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# Gender-based violence in Yemen: An overview of Governmental and International actions

Examining gender-based violence in Yemen through Intersectionality and Horizontal  
Inequality and measures taken by relevant actors to address the situation

Bachelor Thesis in Peace and Development Studies

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## **Abstract**

Yemen is a conflict ridden country facing humanitarian issues as well as high levels of inequality, both due to the conflict itself but also the patriarchal hierarchy and customs that elevates men above women. The population of Yemen faces inequality in more than one way, however this study will be focusing on the recurring gender-based violence. Gender-based violence is a widespread phenomenon and something that affects more than a third of women globally, whether it be through physical violence or more invisible forms such as emotional or financial abuse. This study will focus mainly on the physical abuse, including sexual violence in relation to the ongoing conflict, as well as harmful customs and practices that exists in Yemen. By using an intersectional framework and horizontal inequality the objective of this thesis is to examine how different social factors contribute to increasing gender-based violence. Moreover, this research aims to investigate the role of international organizations in relation to gender inequality and gender-based violence in a conflict ridden country, as well as potential initiatives done by the state of Yemen. In conclusion, this study emphasizes how critical it is to adapt interventions to the specific obstacles suffered by women in conflict areas in order to assist with upcoming initiatives supporting women's empowerment and gender equality in Yemen and other similar circumstances. Additionally, this thesis concludes the importance of implementing both intersectionality and horizontal inequality as frameworks both on Yemen as a case study and on gender-based violence generally, as the issues are broad and fueled by many contributing factors. This is also what is missing from earlier research, broad and inclusive theories that can be applied to the specific case of gender-based violence in Yemen.

**Keywords:** Conflict, Gender-based violence, Intersectionality, Horizontal inequality

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## 1. Introduction

In today's society, gender inequality is a prominent issue and something that needs to be addressed. Globally, violence against women is a major problem. Nearly 736 million women worldwide, or close to one in three, have experienced domestic abuse in relationships both physically and sexually, sexual assault by another person, or both at some point in their life (representing 30% of women who are 15 and older). Serious harassment actions are not included in this data (United Nations Women, 2023). As gender inequality is a very broad term, which includes a lot of different aspects and areas, this thesis will focus on gender-based violence, a term which defines the act of assault against another person's will. The violence is based on the imbalance of power between men and women and can take either a visible or invisible form. It can happen to anyone, but because of the power imbalance between the genders, women are far more affected. The violence can manifest as physical violence, emotional abuse, including verbal abuse and deprivation of freedom, sexual abuse, harmful customs and practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation, to name a few. (International Rescue Committee, 2023).

Some form of violence, whether it be emotional, psychological or physical will affect more than a third of girls and women globally at some point in their lives. Gender-based violence can happen at any point in time and at any place in the society, not necessarily in direct link to conflict or crisis, however the number of affected increases in a situation of emergency. Conflict and crisis heightens vulnerability and exposure when the security of family, society and legal systems become scarce (ibid). To contextualize the issue of gender-based violence in a thesis, it is easiest to do a case study on a specific country that particularly struggles with this issue. Yemen is a remarkable subject for research for a number of reasons. Yemen struggles not only with the consequences of the prolonged civil war, but also with systemic injustices affecting both women and girls. A hidden battle for justice and equality is taking place in the middle of the conflict. This nation is known for its political instability, humanitarian problems, and violence, however gender-based violence tends to be forgotten

among the broader story of conflict, malnutrition, and migration, but needs immediate attention. The situation of women and girls has frequently been ignored, in practice as well as in research (Council on Foreign Relations, 2023). Yemen's poor rating (155 out of 156) on the 2021 Global Gender Gap Index, which reflects the country's high gender disparity, emphasizes how urgent it is to look into how conflict affects gender gaps (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). In order to highlight the urgent need to address this worrying aspect of the situation, this paper seeks to shed light on the gender-based violence in Yemen, more specifically through the theoretical frameworks intersectionality and horizontal inequality. The situation is complex and increased by different factors, such as the conflict. However, examining the connection between conflict and increasing gender-based violence is hard, though violence overall increases and violence against women is prominent, it is difficult to provide clear evidence as to how much of increasing levels can be linked to the conflict itself and how much is due to other factors.

The Sustainable Development Agenda was adopted by UN member states in 2015, to achieve 17 different goals within a 15 year time frame. Goal number five targets gender and women, by striving to achieve equality and empower all women and girls. This includes acting to end child marriage and prevent sexual and physical violence among other things. However, the process of achieving gender equality has not been successful, in fact the progress that had been made has not only halted, but also begun to reverse due to intersecting crises of the climate emergency, COVID-19 and rising economic and political instability (United Nations Women, 2022). Since Yemen is a member state in the UN, this highlights the importance that Yemen urgently needs to address the issues occurring in the country, especially as oppression of women and child marriage are two examples of the pressing issues the country is facing (United Nations Yemen, 2023). Yemen is in a terrible situation as a result of the conflict, dealing with a financial crisis and worsening infrastructure. Women's movement is further restricted by traditional gender norms, which makes it more difficult for them to get needs including food, water, sanitary conditions, and medical care (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). The situation in Yemen is complex and investigating inequality and its causes and driving factors is challenging, which is a part of the reason we have chosen to examine gender-based violence for this thesis, apart from its prominent existence in both societies overall and in Yemen. Although gender-based violence is still a broad subject with

many contributing factors, it is nearly impossible to do extensive research on all of them considering the limitations for this thesis. With that said, this thesis does not seek to do a deep dive into just one of the possible causes or factors as they all intersect and affect each other. Rather, the aim for this research is to provide an overview of the situation regarding Yemen and gender-based violence and what is currently being done to help combat the violence by both the government and other actors. Further, the objective of the analysis is mainly to investigate this phenomenon through intersectionality and horizontal inequality as these are important theories in gender studies.

## 1.1 Background

Yemen's history has been formed by a complicated combination of religious, political, and cultural factors. Tensions over religion and culture between the north and south of Yemen have shaped its history. The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, led by Ali Abdullah Saleh, and the Yemeni Arab Republic, supported by the Soviet Union and the United States, were united to establish the current state in 1990. Nevertheless, four years later, separatists from the South split away, only to return as the Southern Movement in 2007 with the goal of gaining greater independence. Ansar al-Sharia and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) expanded their area of influence in the east and south. Throughout 2004 and 2010, the Zaydi Shiite-led Houthi movement in the north revolted against Saleh's regime many times (Laub, 2015). Navigating these historical flows and identifying the patterns connecting Yemen's outstanding weave will help to understand the country's past.

Yemen's civil war started in 2014 when Iranian-backed Houthi rebels took over the current capital city called Sanaa, and claimed a new regime. In 2015, airstrikes against the Houthis by an alliance led by Saudi Arabia escalated the battle. Following his escape to Saudi Arabia, President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi engaged in a complicated power struggle. The conflict created regional forces as well, giving rise to an indirect battle between the Sunnis and Shia. In 2016, negotiations for peace came to an end and a naval blockade worsened the humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen. The situation was made more complex by internal tensions and the Southern Transitional Council. The Houthi rebels escalated their attacks in 2021, and Yemen continued to be the world's greatest humanitarian crisis, with millions of affected individuals in need of aid. The suffering became acute by the economic downturn

and inflation. The United States carried out counterterrorism policies, mostly using airstrikes, targeting groups of AQAP and ISIS. President Hadi resigned in 2022 to allow for the election of a new presidential council (Council on Foreign Relations, 2023). Since cooperating with the Yemeni government after the USS Cole bombing in 2000, the United States has demonstrated a major dedication to defeating terrorism and violent extremism in Yemen. The United States has carried out over 400 strikes in Yemen since 2002. Although the Houthi rebels do not pose a risk to the United States, their violent assaults on Saudi Arabian land and assets represent an enormous risk to a vital alliance of the United States. Even though the six-month cease-fire administered by the UN concluded in October 2022, all sides have continued to show limitations, leading to a longer duration of minimal armed conflict. Furthermore to the UN's ongoing intervention actions, ongoing peace negotiations between Saudi and Houthi leaders began again in April 2023 under the direction of Oman. However, major progress is still unclear in the nation (ibid).

