

# NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT - SUMMARY

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YEMEN  
**CREATIVE**  
HUBS

## The Report

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The Needs Assessment Report is managed by Your ECHO non-profit Organisation, within the framework of Yemen Creative Hubs, a new project funded by the European Union and Co-funded by Goethe-Institut.

The report takes a closer look at the current position of CSOs, individual artists, and cultural practitioners in Yemen and the diaspora within the arts and culture landscape. Data collected is based on cultural actors' work experience in the arts and culture scene in Yemen and/or abroad. An online questionnaire targeting three different groups within the Yemeni arts and culture scene was shared with: (1) Yemeni artists and cultural practitioners residing in Yemen, (2) Yemeni artists and cultural practitioners in the diaspora, and (3) Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) that work in the arts and culture scene. The questionnaire allowed for flexible scalability when collecting the data which enabled the reach and collection of a wider number of responses from actors with various levels of involvement in the field. During this process, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected.

The main report consists of ten main sections with subsequent subsections detailing results of each of the targeted groups. The main sections included in the report are:

1. The Current State of the Cultural Scene in Yemen (Local artists and their collaborations)
2. Yemeni Artists and Cultural Practitioners in the Diaspora
3. Civil Society Organisations
4. Training Needs
5. Communication and Networks
6. Digital Competencies
7. The Cultural and Creative Industry
8. Language
9. Art and Peace Building
10. Recommendations

Results of the questionnaire were analysed to highlight the main challenges and needs to revive the Yemeni arts and culture scene in general and in daily practices. The following section presents some of the results presented and detailed in the report.

### Current state

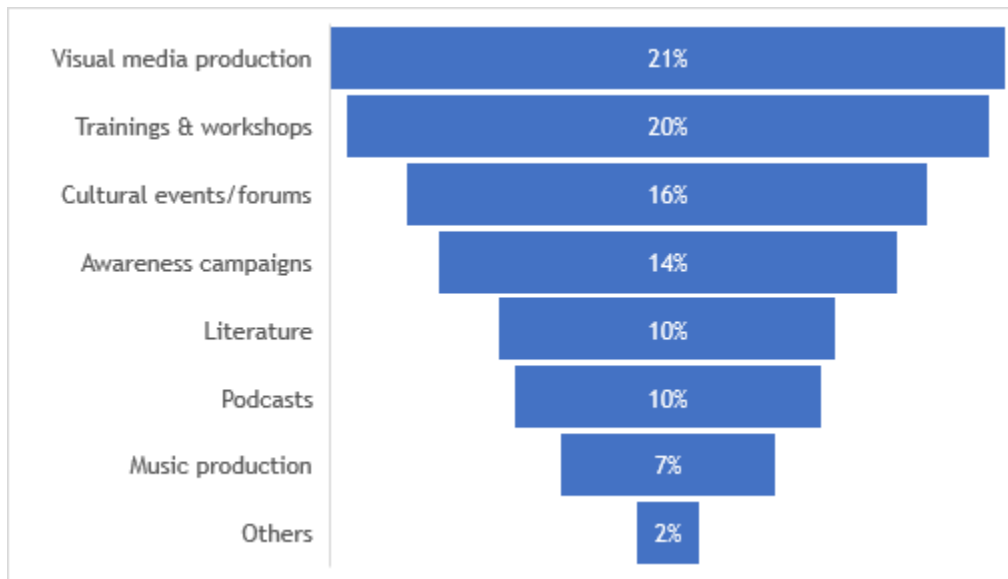
When asked about pattern and frequency of work in the arts and culture scene, results showed that the majority of local artists have no sustainable income when it comes to their work on cultural projects. Most local artists and cultural practitioners (71%) answered that they work on one time or seasonal projects and (29%) have been working on recurring projects (Programs). The majority of our participants in the diaspora (93%) have been part of projects implemented inside Yemen and in their countries of residence. Artists participated in projects in visual arts, photography, acting, music, painting, and heritage. Based on their different experiences, they were able to highlight a multitude of issues that disadvantage them and hinder them from exploring and expanding their networks.

In terms of collaborations 76% of local artists and cultural practitioners responded that they are collaborating with their counterparts and arts and culture institutions, and these collaborations manifest in exchanging expertise and projects in: visual media production, cultural events/forums, music production, podcasts, literature, trainings & workshops and awareness campaigns.

The main challenges faced by all three target groups can be summarised as follows: All target groups responded that they faced challenges in terms of funding, the current conflict and security situation, chances for networking, lack of training opportunities, mentorship and formal education. Moreover, there were additional challenges and obstacles for the specific target groups detailed in the full report.

