

**Activity presented by the Yemeni Women’s Voices Platform 2023**

**Mechanisms and methods of support and solidarity with women: How can men support women in Yemen?**

**October 29, 2023 / four o’clock afternoon**

**Number of attendees: 20 person, 60% women, 40% men**

**Expert Mohammed Farea, Trainer and Activist from Taiz.**

 **Asmaa Abdul Qader, Graduate of medicine, from Sanaa.**

 **Abdul Rahman Anis, An influential university professor from
 Aden.**

**Activity Host Sakina Muhammad, Journalist and information auditor.**



On October 29, 2023, the Yemeni Women’s Voices Platform organized an activity via Zoom on mechanisms and methods of support and solidarity with women and how men can support women in Yemen. Several experts and attendees were invited to exchange and share knowledge about support mechanisms and successful experiences that worked in everyday life.

The activity came out with a number of recommendations provided by experts to a number of Yemeni girls and boys, who interacted with and asked a number of questions. The online activity was facilitated by **journalist Sakina Mohammed**.

* **Activity Facilitator**

**Sakina Mohammad,** a Yemeni journalist and information auditor, holds a bachelor's degree in Radio and Television at Sana’a University. Sakina has many journalistic contributions to Yemeni platforms such as Khayat and Al-Mashaed. Her interests focus on youth and women’s issues, and humanitarian issues.

* **Experts**

**Mohammad Farea**

Trainer and activist in advocacy and support for women’s rights. Mohammed Farea supported his wife, Mrs. Iman Al-Ariqi, until she was able to establish her own project, “Mazgan Café,” in Taiz city, southwest of Yemen.

**Asma Abdul-Qadir Al-Husami**

A graduate of human medicine at Sana'a University. She has a disability with short stature, which is affected by hereditary genes, and is approximately 115 cm tall. She studied primary and middle school at Khawla Bint Al-Azwar Girls' School and secondary school at Al-Hidaya Bani Al-Hussam School. She was the first in her class.

**Abdul Rahman Anis**

A university teacher at the College of Arts, University of Aden. He holds a master’s degree in journalism and media at the University of Aden. He worked as managing editor of the October 14 newspaper in Aden from 2009 to 2013, a director of news and programs, and correspondent for many Yemeni radio stations, newspapers, and websites. He works as a trainer in the fields of journalism, media, and media organization management.

**Introduction by Sakina Muhammad**

Women in Yemen are confronted with behaviors that distinguish them from their male peers from the moment they are born. The upbringing factors begin either with barriers for these women or with real support that transform women’s roles in society into individuals capable of interacting with the social environment and moves them from a view of helplessness and a life of dependency to a self-reliant personality.

As a part of participatory and complementary life, women in our society need men for support and to stand by their side. They need supportive males.

A need that depends on positivity and belief in what the man can offer to the woman, not out of sympathy or enhancing the societal view towards her, but rather out of belief in her abilities and potential.

In this symposium devoted to “Mechanisms and methods of support and solidarity with women: How can men support women in Yemen?”, we will talk about topics related to active men, who are committed to their societies by supporting women, each in their own appropriate way and based on their experiences. We will learn about their experiences here as a confirmation of their positivity, which prompted us to have them with us, such as Muhammad Farea, who was supportive of his wife Iman and they were successful in their careers together.

We have Asmaa Al-Husami, the doctor who overcame difficulties and faced challenges from bullying, discouragement, and lack of belief in her abilities, to become what she wanted to be, with the support of her father and brothers.

**DISCUSSION POINTS**

1. Men's support for women, possible and appropriate methods and mechanisms.
2. The importance of family male support and what it means to women. Its impact on their work and future.
3. The role played by influencers who support women's issues and their importance to society.
4. Advice for men about the importance and value of solidarity with women and supporting them.
5. Advice for women on how to prove themselves to their families and convince them to support them.
6. Advice for male and female influencers on how to overcome social attacks against them, absorb the anger and provide positive content about women’s successes to enhance their presence.