To put it differently, Yemen faces itself at a turning point in its intricate history, marked by internal power struggles, regional battles, and turbulence in policy. The country has been in a prolonged humanitarian catastrophe since 2014 as a result of the Houthi-led civil conflict, which has been made more acute by outside operations. The multifaceted interaction of geopolitical, cultural, and religious elements emphasizes what obstacles Yemen confronts in achieving justice. Yemen's people are suffering greatly as the world's worst humanitarian disaster plays out, pointing out the need for ongoing worldwide efforts to rebuild ruined lives, as well as welcome a long-term peace.

## 1.2 Relevance

Gender-based violence is not a new phenomenon. It is a widespread, global issue that needs to be tackled. Western societies are not an exception and violence against women occurs frequently, however it can be argued that there are parts of the world where this issue is more pressing, even though it is unfair to compare issues. Yemen is a country where gender inequality is prominent, including gender-based violence, which is a form of inequality since it, in this case, specifically applies to men abusing their position and power in society to harm women both physically and mentally. As stated, gender-based violence increases in a society

in crisis or conflict and given the long on-going conflict in Yemen this is something that needs to be addressed (United Nations Yemen, 2023).

### 1.3 Research Objective

The primary objective of this thesis is to explore the complicated link between gender-based violence and the current conflict in Yemen. Using the theoretical frameworks of intersectionality and horizontal inequality, the study will examine multiple variables that both contribute to and foster violence against women. Owing to the extensive nature of gender-based violence, it is not possible to include each potential relevant component in this study. The main goal is to provide a reasonably broader overview and to spread information. To tackle the research issue, the thesis takes a comprehensive approach, analyzing the larger context of a multifaceted conflict. Moreover, this thesis examines to what extent the National Action Plan for Yemen (NAP), as well as international organizations, such as United Nation Development Programme (UNDP), CARE international and The International Rescue Committee initiatives, aid in addressing these patterns. The study will analyze how these organizations programs fit in with the requirements and dynamics of the area.

### 1.4 Research questions

The following research questions will direct the study's progress.

1. What are some of the most prominent ways in which gender-based violence expresses itself in Yemen since 2014?
2. What are some of the initiatives that the government of Yemen and international organizations have taken to address violence against women and girls since 2014?
3. What new perspectives do intersectionality and horizontal inequality propose in regards to gender-based violence in Yemen?

## 1.5 Structure of the study

This thesis consists of seven chapters, including the introduction. The study begins by providing an introduction with an overview of the situation. This is done by describing the injustices in Yemen, which is the humanitarian crisis as a result of the ongoing conflict, as well as an issue that tends to be forgotten; gender inequality. Chapter 2 presents a literature review with the aim to deepen the knowledge about Yemen's extensive problems as a result of the war, as well as a focus on women's issues. A deeper understanding on the subject of gender-based violence is also provided to establish the parameters of what we are researching in this thesis. Subsequently, in order to promote a complex understanding of the legal structures at work, a thorough analysis of theories relevant to the thesis and a broad examination of the wider research field are conducted in the 3rd Chapter. In addition, the theoretical framework outlines intersectionality and horizontal inequality, both of which are important concepts in both Gender studies as well as Peace and Development studies to examine the complex ways of how inequality affects different groups and individuals. The approach used within the research is presented and clarified in detail in the methods chapter in a methodical and transparent form. Chapter 5 provides an in-depth description of the activities carried out by international organizations that operate in Yemen. The analysis of these results are the focus of the next part of Chapter 6, which ends with a section that not only highlights the major insights but also offers recommendations for a brighter future for women and girls in the country.

## 2. Literature Review

As established, Yemen is a country facing a lot of consequences because of the conflict, including an extensive humanitarian crisis. In "*Yemen in Crisis: Road to War*", Helen Lackner provides a detailed examination of the complicated challenges that Yemen is facing. The book covers the historical, political, social, and economic aspects of the nation, bringing insights into the causes of its current dilemma. Lackner examines problems including financial difficulties, regional conflict, foreign intervention's effects, ethnic disputes, and the contribution of tribalism to Yemen's ongoing instability. In order to identify the crisis's underlying causes and offer practical solutions, the author highlights how crucial it is to comprehend these complex dynamics (Lackner 2019). Lackner begins by outlining the cycle

of happenings that resulted in the catastrophic military intervention supported by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in March 2015, following the public protest in Yemen in early 2011. However, her book lacks an in-depth account of the conflict. She includes acknowledgment of the 1960s and 1970s, but her focus is on the years that followed the 1990 unity of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY, the South) and the old Yemen Arab Republic (YAR, the North) (ibid).

It is clear that the situation in Yemen is in dire need of change, and many organizations are already working hard to help the civilians affected. The World Food Programme reports that 10 million people in Yemen are suffering from extreme lack of food, and over 20.1 million people, which is 50% of the country's population, faces starvation. The United Nations has declared Yemen to have the worst humanitarian catastrophe in history. Since COVID-19 has spread, the situation has grown worse, and for many thousands of people in Yemen, assistance from humanitarian organizations is now their only hope. Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the world, with over 50% of the population struggling to obtain even one meal a day because of its structural vulnerabilities, prolonged violence, and bad governance. As of December 13, 2020, there were 607 documented COVID-19 fatalities among the confirmed cases. Because of the weak health system and continuing armed conflict, which limit testing capabilities, the real number is probably far higher. Based on epidemiological calculations, it is possible that up to 16 million individuals, or up to 55% of Yemen's population, may be infected with COVID-19. The limitations brought on by the epidemic have made social and economic problems worse, including the country's food shortages, which are destroyed by conflict (Hashim et al, 2021).

War and conflict have effects on both women and men, and have horrible effects on gender inequality, at least according to some scholars. However, according to Buvinic *et al.* (2013) there had been relatively little research on the effects of conflict on effects on gender roles and inequalities regarding individuals and households. This is because household surveys of high quality and large scale are typically unavailable for conflict ridden countries and if there are surveys available they usually do not include questions regarding violent behavior. Furthermore, another issue is the lack of reliable baseline information on variables like levels

of violence before a conflict and sexual and gender-based violence measures (Buvinic et al. 2013). However, there seems to have been an increase in research and information in the past decade regarding the effects on inequality and gender related issues. Violence is a common occurrence in the context of war, but not only in the ways one normally would think of such as men fighting other men over the issue in question. Violence against women is equally as prominent, even though women are often not actively fighting the war. Sexual violence is one of the most common phenomenons according to Hague (2016). Sexual violence is often used as a weapon in war to demonstrate victory, break up families, terrorise the population and in some cases it is even used to ethnicity of the next generations bloodline. It is common that women are raped in front of their families, including their children, in order to humiliate their husbands foremost, but also the family in general. Sometimes rape can also be used to change the course of a womens life, by for instance deliberately infecting them with HIV so they will be unable to bear children. In other, rarer cases rape is used to force women to bear children of a specific ethnicity if the ethnicity is inherited through the male line (Hague, 2016).

