

SOCIAL EXCLUSION ANALYSIS – YEMEN

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Social exclusion is a process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged and discriminated against. Socially excluded groups experience *inequalities in access* to resources, opportunities, services, and decision-making. Social exclusion focuses attention on the complex and dynamic nature of poverty. It describes relative rather than absolute deprivation. Exclusion may cause instability and conflict, especially where the state is unwilling or unable to guarantee the rule of law, provide security and deliver services to particular groups. Factors currently driving social exclusion in Yemen are class, descent, gender, age, migrant status and ethnicity. Social exclusion in Yemen is also spatial – both urban and rural spaces where people live are stigmatised and excluded from services.

Formal and informal institutions may cause and/or perpetuate social exclusion. Discrimination occurs in public institutions like the legal system, education or health service, as well as social institutions like the household. In Yemen, there is formal equality under the law. However, informal mechanisms continue to exclude many groups from land ownership, education, justice or running for public office (women, Akhdam).

Analysis of social exclusion in Yemen is complicated for two main reasons:

- Yemen is in transition and is economically and socially diverse. There has been profound economic, political and social change in the past 30 years. Patterns of exclusion and inclusion are therefore varied and still in flux. There is greater inclusion of some previously excluded groups as a result, for example, of improved access to health and education services, migration, new employment opportunities and a rhetoric of legal equality. Yet other changes have led to rising inequality in access to services, opportunities and to justice and political participation. If they are not checked, patterns of inequality may lead to the entrenched exclusion of large parts of the population.
- Another difficulty is a lack of specific data on who is excluded. In order to underscore its commitment to social and political inclusion, the government does not recognize historic status distinctions. Consequently, statistical information is not disaggregated according to social status and sometimes not by region. Upwardly mobile members of groups that were historically excluded will not respond to questions that implicate their former excluded status. All of these factors impede the collection of reliable data on exclusion.

Currently, excluded populations in Yemen include the landless poor (including some members of traditional low status occupational groups, such as Akhdam)

unskilled labourers, unemployed youth, children of the poor, and elderly and handicapped members of poor families. Remote rural communities are excluded from services, and women are increasingly excluded from justice, security and political voice. Key trends underlying exclusion are:

- Expansion of the state and erosion of social capital. Patterns of exclusion have shifted with political, social and economic change. During the imamate in tribally organized communities, tribes and their leaders (shaykhs) were relatively egalitarian, with important checks on the power of shaykhs. Excluded populations were composed primarily of low status occupational groups. They were excluded from land ownership, carrying arms and intermarriage with the tribal and elite populations, but safety nets insured food and employment security and, at least formally, access to justice. In the more highly stratified Tihama, southern highlands, southern coastal region and Hadramawt, service providers were also socially excluded, along with large numbers of landless cultivators. Again, safety nets insured their food security, and informal mechanisms limited the accumulation of wealth among landowners. The government's efforts to consolidate its power through patronage has led to the development of a new class system based on wealth and a devaluation of traditional safety nets for the poor. Selected tribal leaders now enjoy a level of power and impunity that they did not have in the past. With the power of the government and the military behind them, they no longer need to represent the interests of their constituents. The traditional mechanisms that historically checked the unrestrained accumulation of wealth and forced those in power to be accountable to their constituents are no longer effective. Consequently, many of the poor are excluded from justice, security and political participation.
- Accelerated urbanization. Among the 800,000 immigrants who returned from the Gulf in 1991, an estimated 75,000 still lived in temporary housing in Aden and Hodeida in 1996. They remain excluded from food, income and housing security, services and political voice. The rapid growth of towns and cities has led to vast increases in the value of urban land, which, along with declines in social capital have led to widespread exploitation of the most vulnerable populations. Squatters have been forcibly relocated; lands designated as safety nets for the poor have been appropriated, further excluding already vulnerable populations. Lack of support networks and safety nets for many urban newcomers has contributed to their exclusion from justice, income security and services. The landless poor are largely concentrated in squatter settlements in Yemen's towns and cities, especially in the southern governorates. Although not all those who live in squatter settlements are technically Akhdam, the term has become a generic that refers to all those who live in squatter settlements regardless of their original social status.

- Growing marginalization of rural areas. Growing urban populations have put a strain on service delivery systems leading to further declining capacity to deliver services to rural areas and the progressive marginalization and exclusion of rural communities. The increasing marginalization of rural communities has conflict and security implications among some of the more remote communities that feel denied access to services. It is these communities that have resorted to the kidnapping of tourists as an attempt to make their voices heard.
- Decreasing access to land. The restitution of lands in the former PDRY to their former landowners, part of the unification agreement and a way to encourage landowners who had fled the socialist regime to return to Yemen, put 23,000 small tenant farmers at risk. The former beneficiaries of PDRY's land reform measures are now largely excluded from income security, as well as health and education services.
- The most excluded group in Yemen was a pariah group labeled Akhdam (literally, servants). Historically, the term referred to dark-skinned, low status street cleaners, shoe makers, dancers, musicians, healers and ritual experts of the Tihama and southern Yemen. There were few, if any, Akhdam in the North before the 1970s. Although the degree of their exclusion varies with community, Akhdam are almost always disparaged by members of other social groups. In the past 30 years, many members of previously excluded status groups have taken advantage of opportunities for upward mobility through migration and education. Since bans on landownership have been lifted, they have bought land and built houses. Very few members of traditionally excluded groups continue to use traditional status markers to identify themselves. For example, one rarely hears someone self-identify as a member of the Akhdam. Still, many Akhdam and some members of other low status occupational groups continue to be socially excluded.
- Increased unemployment rates – especially for youth. Unemployment is estimated at 13.6% but is probably higher. With nearly 20% of the population aged 15-24 years, severe reductions in agricultural production and few options for migration, growing numbers of youth will continue to be excluded from income and employment security.
- Growing exclusion of women – e.g., the growing popularity of an imported politicized form of Islam that targets women's mobility and their traditional forms of expression. It also targets more tolerant forms of Islam.
- Ethnicity was not an issue historically. All Yemenis, even those who practiced a religion other than Islam (e.g., Jews) spoke Arabic and shared a Yemeni cultural tradition. Since the migration of large numbers of refugees from East Africa and the acquisition of the ethnically distinct Mahra and Socotra, ethnicity may become a problem. There is some indication that refugees from East Africa, especially women, suffer some forms of exclusion. Whether or not ethnicity will become a major site of social exclusion in Yemen cannot be determined without additional research.

In spite of growing polarisation and social exclusion in Yemen, there are important entry points on which development interventions can build. These include:

- A history of egalitarian values in tribal regions and tribal customary law with its checks and balances, co-operative mechanisms and traditions of community assistance to the poor.
- Formal state commitment to equality.
- Migration
- Monetization of the economy.
- Traditions of rural women's mobility and economic participation are important sources of empowerment. If they are enhanced with relevant extension services, this can counteract both the exclusive tendencies of Wahhabism and possibly help reverse the exclusion of rural communities.
- Finally, the major increase in infrastructure, health and education services have all been significant drivers of change in Yemen.

This report is based primarily on desk study. It draws on data collected by the World Bank Country Social Analysis (CSA) teams, published research and unpublished reports on the processes of social exclusion in Yemen. It also draws on the author's long-term field research in Yemen. Parts of earlier drafts of this report have been incorporated into CSA.

THE RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION TO DEVELOPMENT

Definition and Rationale

Development interest in social exclusion stems from the realization that poverty alone does not explain underdevelopment. Poverty is not a simple lack of money and resources or even of education and health care. *Inequality* in access to resources impacts agency. Social exclusion is the process in which some groups are disadvantaged because of who they are, where they live, or what they have come to represent. Those who are socially excluded are less able to lift themselves out of poverty than those who feel included, thus reducing their potential contributions to development. By focusing development attention to *disparities* in economic security, access to health services, educational opportunities and justice which exacerbate the impacts of material poverty, social exclusion directs attention to the multi-dimensional and dynamic nature of poverty (Chronic Poverty Research Centre 2005; Hashem 1996; International Institute for Labour Studies 1994, 1996).

Social exclusion refers to *relative* rather than absolute deprivation. The denial of rights to land ownership in a community where income security depends on land, denial of education or health care when these are available to others, denial of access to community projects or social life in a community all indicate forms of social exclusion. A DFID policy paper defines social exclusion as:

A process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, caste, descent, gender, age, disability, HIV status, migrant status or where they live. Discrimination occurs in public institutions like the legal system, education or health service, as well as social institutions like the household. [2005:5]

For example, in Yemen's history some occupational groups were not permitted to own land, carry arms or intermarry with members of mainstream and elite occupational groups. This discrimination was reinforced informally when they were made the targets of jokes and insults. This kind of exclusion can, "rob people of their ... aspirations and their ability to challenge exclusion" (DFID 2005b:6). The resulting disempowerment makes it very difficult for the excluded to organize into politically effective units and lift themselves out of poverty.

Social exclusion is not only disempowering, but it makes it difficult for the excluded to take advantage of opportunities for employment, education and health care, thus keeping them in chronic poverty. Perhaps most important is that members of disadvantaged groups are often exploited and denied access to justice, thus reinforcing and perpetuating their disadvantaged position and

further entrenching their poverty and inequality (DFID 2005b:7). While many of the poor in Yemen accumulated wealth through migration, this was more difficult for the most excluded groups.

In general, social exclusion refers to discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, social status, gender or any other groups excluded by the particular society in question. Identities of excluded groups and the degrees and ways to which they are excluded vary with country, region, world view, and era. While in some places, religious or “racial” discrimination are important, these may be irrelevant elsewhere. Ethnic groups that are subject to discrimination in one context may be included in others. Social exclusion also varies with historical time periods. When trading as an occupation was disdained by the tribes in Yemen (well into the 1970s), traders in rural and urban markets were d. With the monetization of the economy, and as access to material wealth replaced other indicators of status, trading as an occupation has lost its stigma and is now considered a respectable occupation.