**Symposium summary**

Male and Female speakers shed light on the methods and mechanisms of supporting women in a society classified as masculine, supporting them to engage in the labor market with a firm belief in the importance of their presence. The discussions focused on the obstacles that women face in managing any project in the market and how the outlook towards women managing their own projects can be changed. In addition to the importance of believing in her abilities and working on that as an important factor in supporting her.

**Symposium on mechanisms and methods of support and solidarity with women: How can men support women in Yemen?**

It was held via Zoom video communication technology, on October 29, 2023, and was allocated to members of the Yemeni Women’s Voices platform group on Facebook, which is a closed group. The 20 most active male and female members to the posts within the group were invited. The ratio was 60% women and 40% men.

Mohammad Farea began his speech by telling the story of his support for his wife, Iman. He described it as an experience that made him feel grateful for himself, because they formed a successful couple and their success was witnessed and appreciated by the society in Taiz. In his talk about the experience he highlighted a number of points that required him to take such a step in a society known for its conservative nature and interacting with women based on customs and traditions.

**Mohammad Farea** spoke about the will that Iman has and the desire to continue what she started. This made him always support her out of his belief in her abilities and potential, not only as a wife but also as a cook who differs from others with her delicious food. This was the reason for her success today. She owns Mazgan Café and runs it with her husband, Mohammad Farea, who has supported her.

**Mohamed Farea: ‘’*It is my duty to stand with Iman. Because success is for all of us and we do not share all aspects of life, because of personal and work difficulties, but we overcame them.’’***

**Mohammed Farea gave a number of tips that must be taken in order to have men support women, including:**

* Good upbringing of children from a young age on equality and that a sister has the same rights and duties as a brother.
* The brother should be the girl’s primary support and protector.
* The correct social system begins with a family that raises a generation with positive ideas that believes in women’s right to everything in life.

During Farea’s talk about his experience supporting Iman, a number of attendees via chat demanded the necessity of inviting Iman to be present and participate, to listen to her experience, how she benefited from her husband and how they faced social circumstances together.

Iman’s response was: ‘’As my husband and friend Mohammad Farea said, he really stood by me and supported me a lot, psychologically and financially, and in his presence. I felt courageous to go out into the labor market.

I was criticized by my family, out of fear because I faced some health issues. I used to and still look at criticisms as individual actions of people who are not receptive to the presence of women in the market, especially in Taiz. The perception of me as a woman providing a service to cafe patrons was inferior. I was very upset, but my husband’s support and positive conversations with me impacted positive had a positive effect and raised my morale.’’

**Iman Al-Ariqi: ‘*’I used to and still look at criticisms as individual actions of people who are not receptive to the presence of women in the market, especially in Taiz.*’’**

Asmaa Al-Husami quoted a special story about a girl who suffers from short stature due to hereditary genes and how she was able with the support of the male members of her family, to overcome illness and bullying to graduate from the College of Medicine at Sana’a University and be an inspiration. In the midst of the conversation, Asmaa recalls her experiences with her father’s support as well as her brother, who used to transport her to the college to study before his death. She also shared the support she usually needs, starting from leaving the door of the house, transportation and then to the door of the hospital clinic.

**Asmaa Al-Husami: ‘*’My father played the biggest role in my education. He was the reference for me at all stages of my studies, I inspired the will and determination to complete my studies from him.*’’**

Asmaa summarized some advice for women to have the motivation to convince the men in their families to support them and believe in their abilities. She called them to:

* Determine their goal in life.
* Try to make their families aware of the importance of education and that is a religious duty that society needs.
* To have some successful female role models who have learned and become important in society, whether locally or internationally.
* Be determined to excel and insist on continuing their education and seek the help of their educated relatives to convince their families of the importance of continuing their education.