As mentioned earlier, Yemen repeatedly ranks extremely low on the Global Gender Gap Index. The United Nations Development Programme indicates that it was ranked second-to-last on the Index in 2021 (Butt et al, 2022). Yemen is ranked among the world's most challenging countries for women. The country's long-standing and turbulent problems, along with the deeply embedded gender inequality that runs across generations, are the main causes of this poor rating. As a result, Yemeni women are living in extremely adverse conditions, and their mental health is worsening as a result of the ongoing conflict. It is essential to tackle the underlying causes of these issues, which calls for serious efforts to improve the living circumstances of Yemeni women. These kinds of initiatives are crucial for both reducing their symptoms and advancing their mental health (ibid). The majority of these are the result of additional difficulties arising from the continuing armed conflict in Yemen, including the aftermath of the widespread famine, a rise in gender-based violence, a lack of medical resources, and several other conditions. It was shown that in low-income nations including Yemen, mental health was the focus of only 3% of medicinal studies. According to research, nearly one in 5 Yemenis suffer from mental health diseases, showing that the country's population is severely affected by mental health issues. This is further supported by a study done in 2021 on students from Yemen, which found that opposed to male students,

female students from Yemen were more likely to experience future concern in terms of its social component (Butt et al, 2022).

Examining the numerous variables causing disparities at different layers of society is essential in order to solve the critical issue of inequality's origins. A broad spectrum of factors can contribute to inequality, such as household income, age and gender layout, differences in the percentage of each gender in the labor force, the economy's natural resources, and measures of human capital associated with income, including health and education. It is crucial to understand that the MENA area is diverse in terms of development statuses, assets, and income levels. In general, manufacturing is not of the utmost significance to the economy of MENA nations. The results suggest that GDP per capita and female labor force participation are factors that increase already-existing disparities in salaries and increase inequality. Owing to limited data, certain MENA nations are left out of the panel simulation and the descriptive analysis. For example, the GNI development in Yemen from 1992 to 2005 was only 0.01 (Acar & Dogruel, 2012).

## 2.1 Research Gap

There is an absence of detailed research on the actions done by international organizations in Yemen to address and reduce gender-based violence. Furthermore, it appears that there is a research vacuum concerning the investigation of the relevance and usefulness of two fundamental theories—intersectionality and horizontal inequality—in the particular context of gender-based violence in Yemen. This gap in the literature emphasizes how important it is for academic studies to explore the complex dynamics of how international organizations deal with and contribute to the various issues surrounding gender-based violence in Yemen, as well as to take an in-depth look at the intersectionality and horizontal inequality frameworks in this important field. This gap might be triggered by an absence of extensive study, current data, or in-depth assessments that puts emphasis on the lives of women and girls during the conflict, the amount and kinds of gender-based violence, in addition to practical solutions or plans to deal with such issues. For instance, the last mentioned literature review lacks an understanding of the reasons for inequality in the MENA region, which gives rise to the research gap concerning Yemen. Although it offers insight into the factors that contribute to

unequal circumstances, the paragraph makes it evident that Yemen was left out of the descriptive analysis of this study because of a lack of data. The low GNI development number presented for the years 1992 to 2005, as well as other data on Yemen, demonstrate not enough broad studies that may give insight into specific difficulties, underlying causes, and possible solutions relating to inequality in Yemen. As such, experts and policymakers may not be fully aware of specific challenges that will either make Yemen's inequality worse or less.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

The utilization of intersectionality and horizontal inequality theories in the examination of gender-based violence and conflict in Yemen provides an improved understanding of the various interrelated elements that increase women's vulnerabilities within this specific environment. It also contributes to developing more focused and efficient strategies and actions that take into account the different requirements and experiences of women across a range of intersecting identities.

#### **3.1 Intersectionality**

The term intersectionality was invented by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw as a metaphor to crossways, to describe the “*various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women’s employment experiences*” (Crenshaw, 1989 as cited in Losleben & Musubika, 2023, p. 73). The reason for the invention was a court ruling, where five black women sued the company they had been working at for discrimination because of how the company’s employer’s seniority system maintained effects of past discrimination against black women. However, the court cleared the allegations of discrimination, because the company employed both black people and women, but only black men and white women. Crenshaw understood the way the discriminations intersected, that the women were discriminated against both in regards to race and gender. She then coined the term intersectionality and equated it to traffic in an intersection, where traffic flows from many different directions. If an accident were to happen in an intersection it could be caused by traffic coming from any number of directions and sometimes even all of them. In the case of the court ruling, the women were discriminated against from two different “directions”, both race and gender (Losleben & Musubika, 2023 p. 73).

Intersectionality is a theoretical framework that refers to how different discriminations overlap and intersect, rather than exist in a vacuum. Discrimination happens on different levels simultaneously and they work to create as well as maintain and build up systems of oppression. Intersectionality is crucial to understand how factors such as racism, sexism, classism and hostility towards other cultures combine and form multifaceted discrimination. We as human beings are not perceived as a simple being that can be described in one term, but rather a variety of different identity markers like gender, age, sexuality and ethnicity among others. These markers do not have a meaning on their own, we as a society give them meaning and what markers one identifies with changes continuously throughout life depending on different circumstances. Society is the one assigning meaning to these categories, and whether it is despite or because of this, the consequences of each one becomes very real for each individual. Each identity marker holds a certain value and with this comes the structures of both difference and discrimination. In other words, intersectionality is not necessarily about how one identifies or is identified, but rather about how society contributes to either oppressing or privilege individuals or groups (ibid, p 72-74).

### 3.2 Horizontal inequality

Given that inequality is an underlying factor and an effect of violent conflict, addressing its structural causes is one method for accomplishing this. Violent conflict is becoming progressively correlated with poverty and inequality. Over 2 billion people reside in areas that are unstable or have experienced violence (Oxfam, 2019, p. 1). Systematic political and economic disparities throughout groups, known as horizontal inequalities, may arise from a variety of variables, such as differences in the environment, the distribution of natural resources, the effects of colonialism, and economic policies. It is vital to go above the income gap and analyze the social, economic, and political aspects of inequality that lead to conflict in order to tackle the underlying causes of disagreement in terms of inequality. Social inequality, for instance, hinders people's ability to obtain services like a place to live, medical care, and education. The split of political chances and influence among groups, including leadership of local and national governmental institutions in addition to the armed forces and police, is referred to as political inequality (ibid, p. 4-5). In other words, discrimination based

on oppressed identities in society, such as ethnicity, gender, and race, is marked by horizontal inequalities. While often addressing social injustice and economic inequality, development strategy has primarily focused on increasing economic growth and ending absolute poverty (Kabeer, p. 190, 2015). Additionally, quantitative analyses have demonstrated that the causes of some of the most serious kinds of drawbacks, or what is known as "extreme poverty", are less about added factors as they are the intersection of various forms of inequality, both vertical and horizontal. Thus, these disparities overlap, increase, and worsen one another. Gender inequality surpasses horizontal differences such as caste and race along with vertical inequalities. Owing to the intersectionality of several types of inequality, women and girls from the most economically disadvantaged castes, ethnic groups, and racial backgrounds usually face higher rates of violence. When it comes to their health, nutrition, and education, they also typically confront more significant obstacles than women from comparable impoverished homes (ibid, p. 194).

### 3.3. Theories applied to the research

Trying to understand gender inequality is complex. It is not as simple as stating that there is a difference between men and women, there are differences between different groups of women too which is why intersectionality is a relevant choice for this study. Further, the implementation of intersectionality works well as it generalizes categories while still taking multiple categories into consideration. This means that the theory itself reduces human individuals to categories, which can be seen as reducing their agency, something that sounds bad but every theory has different premises for its application to be possible. The reason for intersectionality being generalizing is that the data collected is analyzed through a demographic aspect, that is, different categories such as race, class and gender. In this thesis this will be used as an advantage, as we are doing a qualitative desk study with the aim to analyze how different aspects contribute to gender inequality and gender-based violence. Given the difficulties in obtaining data or analyzing personal experiences, as well as the need to look at societal categories such as class and religion in relation to women's oppression, intersectionality seemed as a good choice. However, when used with intersectionality, horizontal inequality provides an additional pattern that improves awareness of social differences. Whereas horizontal inequality opens the viewpoint to consider differences across various categories of society, such as economic classes or geographic areas, intersectionality

concentrates on the intersecting identities among certain groups. Horizontal inequality studies differences that run parallel to one another in order for addressing systemic imbalances. Additionally, it will offer a framework to examine the connections between gender dynamics and economic, social, and geographical disparities and vulnerabilities that have been caused more severely by the crisis in Yemen.