Spatial exclusion is based on where people live. It may refer to remote areas beyond the reach of services and government security systems; d spaces, such as squatter settlements; or small villages or neighborhoods defined as “poor”. Spatial exclusion can also result from residence away from family and support systems, as is often the case with internal and external migrants (DFID 2005:6).

Mechanisms of Social Exclusion

Causes of social exclusion include formal and informal processes and institutions. Formal institutions, such as laws or economic policies may make it difficult or impossible for some portions of a population to engage in gainful employment, maintain secure housing or voice their needs in effective ways. Informal institutions, such as negative attitudes toward certain groups, societal or cultural constraints on community participation, or limits on marriage options, stigmatise and disempower the socially excluded. In some cases, informal institutions oppose formal policy. In Yemen, for example, members of all social status groups are considered equal under the law; yet informal mechanisms continue to exclude some groups from accessing agricultural lands (e.g., former *waqf* lands in Zabid), attending school (some girls, Akhdam) or running for public office (women, Akhdam). In other cases, formal and informal mechanisms are in synergy, as when negative attitudes towards a group (informal) justify laws and policies that serve to exclude the group from services or security. An example is police treatment of street children or of groups labeled Akhdam. Factors that may exacerbate situations of social exclusion for individuals or groups include migration to areas where they lack property, kin and community support networks, coupled with poverty and the absence of vocational skills, as is the case with homeless itinerant labourers in Sanaa (Hashem 1996).

Indicators of Social Exclusion

Specific indicators of social exclusion include disparities in:

- income security, including access to land and/or employment opportunities;
- access to natural resources, such as potable water and fuel;
- access to roads, electricity and other forms of infrastructure;
- health indicators and access to health care;
- education and vocational training; information, such as health or agricultural extension;
- visibility;
- justice and political voice, including participation in community projects and mediation processes;
- safety nets and systems of mutual support;
- social status;
- attribution of negative judgments on character.

Impacts of Social Exclusion

Social exclusion impairs the agency and visibility of excluded groups. It is deleterious to economic growth. It contributes to conflict and insecurity, and it threatens the achievement of MDGs. The combined effect is deleterious to development.

Negative Impact on Agency and Visibility

Inequalities exacerbate poverty by limiting access and recourse to health services and educational opportunities, thus reducing capacities for the excluded to improve their own welfare. Moreover, excluded groups are often rendered “invisible” to service providers, employers, judges and politicians, as well as to donors and development agents. Consequently, the excluded are doubly vulnerable: not only are they poor, but they have fewer options to improve their own welfare. In Yemen, traditional safety nets for the poor that are put in place when they interact regularly with the more privileged are eroded as new classes based entirely on wealth or patronage increasingly distance themselves from spaces associated with the poor (Carapico 1996; see Moser and Rodgers 2005:vi). Distancing mechanisms, in turn, aggravate perceptions of the excluded as troublemakers or people who are perceived to be deficient, morally or in some other way.

Negative Impact on Economic Growth

Social exclusion not only destroys agency but ultimately slows economic growth. It can lead to higher rates of poverty among the excluded. On a macro level, extreme inequalities slow down growth and national development as the excluded are denied opportunities to contribute to the nation's economic growth (HDR05:51, 53-54). Social exclusion "restricts the development of investment opportunities and markets" (HDR05:53), consequently, impeding "the efficient operation of market forces (DFID 2005b:7). By destroying agency, social exclusion hinders entrepreneurial activity.

Contributes to Conflict and Insecurity

Social exclusion contributes to conflict in several ways:

Horizontal inequality can lead to the perception that "state power is being abused to advantage one group over another" (HDR05:63). These factors can contribute significantly to political unrest.

Perceptions that members of excluded groups are troublemakers by definition makes them more vulnerable to violence from the state or from the more privileged. For example, appropriating their land and housing may be rationalized in the name of social improvement, as happened when homes in squatter communities near Aden were bulldozed (Seif 1995, 2003). Police are more likely to abuse members of excluded groups. Protracted conflict can ensue when this kind of violence is returned in kind.

Young men who are excluded from employment and livelihood opportunities present serious potential risks of conflict. As Caroline Moser and Dennis Rodgers argue, "Reduced employment opportunities not only threaten personal security, but are sometimes linked with different forms of violence associated with younger men" (2005:v).

A Threat to the Achievement of MDGs

In addition to the problems engendered by inequalities and discrimination, social exclusion can threaten the achievement of MDGs. Women who feel disempowered are less likely to seek health care for themselves or their children, thus perpetuating high maternal and infant mortality rates (see also HDR05:61). Vulnerabilities due to inequalities in health care will aggravate other indicators of poverty (HDR05:70). For example, a report by the Higher Council on Motherhood and Children argues that malnutrition and low birth weight in Yemen lead to disabilities in adulthood that limit individual capacities to participate fully in development (HCMC 2003).

In Yemen, exclusion from medication and health care have led to a reversal of earlier improvements in morbidity rates, especially maternal and infant mortality rates (IMR). According to the Higher Council for Motherhood and Childhood, “Maternal mortality increased from 350 per 100,000 live births in the mid-1990s to 850 in 1999” (2003:10). In 1997 wide disparities were reported in health indicators between the poorest 20% of the population and the richest 20%, with only 6.8% of births among the poorest attended by skilled personnel as compared to 49.7% among the richest. Only 7.8% of the poorest children were immunized compared to 55.7% of the richest. The IMR for the poorest 20% of the population was almost twice as high as for the richest, and under 5 IMR was almost 2.5 times as high (HDR05:245, Table 1). These statistics point to serious exclusion from health care for the poor.

Illness and nutritional deficiencies among mothers (exclusion from adequate health care and food security) can cause disabilities in infants. Low birth weight, birth defects, neonatal illnesses and nutritional deficiencies produce a high number of severely disabled children. In Yemen, the proportion of malnourished or stunted children of school age (46%) is among the highest in the world. Large numbers of disabilities, in turn, stress a nation’s resources and contribute to reduced rates of economic growth.

Disparities in Health Indicators (HDR05:245)

Births attended by skilled health personnel (%)		One-year-olds fully immunized (%)		IMR (per 1,000 live births)		U5MR (per 1,000 live births)	
Poorest 20%	Richest 20%	Poorest 20%	Richest 20%	Poorest 20%	Richest 20%	Poorest 20%	Richest 20%
6.8	49.7	7.8	55.7	108.5	60.0	163.1	73.0

Adults in poor health are not as likely to take advantage of opportunities that may improve their lives, such as education. This, in turn, has consequences to poverty and income. According to the World Bank Republic of Yemen Poverty Update,

A literate breadwinner brings in a 16.5% (urban) to 18.4% (rural) gain with respect to an illiterate breadwinner. If illiteracy were eradicated among the breadwinners, the incidence of poverty would decrease by 5.8% nationally...The gains from a literate spouse versus an illiterate spouse are also not negligible (12% in rural areas, 6% in urban areas). [2002:16]

Women (and men) who are excluded from literacy and education are more likely to take their daughters and sons out of school early or not permit them to

attend school at all. A survey of children in the labour force in Yemen found that 95% had illiterate parents. Not only are these children deprived from education, but they suffer potential exclusion from information and employment opportunities.

In sum, by taking account of the complex nature of poverty, the various causes of exclusion and their impacts on development, a focus on social exclusion facilitates the design of appropriate and effective development interventions.

CAUSES OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN YEMEN

Background

The Republic of Yemen, a union of the former Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), has undergone profound economic, political and social change in the past 30 years. In some ways, improved access to health and education services, migrant remittances, new employment opportunities, laws that discourage exclusionary practices and a rhetoric of legal equality have favored the inclusion of previously excluded groups.

On the other hand, recent changes have also led to rising inequality in access to services and opportunities and to justice and political participation. In some cases, historic inequalities are becoming entrenched, while in others, patterns of exclusion are new, a result of modernity in the form of a monetized economy and rapid urbanization with concomitant declines in social capital and social cohesion. Ideas recently imported from other countries, such as a Saudi interpretation of Islam (Wahhabism) and the racialization of status tend to exacerbate the exclusion of already vulnerable groups: women and low status occupational groups.

To date, with a GINI coefficient of 33.4, inequality rates in Yemen are low relative to some other countries. But if they are not checked, patterns of inequality may lead to the entrenched economic, political and social exclusion of large parts of the population. In fact, recent data indicate a widening gap between rich and poor: "In 2000, the poorest 10% of Yemeni households spent 3.5% of the national income, while the richest 10% controlled 34% of income and accounted for 25% of expenditure" (Colburn 2002:54, cited in World Bank Country Social Analysis, 2005:42). Such data are associated with increasing levels of exclusion for large portions of the population.

Specifically, current patterns of social exclusion in Yemen can be traced to the combined effect of a number of interrelated economic and political changes. The

forced return of 800,000 migrants from the Gulf countries in combination with declines in subsistence agriculture and an increasing reliance on the market for food accelerated urbanization and raised unemployment rates. The rapid growth of towns and cities led to geometric increases in the value of urban land which, along with declines in social capital, have led to widespread exploitation of the most vulnerable populations. The lack of support networks and safety nets for many urban newcomers has contributed to their exclusion from justice, income security and services. Growing urban populations have stressed service delivery systems leading to declining capacity to deliver services to rural areas and the progressive marginalization of rural communities, particularly those at a distance from towns and cities.

The central government's efforts to consolidate its power through a patronage system in which members of selected families are given preference for services, lucrative government contracts and positions of power have also contributed to social exclusion. State co-optation of selected tribal leaders and tribal rhetoric ultimately exclude the vast majority of the tribal population.