When asked about direct resources/projects that are needed in the arts and culture scene in Yemen, participants had common as well as varied responses specific to their target group. All participants agreed that human resources (manpower) are the main resource available for them in terms of operations. They also agreed that other vital resources are desperately needed to better their operations. Those include financial resources (access to funding), dedicated workspaces, academic support, mentorship guidance and education programs. Specific needs of

different targeted groups were also mentioned in different areas as detailed in the full report. The following figure shows fields of collaboration between local artists.



**Figure 1 Local Artists Fields of Collaboration**

### Training needs

Artists and cultural practitioners in Yemen and in the diaspora highlighted the need for training in specific areas that target their personal skills and lead to better artistic production and management, the following were mentioned as the most important:

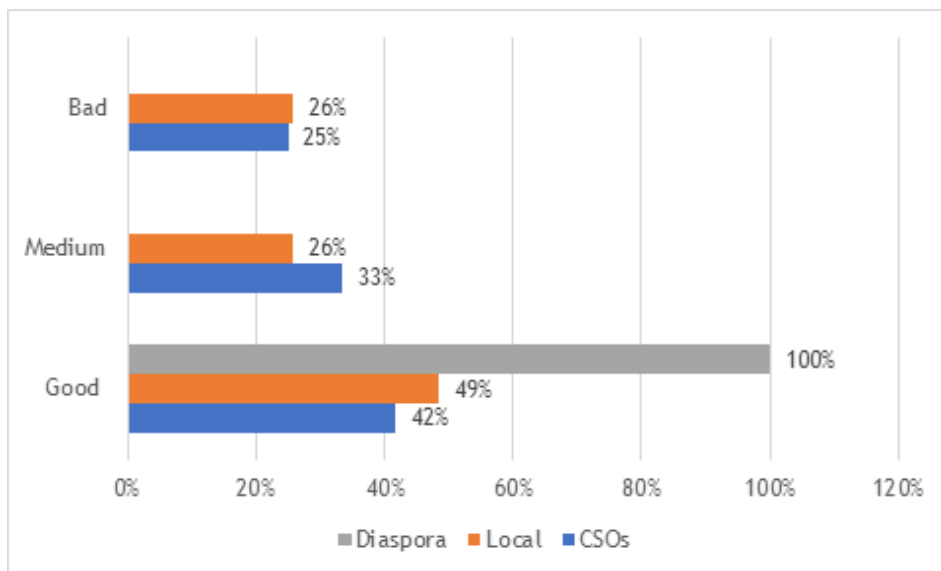
- Leveraging social media and digital platforms to display art projects.
- Language courses and public speaking skills for better content creation.
- Digital literacy and needs to protect their presence in the digital sphere.
- Research building skills and how to acquire knowledge through self-learning.
- Conflict resolution skills.
- Archiving skills.
- Monitoring and evaluation practices.
- Creative thinking.

In terms of experience in cultural project management, 39% of respondents had no previous experience in cultural project management and 58% of respondents had previously worked and managed cultural projects. The majority of participants responded that they have received no

training in cultural project management before being engaged in cultural projects. Many of the skills required were acquired by learning-by-doing on the job. Results showed that CSO participants have more structured training with regard to cultural project management.

### Communication and Networks

CSOs, artists and cultural practitioners in Yemen experience serious issues with internet connectivity. The effects of poor internet include, but are not limited to, loss of jobs and delayed deliveries of materials, missing opportunities of distant learning and participation in online events and the need to travel between different cafes and service providers several times a day to look for better connectivity to finish their work. Despite the deteriorating communication infrastructure and bad Internet access to online events, most artists’ and cultural practitioners’ responses indicated that their preferred mode of communication with their target groups is mainly through social media, emails and WhatsApp, all of which require an Internet connection. The following figure shows results around the satisfaction of the internet quality among the different targeted groups.



**Figure 2 Internet Connectivity Quality**

One of the vital aspects about reviving the arts and culture scene in Yemen is the shape of networks and communication between the different groups constituting it. When asked about having a network of artists and/or cultural practitioners, the majority of participants (76%)

responded that they have a network inside Yemen. Most participants engage with their counterparts in the country through collaborative projects, joint training, or any work-related activities that directly contribute to expanding their networks and getting to know new artists and cultural practitioners. 61% indicated that they also have a network of counterparts outside of the country that they maintain through engagement using social media platforms, newsletters, video calls, arranging and attending online events, and more classic modes of communication like phone calls and text messages.