Avoiding intersectionality could result in limiting perceptions of women's experiences. Gender-based violence has numerous dimensions, and focusing only on one's gender could miss the particular difficulties suffered by women who identify within the intersecting identities. In other words, this implies that an individual's interaction with violence is impacted not just by their gender but also by further factors including race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, financial standing, or other social classifications. Nonetheless, ignoring horizontal aspects may give rise to an insufficient awareness of the ways in which regional and economic inequality promotes violence against women. The successful outcome of interventions would be reduced if the complexity of disparities across many dimensions were addressed.

#### **4. Methodological framework**

This section examines the method used in this thesis and evaluates the validity and reliability of the study. The chosen method for this thesis is a qualitative abductive case study, with an examination and observation of already-existing secondary data sources.

##### **4.1 Case study**

When selecting a case, it is done through a specific interest in the complexity of the case and it is also important to address why the particular case is important to study according to Bryman (2016, p. 664). Yemen can be used as a case study to illustrate the many inequality-related issues the country faces, specifically in light of gender-based violence. The case in question highlights a number of complexities since gender-based violence is a prominent issue in many countries, takes many different forms, and is thought to increase in times of crisis or conflict. Yemen is said to be one of the highest ranking countries when it comes to inequality, making it a valid choice of case. According to George & Bennett (2005),

one of the biggest issues with case studies, as well as other research methods in social sciences, is selection-bias. Selection-bias is commonly used in reference to statistical terms, and refers to when a selection process, whether in study's design or the real-life phenomena being investigated, leads to inferences that are impacted by systematic errors. However, such biases can also appear in case study research, "*when cases or subjects are self-selected or when the researcher unwittingly chooses cases that represent a truncated sample along the dependent variable of the relevant population of cases*" (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 47). Statistical researchers are advised not to choose cases on the dependent variable, but on the contrary case study researchers sometimes choose cases with a shared specific outcome. It has been argued that case selection on the dependent variable should not be completely dismissed by analysts and practitioners of case study research, because it can be appropriate for some purposes. The cases that are selected in this way can help identify unnecessary variables sufficient conditions for the outcome that has been selected (ibid). Another related issue is the researchers own knowledge about the case or situation beforehand, such as which variables might have the most value or if their cognitive bias is in favor of a particular hypothesis. The issue itself is whether or not this foreknowledge biases the selection of cases. A bias towards a particular hypothesis can affect the research in question, however George & Bennett argues that some preliminary knowledge can allow for a much stronger research design (George & Bennett, pp 47-49). It is hard, if not impossible, to be completely unbiased in social science research and especially case studies, as the cases have to be selected and this is, as established, done by a certain interest or need to investigate a case. Yemen has been used as a case study multiple times before, specifically because of its long conflict and the humanitarian crisis that has become because of both the conflict and climate changes. The decision to select a case combining Peace and Development research with Gender Studies was considered to be justified in this thesis. As Yemen has a lot of issues with both conflict and gender inequality, we felt that it sparked our interest to analyze the connection between the two, something that has been done before in other countries and regions but not a great deal in specifically Yemen. There is some research between things such as mental health and conflict, and how that affects women, as well as reports from organisations such as the United Nations and Amnesty that discuss about the effects that the conflict has on women in terms of for example sexual abuse. This is why we decided to broaden the research to not only investigate the link between gender-based violence and conflict, but also what the role of the United

Nations and the state itself has, as well as implementing theories mainly used in Gender Studies to get a new perspective.

Researchers that examine case studies acknowledge that a single case study is a detailed examination of a particular instance (Bryman, 2016, p. 62). In this case, it is applied to a country, rather than a representative or typical sample. The key difference between a single case study and a multiple case study is that the multiple case involves researchers looking at several examples and cases with the goal to identify the variations and parallels between the cases. As a result, this research only addresses a single case, as our goal is not to identify parallels between different cases. Moreover, a single case study allows the researcher to understand the topic being studied at a deeper level. The benefit of single case studies is that they can give deep clarification of the phenomenon's existence (Gustafsson, 2017). The case study of Yemen is complex and profound and even in a single case study it is impossible to cover all factors that play into why the situation is what it is. The aim of this thesis is to have a slightly wider approach while only being focused on one case, but because of the complexity of the case and the limitations, some things have to be reduced. Not all factors can be covered and that was not the plan either, as it is an important subject with a lot of research missing, we aim to provide a more general base understanding, with the possibility of future research that can dive deeper into specific causes and factors.

## 4.2 Abductive reasoning

By use of the abduction method, the researcher develops a theoretical understanding of the circumstances and subjects, exploring the vocabulary, definitions, and viewpoints that shape their perception of the world. The critical stage of abduction is when the researcher establishes a social knowledge of the social world by observing from the perspectives of the participants, having first portrayed and understood the world through their own lenses (Bryman, p. 394). Abduction as a research method is defined by a mainly inductive approach; nevertheless, what sets it apart is its focus on understanding participants' worldviews. The analysis of processes is the usual lens through which social life is viewed in qualitative research, and this tendency can take many different forms. The focus on illustrating how events and structures change throughout time is a common form. As a result, qualitative data

often reflects an intense sense of vitality and change. A series of actors and group events, and activities that occur gradually within a particular environment is what is meant to be understood as a process in this case (ibid, p. 395). To put it simply, the reason why abductive approaches have an advantage over deductive or inductive methods is because the former use theory to analyze society, whereas the last two begin or build a theory. The application of intersectionality and horizontal inequality in abduction helps this thesis understand the processes of inequality in Yemen.

### 4.3 Materials

For this subject, a variety of sources can be examined for reference materials. Academic documents, books, and articles are examples of secondary sources for this research. As we have decided to do a desk study and analyze our material, which is mostly books or academic articles, and are not doing interviews or surveys, our material will mostly consist of secondary sources. We are analyzing previous research in this field as well as relevant documents and articles from different international organizations, both to get a sense of the situation in Yemen and for our analysis. When choosing the texts, we have used our questions as a guideline to establish the relevance. At first we thought we were going to be using our theoretical frameworks as a means of selecting relevant data too, to code the material in a way by if they have implemented an intersectional perspective or discuss horizontal inequality. However, we decided that it would be more relevant to use our theories for our analysis, by using our question about theory to analyze the documents that we have chosen. Instead, we chose international organizations as our main source for our findings, first to establish the current situation in Yemen, as these organization's main objective is civilian lives and therefore report the truth. This is not to say that a country's national news channels or state are automatically corrupt or untruthful, but choosing independent international organizations whose sole purpose is to report on humanitarian crises, conflicts and civilian issues works better for reliability in a thesis.

International organizations are heavily involved in countries that are affected by crises and conflicts. Hence, we considered it appropriate to investigate the specifics of their work, with Yemen as the focus in this case. All organizations we have found that are active in Yemen

discuss the humanitarian crisis, albeit in different ways. Some focus on the overall picture, while others focus on women and children, but the agreement from all is that the situation is deeply flawed. Despite the focus on women, these organizations are all generally valid, as women's rights are human rights and discussing humanitarian issues is not isolated, women's rights fall under this category too.