The participation then moved on to discuss the role of influencers on social networking sites and the mechanisms of addressing topics that society classifies as sensitive to women's issues, which Abdulrahman Anis warned about in his input. He believes that it is necessary to discuss topics in a positive way that serves the presence of women and represents support for them. He adds that the influencer should have a broad knowledge of how to address support without a community clash and how to gradually ensure that the public accepts the methods of support and becomes a supporter of the presence of women in various fields.

He also added that the male or female influencers in social media should have full faith in the issues he or she espouses and focus on issues where positive support is concentrated from a compendium of positive stories of strong and exemplary women who were able to make a difference.

**Abdul Rahman Anis: '’*It is necessary to discuss topics in a positive way that serves the presence of women and represents support for them. He adds that the influencer should have a broad knowledge of how to address support without a community clash, and how to gradually ensure that the public accepts the methods of support and becomes a supporter of the presence of women in various fields*.’’**

**Abdul Rahman Anis: Tips to influencers**

* You are the owners of a message, and as the owner of this message you must avoid doing harm in order to deliver the message you believe in.
* We must withstand abuse and not respond to abuse with abuse.
* Sincerely strive to try to make a change in community awareness in this regard.

Working according to a well-thought-out mechanism and not slipping into stubbornness or challenging society, no matter any shocking or bad reaction is.

The audience interventions were characterized by praise and appreciation for everything he mentioned whether from the two experiences or regarding the discussion about influencers and the role they must take to achieve the goal and deliver the message of empowerment and creating a community of support and advocates for women’s issues.

**Details**

1. **Men's support for women, possible methods and mechanisms.**

**Mohamed Farea**

The story of how I met my wife, Mrs. Iman Al-Ariqi, was important. We met in a government office and we got married. I went through very difficult circumstances and Iman stood by me at a time when everyone abandoned me. She was my true support in the first years of the war when I lost my job and we began to think about a project.

I discovered that my wife Iman is skilled in cooking, and Iman originally had experience in importing and selling some products for women. Therefore, she had cooking skills and was also skilled in marketing and selling.

Iman had the will and I believe in the empowerment of someone who already has the will. This is what makes the person reach success faster than others. This was the starting point for Iman to help me and she was very understanding of my working conditions. After that, I got involved in the training field and offered an external organization that held training in Taiz to offer lunch cooked by Iman to them. They were impressed by Iman's skill in cooking and her distinctive personality in flavors and in the way of serving.

At the beginning of war in Yemen 2015, Iman and I became convinced that the financial return from a government job was not enough, so we decided to open our own project. We then opened Mazgan Café as the first café managed by a woman in Taiz.

And so she was setting a goal for her career and her passion. Iman tried to work and devote her efforts to work with high professionalism and unfortunately this affected her health, and this is something that saddens me.

I am referring to Iman’s efficiency in reconciling her home and work. In fact, we are in a patriarchal society, no matter how much a woman works outside her home when she returns, she is required to do all home tasks as if she has added a burden to herself.

As Iman was supporting me in my work, it was also my duty to support and appreciate her.

This is due to a good upbringing. Iman had previous marriage experience, but this did not affect my marriage to her. She had two children from her ex-husband and gave birth to two more children.

It is my duty to support Iman because success is for all of us. There were difficulties like society’s attack on us when I encouraged Iman to reveal her face. In addition to the project's challenges came financial and license obstacles.

**Mohamed Farea: ‘*’All experiences established in us principles and concepts that were reflected in our behavior, our complete belief in partnership ends with support we provide to come back to us, especially men, If you are supportive to your wife, you will provide success.’’***

**Public**: **Greetings to Professor Mohammad, behind every great man is a woman, and behind every great woman is a man.**

1. **Importance of family male support, meaning and impact on a woman’s work and future.**

**Dr. Asmaa Abdul-Qader**

I am Asma Muhammad Abdel-Qader Ali, a doctor graduated from the Faculty of Medicine, Sana’a University, currently practical. I was born with severe short stature and deformed limbs.