Those who feel increasingly excluded from income security and services and concerned by a decline in social capital are attracted to imported forms of politicized religion that target women's empowerment and mobility. (Part of their appeal is that they provide health and other social services that are not provided by the Government.) Frustrations are channeled in racial terms that had been latent but are now reinforced largely through imported television programmes, thus increasing the vulnerability and exclusion of populations perceived as dark skinned.

Challenges to the Analysis of Social Exclusion in Yemen

Analysis of social exclusion in Yemen is complicated by several factors:

- As a young state, Yemen is still in transition. Observed trends towards exclusion or inclusion are not yet established and are still in flux. Members of bounded groups that were once excluded are no longer necessarily excluded, while new portions of the population are increasingly marginalized.
- Yemen's economic, social and historic diversity leads to regional differences in the impact of formal policy. The impact of informal institutions also varies with region. For example, while some areas in Yemen, notably the tribal highlands, tended historically towards *relative* egalitarianism, social and economic structures in other areas that were historically detribalized were more hierarchically organized. Although PDRY's socialist government attempted to erase such differences, their policies have been undercut by policies established after unification.

- Because the Government of Yemen does not recognize traditional occupational or status distinctions, statistical data are not disaggregated by status. While the policy has been an important driver of inclusion, it complicates the collection of data on social exclusion and on the implications of exclusion to livelihood strategies and access to services.

Nevertheless, it is possible, for analytic purposes, to distinguish factors that have led to increased inequality and social exclusion. These include the combined effects of the monetization of the economy along with a severe decline in migrant remittances and other economic shocks of the 1990s, rapid urban growth and concomitant reduction in social capital and social cohesion, increased government centralization and patronage, post-unification government policies in the southern governorates, the politicization of religion and the racialization of status.

Rapid Urbanization

The influx of returned migrants and refugees exacerbated urban growth which had been precipitated by the construction boom in north Yemen in the 1980s and which had created a demand for unskilled manual labour in Yemeni cities. These factors, combined with declines in agriculture, a growing dependence on a cash economy, tribal conflict in some places and the dearth of wage employment in rural areas led to massive urban migration.

In less than three decades, the proportion of the total population that is rural declined from over 90% in 1976 to 74% (Yemen Ministry of Planning 2003:7) with a current annual urban population growth of 7.2%. In Sanaa, the population has risen from an estimated 135,000 in 1975 to 1,747,627 in the 2004 census. Aden, Hodeida, Taiz, Ibb and Mukalla have also experienced rapid growth. Major cities are overcrowded and hard pressed to provide basic services and secure employment for their residents.

Migrants to Yemen's cities include farmers, herders, fishermen, members of previously disdained occupations who had been connected to rural communities, returned outmigrants and former residents of secondary towns and villages. As residents of secondary towns migrate to cities or to other countries, residents of smaller towns and rural villages are migrating to secondary towns (Bonfiglioli 2005). While the urban sector has, in many ways, provided new opportunities for education, health care and income security, its rapid growth has also fostered the entrenchment of some existing patterns of exclusion and the development of new forms of social exclusion. Most vulnerable are members of the lowest social strata, squatters, itinerant day labourers, and migrants without kin or other support networks in the urban setting.

In addition to unemployment and inadequate services, rapid urbanization has impacted social exclusion in other ways as well. Increased land values in urban environments has led to the appropriation of lands historically relegated to the poor and a disregard for historic safety nets. Finally, the stresses on service provision in urban areas are marginalizing rural areas, thus leading to the exclusion of much of the rural population from needed services.

Historically, the relationship between urban and rural spaces in Yemen was characterized by mutual economic and political dependence and by a combination of mutual disdain and a grudging respect (Adra 1983a). Yemen's towns and cities were populated largely by members of the scholarly elites and low status service providers. Typically, towns were sites of markets, government courts and schools. They may have been administrative centres and sometimes the seats of various imams (in the North) or saints, sultans and masha'ikh¹ (in the South). Almost everywhere, their security was protected by local tribes.

While towns continue to provide markets for agricultural produce, urban remittances now subsidize agriculture as had earlier remittances from the Gulf, thus reversing historic urban dependence on the rural economy. The decline in weekly markets, which redistributed rural produce and allowed for only a trickle of outside products, has given way to dependence on market towns which stock imported goods and introduce new forms of technology. The overall economic relevance of rural communities in Yemen has declined.

Centralization of Power and Its Consolidation through Patronage

Compounding the problems of rapid urbanization are government policies that reduce political and economic participation. Oil income and development aid have facilitated the central government's efforts to consolidate its power through a patronage system in which members of particular families are given preference for services, lucrative commercial contracts, and positions of power. This kind of patronage is not new to Yemeni power politics. What is new is the creation of an urban elite based entirely on wealth. As Carapico writes, "Within a generation, class had substantially replaced status as the principal denominator of social inequality" (Carapico 1996:88). It is generally members of the new elites who expropriate lands from the poor, as in the examples cited above.

As recently as 10-20 years ago, members of the elite and majority populations socialized as equals with their employees and those in service populations (Adra 1983a; Varisco and Adra 1984; Hashem 1996:84; Carapico 1996; Makhlof

¹ Masha'ikh used in the South refers to large landowners, not necessarily or usually elected tribal leaders.

1979:26-27). Familiarity across status boundaries fostered an awareness of the needs of the poor and engaged traditional support mechanisms and safety nets. Transfers of food, money and clothing were common. Clientage offered food and employment security. Conversely, the poor had access to wealthy individuals through their active participation in weddings, celebrations, sharing meals and daily life. Familiarity with the lives of the elite also gave them the informal power to criticize those who were not generous through poetry and gossip.

Today, the urban elite celebrates in rented halls or luxury hotel ballrooms, and entrance is limited to those holding printed invitations. Increasingly, domestic help is provided by expatriate refugees or migrant labour from other countries, thus cutting off opportunities for the formation of familiar relationships between the new elite and the local poor (Hashem 1996; Carapico 1993). These developments signal an erosion of social capital and community based social cohesion, and they further the exclusion of vulnerable groups.

Co-optation of Selected Tribal Leaders (Civil Society)

Tribal structures in Yemen were, and in many cases continue to be, examples of a vibrant civil society. The tribe is a co-operative group by definition, as are its constituent communities. Leaders at all levels are elected to mediate conflict within their respective tribe or community and to represent the community to the outside world. Conflict is resolved through arbitration and an established set of customary laws based on principles of co-operation and precedent (Adra 1983a). Within the tribal system, leaders are expected to maintain the appearance of equality with their constituents. At least in principle, and with the possible exception of women in some situations and members of low status occupations (sometimes), this is an inclusive system.

While official government recognition and support are given to tribal values and tribal customary law, selected tribal leaders (shaykhs) have been given powers that they never had as elected leaders accountable to their constituents. With the power of the government and military behind them, traditional checks to their power have disappeared, and they have virtual impunity to imprison others, treat communal lands entrusted to them as private property, and amass wealth. Rather than increase access to justice, this practice excludes powerful leaders' constituents from justice and political participation. It further excludes the many rural communities whose leaders do not enjoy political favor and who face serious difficulty in obtaining services and representation. These are the communities that tend to be riddled with violence and blood feud.

Some selected tribal leaders have been given land and positions of power in southern governorates. Their excesses have reinforced southern stereotypes of "rough" and "warlike" tribes. Current inequalities in the South are blamed on

what is incorrectly perceived as a “re-tribalization” of the south, thus contributing to north-south tensions and perceptions of exclusion.

Post-unification Policies in the Southern Governorates

In 1990, YAR united with socialist PDRY to form the Republic of Yemen. Neither the North nor the South could have survived independently, yet the union of the two historically, ecologically and economically diverse Yemens has not been unproblematic. Especially after the civil war of 1994 that established the military and political supremacy of the North, there have developed strong popular perceptions of horizontal exclusion. Southern Yemenis complain of northern hegemony and colonization, while northerners complain that state funds are being disproportionately allocated in favor of the southern governorates. Available data support both perceptions.

Southerners have complained of exclusion from decision-making and development efforts. Many southerners, especially those connected with the previous socialist regime, have been excluded from political power, and the National Socialist Party is increasingly marginalized, with some of its more prominent members having been assassinated. This fuels rather than assuages historic south-north tensions. More importantly, it deprives the Yemeni Government of the full input of highly trained southern professionals.

A study of decentralization expenditures by governorate suggests that not all government spending is pro-poor, and that among the governorates which reflect an anti-poor bias in their allocations are Shabwah, Lahj and Hadramawt, in contrast to the northern governorates of Taiz, Hodeidah, Ibb and Hajja, which appear to allocate either more to the poor than the non-poor or an equal amount to both (Ravallion 2000). This issue needs further investigation since expenditures in the northern governorates of Amran and Sanaa also appear to be anti-poor by the standards of the same study. Nonetheless, it does appear that projects supporting infrastructure in the South are tied to efforts to lure back to Yemen large landowners who migrated to Saudi Arabia during PDRY’s socialist regime and not to directly improving the lives of the poor.

Politicization of Religion

The vast majority of Yemenis are Muslim, and almost all value the role of religion in their lives. The so-called Zaydi-Shafi’i split between North and South is exaggerated. Doctrinal differences are slight and did not cause problems in the past. However, the growth of Wahhabism, a highly politicized Saudi

interpretation of Islam, does seriously impact social exclusion.² Returned migrants from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, religiously conservative teachers, and other forces have introduced to Yemen a Wahhabi view of Islam that targets women's mobility and voice as well as more tolerant forms of Islam.