#### 4.4 Reliability and validity

Validating the findings should be done consistently throughout the research process, however there are things that can be done to further ensure that the data used for analysis is valid and reliable. One of these is to triangulate, which means that the researcher should examine the data from different sources and use this to build a coherent evidence for themes. By using several sources of data that all contribute to build upon or establish a theme, this helps to add validity to the research in question (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Therefore we have used several sources to find data, that all point towards the issue at hand, that there is a prominent problem with inequality and gender-based violence in the country.

#### 4.5 Limitations and delimitations

Any conducted study faces both limitations and delimitations that can affect the study's validity, scope and generalisability. As we will be conducting a qualitative desk study, we will not be doing any interviews or surveys, and all our material will be secondary sources. We have outlined a few limitations with this approach, such as not getting individual perspectives of the affected women in Yemen. However, we feel this would have been extremely difficult even if we had decided to do interviews, mainly because of the current state of the country and the oppression of women, who would not be allowed to participate in an interview without a male presence and therefore the outcome would not be reliable data. This is however still a problem when researching secondary data, as not a lot of personal experiences can be found. This justifies the use of intersectionality as a theoretical framework, as the key tenets of intersectionality are that human lives are complex and shaped by different social factors and can not be determined by only viewing individual factors such as race or gender. However, the limitation with intersectionality is that the data is analyzed through a demographic aspect, which slightly reduces people from individuals to categories. In the case

of this thesis however, this is preferable as we have already established that individual experiences are hard to find and analyze.

Our delimitations are mainly the decision on how to conduct the study, as established we will not be conducting interviews, something that could be argued to be better suited for this type of study. When writing about human experiences it is always preferable to have primary data from the individuals affected, however this did not seem to be possible for us, both in regards to our own safety as Yemen is a country in active conflict and in regards to a lack of funding for travel, which would be necessary to conduct interviews.

#### 4.6 Ethical considerations

The choice of conducting a desk study was mostly made due to a lack of both funding and time. Carrying out a field study would take a lot of resources that we do not have access to. A field study would require us to take further measures regarding both safety and ethics. Since there has already been a significant amount of research done on gender-based violence as a phenomenon and the conflict in Yemen, we are certain that a desk study will provide us with the information we need for our thesis. We have not identified any noticeable threats with regard to ethical issues because the approach we have chosen is a desk study and therefore will not be undertaking surveys or interviews.

### 5. Findings

A detailed overview of the research findings is presented in this chapter, categorized into different main areas. It will also include what work different humanitarian organizations do in Yemen, as well as women's involvement through a letter sent to the UN Envoy.

#### 5.1 Inequality in Yemen

Yemen is a nation that is facing serious inequality issues. Firstly, child marriage is a prominent phenomenon, as nearly two thirds of girls in Yemen are married before the age of 18. As a result of the prolonged conflict, precarity is a growing problem and many families are forced to cope with growing financial issues by using child marriage as a coping mechanism. According to United Nations Yemen (2023), the freedom for women and girls in

Yemen is decreasing, mainly due to the Mahram system, which requires women to be accompanied by a male guardian when traveling. This in turn means that women are no longer able to work independently, and this phenomenon occurs mainly in some northern parts of Yemen. It is estimated that life-saving treatments regarding reproductive health and protective services are needed for about 12.6 million women. Further, there is an urgent need for access to services that address and prevent gender-based violence for an estimated 7.1 million women. However, these services are not being provided, either by being extremely limited or in some instances completely absent (United Nations Yemen, 2023). The Mahram system deeply contributes to oppression of women and is a violation of human rights, as women are unable to move freely without a male guardian. Nonetheless, the issue of traveling might not be the most pressing issue, as Amnesty International (2023) alerts the world that women who have completed prison sentences are not being released as they should, unless there is a male guardian to accompany them. If for some reason the family decides to not send a male guardian, the women remain arbitrarily in jail or are released to a women's shelter. The conditioning of release upon a male guardian's approval has been a customary practice for long, even before the civil war broke out in 2015, but has no legal basis according to lawyers interviewed by Amnesty International. In fact, the law specifically prohibits detention after a prison sentence regardless of the gender, but these customs are so deeply rooted in societal norms in Yemen that it is still allowed to happen. There are many examples of how this system affects women negatively, for instance a woman that has been detained for over five years after her sentence had ended and another woman who was killed a week after being released to her father in 2019 (Amnesty International, 2023).

In 2022, Amnesty International also reported that despite the ceasefire agreement, where parties agreed to halt military operations both inside and across Yemen's borders, parties still carried out sporadic attacks in civilian areas and frontlines. This both hurt and killed civilians, as well as disturbed access to humanitarian aid. Further, Amnesty International reported that all parties in the conflict had perpetrated gender-based violence and discrimination. The Mahram system continued to be imposed by the Huthi de facto authorities and directly affected women's and girl's right to humanitarian aid, healthcare and reproductive healthcare because humanitarian workers were unable to conduct fieldwork in these areas (Amnesty International, 2022).

The 2023 humanitarian response plan, which provides \$4.34 billion to cover 17.3 million people, was only 37.5 percent complete in October, leading to cuts to vital aid initiatives. Considering these obstacles, 216 humanitarian organizations continued in offering essential support to 8.6 million people every month with the goal to fulfill their basic requirements for food, water, sanitation, medical services, and nutrition (OCHA, 2023). Men and women in Yemen differ drastically in terms of their access to political involvement, livelihood possibilities, education, and protection. Since there are restrictions on their freedom of movement, their lack of influence over decisions, and their lack of access to and authority over resources, women are greatly impacted. They also have difficulty accessing the required data, such as right information and useful advice as materials promoting good hygiene. Carrying water is mostly the duty of women, girls, and boys in rural regions. Men tend to be more of a passive gender, especially if the village's water supply is far away. When visiting wells and rivers for water, women and girls are at danger for harassment and even gender-based violence because of this dynamic. Moreover, there is an increased risk that women and children will be injured by mines and unexploded ordnance (often referring to bombs) when they are utilizing hygiene facilities and services. Beside this, families are forced into unstable environments without fundamental necessities and privacy as a result of the collapse of shelters caused by civil war. This creates increased threats, especially among women and girls who follow cultural standards, and it further contributes to violence in many forms, including verbal, physical, and sexual assault (OCHA, n.d.).

## 5.2 The involvement of civil society

In 2018, women from Yemen, locally as well as globally, advocated for peace in their country during the week of International Women's Day. More than a hundred women from all across the world joined together to write an open letter to the UN Envoy. Internationally and throughout the MENA region, women and civil society groups have signed on to this letter (WILPF, 2018).

The letter starts with *“We, the women undersigned below, welcome you to your new position as the Special Envoy to the UN Secretary-General for Yemen. We hope that you will take this opportunity to support women’s effective participation in peacebuilding and security*

*processes as per the UNSC resolution 1325 and its relevant resolutions, and to engage meaningfully with all civil society actors in the South and North of Yemen” (Griffiths, 2018).*

Considering the poor state of life for women in Yemen, women voice their dissatisfaction with the international community. In the first five months of the conflict, there was a 76% increase in gender-based violence, 2,447 recorded reports of women being murdered or harmed and more than two million internally displaced people—of whom, 75%, were women and children that were forced to evacuate. They continue on to explain that around 21% of female-headed families among displaced individuals as well as host communities are headed by women under the age of 18. Apart from that, the percentage of child marriages has risen to 66% as an outcome of families using child marriage as an escape plan to deal with the growing gap in poverty and the lack of economic possibilities. The full or partial cancellation of government officials' pay and the reduction of financial aid payments from the social welfare fund to those in need of help have resulted in almost 8 million people losing their jobs (Griffiths, 2018). Track II negotiations, which were led by International Non-Governmental Organizations and were sponsored by the UN, were secretive and used the sensitive diplomacy that characterizes these kinds of dialogues. Women participants voiced their frustration with the underrepresentation of women at these events. In an effort to provide a forum for women's participation in the peace process, UN Women also supported the founding of the Yemeni Women Pact for Peace and Security. It is unresolved, therefore, how much the agreement has influenced the process and how its members' viewpoints are taken into account (ibid).

