

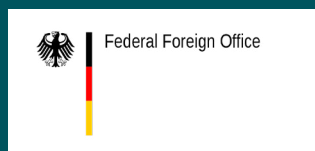
Outlook

Building on the foundations of inclusive dialogue and evidence-based engagement, the next phase of the EPfR project will further integrate environmental and climate security considerations into Yemen's peace and policymaking processes through sustained national-level engagement. Efforts will focus on channelling local dialogue and consultation outcomes to decision-makers at the local, national and international levels through technical dialogue, advice and capacity-building, and practice-orientated analysis, while maintaining feedback loops with community representatives. The project will also continue to foster the inclusion and leadership of women across its activities, ensuring that dialogue and policy initiatives reflect the needs and roles of women. By maintaining its bottom-up, multi-track approach, the EPfR project is well positioned to connect local perspectives with national strategies, advancing sustainable peace and strengthening environmental governance in Yemen.

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SUPPORTED BY



PUBLISHED BY

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DATE

October 2025

COVER PHOTO

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SUGGESTED CITATION

Geres, L., Martínez, A., al-Omeisy, H., al-Salahi S., Viehoff, A., Steinkraus, A., Whitaker, E. (2025). Evaluation synthesis: Yemen project: Environmental pathways for reconciliation in Yemen. Weathering Risk Peace Pillar. Berlin: adelphi research.