Wahhabism is attractive to unemployed youth and disenfranchised southern Yemenis who live in communities that lack the cohesiveness of tribal organization. It allows them to express their frustrations by exerting increased control over sisters, wives and mothers. Others who accept Wahhabi teachings tend to be illiterate rural Yemenis unsure of their competence in religious matters and ready to believe that their traditional behaviours and beliefs were un-Islamic. In addition to excluding women, Wahhabism fosters religious intolerance and marginalizes the more tolerant Zaydis who once ruled in the North as well as various Sufi traditions of Hadramawt.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity has become an issue in Yemen only since the migration of large numbers of refugees from East Africa and the acquisition of the ethnically distinct Mahra and Socotra. Ethnicity as a factor in social exclusion will be discussed below.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: WHO WAS EXCLUDED IN YEMEN?

As is the case today, social exclusion in the past was influenced by economic as well as socio-political factors and reinforced through informal mechanisms. In order to understand who was excluded historically, which of the historically excluded groups are now integrated into Yemeni society and which continue to be excluded, this section will provide a brief background to social organization as it existed before Yemen's two revolutions.

Historically, in most of Yemen, there existed variations on a tripartite social organization, with a minority scholarly elite at the top, a majority population of farmers, herders and/or fishermen, and another minority population of artisans, entertainers and ritual experts of low status. These groups were largely endogamous and sometimes internally stratified as well. Traditional models should be understood as a paradigm of status that people carried in their heads rather than strict models for predicting actual behavior, which varied by community.

² Wahhabism should not be confused with the Islah party which includes in its membership a range of religious belief.

Tribal organization is strongest in the northern highlands. There were differing degrees of tribal political organization among tribes in the central and southern highlands and eastern plateau that were not under Zaydi rule. In some areas in the Tihama, southern highlands, southern coastal regions and towns in Hadramawt the vast majority of the population has not been defined as tribal since Rasulid rule 700 years ago. Both tribal and nontribal systems will be described briefly because each has impacted patterns of social exclusion today.

In the tribal regions, subsistence agriculture and terrain, as well as customary law and rules of honor, promoted an egalitarian social structure in which most of the population owned some land. Elected leaders (shaykhs) were considered “first among equals” and were largely accountable to their constituents. The tribal population, including its shaykhs, was largely rural, while most members of both the elite and low status service occupations lived in towns and cities. As food providers and warriors who guaranteed the safety of the urban and nontribal population, the tribes wielded considerable informal power in the Zaydi imamate.

Low status service providers were associated with markets, although some lived among the tribes in client relationships with their host community. They were involved in wage earning activities, such as commerce, crafts, work related to the body (bath attendants, barbers), butchers, growers of vegetable cash crops (as opposed to grain crops) and some were ceremonial and ritual experts. A few cultivated land owned by others in rental or sharecropping arrangements.

Service providers were internally stratified. Some, such as butchers or artisans (weavers, blacksmiths, carpenters) were organized in towns as guilds through which they co-ordinated purchases and set prices. Collectively they were known as *Mazayina* (*barbers, musicians, healers, heralds*), *Ahl al-Suq* (lit., market people), *Atraf* (lit., marginal), *Nuqas* (lit., deficient), *Bani Khums* or *Ahl al-Thulth*, or *Khadam* (servants, which is distinguished in Yemen from the title, Akhdam, discussed below) or by trade names, e.g., butcher, cupper, tanner, etc.

Before Yemen’s two revolutions, these groups were excluded from land ownership, carrying arms, and intermarriage with tribes or elites. They received tribal protection and economic support (grain, food, and cash) in return for services rendered. Following customary law as well as Zaydi principles, these populations were protected from violence and thus enjoyed access to security. Nevertheless, their low social status was reflected in the behaviours of at least some of the tribal majority and elites towards them.

The flat terrain and flood irrigation facilitated the consolidation of large landholdings in the Tihama, portions of the southern highlands and coastal region and towns in Hadramawt. As a result, there evolved a hierarchical system of

wealth and landownership, with a small landowning elite and a large majority of low status cultivators and service providers (for an example from a town in Hadramawt, see Bujra 1971). Lowest in status was a pariah group known by others as Akhdam, although they do not self-identify as such. Traditionally, this was the most excluded group in Yemeni society. (Tribes were marginal to this region of Yemen and, with the exception of a few tribes in the central highlands, most were disarmed by the British or PDRY. Although some rural communities in the Tihama and southern highlands self-identify as “tribal”, the economic system was more “feudal” than tribal.)

Socially excluded low status groups in these regions were landless cultivators and service providers. They cultivated land owned by large landowners through tenancy or sharecropping arrangements or as itinerant farmers. These groups were internally stratified and included service occupations, such as *Mazayina*, *Abid* (descendants of slaves), *Hujur* (lit., landless cultivators), *Lahuj* (lit., people from Lahj), *Shahat* (beggars), *Shumr*, and a pariah group known collectively as *Akhdam* (lit., servants), among others. In towns and cities of Hadramawt, service groups were known collectively as *Masakeen* (lit., poor, humble), with another lower status group known as *da'if*, *traditional workers in clay*. These groups were generally excluded from land ownership and intermarriage with elites.

Contested Identities

In almost all cases, service group labels are (and were in the past) contested by those so labeled. The service groups themselves do not label themselves as such except to satirize or otherwise discuss attitudes of the majority. Although the majority population questions the genealogical pedigree of the service groups, members of service groups argue that their descent status is perfectly respectable, just different from that of tribes or the elite. They often use the term, *qabila* (tribe) to describe their extended families, and they organize their communities on a tribal model (Walters 1987:60). Another form of contestation is a constant disparaging of those who feel superior to them. This was observed to be the case in Abyan (Seif 2003) and across all social strata in a northern highlands community in 1978-79: among themselves, tribal families disparaged the traditional scholarly elite, and the service groups disparaged the tribes (Adra 1983a: 29-82; Varisco and Adra 1984).

Opportunities for Upward Mobility

Although there have been significant changes in the relationships between service groups and majority populations, historical prejudices and discriminatory practices are still evident. Historically, opportunities for upward mobility were rare, but there are documented cases of Mazayina who changed their ascribed status through religious education. Migration to foreign countries or other parts

of Yemen has been a way for historically excluded groups to escape stigmatization at home. Those who returned invested remittances in land (in the 1970s and 1980s), housing or entrepreneurial activity. Even in the past, members of service groups connected with markets sometimes had more access to cash than many in the majority population. In all parts of Yemen, there have been individual service providers who are highly respected by people in all social strata for their strength of character, honesty, or talents in mediation. These individuals were, and continue to be, asked to mediate disputes among the majority population.

The monetized economy and socialist policies in PDRY afforded many members of low status groups opportunities for accumulation of wealth and upward mobility. Monetization also reduced the stigma previously attached to commerce and market activity. The revolutions in both north and south banned restrictions on land ownership and opened access to education and health care, significantly reducing levels of exclusion. Nonetheless, many Akhdam and other landless groups still suffer from social exclusion today.

WHO IS CURRENTLY EXCLUDED IN YEMEN?

Currently, those who suffer from social exclusion in Yemen are primarily the landless poor. This category includes Akhdam and other itinerants who live in squatter settlements, returned migrants in temporary housing, and unskilled urban migrants. Also excluded are unemployed youth, residents of remote rural communities, children of the poor, disabled and elderly members of poor families, women and ethnic minorities.

The Landless Poor

Rapid urbanization and consequent declines in social capital have increased the exclusion of historically vulnerable populations: the landless, unskilled itinerant labourers, and some members of historically excluded occupations (but see discussion under “Entry Points” below for examples of urbanization as a driver of inclusion.) The category known collectively as “Akhdam” has been particularly vulnerable although the term as it is commonly used also refers to a number of other low status groups who did not manage to lift themselves out of poverty through migration in the 1970s and 1980s. Among these are itinerant labourers in the south living in squatter settlements and squatters in northern towns (although some of these have been relocated to apartments in Taiz and Sanaa.)

Unskilled landless labourers without kin or community networks in towns cities tend to live in squatter settlements near sources of wage labour. There, they join members of historically excluded groups who were often relegated to living

in the outskirts of towns and cities where they provided services or labour on agricultural land during peak seasons. Squatter communities in fact comprise a heterogeneous mix of traditional categories of service providers and other urban migrants, but they are labeled by others collectively as Akhdam. This collective labeling reflects their “invisibility”, an additional indicator of social exclusion.

“Akhdam”

Akhdam is a term which literally refers to servants but has been used in Yemen to refer to a landless, itinerant and dark-skinned low-status grouping once thought to be the descendants of Ethiopian invaders more than a millennium ago. The term historically referred to the category of service providers that occupied the lowest rungs of the social ladder in the Tihama and southern Yemen. (Rarely did one ever see people designated as Akhdam in the North during the Zaydi imamate.) Akhdam worked as street cleaners or in shoe making. They specialized in music and dancing. They were considered ritual experts at traditional healing ceremonies, weddings and other celebrations.

The status of Akhdam varied with region and community. In some places they were true pariahs: members of other status groups would not live near Akhdam nor eat with them, and it has been reported that at least one community banned Akhdam from attendance at the local mosque. In other communities, Akhdam lived among other status groups, but they were almost always disparaged in some form (Walters 1987; Meneley 1996). In some southern and Tihama towns, Akhdam were, and continue to be, asked not to build houses inside the town; they have to live on its peripheries. It is often said of Akhdam that they are “black” although their actual skin coloring does not differ from that of many inhabitants of the Tihama and the South. Finally, there is a perception among elite and majority Yemenis that Akhdam women lack honour and are therefore sexually lax. Like refugees discussed below, women labeled Akhdam are subject to sexual harassment.

Some Akhdam and members of other low status groups escaped their social stigmas by migrating, either to other countries or to cities where they could forge new identities. Others benefited from PDRY’s socialist policies to work in the civil service and/or acquire land. Those who are currently excluded include returnees from the Gulf, people who have been disenfranchised by post-unification policies, and others who have not succeeded in overcoming their poverty and exclusionary status.

