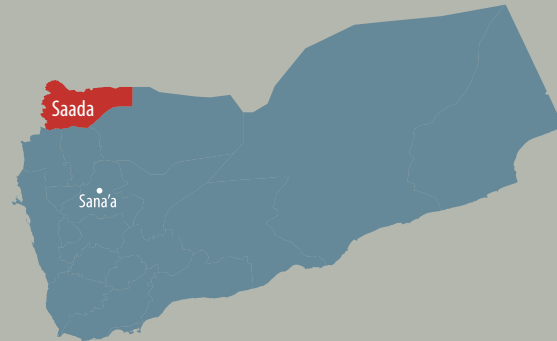


  
**Voices  
of**

## Sahar, Saada Governorate



Sahar district has been one of the most affected areas of the conflict in Saada governorate. The district has many local markets and bazaars, and is particularly well known for hosting the largest market in the governorate, the Al Talh market. Sahar has been called the food basket of Yemen. It produces more fruit and vegetables than qat.

### Main Sources of Income:

- Agriculture: Approximately **70 percent** of the population generates their income from private farms. Those who do not own farms earn income as daily laborers for others, assisting in the harvesting and delivery of products. Some youth are employed by agricultural associations to pack, store and load produce. Female-headed households can earn income from cattle husbandry.
- Private Sector/Services: Approximately **20 percent** of the population operates their own businesses, for example gas stations, grocery stores, selling cars and spare parts, and agricultural products. In addition to running small businesses like grocery shops, some women also earn income from selling clothes or housewares, and offering tailoring services.
- Public Sector: Approximately **10 percent** of the population is employed in the public sector, mainly in the fields of education, health and the military. Some civil servants also operate side businesses.
- Most families are **patriarchal**, with a male **head** of household making decisions and taking responsibility for the physical and economic security of the family.
- Traditional **houses** in Sahar are made of **mud** and built to host more than one family. However, some families live in newer homes constructed of stone or cement blocks – leaving their old houses for livestock or storing fodder and wood.

# Main risks

**Psychological trauma:** Interviewees expressed feelings of extreme physical insecurity, fearing that they may be killed at any time. For them, there are no safe zones. Many casualties have been reported during attacks on main roads, markets, gas stations, health and education facilities, and even residential neighborhoods. The attacks leave not only deaths but also severe injuries, such as disabilities. Without proper medical care, pregnant women can face tragic fates during home births.

**Deterioration of security conditions:** In light of such difficult circumstances, incidents of crime and gender-based violence are commonly seen.

**Child labour:** Rising unemployment and pre-existing illiteracy may force people to let their children work.

**Malnutrition and food insecurity:** Residents, particularly children, are facing acute malnutrition as a result of inadequate food supplies.

**Spread of infectious diseases:** There has been a rise in cases of infectious and viral diseases, particularly among women and children. They include fever, diarrhea, skin diseases, and eye and chest infections. Some participants attributed the cause to the ongoing fighting and environmental pollution.

# Coping mechanisms

The more financially stable are using solar energy to produce electricity and pump water to their farms.

People are minimizing food consumption by dropping many essential items from their diet, sometimes reducing meals to two per day and, in some cases, fasting.

Community-based social support during these difficult times has been clearly observed. Residents are sharing shelter, giving charity and providing financial and psychological support. For example, in order to save fuel, one person is often designated to go shopping at the local market on behalf of the entire village. This also has a security benefit, as some markets have been the targets of shelling.

Using candles and lanterns for lighting; residents are also mixing cooking oil with other substances to replace fuel with which to operate heavy machinery, such as water pumps.

Some women are working at tomato and cucumber farms in order to bring back some vegetables for their families.

Relocating markets to safer areas.

Using motorbikes for transportation instead of cars.

Displaced women are helping their host communities by collecting wood and water, receiving some wood, water, and in some cases flour, in return.



Fruit and vegetable delivery: Though risky, some residents have turned to trucking agricultural products to other governorates for profit. For example, earning about USD 2,326 (YR 500,000) for one load from Saada to Sana'a - a good income in present circumstances.

People have been selling their assets, such as gold, livestock, business capital assets, as well as cashing in on savings. However they usually end up selling their goods low prices just to secure food or transportation.

Growth of a black market: People are turning to the black market for fuel and cooking gas.

Criminal activity: Some men, particularly youth, have been driven by dire necessity to steal or join armed groups in order to provide food for their families.

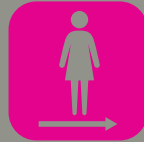
Using folk remedies in the absence of proper medications: In some cases, the treatment has a worse effect on health than the illness it's purporting to treat.

# Opportunities



## **Agricultural land:**

The area is fertile and has access to water.



## **Community acceptance of women participation:**

Women are actively involved in agricultural activities and, though limited in number, there are some women working in both the private and public sector.



**Active community-based associations:** For example, the Alsunbolah Cooperative Agricultural Association exports 90 percent of the agricultural products and employs hundreds of youth.



**The availability of markets:** As the area contains several strategic and strong markets, there is a demand and supply cycle.

# Challenges

## **Impact on girls' education:**

As a result of the destruction of schools, many children interviewed did not seem optimistic about the future. Girls expressed uncertainty about their continued schooling after the destruction of school buildings. They cannot study in tents due to cultural traditions requiring girls to study in enclosed spaces and with dedicated latrines.

**Survival:** The dire security situation has created fear among the population, especially women and children, who do not know how they will survive – particularly in the absence of any external support for their well-being. “We are not safe and we do not know if we will still be alive when the war is over,” one of the women interviewed shared.

## **Loss of women-established businesses:**

Some female participants could not continue to earn income from their ventures such as raising livestock and crops, and other small businesses.

**Contamination:** Explosive remnants of war were found in many areas of the district. Participants said that these areas will no longer be used for livelihood-related activities such as farming or livestock grazing.

## **Lack of access to markets:**

Participants stated access to markets and businesses is challenging. Even those who can afford the current inflated prices have to risk their lives by travelling through roads subject to the ongoing fighting.

## **Increased fatalities and injuries:**

The conflict has caused an increase in the number of widows, orphans and people with special needs - adding extra pressure to the already economically struggling community.

**Total or partial destruction of infrastructure:** The ongoing conflict has caused total or partial destruction to vital infrastructure in many sectors, including health, education and energy. Water and electricity systems have also been impacted. The destruction has also reached people's homes, farms, factories and markets.

*“Voices of” is a series of community-level consultations led by UNDP in Yemen using inclusive focus group discussions that seek to: identify their fragilities, prioritise opportunities and challenges, and highlight the vulnerability of community livelihoods assets to sustain the crisis.*



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