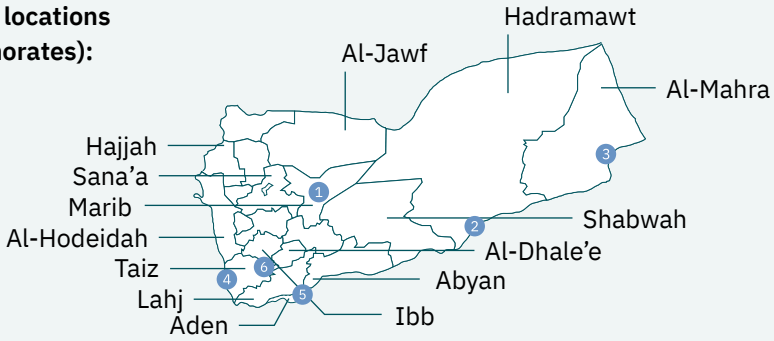
WEATHERING RISK
PEACE PILLAR

Impact Synthesis: Yemen Project

Environmental Pathways for Reconciliation in Yemen

Updated October 2026 | European Institute of Peace

Project locations (governorates):



Cities where community dialogues took place:

1. Marib City
2. Mukalla
3. Ghayda
4. Mocha
5. Aden
6. Taiz City

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Dialogues on addressing climate security risks and improving environmental governance amid armed conflict **builds trust and strengthens relationships between political actors and among communities**, 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 vulnerable and 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 **17 community dialogues** on climate security and water 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.

Using environmental matters as an entry point for dialogue and cooperation: The project successfully convened 3 bilateral and 2 unilateral technical dialogues between key national-level parties, leveraging shared environmental challenges as an entry point to develop joint solutions and strengthen cooperation.

adelphi RESEARCH

EUROPEAN INSTITUTE OF PEACE

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:

> **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

- 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 on climate security and water security 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.

Key Outcomes and Insights

An evaluation[1] from late 2022 to September 2026 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.

The project conducted a large consultation, involving over 3,600 Yemenis across 13 governorates.[2] It 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 17 community dialogues across five governorates[3] 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-related security risks, 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. The dialogues focused on resolving disputes and conflicts over water through state, customary and civic mediation approaches. 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 has 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).

© Nazeh Mohammed, EIP

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.

SHARED ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS ARE AN EFFECTIVE ENTRY POINT FOR DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION BETWEEN THE PARTIES TO A CONFLICT.

Environmental matters can provide a space for engagement when other channels of dialogue are stalled. The project brought together representatives from key national-level parties in a series of structured dialogues focused on addressing water scarcity. Throughout the dialogues, both parties agreed on a common framework for engagement, identified and prioritised environmental challenges and developed a draft roadmap to address water challenges. The dialogues also contributed to positive shifts in attitudes. One senior delegate described how, before the meeting, he had been "preparing for a battle". Afterwards, both delegations' members expressed greater willingness to work as "one team", having recognised that environmental risks do not distinguish between political parties.

EVIDENCE LINKING THE ENVIRONMENT TO PEACE AND CONFLICT DYNAMICS IN YEMEN STRENGTHENED THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS FOR STAKEHOLDERS AND THE PROJECT TEAM.

The project conducted four assessments to analyse environmental issues within the wider social, economic, political and security context, rather than treating them as a standalone sector. The assessments focused on (a) the impact of the armed conflict on the solid waste sector; (b) the status of surface and groundwater; (c) the mediation of water-related disputes and (d) an integrated climate and conflict analysis of Yemen. Together, the four assessments mapped the ways armed conflict directly and indirectly undermines natural resources and environmental integrity. They also identified

concrete entry points to address these impacts through sustainable and peaceful means. The assessments answered questions such as how is water managed across frontlines and how are disputes resolved when water is at the centre of violence? The analyses strengthened understanding of environmental governance and peace processes. They provided the project team and relevant stakeholders with a shared evidence base for programming and dialogue.

SUSTAINED SITUATION MONITORING AND ISSUE-BASED PROJECT DESIGN ENABLED THE PROJECT TO ADAPT TO A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN THE ARMED CONFLICT.

Following the military offensive by one of the conflict parties in the eastern governorates in December 2025, the Track 1.5 dialogue facilitated by the project had to be discontinued. The project therefore required review. This was possible because the project had already established three key things:

a. discreet contact[4] with both parties and a rolling assessment of potential short and medium-term conflict scenarios;
b. relationships developed over three years with other actors, including ministries, governorate authorities and civil society and
c. an urgent agenda focused on climate security and water scarcity, which remained relevant regardless of political developments.

The joint outcome documents from the 2025 dialogues informed the project review, and these two topics served as entry points to continue engagement with the authorities following the escalation.

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.

4 Discreet contact: Confidential, low-profile communication with both parties to facilitate information exchange, sustain trust, and engagement.

© Nazeh Mohammed, EIP

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.
- **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.

© Nazeh Mohammed, EIP

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.

LESSON 4:

INTEGRATED ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH PRODUCE IMPLEMENTABLE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE AND PEACE PROCESSES.