I entered school, studied all levels in my village Bani Al-Hussam. After high school, I moved to Sana’a Governorate and enrolled in the College of Medicine. I was suffering from bullying but I did not give up. I was first in my class and I dreamed of studying a different specialization for that I chose medicine to help people with disabilities and people in need.

I was confident in myself that I would achieve my dream, despite difficulties and criticism for my specialization and they told me that it was too difficult for me.

But thanks to God and thanks to my family, with determination, I overcame all the difficulties and obstacles that I faced in life.

My mother was the biggest supporter during school and sometimes I could go to school only because she would carry me on her back to school.

My father played the biggest role in my education. He inspired me and I have my determination to complete my studies from him.

In school, my brother was my friend and classmate. I went to school and university with him and he used to take me there before he died.

I have overcome difficulties and obstacles with great difficulty in transportation, society’s outlook, and bullying. Today I am on the path to achieve what I dreamed of.

I hope that there will be great support from the government and society and that there will be an end to the bullying that hinders many girls from education, especially disabled people and to access medical and basic services on an exceptional basis.

I am now at this stage looking forward to obtaining support that will provide me with a private clinic and continuing my high studies in the field of dermatology, as I dreamed.

**Public**

A wonderful example, Asmaa is strong and able to overcome society's difficulties. Congratulations to her and her family.

1. **The role played by influencers who support women's issues and their importance to society.**

**Abdul Rahman Anis**

The role that influencers and actors play on social media to advocate women’s issues, I tried to summarize them in several points:

* First, influencers and actors on social media must highlight successful models of women who have overcome obstacles, such as Dr. Asmaa in the reviewed example.

If Asmaa’s issues were advocated and highlighted to society, I believe that there are many supporters who would support her study.. There are also many women who have overcome obstacles that are mainly related to their society and family. These should all be highlighted and be role models for women to follow.

* Among the topics that must also be addressed by influencers on social media is community awareness on the importance of women’s participation in public life. Still in 2023, there remains a deficient view towards women in society and the promotion of ideas sometimes in the name of religion and traditions. These ideas are not bad to be fought with intellectual cruelty, to be influential and more courageous so that women can advance further.
* One of the roles that influencers must play is to expose the violations practiced against women in society.. Some of these violations are heartbreaking and unpalatable to the mind. We are surprised by the fact that violations like this occur, if public opinion becomes aware of them, there will be a major reaction. But sometimes, in one way or other women themselves prefer to remain silent because of society or a complicated family situation. Therefore, women must be encouraged to speak in a way that does not harm their reputation or status in society.
* Also, participation of activists and actors in exposing these violations and mobilizing to create a public opinion that rejects any discriminatory violations practiced against women in society.
* One of the important roles that must be focused on is raising the issues of women’s participation in public life gradually according to society’s awareness, because sometimes if they touch with society in a way of challenge, it may generate more resistance to the idea. If we go back to 20, 30, or 40 years ago, they may have been simple things that are self-evident today. They were forbidden matters and today have become very normal. Consequently, whenever these issues were gradually raised, society accepted them positively, while raising the degree of sensitivity when addressing the issue every time.

In addition to traditions challenging, attitudes, stereotypes, and negativity that violence against women, thus making these matters easier to talk about and to address.

* Women should also be encouraged not to remain silent about violence they are exposed to, whether at home, street, workplace, or anywhere else.
* More importantly, if there is a campaign to support and advocate women’s issues on social media, real influencers and actors who are convinced to defend women’s issues should be selected.

**Public**

* One of the most important points is to take community awareness to avoid clashes and gain community support.
* It is necessary to raise awareness for women and the whole society about complaints mechanisms and to understand the provisions of the law that help them report incidents of violence in all its.
* Talking about women’s issues in the reality of society requires conviction, strong strength, and the ability to argue. Society is not ready to discuss things like this and it must be worked on according to strategies. Non-withdrawal and gradualism were tried and we became an example to follow.