### 5.3 The involvement of Yemeni government

In December 2019, Yemen embraced its initial National Action Plan (NAP) for the 2020-2022 period. The context of why the NAP was needed is because of the current situation in Yemen, which has been described as the world's worst humanitarian crisis. This is mainly due to the most recent events of armed conflict, the civil war, which started in 2014. The engagement of foreign parties and the entry of foreign arms into Yemen contributes to the conflict. Based on research conducted by Women's International League for Peace & Freedom (WILPF) and its partners, ammunition imports from the United States, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Canada,

Germany, and other nations have been connected to violations of human rights in Yemen and have also been criticized for an increase in gender-based violence (National Action Plan, n.d).

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor in Yemen highlights that the government of Yemen understands the highly important resolution, in the way that they acknowledge women as an important factor in causing societal changes. They acknowledge that women are not only victims of war and peace, but also a key actor to defuse conflicts and help build communities based on equality and social justice. The action plan is meant to respond to the UN resolution on women, security and Peace, as well as all international conventions that were ratified. The NAP was established, written, and updated jointly with civil society and UN organizations. It was developed collaboratively by many government ministries, however the plan is the result of national efforts led by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, since it has the concerned authority to implement the UN Resolution 1325. The process of outlining the NAP included a three-day introductory workshop aimed at creating the objectives and structure of the NAP. It outlines four main goals that fall under the categories of participation, prevention, protection, and relief and rehabilitation. The first one of these main objectives is the enhancing of women's participation at all levels in positions of decision-making. The second is to ensure prevention of conflict and all forms of terrorism, extremism and sexual violence. Further, the objective is to strive for protection from all forms of violence for women, as well as providing them with humanitarian needs in gender sensitive ways, both during and after the conflict. Each of these objectives are in line with the foundations of UNSCR 1325. The NAP's adaptation recognizes the conflict in Yemen's significant economic effects, as well as its enormous displacement, rising rates of poverty, and following humanitarian catastrophe that affects individuals, particularly women and girls. The NAP however, does not mention a budget to implement these changes (National Action Plan, n.d). As it is difficult to provide extensive evidence for exactly how or how much the conflict has directly affected gender inequality, that is not the focus of this thesis. This paper highlights the consequences of the situation in Yemen for women and girls with a main focus on gender-based violence, but also underlining their human rights in relation to a number of challenges, including child marriage, sexual violence, and their right to live in a dignified, protected, and safe environment. It also defines these problems within the wider framework of global humanitarian law and human rights.

The NAP has received some criticism from the Peace Track Initiative (2020), due to a few different flaws, for instance its lack of analysis. The NAP has no mention of gender-specific international frameworks and only mentions the International Humanitarian Law (IHR) as its only framework. In addition, they failed to include a comprehensive gender analysis and only lightly touched the subject of issues that are affecting women, which meant that all gender gaps were not investigated, since this did not provide a sufficient context. Apart from a lack of analysis, the NAP provided an inadequate response to women's needs by for instance suggesting too many training activities. The areas in which the capacity-building training is suggested are more than ten, including humanitarian response, project management and marketing, as well as types of violence against women, to name a few. This does not sound bad at first, however, due to lack of consultation these areas do not necessarily reflect on what women actually need. This shows the lack of understanding from the people who drafted this NAP on the role of women on the ground and can also be seen as perpetuating negative stereotypes on women being unqualified. Despite the NAP being drafted and established jointly with the UN and the civil society, the government has received criticism from Peace Track Initiative partners, because during early drafts they were being kept in the dark about the existence of the NAP. Furthermore, women-led organizations within the civil society have submitted recommendations to the government, which were not integrated (Peace Track Initiative, 2020).

#### 5.4 International organizations and their work

Every citizen of Yemen has suffered a humanitarian catastrophe as an outcome of the intensifying armed forces since March 2015. The humanitarian situation weakens as the conflict continues unresolved, and over 13 million people demand urgent assistance to survive. Yemen was considered to be the poorest nation in the Middle East even before the crisis. The prolonged civil war is having a negative impact on the economy; in the year 2015, Yemen's gross domestic product (GDP) declined by about 35 percent. The few development milestones that have been achieved during the last few decades are quickly fading (Care, 2016). Humanitarian organizations are striving to address the serious situation in Yemen; approximately 100 of them currently engage in activities there. Even though Yemen is one of

the world's most challenging places to operate, in 2015 more than 8 million Yemenis living in all 22 regions received a variety of vital aid (ibid).

As a collaboration network, the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) links together non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations, and United Nations (UN) agencies that take part in humanitarian crises, such as armed conflicts and natural disasters. The GPC is mandated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and functions under the direction of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). A multi-partner Operations Cell supports the Strategic Advisory Group, which is directed by the GPC Coordinator and a functioning NGO and is responsible for accountability (Protection Cluster, n.d).

In relation to the Global Protection Cluster, there is a sub-cluster regarding gender-based violence. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Yemen highlights the absolute necessary prevention of gender-based violence as a life-saving critical intervention, alongside medical care, water, food and shelter. Gender-based violence is deeply rooted in structural gender inequality, discriminatory practices and norms, as well as the powerlessness that exists in Yemen (United Nations Population Fund Yemen, 2016). UNFPA has listed a humanitarian response, which for instance includes raising community awareness on gender-based violence issues and services, with the aim to have sessions where information is given through educational materials. Further items on the list include provision of dignity kits, which includes personal hygiene items, gender-based violence services, such as psycho-social support, legal aid and access to safe houses (United Nations Population Fund Yemen, 2017).

Although the Yemeni crisis has affected many people, it is essential to recognize the distinctive consequences it has on women and girls. There is little doubt that food insecurity, malnutrition, and poverty in Yemen are caused mainly by gender inequality and particular obstacles Yemeni women and girls confront in reaching their full potential (ibid). Yemen has been placed lowest in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap every year since 2006 (145 out of 145 nations in 2015). As stated before, Yemen, however, ranked 155 out of 156 on the World Economic Forum's 2021 Global Gender Gap Index, indicating an exceptionally severe level of gender inequality (United Nations Development Programme, 2023).

With an emphasis on autonomy and the prevention of gender-based violence, CARE and other organizations made significant progress in addressing inequalities for Yemeni women and girls prior to the crisis. However, the conflict, which is characterized by increased violence and a shortage of basic goods and services, has seriously hindered recent advancement in reducing inequality in Yemen. It is crucial to acknowledge the unique needs of women and girls in order to develop programs that are gender-sensitive. CARE and GenCap carried out a study in November 2015 to look over and assess the data that was already available about how the ongoing conflict affected gender roles and relationships, therefore, the various needs of women, girls, men, and boys (CARE, 2016). GenCap formed in 2007 and is operated by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) alongside with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). In addition to working at both regional and global levels, Senior Gender Advisers (SGAs) are effectively selected by GenCap for humanitarian field work. Their main aim is to ensure that equality between men and women and women's empowerment are fundamental to humanitarian initiatives (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, n.d). However, based on the report, gender concerns have not been taken into account in the majority of examinations carried out after March 2015, even though Yemen had significant pre-conflict data on these matters (CARE, 2016). In order to find out how war affects gender dynamics, CARE, Oxfam, and GenCap worked together to do a gender assessment in Yemen. In addition to performing 32 in-depth interviews, 40 focus groups, 554 household interviews, and a secondary data analysis with an emphasis on regions that were seriously impacted were also part of the evaluation. The outcomes are meant to be used as a roadmap for developing programs that will allow the changing needs and roles of men, women, girls, and boys while upholding gender equality. The study underlines the importance of more investment in women and girls throughout the humanitarian field and promotes an overall Gender in Emergencies strategy, expanding beyond program development. The gender evaluation highlighted gaps in how to ensure that women's and girls' needs are being met, and it showed that their position is becoming worse. Despite obstacles, there are positive signs that the fear brought on by the current war may eventually result in adjustments to gender norms (ibid).