Analysing environmental issues alongside the social, economic, political and security dimensions in Yemen, instead of in isolation, proved to be a key success factor. This integrated approach clarified how armed conflict degrades natural resources and environmental integrity. It also enabled the identification of concrete peace responses that reflect the capacities, authorities and interests of actors on the ground. The reach of the four assessments extended beyond informing the facilitated dialogue processes and informed the work of UN Special Envoy to Yemen (OSESGY) on climate security, diplomats focusing on water issues in Yemen and researchers from think tanks and academia focusing on identifying peace solutions to environmental issues in countries affected by armed conflict.

Recommendations for practitioners

- **Conduct integrated environmental assessments in conflict-affected settings:** Purely technical questions will yield findings that are accurate but difficult to apply when local actors have limited capacities and resources, or when security conditions make implementation difficult. Practitioners should frame technical questions within the wider the social, economic, political and security context. They should also build teams that combine environmental, political and peace expertise. This approach can make the relationship between armed conflict and environmental pressures easier to understand and address. Environmental analyses that fail to consider the broader dynamics are less likely to identify practical, feasible recommendations.
- **Treat conflict analyses as an ongoing process:** Conflict analysis should not remain a one-off activity at the start of the project, especially when the projects spanning multiple years. Projects should assign responsibility to a designated lead and establish a fixed review cycle. They should also link monitorable indicators to log frame assumptions and consider how outcomes and outputs contribute to the issue to be addressed through dialogue processes. This can improve understanding of the conflict dynamics, strengthen scenario planning and support contingency measures that help sustain delivery when conditions change.

Recommendation for policymakers

- **Promote environment, peace and security analysis as shared evidence rather than project-specific deliverables:** National authorities, local civil society and international actors working across humanitarian, development and environmental portfolios often duplicate analyses without fully considering the peace and security dimensions. By sharing integrated assessments with relevant authorities, embassies, envoys and multilateral channels can strengthen the quality of decision-making across programmes. It can also connect environmental priorities more directly to political and peace objectives.

LESSON 5:

ANCHORING ENVIRONMENTAL PEACEMAKING PROJECTS IN ISSUES LIKE WATER SCARCITY AND LOSS OF LIVELIHOODS, RATHER THAN PARTIES, CAN HELP THEM WITHSTAND VOLATILE POLITICAL CONTEXTS.

The project was designed around political and security assumptions established in 2022. Three years later, a major escalation in the conflict made these assumptions no longer applicable. Direct and discreet contact with relevant actors, combined with monitoring and understanding contextual developments, enabled the project team to understand the changing situation, review the project swiftly and adapt.

Recommendations for practitioners

- **Engage political and environmental actors at all levels:** In addition to the project's main political engagement and dialogue process, practitioners should involve relevant environmental and political actors across other Tracks. Broadening engagement can improve the project's understanding of different priorities and needs, strengthen its credibility and legitimacy and create alternative pathways for engagement if political conditions change and periods of political uncertainty.
- **Adopt adaptive management and planning throughout implementation:** Project teams working in conflict settings should regularly review their project assumptions. Political and military developments can quickly alter stakeholder relationships and implementation pathways, making periodic reviews key to adapting before major disruptions occur.

Recommendation for policymakers

- **Treat conflict analysis and foresight as core activities rather than an inception activity:** Foreign policymakers funding projects in conflict-affected countries, including those in the environment, development and humanitarian fields, should allow flexibility in project design. Allowing activities such as rapid project reviews upon contextual shifts enables implementing partners to deliver through different formats. It incentivises continuation of processes that otherwise may no longer be viable.

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- and local-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 on addressing national water disputes, advice and capacity-building on climate planning and early warning to extreme weather events in severely-affected coastal governorates and practice-oriented analysis, while maintaining engagement with community representatives, especially with customary leaders, tribal authorities and water user associations.

The project will also continue to foster the inclusion and leadership of women across its activities, ensuring these reflect the needs and roles of women. By maintaining its bottom-up and 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.

AUTHORS
Laura Geres (EIP), Albert Martinez (EIP) Hisham al-Omeisy (EIP), Suaad al-Salahi (EIP), Alina Viehoff (adelphi research), Alexandra Steinkraus (adelphi research), Nesmah M. Ali (EIP) and Emma Whitaker (adelphi research)

SUPPORTED BY

german cooperation
DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

PUBLISHED BY
adelphi research gemeinnützige GmbH
Alt-Moabit 91, 10559 Berlin, Germany
+49 (0) 8900068-0
office@adelphi-research.de
www.adelphi-research.de

LAYOUT
Odile Stabon

COPY EDITING
Jonathan West

DATE
October 2026

COVER PHOTO
© Nazeh Mohammed, EIP

LICENSE
For texts in this publication, the publishers grant a license under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution No Derivatives 4.1 International. You may reproduce and share the licenses material if you name adelphi as follows: '© adelphi research CCBY ND 4.0.' Photographs and graphics are not covered by this license. In case of doubt please contact adelphi research prior to reusing the material.

© adelphi research, 2026

SUGGESTED CITATION
Geres, L., Martinez, A., al-Omeisy, H., al-Salahi S., Viehoff, A., Steinkraus, A., N. Ali., Whitaker, E. (2026). Evaluation synthesis: Yemen project: Environmental pathways for recon ciliation in Yemen. Weathering Risk Peace Pillar. Berlin: adelphi research.