Although the affected families themselves do not self-identify as Akhdam, the label is still used in a pejorative sense in both urban and rural contexts. A complicating factor is that the label is now applied to many of the landless poor who live in squatter settlements regardless of their social origins.

The number of people currently labeled Akhdam has been estimated at 129,000, 58% of whom reside in the governorate of Hodeidah and about 14% reside in Aden. Others live in Sanaa, Taiz, and on the fringes of Yemen's other cities and secondary towns. They are primarily self-employed and work for municipalities as street sweepers. In the 1990s a number of development projects have targeted Akhdam living in urban ghettos, especially Sanaa and Taiz.

In the 1970s, members of groups perceived as Akhdam living in or near the village of Amer in Zabid Valley were recruited by the Government of Yemen to work as street sweepers and sanitation workers in Sanaa. They were given the site of an old caravanserai in Bab Sabah for a residence. Some have since resettled in rented quarters in another part of the capital. Although their wages are considered satisfactory, street sweepers have not integrated into Sanaa society. Among other examples of exclusion, Stadnicki reports that they are not welcome in local restaurants except at night (2003:83-84).

New groups of Akhdam and other itinerants, who were not necessarily from historically excluded groups but were attracted by the availability of wage labour, later joined them and settled in squatter communities around Sanaa. Popular perceptions of other Yemenis are that all residents of squatter settlements are "Akhdam". The term has become a generic that refers to almost all who live in squatter communities regardless of their original social status. The space of the squatter community has taken on the stigmas attached to Akhdam in what Caroline Moser and Dennis Rodgers (2005) call "the spatialisation of poverty" and the social category Akhdam has been conflated with squatting.³

A major study on squatter communities in Yemen conducted by Ahmed Mohamed Shuja'a Al-Deen, Abdo Ali Othman and Abdullah Ali Al-Ghully (1996) found that 47% of their sample worked as porters or did other work as daily hires, another 14% were self-employed (cobblers, traders, qat sellers, and "dealers in second hand materials" [i.e., collecting and selling recyclables]. Cleaners formed 13% of the sample. Another 9% worked as electricians, mechanics, teachers and carpenters. Beggars constituted 7% (another source lists this figure at 67% - Al-Ahmadi and Beatty 1997; see also Othman 2004). Soldiers and guards made up another 7%, and drivers 2% of the economically active population. Of these wage earners, only 31% have secure incomes. None have land security. Especially as urban lands gain in value, squatters become more vulnerable to eviction (see below).

³Data are not available on the social exclusion of Yemeni migrants deported from Ethiopia in the 1970s who have been squatters in Hodeida.

An Oxfam study conducted in 1997 (Al-Ahmadi and Beatty 1997) found that well over half of household heads among “Akhdam” had no work, indicating that many of those in gainful employment are women and children: 49% were employed in collecting and selling recyclables; 44% did miscellaneous cleaning; 11% engaged in skilled labour, and 9% were street vendors. Another study noted that 14.6% engaged in begging after dropping out of school. Fewer girls of squatter communities enroll in school because of parents’ safety concerns and because their work is needed at home. Of those who do attend school, their drop out rate is smaller than that of boys, whose drop out rate is 74% (Hashem 1996).

Residents of squatter settlements have no access to sanitation and minimal access to potable water and health care. Where schools are available, children tend to drop out, either to contribute to family incomes or because of discriminatory behavior by teachers and majority students (Dorman and Hibshi 1997).

In 2005 residents of several squatter communities in Sanaa were resettled in State-owned apartment buildings. In 2003 squatters in Taiz were resettled, and several communities in Aden have been resettled in recent years. Little is known about living conditions or services in the new settlements or the impact of the new living arrangements on residents’ social exclusion.

In addition to exclusion from income security, education, health care and sanitation, residents of squatter communities and “Akhdam” elsewhere tend to be “invisible”. Even when they have employable skills, these are not recognized and do not therefore lead to secure wage employment. Afrah Al-Ahmadi and Sharon Beatty (1997:12) write that skills exist in squatter communities; the problem is a dearth of employment opportunity. Bonfiglioli (2005:101) writes that in Ja’ar, even Akhdam who have completed secondary school or graduated from universities cannot find secure employment. He relates the story of an Akhdam school teacher in Zabid who continues to be d in spite of his professional achievements.

Complicating the exclusion of Akhdam and others is a tendency in Yemen to attribute dark skin to those of lower status relative to that of people with higher status irrespective of their actual skin colour (Walters 1987). One impact of the exposure of Yemenis to Western racial attitudes through television has been to entrench this tendency. Currently, anyone who is poor with dark skin is disparaged as Akhdam, thus excluding a larger number of Yemenis. Dark-skinned offspring of mixed Yemeni and African parentage are particularly at risk. Even those with elite genealogies face difficulties in securing employment and renewing identity cards. Their children are taunted in school and sometimes assaulted by school mates, and they are discriminated against by teachers.

Disenfranchised Agricultural Labourers

Another population that suffers from land insecurity consists of agricultural labourers in the former PDRY who have been disenfranchised as a consequence of unification. These are itinerant agricultural labourers who live in squatter communities in the southern governorates.

In contrast to the relatively egalitarian tribal areas of Yemen, social inequality characterizes Yemen's coasts, southern governorates and Hadramawt. Most land was historically, and is currently, owned by large landowners (often absentee) and cultivated by peasants through rental or share-cropping arrangements. PDRY's agrarian reform laws attempted to counter social inequalities by providing peasants *de facto* ownership of land in agricultural cooperatives. However, the laws did not provide all agricultural labourers with ownership deeds to the land they worked. In the case of state farms, in contrast to cooperatives, land reform transformed tenants of large landowners into tenants of the State (Seif 2003). These laws and other PDRY policies were important drivers of inclusion. Although peasants in PDRY were poor, they felt included and empowered by land reform laws and laws that guaranteed them access to education and health services (Seif 2003).

The restitution of lands to their former landowners, part of the unification agreement and a way to encourage landowners who had fled the socialist regime to return to Yemen, put 23,000 small tenant farmers at risk (World Bank 2004:111). Some reportedly have been able to negotiate with the former landowners to continue rental of this land. Others are now itinerant labourers, with no land or income security and little access to health or education services.

A population that for 20 years had enjoyed land and income security, as well as health care and educational opportunity is now largely excluded from these benefits. Children and youth who had attended school before unification now have to participate in wage labour to help their families survive (Seif 2003). It is among unemployed youth in these southern and eastern governorates that radical Islam, with its potential for conflict, has its greatest following. Development of a free trade zone for the port of Aden promises to improve the urban infrastructure of Aden, but few jobs or benefits have resulted thus far.

The Appropriation of Lands Historically Relegated to the Poor

Residents of squatter communities and other landless poor are excluded from justice and security in other ways as well. Increases in the value of urban land due to speculation and development have, in many cases, led to the disregard of squatters' legal and informal rights and their forced, often violent evacuation

from their homes (Seif 2003; World Bank 2004, Bonfiglioli 2005:102). Although laws exist governing expropriation and just compensation, and in the North the right to acquire land by seizure is legally recognized, a number of squatter communities in the North and South have been involuntarily resettled without sufficient warning or adequate compensation, some several times (World Bank, RSAS 2004). These practices, made possible by the relative impunity enjoyed by the new monied classes, ignore the safety nets of the poor and further exclude already vulnerable populations.

The appropriation of property is not limited to temporary housing. *Waqf* properties (religious endowments) are also being appropriated. Historically in Yemen, *waqf* properties, entrusted to the supervision of respected religious trust authorities, curbed the tendency of wealthy families to consolidate land. At a time when wealth in itself held limited social value, rich men gained prestige for their families by donating land and property as *waqf* for the public good. When families could lose land for political reasons, putting land into a *waqf* trust usually guaranteed that the land would not be appropriated by a leader or another wealthy individual; and it could offer continuing benefits to one's heirs. Usually, *waqf* land is available to the landless for tenancy and share-cropping at fixed rates. The use of religious trusts as an alternative to the building of huge personal estates was especially important in the hierarchically structured towns of the Tihama and the South where tribal influences are minimal. (In tribal areas, customary law hinders the alienation of land from tribal segments, thus serving to equalize land holdings within a tribe or geographical area.)

Modern economic forces and the rising value of urban property are eroding this institution and further polarizing wealth. In the town of Zabid, for example, where 70% of the population lives near or below the poverty threshold, six to ten extended families currently own more than 60-70% of the fertile cultivable agricultural land. These families also own the water pumps, which are vital for local production. A World Bank urban livelihoods team recently found that,

The same families ... increasingly control urban space (land and houses, and ... contribute to changes in control of *waqf* lands, which in the past constituted a safety net for the poor and prevented concentration of assets. Finally, educated members of these families have monopolized the civil service jobs. [Bonfiglioli 2005:95]

Presumably, the same group of families was also responsible for re-organizing and relocating the market in Zabid and banning roadside commerce to the detriment of the poor (Bonfiglioli 2005). In the past the wealthy increased their prestige through providing the poor with employment and other safety nets. The monetization of the economy has increased the value of wealth accumulation,

and the decline in social capital has devalued religious endowments, thus aggravating the vulnerability of the poor.

Returned Migrants in Temporary Housing

The forced return of 800,000 migrants from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf during the 1990-91 Gulf War suddenly increased the newly unified Yemen's population by 8%. This not only deprived the population from much needed remittances and sources of income upon which it had grown dependent, but added the need to create jobs for the returned migrants. Many were unskilled labourers; almost half had no formal education; and 61% were born in Saudi Arabia (CSO 1990:17-35, cited in Hashem 1996:77-78). Many of the returned migrants came home to work in agriculture or join other family enterprises. Some who returned with capital invested in housing and commercial enterprises in Yemen's cities and secondary towns, such as Yarim, fueling the growth of secondary towns (Bonfiglioli 2005). At minimum the numbers of returned migrants increased demands for basic services.