The International Rescue Committee (IRC), like Amnesty International, encourages all concerned parties to follow international humanitarian law. The wars in Yemen have

tragically led to enormous human suffering due to the continuing breaking of these laws. The IRC fundamental objective is to help people whose homes and livelihoods have been destroyed by war and natural disasters by helping them continue their lives, heal, and take back control of their own futures. Since IRC started working in Yemen in 2012, they have helped people in the south of the nation by providing clean water and assistance with humanitarian needs. The IRC maintains offering vital healthcare and food supplies to those affected by the ongoing conflict, in spite of the obstacles caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. Furthermore, pregnant women and mothers-to-be are receiving reproductive healthcare treatments. The IRC remains to offer essential support to women who are victims of gender-based violence and takes an active role in the creation of a COVID-19 isolation unit (The International Rescue Committee, n.d).

The situation in Yemen is in dire need of attention, as evidence shows that inequality is a prominent issue in Yemen and more specifically gender-based violence. This is due to both the culture in Yemen, as the Mahram system shows as well as strong patriarchal structures that are enforced partly because of the conflict and power positions of the men in Yemen. Yemeni residents' determination has grown evident as humanitarian organizations such as CARE, GenCap, and the International Rescue Committee work continually to fulfill their numerous demands. These humanitarian organizations' constant dedication in the face of major obstacles shows a shared commitment to minimizing the effects of the crisis in Yemen. Looking into the future, supporting positive progress in Yemen and establishing the groundwork for a more safer and inclusive future will need an ongoing focus on handling gender disparities, defending vulnerable people, and fostering stability.

## **6. Analysis**

The following chapter presents an analysis of the empirical data in relation to the research objective and the questions. The aim is to examine the data related to the current situation for women and girls in Yemen and analyze the possible factors contributing to gender-based violence, as well as analyzing this through the lenses of intersectionality and horizontal inequality. Further this chapter will also provide an analysis of how different international organizations as well as the state of Yemen have worked to create knowledge, possible

projects and other contributions to a more equal society. As the study is using an abductive approach, the goal is not to test or generate a theory, but rather use theories as a tool to help analyze the empirical data and see if it has any ground in the theories. As always, theoretical frameworks have a certain amount of generalisability in order to work and therefore it is almost never perfectly applicable on a case. Additionally, the situation in Yemen is extremely complex and the women suffer from broader inequality problems than specifically gender-based violence. As everything in a society is connected and many factors intersect, it is impossible to create a perfect case study, especially with the means and funds available for this thesis. The aim is mainly to create more awareness to the situation in Yemen, which is in a way broadly discussed in the media in regards to the humanitarian crisis and the conflict, but where the specific needs and issues of women and girls tend to be forgotten in the bigger context.

## 6.1 The current situation in Yemen and theoretical framework applicability

The situation for women in Yemen is as established, in dire need of attention. The Mahram system is a huge part of this, which is a custom and a traditional practice that removes agency from women and promotes gender inequality. The conflict itself has caused some more issues to arise, linked to the traditional view on women and men. Whether or not the conflict itself has caused an increase in gender inequality and gender-based violence is hard to answer definitively, but there are some facts to consider that could be seen as a contributing factor. Firstly, Amnesty International reported that all parties in the conflict had perpetuated gender-based violence and sexual violence. Whether or not the rates regarding gender-based violence would be lower without the conflict is impossible to answer, but this is clear evidence that it is happening at least in relation to the conflict. The conflict also causes instability in the country, for instance affecting the economy. Child marriage is a widespread issue in Yemen and is something that UN Yemen links to the growing issue of precarity and growing financial problems. Intersectionality as a theoretical framework involves the consideration of different factors intersecting with each other. This means that gender inequality and gender disparities are not the only issue women are facing, and that oppression is not one sided or easily explained. Oppression of women is on the one hand because of their gender, but simultaneously other factors interfere and cause multileveled inequalities. These

factors include but are not limited to, class, ethnicity, religion and access to resources. As established, an economic crisis can lead to changed behavior in the country's population, for instance that some families might arrange child marriages so that the economic responsibility of providing for a child falls on someone else instead. Based on intersectionality, it illustrates the class factor as crucial in this context. Lower income households would logically have a harder time providing for all family members, which could result in the decision to arrange a marriage. In this case, two factors are intersecting, gender and class, as it is the young girls that are married away and more so in the lower income class.

It could also be harder to challenge traditional norms and values due to being a part of a lower social class, considering that higher education is less common and due to economic restraints. In addition, family hierarchies may also be stronger in rural or lower income areas, as the patriarchal structure is already well established in the country, and restraints in terms of education and job opportunities for girls and women mean that they would have to take on more traditional gender roles, such as taking care of the family and the household. On the basis of the analysis, it states that economic disparities across religious or ethnic groups intersect with gender, which affects women differently depending on their religious or ethnic identity. Women from minority religions or ethnic groups may face additional challenges in healthcare, education and employment. Apart from this, more traditional or conservative branches of religious groups could contribute to gender norms, which restrict women's opportunities. The participation and social role of a woman can be differently impacted if the religious group has more conservative tendencies. Family hierarchies are stronger in rural or lower-income areas, which is an indication of the ongoing character of horizontal inequality. There is a horizontal split in the options and tasks obtainable to women due to their socioeconomic status as an outcome of the lack of job and educational opportunities for girls and women, which strengthens traditional gender stereotypes. The analysis of economic differences between gender-related religious and ethnic groups adds another dimension of horizontal inequality. It implies that women face various difficulties based on their ethnic or religious identity, implying a horizontal division of experiences and possibilities.

The National Action Plan from Yemen outlines the importance of caring for women and girls' rights, such as child marriage, sexual violence and gender-based violence. The NAP was

written in 2019, and meant to cover the period between 2020-2022, however, Amnesty International reported in 2022 that all parties in the conflict had been guilty of perpetrating gender-based violence. Further, the NAP has received criticism from the Peace Track Initiative for not being deep enough, for being exclusive and having an inadequate response for women's needs. In other words, the analysis of exclusiveness raises the matter of whether the NAP is inclusive enough of different viewpoints and opinions, especially those of women and communities that face gender-related difficulties on a daily basis. Generating policies that are in line with the reality faced by Yemeni women and girls requires an inclusive approach. It could be the case that the state of Yemen felt the pressure to make a plan, since the UN had been active in the country for a while, and the flaws of the plan could be unintentional but maybe rather a consequence of the patriarchal structures and traditional customs of the country. The Mahram system for instance, is not written in any law or legal system, but is rather a subject of the old traditional views and values of the Yemeni people. This is not something that the state has taken any measures towards or mentions in the NAP either, further showing its commonplace in the society. The NAP was the only evidence of the government's involvement to be found upon research and despite the good efforts of creating it, it is clearly flawed and incomplete. By not having an in-depth knowledge of the situation and the issues of women, something the NAP has been criticized for not having, it leaves out a lot of important facts and therefore does not provide efficient or adequate solutions. Yemen is facing a humanitarian crisis in combination with gender-based violence and with a lot of focus falling on the humanitarian part, the NAP does not adequately address the intersectionality of gender and socioeconomic factors in relation to the conflict, which leaves vulnerable groups underserved.