**Public Questions and discussion**

**Public To Mohammad Farea**: You mentioned that you were subjected to a lot of negative criticism of you and your wife, Iman Al-Ariqi. How did you overcome that?

**Mohammad Farea**: We were not facing society with a major challenge, so that the moment we felt there would be some sort of clash, we would withdraw. When we opened the café, we were careful that Iman was not present all the time nor were we completely silent, sometimes we were afraid. My car was targeted with gunfire, so we reduced the intensity of the confrontation and decided not to confront it and to continue not retreat.

**Public, Abdul Rahman Anis:** Does discussing details about women on social media create any kind of pressure?

Abdul Rahman Anis: Of course, women’s issues in particular. Whoever raises them must have courage. It is possible that the reaction he gets may be harsh, it may push him to back down if he does not believe in the idea, and we are in a society where when I discuss any issue, the well-known question asked: Would you accept it for yourself, would you accept it for your mother for your sister?, and my answer is yes.There must be no moral lapses. Facing abuse may be a reaction to bad words directed against influencers, and once the influencer responds with abuse, he turns the silent group against him.

**Public audio intervention:**

I agree with Professor Abdul Rahman Anis in what he proposed, that there are supporters of women’s issues who memorize what should be done, but do not understand, they discuss with people a previously memorized idea in addition looking at reality and traditions, then they clash with people and rejection occurs, and they are unable to present their idea in a good way.

Some of the attendees asked to hear Iman’s intervention, who agreed, and it was a brief intervention.

**Iman Al-Areqi**

As my husband and friend Mohammad Farea spoke, he really supported me a lot, psychologically and financially, and in his presence, I felt courageous to go out into the labor market.

I faced criticism from my family, out of fear because I was ill health-wise. I used to view the criticism as individual actions of people who do not accept the presence of women in the market, especially in Taiz. I was viewed as a woman providing service to café-goers as an inferiority. I was very upset, but my husband's support had a positive impact and raised my morale.

**Public, to Asmaa:** For the fulfillment of your dreams, do you need support from males?

**Dr. Asma Abdel-Qader**: Yes, from leaving the house to standing in the street, my work in the hospital and in dealing with patients, I need the support of everyone around me, whether they are family members or others.

**Public audio intervention:**

Thank you to all who shared their experiences. Sometimes journalists are exposed to violence, especially women, as Professor Abdul Rahman mentioned. Despite their attempt to engage with society from a sensitive point of view, they deal with very sensitive issues that reach a point where a project, work or business can be halted as a result.

I had an experience recently when I moved to a new job. The unfortunate thing is that I worked with a person who mostly attacks women and believes that a woman’s place is home.

1. **Advice for men about the importance and value of women solidarity and support.**

**Mohamed Farea**

Good upbringing for children from a young age on equality, that a sister has rights and duties like a brother, that the brother is the primary support and protector of the girl, and that the correct social system begins with a family that raises a generation with positive ideas that believes in women’s right to everything in life.

1. **Advice for women on how to prove themselves to their families and convince them to support them.**

**Dr. Asmaa Abdul-Qader**

Define theirgoal in life and try to make their families aware of the importance of education and that education is a religious dutythat society needs, and that they have some successfulfemale models who have been educated and have become important in society, whether locally or internationally. They work to exceed and insist on continuing education, and seek the help of their educated relatives to convince their families.

1. **Advice for male and female influencers on how to overcome social attacks against them, absorb the anger of some, and provide positive content about women’s successes in a way that enhances their presence.**

**Abdul Rahman Anis**

I say to influencers, you are the bearers of a message, and the one who has the message must be patient with harm to deliver the message he believes in. As much as possible, he must withstand abuse and not respond to abuse with abuse and strive sincerely to try to bring about a change in societal awareness in this regard and work according to this mechanism. Thoughtful and not afraid of challenging society, no matter how great the reaction is, no matter how shocking or bad it is.