The most vulnerable returned migrants were those who did not own land in Yemen and who had lost ties to extended kin networks. Temporary housing in the form of tent cities were set up for them. By 1996, 75,000 returnees still lived in these settlements in Aden and Hodeida. Resettlement and employment opportunities promised by the Government have not materialized in spite of the alleged efforts of elected middlemen. In 1996, 83% of the returnees in Hodeida were unemployed (Hashem 1996:90). Of the four groups of excluded persons surveyed by Hashem, returnees in tent cities had the lowest income (1996:92).⁴ Thus, most members of this group remain excluded from income and housing security, services, and political voice.

Unskilled Landless Urban Migrants

Urban migrants without kin or other support networks are vulnerable to social exclusion. Kin and community networks in Yemen provide important safety nets and support mechanisms, and most Yemenis rely on their social networks for economic support in times of stress. Sometimes they are in the position of giving help, and sometimes they are the recipients of help. The poor in urban settings who lack such networks cannot sustain economic shocks.

Unemployed Youth

⁴ The other three groups were Akhdam, day labourers and residents of remote villages.

The sudden large influxes to the population, Yemen's high fertility rate - said to be at 6.2 (6.7 rural and 4.5 urban) in 2003 - declining agriculture, and rapidly growing urban sector have combined to create very high levels of unemployment. In the town of Yarim, for example, the unemployment rate is 15-20%, and climbs to 40% for the district as a whole (Bonfiglioli 2005:73). Angelo Bonfiglioli argues that these unemployment rates have precipitated "sudden, downward mobility" in the area. The national unemployment rate in 2003, which is probably under-reported, was 12.4% for males, slightly higher in urban areas (13.6%) than in the rural sector (12.1%). High rates of unemployment indirectly reduce informal safety nets for the poor: families who are themselves economically stressed can no longer afford to help the poor (Bonfiglioli 2005:118) thus further marginalizing the socially excluded.

Highly vulnerable to exclusion are Yemen's youth. Youth, aged 15-24 years form 19.8% of the total population.⁵ This is the age group that would have migrated overseas for work in the past. Since the Gulf War, Yemenis are no longer as welcome in the Gulf. Employment opportunities in Britain and the United States have been greatly curtailed after the events of 9/11. Not only are youth deprived of income security, but the existence of a large unemployed youthful population poses potential security risks (exclusion from security) to the population as a whole.

The civil service in Yemen is already packed; even the military no longer readily employs soldiers. Large private sector concerns, such as the oil industry and hotels, are staffed primarily with expatriates, despite Yemeni laws that require the employment or training of Yemeni nationals. Unemployment is a problem not only for unskilled laborers but even for those who have completed secondary school or hold university degrees. It is estimated that 22% of the unemployed are graduates of universities, technical institutes or vocational schools (Bonfiglioli 2005). Ironically, the spread of educational opportunity to rural areas exacerbates this problem. Because the education system tends to alienate youth from agriculture, young men and women who graduate from secondary school often refuse to work in agriculture, yet they have few, if any, other employment options. The existence of a large population of unemployed but able bodied youth is a potential driver of conflict. Simultaneously, their lack of educational opportunities, employment, or other gainful activity makes youth susceptible to politicised Wahhabi and Salafi influences.

⁵An estimated 46% of the total population were below age 14 in 2003. In the 1975 census of North Yemen only 12% of the population was under the age of 14.

The Rural Population, Especially in Remote Villages

An estimated 73% of Yemen's total population lives in scattered rural communities of fewer than 5,000 inhabitants. Most Yemenis prefer to live in their rural communities. They express appreciation for their access to fresh air, the beautiful countryside and community support networks. Women, in particular, value the mobility they enjoy relative to urban women who are obligated to abide by cultural ideals of seclusion. Life in the countryside is becoming less sustainable, however, with the decline in subsistence agriculture, reduced access to water, and dearth of services relative to Yemen's growing towns and cities.

Government resources and service delivery have been stressed by growing urban demand. This, combined with difficulties of access, have hampered the delivery of services to many rural areas, especially remote communities. The result is a growing disparity between the services available in towns and cities and those in rural areas. For example, 87% of the urban population has access to an active health facility, but only 33% of the rural population does so. It is difficult to staff rural schools, since most trained teachers are urban and prefer an urban lifestyle. The relative lack of infrastructure and health services and difficulties in staffing rural schools, combined with increasing difficulties of access to potable water have made living conditions more difficult in rural villages, especially those located far from towns.

Geographic location is listed as a poverty risk factor, along with lack of education, lack of remittances from abroad, and large household size (Higher Council for Motherhood and Childhood - HCMC 2003:13). In 1998, an estimated 18% of the total population lived in extreme poverty, unable to afford the cost of the minimum caloric requirement. Of these, 83% live in rural areas (HCMC 2003:12). Not only have rural areas lost their political and economic importance, but they have become increasingly marginalized, with higher rates of illiteracy and morbidity relative to urban residents, increased dependence on the market for food and decreasing income security. These problems are intensified with distance from centres of power and tend to exclude rural farmers who had historically provided the backbone of the subsistence economy.

The rural population is also largely excluded from social programmes. According to the Higher Council for Motherhood and Childhood, "Almost all social programmes are urban-based and tend to benefit the better-off" (2003:12). The vast majority of NGOs are staffed with people who do not understand rural life and share an urban elite disdain for it. Misperceptions of rural lives and livelihoods limit NGO capacities for effective interventions in rural areas. Donors, following the practice of many urban Yemenis, classify small secondary towns, such as Mahweet, Thula, Abs, and Shibam as rural. These become the

beneficiaries of “rural” projects, thus further excluding rural villages. All of these practices reinforce the increasing exclusion of rural areas from services that are available in urban spaces.

Given the lack of government services in the past and the geographical isolation of rural communities, rural residents depended on each other for support as well as security. Apart from water and border disputes and inter-tribal conflict, crime was rare in rural settlements and regional market zones. Penalties for breaches of security were severe, and local shaykhs (tribal leaders) were usually able to prevent incidents from escalating into ongoing feuds or tribal wars through customary law. As residents feel increasingly marginalized, however, access to security is threatened. These are the communities that, in frustration, have sometimes resorted to kidnapping of foreign visitors in order to embarrass the government into delivering promised services. Tribal leaders in focus groups often reiterate the close connection between a lack of services and income security and the lack of security. They stress that blood feud would cease if population had access to education, health care and employment.

Growing urban-rural disparities reinforce urban stereotypes of the rural population as “backward”, “ignorant” and “rough”. For many urban Yemenis, the category “tribal” has come to imply a resistance to change. Such stereotypes make it difficult for rural Yemenis to find work in urban centres when they first arrive, thus further excluding rural Yemenis from participating in development.

Deprived of their historic economic and political importance, young rural Yemenis, especially those who have completed secondary school, feel increasingly inferior to urban Yemenis while they are at the same time alienated from rural lifestyles and norms. Recently imported Wahhabi views denigrate traditional religious practices as backward or heretical (e.g., visits to saint’s tombs in the south). This combination of alienation and exclusion threatens both social cohesion and social capital.

Children of the Poor (Child Labour and Child Trafficking)

With heads of families unable to find work, incidents of child trafficking and child labour have increased in the poorest communities, putting children of the poor at risk.⁶ Children who have to work for wages to help support their families are

⁶ Estimates of working children (3% in urban areas and 16% in rural areas) should be weighed against traditions of household help and local understandings of the transition to adulthood. Where property is held by the extended family, all family members are expected to contribute to household production, and all benefit. Children are given light tasks. Where schooling is available and parents

excluded from security, justice and educational opportunity. Child trafficking puts all children at high risk of abuse and robbery by traffickers and border guards in addition to the risks they face in Saudi Arabia. Those who return home are d and find that they are not employable. Thus, not only are they excluded from food security, education and health care, but they are also excluded from subsequent employment opportunities.

Children of the very poor support their families at young ages, selling items on the streets or begging. A UNICEF study of children working in the streets found that 96.7% are between the ages of 10 and 18 years and that 92.6% provide financial support to families residing in Sanaa or outside. A major risk factor is parental illiteracy – 95% of working children’s parents are illiterate. That the vast majority of the children themselves can read and write indicates that they are more likely to have dropped out of school than that they are among those who have never attended school (HCMC 2003:67). Not only does wage labour exclude these children from educational opportunities but it puts them at heightened risks of accidental injury and abuse. Because street children are perceived as “troublemakers,” they are also at risk of being abused by legal authorities.

Like child labour, the accurate assessment of child trafficking is complicated by local understandings. A study commissioned by UNICEF and the Social Fund for Development in 2004 (Ahmed 2004) found that children under 18 who travel illegally to Saudi Arabia for work often do so voluntarily and/or with relatives. They make significant contributions to household income (as much as 80%). A distinction needs to be made between child who are actually trafficked (and most at risk) and those who are illegal migrants living with relatives.

Still, child trafficking is a problem that has been growing since the Gulf War. It has been reported that in the first quarter of 2004 almost 10,000 Yemeni children were deported by Saudi authorities through the Harad border crossing, where 60% of the children originated (Yemen Center for Social and Labour

feel that they can afford the loss of a child’s labour, children attend school and help the family after school. Although these contributions are not rewarded with wages, this is not necessarily exploitative, as it provides children with necessary livelihood skills and empowerment. More problematic in terms of development is the age at which a child is considered adult. A 15-year old boy from Hadramawt who joins his father and uncles for wage labour in Oman considers himself an adult and is spared from the serious alienation of unemployed youth. However, these children are often excluded from secondary education (rarely from primary schools).