When trying to address an issue so prominent and delicate as gender-based violence, which is one of the country's main issues, it is important to have a comprehensive understanding of the problem. One of the main reasons why the situation stays the same for women in Yemen is the negligence of the government as they not only failed to implement a comprehensive gender analysis in the NAP, women were not being listened to. Especially strange is to not implement the recommendations that were made by women-led civil society organizations, as the civil society not only has the closest connection to the people but women, and especially women in these types of organizations, have a clearer view of the problems. That the NAP has

so many gaps is remarkable especially since it was collaborated on with both the UN and the civil society, but since claims have been made that partners were initially being kept in the dark, one could wonder how much these organizations had a say in the final draft too. The implementations that actually had been made could be thanks to the influence of the UN and the civil society, but regardless it is evident that the NAP is flawed, and the practical implementations of the goals has been insufficient according to recent data on how the situation in Yemen still looks regarding both the humanitarian crisis and gender-based violence. As with any societal issue, it is hard to say exactly what approach is the right one to combat it, especially when it comes to issues as complex as gender-based violence. Still, a lot of the accountability falls on the government to make sufficient laws and policies that protect the population, in this case mainly women and girls. While the efforts to make a NAP are valuable, some amendments need to be done to ensure that not only some of the urgent issues such as access to food and shelter are met, but that all urgent issues are met. A society can not develop without safety first, and safety includes women's rights to live without the threat of violence, as well as having agency and the means to decide for your own life.

## 6.2 International organizations and theoretical framework applicability

Due to the humanitarian crisis, CARE and other organizations addressed gender inequality for Yemeni women and girls by highlighting autonomy and reducing gender-based violence. Recent progress in decreasing inequality has been limited by the conflict, which is marked by a rise in violence and a lack of needs. This suggests that the crisis has made conditions worse for women and girls and imposed new obstacles. Acknowledging the specific needs of women, CARE and GenCap applied research in November 2015 to evaluate the impact of the war on gender norms and interactions among people. It also highlights the fact that gender issues have not been addressed in post conflict examinations, which calls for a more diverse and sensitive approach to women's role in humanitarian studies. The request for a Gender in Emergencies approach that goes beyond program creation reflects an awareness of the crisis' broader impact on gender dynamics. The report stresses the value of a holistic strategy that stretches beyond emergency processes, arguing for additional investments in women and girls in humanitarian aid.

As mentioned before, with a \$4.34 billion budget, the 2023 humanitarian response plan had the goal to serve 17.3 million people. However, just 37.5 percent of it had been completed by October 2023, indicating a serious financing imbalance. Due to cuts of critical funding efforts affecting an important percentage of the population's accessibility to services they need, this economic inequality leads to horizontal inequality. The differences between genders are evident with Yemeni women suffering multiple challenges. The complicated intersection of gender and socioeconomic variables is brought through limitations on freedom, as well as restricted access to resources. Cultural barriers are a contributing factor to these issues, especially for women who have to be more strict when it comes to their visibility in public. A different approach of horizontal inequality is introduced when shelters fail due to armed conflict, placing families into unsafe situations lacking privacy and basic needs. The conditions of life become unequal as a result, and some groups of people, women and girls in particular, face more risks than others because of cultural norms. Apart from this, the already significant risk of damage from mines and explosive ordnance when using hygienic facilities adds to the already high vulnerability of these individuals.

Studies have shown that the efforts to achieve equality between men and women have not only failed, but have also started to backfire as a result of the interconnected crises of COVID-19, the climate catastrophe, and growing political and economic unrest. It appears from this that the pandemic is not an isolated disaster but rather increases previous difficulties. The word "intersecting" suggests that such emergencies are connected to each other and reinforce one another, making the environment more difficult. The data demonstrate a horizontal inequality in access to vital help during crises, underlining how aid from humanitarian groups has become the sole chance for thousands of individuals. The fragility of the health system and its limited capacity to locate armed conflict contribute to disparities in access to healthcare. The gap between the officially reported COVID-19 fatality rate and the likely greater valid figure illustrates how unevenly the pandemic has affected people, especially those with limited resources who are already more at risk. Also, the mention of Yemen's continuously low ranking in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap investigation since 2006, together with its particularly severe score of 155 out of 156 countries in the 2021 research, serves as proof of the horizontal traits of gender inequality even further. The results of this analysis represent Yemen as a case study where the effects of

gender inequality are more acute, emphasizing ongoing and significant differences in gender-related possibilities.

## **7. Conclusion**

The purpose of this specific chapter is to offer the reader an overview of the main research issue in the thesis by providing results and conclusions. The study centers on Yemen's unique problems as well as the gender-based violence's complex connection to the Yemen conflict. The research addresses the multifaceted relationships between elements that impact women in the context of armed conflict and the numerous aspects of gender-based violence. The overall assessment of Yemen's humanitarian crisis points to an alarming scenario, illustrating the need for aid, especially for individuals that are most vulnerable. In addition to pre-existing disparities among genders, the negative economic effects of the conflict emphasize specific challenges that women experience in reaching their maximum potential in a situation of catastrophe. International organizations, namely CARE and GenCap, are mentioned a lot in the discussion, showing joint efforts to tackle obstacles related to gender. On the other hand, a critical perspective highlights the importance for a more gender-sensitive approach to program development, reflecting the different needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls in the setting of the multidimensional background of conflict. The government collaborated with the civil society and UN organizations in creating a National Action Plan on the humanitarian issues the country and its population is facing. The plan itself is absolutely necessary and a good initiative, however it falls short in a number of ways. Firstly it is not inclusive enough, as latter collaborators were being kept in the dark about the existence of the NAP. The NAP's failure to consider proposals from civil society organizations is another serious failure; these recommendations were submitted by organizations operated by women, who would have a deeper link to the women in need on the ground. Additionally, they failed to implement a gender-specific framework as well as an in-depth gender analysis. It is apparent that more needs to be done by the government in Yemen to combat the gender-based violence that occurs both in society generally and in relation to the conflict, as it is increased due to all parties partaking in the violence against women. As discussed, it is imperative to use both an intersectional framework as well as horizontal inequality to take all intersecting factors into consideration, since the situation is so complex. Applying these frameworks allows all forms

of discrimination to be viewed at the same time, which is important since inequality does not occur in a vacuum and gender is almost never the only form of discrimination in this violence, factors such as class, race, religion and economic disparities also play into the context.

## 7.1 Recommendations

Further research efforts related to the conflict in Yemen and gender-based violence have to focus on a multidimensional approach in order to successfully tackle the complexity of this long standing problem. To begin with, an in-depth examination of Yemen's laws and regulations regarding gender-based violence is of the utmost importance. Secondly, it is critical to advocate for the development of a new NAP for Yemen that is characterized by ambitious government actions that prioritize the security and welfare of its citizens first. This implies an extensive review and improvement of the current action plan, fixing its flaws and adding a stronger and gender-focused framework for combating gender-based violence. In order to provide a comprehensive strategy to end violence against women and girls, the new plan should contain reliable tactics for law enforcement, protection, and prevention.

Both the situation in Yemen and the phenomenon of gender-based violence is complex and extensive, and while future researchers might be tempted to deep-dive into an isolated factor, such as sexual violence or economical factors, it is important to keep in mind that all of these intersect and affect each other. When it comes to gender-related topics, one must look at more than one factor to get the full picture and to be able to both comprehend the full extent of the issue at hand and come up with comprehensive solutions. However, since gender-based violence is such a complex issue and exists even in societies not currently in conflict or crisis, a solution is hard to find, as to any other inequality related issue. Most of the accountability would have to fall on governments to create laws and policies that protect women and prevent violence in any form, but in the case of Yemen, the humanitarian crisis needs to be addressed first and foremost.

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