



# YEMEN TRANSITION 2.0: GOVERNMENT EFFORTS IN AID COORDINATION DURING THE CONFLICT

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of 2015, Yemen has witnessed the worst armed conflict in its recent history. The conflict has caused massive destruction to private and public properties and infrastructure, displaced millions of people, triggered a humanitarian catastrophe, mobilized and militarized tens of thousands of fighters, collapsed the economy, and has almost destroyed the social fabric of the country. However, sooner or later, the armed conflict will come to an end and the country will need to be ready for an extended recovery period. In some areas of Yemen, such as the southern governorates, this recovery period has already begun since August 2015 despite the major security challenges that are impacting these areas.

Coordination of development and humanitarian relief efforts has always been one of the major challenges in Yemen. The country has received repeated pledges for aid in the past and has been unsuccessful in fully absorbing those pledges.

During the current conflict this challenge has been highlighted further: the government's attempts to conduct effective relief operations while based outside the country faced limited success; the INGOs and donor agencies faced difficulty coordinating efforts on the ground under the security vacuum in the country; and it has become more and more difficult to coordinate efforts of GCC Donors with those of traditional OECD donors.

As a potential peace settlement looms in the distance, many in the donor community and in the Yemeni government are beginning to contemplate the post-conflict reconstruction and development work and are kick-starting the initial assessment and planning phase to prepare for the period following any peace settlement. DeepRoot is publishing a series of papers and blogs under the title "Yemen Transition 2.0" in an attempt to inform the discourse and contribute towards a more successful post-conflict transition. This paper will analyze the institutional structures that the Government of Yemen (GoY) has created so far to address the relief and recovery needs in the country.

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## HIGH RELIEF COMMITTEE

A month following the launch of the military intervention by the Saudi-led coalition, and in recognition of the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in Yemen, President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi formed on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April in Riyadh a High Relief Committee (HRC) chaired by the Prime Minister and with the following membership:

- Mrs. Nadia Al-Saqqaf (Minister of Media) –Rapporteur (Acting Chair)
- Mr. Abduraqeeb Saif Fat’h (Minister of Local Administration)
- Mr. Ezzaddeen Al-Asbahi (Minister of Human Rights)
- Mr. Badr Basalmah (Minister of Transport)
- Mr. Moammar Al-Eryani (Minister of Tourism)

The hastily launched HRC was supposed to include in its membership representatives of donor agencies and technical experts/specialists but in the first few months of the HRC operations the structure was not formalized. The objectives of the HRC were also vaguely defined as “addressing the urgent humanitarian needs of Yemenis inside and outside Yemen without discrimination, through coordination of humanitarian relief efforts, identification of priorities, and ensuring that humanitarian assistance reaches all Yemenis in affected areas.”

In the four months from the 28<sup>th</sup> of April till the 30<sup>th</sup> of August, while the country faced mounting pressures of the worst humanitarian crisis in recent history, the HRC struggled to clearly define its mandate, role, processes and operating model.

In an attempt to coordinate better with UN agencies and INGOs, the HRC established an ad-hoc satellite presence in Amman, Jordan where most of the UN agencies and INGOs working on Yemen are based. Minister Nadia Al-Saqqaf led the efforts in Amman, and one of the western donor agencies provided technical assistance to the HRC by contracting a consultant for 3 months to draft the mandate and procedures for the HRC. The consultant was based in Amman from August to November 2015.

Unfortunately, during the period from May till August, there was not much coordination between the Amman efforts and the Riyadh-based operation. The HRC in Riyadh was preparing to re-locate to Aden and shut down any presence in Amman. The Riyadh-based members were not necessarily on board with the work that the consultant in Amman was doing as they had their own vision of how the HRC should operate. There was also growing public criticism of the HRC’s inability to respond effectively to the growing humanitarian needs. The criticism was exacerbated with the HRC’s failure to promptly and effectively address the situation of stranded Yemenis abroad.