Studies (2004). This is directly related to severe economic poverty coupled with a lack of schools. Parents often seek out traffickers and pay them to help their children cross the border to Saudi Arabia. They appear unaware of the dangers this poses to their children. Most children go voluntarily, but there are indications that some children are forced to do so. Most problematic are the young children who work as beggars, street vendors or thieves. Physically disabled children are particularly targeted by traffickers for begging.

Disabled and Elderly Members of Poor Families

Children and adults with disabilities are normally cared for and supported by their families. This is due to Islamic and community values in both tribal and non-tribal areas. Like the disabled, the elderly have traditionally been cared for by their families. It appears that in some cases, however, financial stress and the erosion of social capital has eroded safety nets for the disabled and the elderly. Elderly Yemenis interviewed by the CSA team have complained that their adult children have left their villages, leaving their parents with no recourse but the charity of neighbors, thus excluding them from income and food security (Varisco 2005). Among some of the poorest families, the disabled are excluded from access to justice and security. Physically disabled children of the very poor are vulnerable to exploitation as beggars in Yemen's cities or in Saudi Arabia. The Ministry of Human Rights has found that some mentally ill adults have been imprisoned because their families could not care for them. Other than studies of trafficked children, some of whom are disabled, no data is available on the numbers or distribution of socially excluded elderly and disabled.

Women

An overarching concern is the increasing exclusion of women in Yemen. Women in PDRY enjoyed the most liberal family laws in the region, university education has always been co-educational in the North and South, and urbanization has improved women's access to education and labour force participation. Women are encouraged to vote and are active participants in political parties. In 2003, 42% of registered voters were women. Women also run for political office. Yet, the number of parliamentary seats occupied by women has declined from 12 to 1 out of a total of 301 members. In 2003, when three women were elected to head their local councils, men were assigned as directors above them in an attempt to sabotage not only their leadership but the electoral process as well. All of this indicates increasing exclusion from full political participation.

Wahhabi influence has led to the repeal of PDRY's liberal family laws. Women in the southern governorates, especially, feel that they have less access to justice than they did in the 1980s. A direct impact of high unemployment rates on women's inclusion is that women, who are the first to be freed from

employment, are left with even fewer employment opportunities than they once had. For many urban women, this excludes them from income security. Because of a cultural ideal of female seclusion, which is fully realizable only in urban contexts among the well to do, women who enjoy the greatest income security are likely to be the most excluded from economic decision-making. Active participation in the economy is correlated with low status:

One irony that emerges from studying gender relations in Yemen, is that the relative autonomy, participation, and self-reliance valued by Western feminists attaches to economic necessity and low prestige in the South Arabian context where (non-professional) working women tend to envy housewives. [Carapico 1996:96]

Thus, in Yemen the women most excluded from land and income security enjoy the greatest autonomy, and decision making powers.

Relative to urban women in Yemen, rural women are largely excluded from access to health care and educational opportunities. Public expenditures in health are urban based and do not reach rural women who have minimal access to reproductive health services. Maternal mortality is high at the rate of 351 per 100,000 births, and it is a major threat to women, most of whom marry and have children. Early marriage and multiple early pregnancies seriously endanger women's health and contribute to high MMR. Another indicator of the impact of early marriage on women's health is that the gender discrepancy in the age pyramid increases for ages 10-14, and ages 15-19 when most rural women are getting married.

Health messages in the media have not been effective in improving rural hygienic practices. Female circumcision (FGM) is practiced on Yemen's coasts, parts of the southern highlands and Hadramawt. This is not a radical form of FGM, but apparently involves only a small nick of the clitoris. It appears that the prevalence of the practice is inversely related to the level of education of women in the area. It is not practiced in the northern highlands where only boys are circumcised.

The child mortality rate is 15% higher for girls than boys, which may indicate a preference for boys; it may be a result of earlier weaning for girls or it may be related to FGM. Disaggregating this data by region and parental education may shed light on potential impacts of FGM on girl's health or regional diversity in the treatment of young girls and boys. As they are, these figures indicate girls' and women's exclusion from health care relative to men.

As is the case with health care, most rural girls and women are excluded from educational opportunity. In rural areas only 24% of school aged girls are in

school. Illiteracy rates for rural women, at 78.2%, are almost double those of urban women (39.9%) and double those for men (32.5% in rural areas and 15.4% in urban areas). The youth literacy rate (ages 15-24) for rural females is only 27% compared to urban females at 82%. In an increasingly literate world, adult women's illiteracy has serious consequences on family health and the attainment of the MDGs.

Rural women, whose labour in a subsistence economy was high value-added and who obtained some economic independence from livestock care are feeling increasingly excluded and disempowered in a monetized urban based economy. Illiterate women who continue to participate in agriculture and livestock care cannot access information relevant to agricultural practice and cannot read the instructions on fertilizer and pesticide containers. Their lack of access to standard Arabic hinders their access to televised extension messages. NGOs that are interested in women offer urban skills, such as sewing, rather than agricultural and livestock extension which would be more relevant to rural women's lives. The invisibility of rural women's needs severely limits their potential contributions to economic and political growth.

As women's economic roles in the subsistence economy decline, so do their economic decision making and their mobility. A major reason that more rural women do not accompany their migrant husbands to urban areas is that they do not want to lose the mobility and economic inclusion afforded by their rural lifestyles. Even in rural areas, however, Wahhabi influences are threatening women's inclusion.

Wahhabism targets mixed gender socializing, women's mobility, their traditional poetry and economic independence. Its impact has been largely to disempower women. In response to Wahhabi influence, social pressure has increased to veil women in rural communities, restrict their mobility and prohibit mixed gender dancing and poetry exchanges. Women livestock owners in Hadramawt, who normally transport animals and feed by Land Rovers and pick-up trucks that they drive, have reported recent attempts to prevent them from driving. If these trends continue, rural women will not only be excluded from education, health care and control over land, but also from their traditional forms of self expression and community participation.

In many regions, although not in all, women are excluded from land security in that they do not inherit land. In practice, they exchange their inheritance rights to inheritance to land (or, more accurately the rights to control their land) for the guarantee that their father or brothers will provide them prescribed gifts of substantial economic value during their life, and that they will guarantee them a lifetime of economic and household security (for detailed discussion of these

issues, see Mundy 1979). In this case, their relative exclusion or inclusion depends on the character and integrity of their male kin.

Historically, as well as currently, rural women are formally excluded from community political processes although they have considerable informal input. In theory, women's access to justice equals that of men. In practice, women are represented by their male kin. Like their access to land, their access to justice depends entirely on the integrity of their fathers and brothers.

Highly vulnerable are married women who have accompanied their husbands to towns and cities but who do not have kin nearby. Their lack of a protective and supportive network combined with men's frustrations with economic stresses have increased their vulnerability to domestic violence. As Sheila Carapico argues, "Women in nuclear households in new suburban neighborhoods...are subject to unprecedented physical and emotional abuse" (1996:92). This is supported by interviews with Yemenis who argue that women in rural, tribal areas are protected from domestic violence by tribal honour and customary law that prohibit physical violence against women, and by the protection of their kin. All agree that physical domestic abuse has increased in urban environments (interviews with author November 2005).

Ethnic Minorities

Although there is wide variation in ecology and economic and social structures in Yemen, ethnicity has not been an issue historically. All Yemenis, even those who practiced a religion other than Islam (e.g., Jews) spoke Arabic and shared a Yemeni cultural tradition. Differences in dialect, clothing and forms of artistic expression (poetry, dance, music) did not translate into distinct ethnicities, as cultural assumptions and values were shared. Ethnicity has become an issue only since the migration of large numbers of refugees from East Africa and the acquisition of the ethnically distinct Mahra and Socotra. The extent that these groups currently or in the future will suffer from social exclusion cannot be determined without further research.

Refugees from East Africa

At about the same time period as the forced return of migrants from the Gulf, and continuing since then, thousands of refugees have poured into Yemen from war-torn Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia. Refugees are housed initially at reception centres located near the most utilized ports of entry. The Ministry of Human Rights (MHR 2003) reports that by 2003 over 60,000 refugees had been registered at the Mayfa' Reception Centre in Shabwa Governorate. Kharaz Camp in Lahj held 10,145 Somali and 548 Ethiopian refugees. This camp was built by UNHCR and provides schools, food and 24-hour health service. Yet camp

residents are not gainfully employed (MHR 2004a,b). Refugees residing in camps are excluded from gainful employment and supportive community networks that would allow them to integrate into the wider society.

Once they are registered, refugees are free to travel within Yemen. Some return home, and others move on to neighboring countries. Without follow up research, little is known about the working conditions of refugees who do not live in camps except that some have found professional employment as doctors, pharmacists and teachers, and others work as tailors, domestics or farmers (MHR 2003).

It is expected that refugee women without relatives in Yemen would be most vulnerable. East African women are d in Yemen. Because it is commonly assumed that they have loose morals, they are regularly subjected to sexual harassment. This may be the reason that some domestics from East Africa are not incorporated into household life as are Yemeni domestic workers. A recent article in Yemen Times alleges that in Sanaa Central Prison, “There are Ethiopian female prisoners who cannot speak Arabic and, therefore, cannot express the nature of the their problems” (Bin Sallam 2005). Clearly, more studies are needed of Yemen’s refugee population and their relative inclusion or exclusion.

Mahra and Socotra

The populations of Mahra (est. 56,400) and Socotra (est. 60,000) are ethnically distinct from other populations in Yemen, extremely poor, and geographically distant from centres of power. Because of their small populations they do not attract donor interest. The Socotrans, who speak a language called Socotri, live on the island of Socotra, which has been culturally isolated from the mainland for centuries. In the coastal areas of Socotra, most literate people are completely bilingual, but in rural areas and among women and children Arabic is rarely used and often not well understood. There is interest in developing Socotra for tourism and biodiversity. This may alleviate poverty and provide its population with income security. On the other hand, the benefits of tourism development could exclude the majority of Socotrans if tourist establishments rely on expatriate labour as many do in Sanaa, or if the benefits accrue primarily to members of the new urban elite.

The tribal Mahra, who speak Mahri but usually know Arabic as well, live in the eastern area closest to Oman and have strong affinities with neighboring Omani tribes. Traditionally they were semi-nomadic and settled pastoralists with a small amount of agriculture, but in recent years they have become active in smuggling. Neither of these two ethnic populations, which also have status distinctions within their own social structure, is well known by mainland Yemenis, including government officials in the unified nation. Research is needed to assess their development needs and potentials for exclusion.

ENTRY POINTS AND DRIVERS OF CHANGE

In spite of growing polarization and social exclusion in Yemen, there are important entry points that development interventions can build on. These include egalitarian values in the North and tribal regions, expressed government commitment to inclusion, the inclusionary impacts of migration, a monetized economy, traditions of women's mobility and economic participation, and the increased availability of services to most Yemenis. Another important entry point and probable driver of stability has involved a combination of strong religious identification and tribal mechanisms for conflict resolution.

For many Yemenis, monetization has been an important driver of change. The challenge is to build on this to counteract its exclusionary aspects. Projects that build on the inclusionary aspects of traditional Yemeni values can be powerful drivers of change.

Tribal Governance, Egalitarian Values, and Institutionalized Safety Nets

Historically, in the North tribal governance and the egalitarian ethic of Zaydi Islam mitigated disparities in income. Tribal governance is characterized by a system of checks and balances, valuation of equality of access to justice, protection of the weak, incipient civil society in the form of co-operative mechanisms, and safety nets such as community assistance to the poor. Social life in tribal areas minimized recognized social status differences (Adra 1983a; Varisco and Adra 1984; Bonfiglioli 2005:95). Even today, one finds that, "the more effective the tribal organization in a region, the more likely it is for land to be distributed equitably" (World Bank CSA 2005). In some communities tribal structures have been re-animated to enhance community access to services (author's field notes, 2005).

Historically, economic and political dependence on the rural populations also mitigated tendencies to form powerful urban elites. Although formal government was based in Yemen's urban centres, informal power lay with the rural tribal majority, which in the North was responsible both for feeding and protecting the urban population. The economy, predominantly based on subsistence agriculture, fostered rural autonomy.

Even in the more hierarchically organized non-tribal coastal and southern regions, wealth disparities were not large by international standards (Lackner 1985), and safety nets for the poor and disenfranchised were institutionalized. In Hadramawt and other parts of the South, remittances supported the wealthy,

but there remained a heavy reliance on the rural majority for subsistence and protection. This symbiosis between patrons and clients mitigated the amplification of status and wealth differences.

Although there has been considerable decline in social capital, mutual support and protection for the poor are still valued and provide important safety nets in many communities. Local donations to the poor have been estimated to exceed transfers by the Social Welfare Fund.

Building on traditions of community support, the formation of active parents' councils in schools in Ibb, Abyan and most recently in Saada and al-Jawf have reportedly increased school enrolments by 33% as a result of parental action. The rates of girls' enrollment and retention in schools have increased geometrically.

Tribal processes impact positively even on communities that do not self-identify as tribal. For example, even residents of squatter communities rely on each other for mutual economic and social support and elect a leader to mediate disputes among them and represent their community to outside world. These are important entry points for development interventions to build on.

Finally, major drivers of security in Yemen and reasons that economic and political problems have not resulted in more violent conflict include a deep respect for religion and adherence to tribal process. These are important entry points, especially in rural areas.

Expressed Government Commitment to Inclusion

Equality of Citizens in the Yemen Constitution

“The state shall guarantee equal opportunities for all citizens in the fields of political, economic, social and cultural activities and shall enact the necessary laws for the realization thereof.” (Constitution of Yemen, Part One, Ch. 3, Article 24)

“Citizens are all equal in rights and duties.” (Article 40)

“Every citizen has the right to participate in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the country. The state shall guarantee freedom of thought and expression of opinion in speech, writing and photography within the limits of the law.” (Article 41)

Officially, the current Government of the Republic of Yemen is committed to political and social inclusion, as were the governments of YAR and PDRY. This has been a significant driver of change and has encouraged members of traditionally excluded groups to refuse stigma-laden labels and assert their equality as

Yemeni citizens. Traditional prohibitions against land ownership by those who engaged in low-status occupations have been lifted, thus driving upward mobility for many Yemenis.

From 1969 until unification in 1990, PDRY's command economy strove to equalize disparities in wealth, education and health in the southern and eastern regions. Land Reform redistributed the larger landholdings to former tenants and sharecroppers, thus introducing the idea that members of d occupational groups deserved equality as citizens. If government policy could build on these principles, this would drive inclusion and positively impact development.

Migration and the Monetization of the Economy

Historical Background: Migration as a Driver of Inclusion

Migration in Yemen was an important driver of inclusion even before the oil boom of the 1970s and 1980s. Some members of excluded groups in Hadramawt accumulated wealth through migration to southeast Asia, which they then used for upward mobility. Beginning in the 1970s, the benefits of remittances from Yemenis working in the oil rich Gulf States (estimated at \$1.5 billion per year) reached the majority of Yemenis in both North and South. Remittance wealth contributed to infrastructure development as remittances were invested into the construction of feeder roads to villages and into entrepreneurial activities, such as flour mills and electric generators that serviced nearby villages, small shops and taxi services. In many rural villages remittance wealth combined with community co-operative mechanisms to build local schools and house teachers. In some, health centers were built with remittances. Migration in the 1970s and 1980s not only supported subsistence agriculture, allowing rural women to continue their economic activities (Adra 1983b) but also contributed to the inclusion of the rural population by improving access to education, health care and income security.

In growing cities and towns, as well as in rural villages, remittance wealth created jobs in construction and small commerce for many of the poor. Beneficiaries of migration included members of occupational or status groups that were historically d and socially excluded. Outmigration, as well as internal migration to anonymous urban spaces, also contributed to their upward mobility and inclusion. For many who took advantage of new opportunities and income to purchase land, house construction signaled new forms of inclusion.

Tribesmen and members of the traditional elites who had historically disdained wage labour and commerce began to engage in service activities as immigrants overseas and at home, often alongside Yemenis from traditionally excluded groups. The newly monetized economy encouraged members of the elite and

majority populations to engage in commerce and market activities, thus blurring historic professional boundaries. These factors have been major status equalizers, especially in newly settled urban areas.

Moreover, remittances and/or education have enabled members of formerly excluded groups to cross wealth and status boundaries. In some contexts, members of disdained occupational classes invested remittance wealth in shops or urban houses which they rent out, thus increasing their income. Many have escaped their traditional social stigmas in the relative anonymity of cities and secondary towns.

Skilled members of traditional service occupational groups now charge high prices for their services, such as playing music at weddings, currently at YR15,000 (\$81) per evening in rural communities near Sanaa. Although dependence on cash has increased the economic vulnerability of Yemen's rural majority and has contributed to the polarization of wealth discussed above, its net impact on members of historically excluded groups (other than Akhdam and landless itinerant labourers) appears to have been inclusive.

Traditions of Women's Mobility and Economic Participation

In the subsistence economy, rural women's high value-added participation in agriculture and livestock care afforded them considerable mobility and informal voice, with significant decision making powers at the household and community levels (Adra 1983b; Tutwiler and Carapico 1981). These factors mitigated cultural and religious forces that favored the seclusion and consequent exclusion of women. Although urban women often enjoy greater leisure than their rural sisters, many rural women continue to prefer their mobility and greater levels of participation, refusing to move to urban centres with their husbands and sons. Supporting women's empowerment with agricultural and livestock extension services *for women* and literacy classes for adult rural women would have important positive impact on rural women's inclusion and may help reverse the exclusion of remote rural communities.

Another important traditional entry point for women's inclusion, probably tied to women's economic contributions to the rural economy as well as a cultural high value placed on children, is a cultural respect for women, especially for mothers. In many cases, this counteracts the excluding tendencies of Wahhabism.

Increased Availability of Services

In the past thirty years, the access of all Yemenis to infrastructure, education and health care has improved considerably, with corresponding impacts on health and education indicators. Before the impact of external development

efforts the infant mortality rate in the north was estimated at about 24% (1976), but this has lowered dramatically to 7.6% in 2000. In 1980 the child mortality rate under five was 141 per 1000, but this had decreased to 94.1 per 1000 by 2000 and 82.4 by 2003. Life expectancy at birth was estimated at 37 years in 1976 but has now risen to about 63 for both sexes in 2003 (World Bank 1979; Yemen, Ministry of Planning 2003, 2004). In large part this is due to expanded health care facilities in urban areas and secondary towns, coupled with improved transportation throughout the country.

In 1976 there were only 234 physicians (110 who were non-Yemeni) in the north for an average of one physician per 23,256 inhabitants. This has improved in 2003 to 3,195 physicians with an average of one physician per 6,371 people. In education, the illiteracy rate in 1975 was estimated at 74% for males and 98% for females, but by 2003 this had been reduced to 27.3% for males and 67.1% for females. This decrease is due mainly to the increase in schools and the number of teachers. In the 1974/1975 school year there were only 232,784 students (209,996 being male) enrolled in the first six grades. By 2003 this had risen to 3,702,571 (with 2,297,691 being male). As noted in a recent report by the World Bank, "Public spending on education also appears to favor the poorest households" (World Bank 2005:38). These data point to important drivers of change that should be expanded.

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