This led eventually to a new cabinet decree on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August to restructure the HRC and re-define its role. The new decree redefined the HRC’s membership as follows:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minister of Local Administration - Chair</li> <li>- Minister of Social Affairs and Labor – Vice Chair</li> <li>- Executive Manager – Member and rapporteur</li> <li>- Minister of Media</li> <li>- Minister of Transportation</li> <li>- Minister of Endowments</li> <li>- Minister of Health</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minister of Expatriate Affairs</li> <li>- Representative from the Federation of Chambers of Commerce</li> <li>- Representative of Civil Society Organizations</li> <li>- Representative of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers</li> </ul> |
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The new mandate of the HRC was redefined as:

- Representing the GoY in humanitarian affairs
- Strategic oversight on all entities working in humanitarian relief in Yemen
- Ensuring that humanitarian assistance is coordinated in an inclusive manner that represents all Yemenis and delivered to those who are at most need

The new mandate of the HRC was slightly better in that it clearly limited the scope of the committee's work to coordination rather than delivering delivery, and emphasized the inclusive and representative nature of its work.

In its meeting which approved the committee's restructuring, the cabinet has agreed to establishing branches for HRC at the provincial level. Each branch would be chaired the Governor or his representative and would include representatives for the Local Council, the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Civil Society organizations in its membership. HRC would develop the tasks and bylaws governing these branches. Unfortunately, these branches never materialized in the way they were envisioned.

The new HRC was also supposed to contract a technical specialist as an executive manager who would lead the technical work of the committee while the remaining cabinet members and other representatives would act as a board for the technical committee. However, more than seven months since re-structuring the committee, the executive manager has not been hired yet, and the HRC continues to face the same challenges that prevented it from providing an effective contribution to the humanitarian relief efforts in Yemen.

## SUPREME COMMITTEE FOR RE-CONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT

On the same day that the HRC was re-structured by a cabinet decree, the cabinet also issued another decree to create the Supreme Committee for Re-construction and Development (SCRD). The mandate of SCRD was three-folds:

- Conducting an assessment of the current situation and the impact of war on the infrastructure in Yemen and identifying the requirements and costs of re-construction and development
- Developing a national plan for re-construction and re-habilitation of damaged areas along with a strategy for development in accordance with plan
- Securing national recovery, restoring security and peace and achieving economic and social development

To achieve the objectives of the committee, the decree defined the following membership of the SCRD:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minister of Planning and International Cooperation – Chair</li> <li>- Minister of Public Works and Highways – Vice Chair</li> <li>- Executive Manager – Member and rapporteur</li> <li>- Minister of Transportation</li> <li>- Minister of Finance</li> <li>- Minister of Industry &amp; Trade</li> <li>- Minister of Telecommunications</li> <li>- Minister of Health</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minister of Energy and Electricity</li> <li>- Minister of Water &amp; Environment</li> <li>- Minister of Expatriate Affairs</li> <li>- A representative from Ministry of Foreign Affairs</li> <li>- A representative from the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers</li> <li>- A representative from the Federation of Chambers of Commerce</li> </ul> |
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Similar to the HRC, SCRD was supposed to hire a technical specialist as an executive manager for the committee to lead the technical work with the rest of the committee acting as a board. Until today, an executive manager has not been hired. The SCRD contracted a few consultants on temporary basis to assist with the planning phase, and has conducted a number of meetings in Riyadh and with different donor agencies. The SCRD has also drafted an initial high-level framework for the reconstruction and rehabilitation plan.

The SCRD faces similar challenges to those faced by the HRC, except that the SCRD is not under pressure to deliver outcomes in the immediate term due to the nature of its work and the fact that the war is still ongoing in Yemen.

## ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

To add to the mix of committees, the cabinet issued a decree in January 2016 establishing a new Economic committee. This new committee has the following membership:

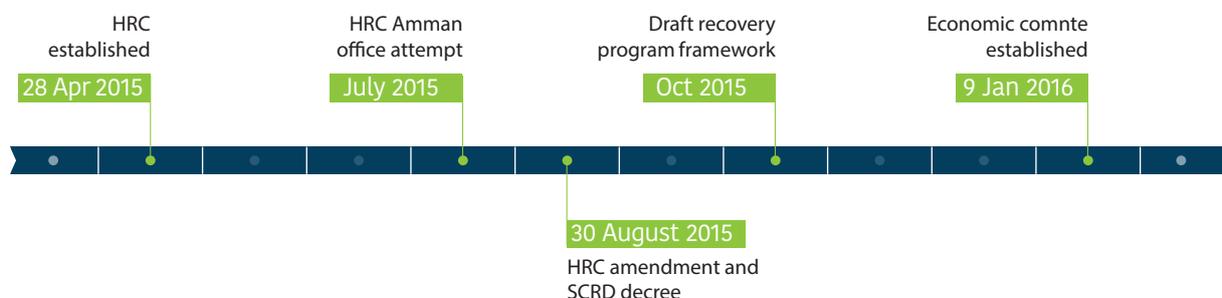
- Minister of Finance – Chair
- Minister of Oil
- Minister of Planning and International Cooperation
- Director General of the Vice President’s Office
- Minister of Industry & Trade

The announced economic committee’s objectives overlap with those of the SCRD and include:

- Developing strategies, policies, and programs for economic recovery and stabilisation
- Developing a comprehensive strategy for economic and social development
- Designing short term economic policies
- Developing resource mobilization plans

Since its inception, the economic committee held a single publicly announced meeting in February where it discussed the recommendations presented by the Central Bank of Yemen to resume production and export of oil and gas.

### Timeline of Government Efforts



## ANALYSIS

The HRC had to somehow find its position within the following circle of humanitarian actors:

- Gulf donors and Gulf NGOs (King Salman Center, UAE/Kuwait/Qatar donors, UAE Red Crescent, multiple Qatar and Kuwait charity organizations...etc)
- UN agencies (UNOCHA, UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP...etc)
- International NGOs (ICRC, MSF, Oxfam, Save The Children...etc)

But the HRC had very little to offer in this landscape: it did not control the funds (funding was provided directly from donors to NGOs and UN agencies), it did not have the technical capacity in coordinating humanitarian relief operations to stand on par with UN agencies and NGOs such as Oxfam, ICRC and MSF, and it virtually had no control of any area of Yemen to dictate or assist in activities on the ground. In addition, the HRC did not have an allocated operating budget to conduct its work professionally (as a matter of fact the HRC did not even have office space in Riyadh or elsewhere). The SCRCD is facing the same challenges above.

The membership of the committees poses an additional challenge. The ten ministers who are members in the SCRCD, three are also part of the four-member Economic Committee, and another three are also part of the seven-member HRC. This overlapping membership, combined with the overlapping and vaguely defined mandates, caused a great deal of confusion. According to a source who attended meetings of the HRC and SCRCD in Riyadh, the discussions were often mixed up between the two committees and there was no clear understanding of what each committee should be addressing.

The proliferation of committees and the lack of clarity in direction have limited the effectiveness of the GoY in leading relief and recovery operations in Yemen. The current approach pursued by the GoY in differentiating relief and humanitarian assistance from reconstruction and economic growth activities and in creating two separate committees for them is based on a traditional view of sequencing post-conflict assistance into phased, discrete, and non-overlapping efforts. Current international development thinking has moved away from that approach and currently integrates very early on economic growth and reconstruction efforts with humanitarian and relief efforts.

In addition, many of the issues facing humanitarian relief and development/reconstruction efforts in Yemen are similar and overlapping, such as logistics, security, coordination...etc. Splitting the efforts into two separate initiatives is causing further inefficiencies. There will be a need for a very high level of coordination between the two, which has been a challenge for the government so far.

Yemen also relies mainly on the same donors for both relief and reconstruction/development efforts. Having the same donor representatives meeting different groups of officials in different committees to discuss the post-conflict situation and potentially receiving conflicting priorities is not a wise strategy. A single point of contact is much more efficient in such an environment.

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## CONCLUSION

In evaluating the performance of the GoY over the past year in the fields of relief and recovery, it is evident that having the right institutional structures is of paramount importance to enable effective aid coordination and delivery. In the absence of carefully designed structures, and adequate capacity and resources, any post-conflict recovery plans will not deliver the intended outcomes. There is a need to learn from the lessons of the first transitional period in Yemen (2012-2015) and ensure better structures, institutions, and processes are in place for any upcoming post-conflict transition period to succeed.

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