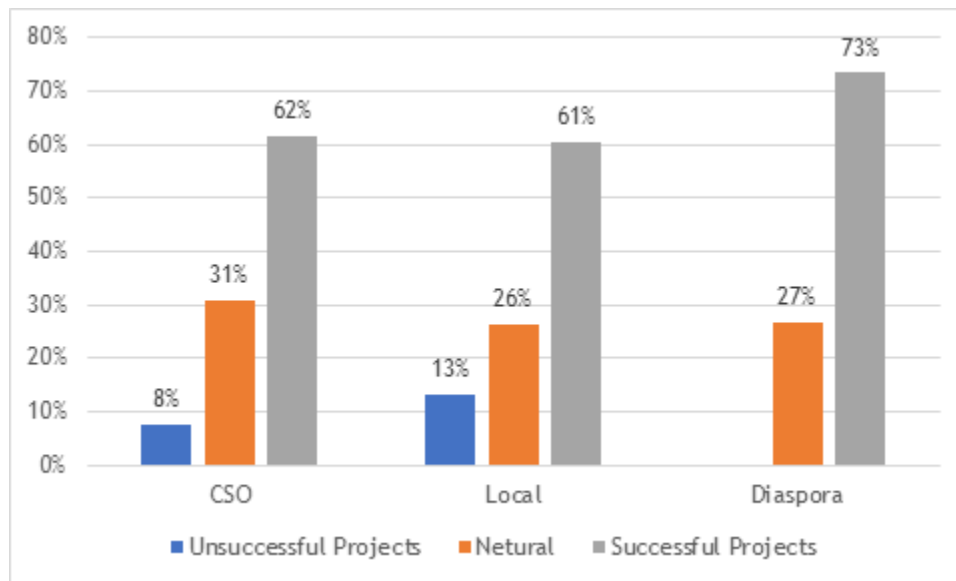
### Cultural and Creative Industry

CSOs, artists and cultural practitioners in Yemen attributed the most prominent risks and pitfalls in the cultural and creative industry to:

- **The current conflict:** which contributed to shifting societal perspectives and inciting against artists and their work.
- **Accessing funds:** where many donors work only with a preselected list of artists and exclude many others. Additionally, unstable currency exchange rates. Created financial insecurity where implemented projects are not sustainable, and participants felt the need to work in different jobs away from the cultural and art scene to make ends meet.
- **Lack of expertise:** in specific projects, there was a lack of experts to provide feedback and historical context to some of the projects which increased the risk of delivering and documenting the wrong information.
- **Internet access:** poor internet access with several blackouts that last for days have also been presented as a risk that directly affects the implementation of projects.
- **Lack of infrastructure and importing equipment:** with almost non-existent infrastructure and ineffective institutions, artists and cultural practitioners have been conducting their work using rented private spaces or cafes, many are harassed and stopped from displaying and conducting their events by the current authorities.

To improve the success of their projects; results showed participants' needs fell within the categories of: better financial resources and funding, longer timelines for project implementation, capacity building in risk analysis and management, creation of long-term sustainable projects, enhancement of infrastructure, investment in better equipment and training and mentorship. In

In addition to that, artists and cultural practitioners in Yemen and in the diaspora mentioned other needs detailed in the full report. The following figure shows percentages of success rates of projects according to the experience of each targeted group.



**Figure 3 Success of Previous Projects**

## Language

The majority of our respondents (97%) agreed that English language proficiency is important for cultural workers. 81% of participants answered that English language proficiency would give them better access to training and workshop opportunities, closely, 80% of participants answered that it would increase their participation in conferences and enhance their self-learning practices. 78% answered that good English language skills would give them better access to scholarships, 75% believed English language knowledge would contribute to better networking practices and 66% answered that English language will enable them to have better access to research. Both artists and cultural practitioners inside and outside Yemen view English language proficiency as an opportunity for self-improvement to enable them to have better chances around education and training. CSOs valued English language proficiency as a tool to better networking and engagement.

## Art and peacebuilding

There are different ways art and cultural work can be used to promote resilience of communities and strengthen the peacebuilding process in Yemen. Results have shown that the way art is used for peacebuilding falls under the following elements:

- **Art as a changing force:** contributing to strengthening the resilience of societies and supporting the peace-building process in a large way, given that implemented projects and activities directly engage the creative and thought process of the public playing a major role in filling a void (of declining trust in governand other effects of the conflict) in terms of strengthening the Yemeni identity and bringing the public together.
- **Art as a reflection of society:** may be highly politicised and equally used to influence peacebuilding processes through projects that address different social issues that emerged as by-products of the current conflict in the country.
- **Implementing projects that encourage dialogue and inclusion:** by including minorities in art projects, this makes them better poised to create a collaborative ecosystem able to influence debate and build around the culture of peace.
- **Arts as mean of preserving traditions:** by creating artistic and cultural projects that help document and maintain what remains of traditional Yemeni human values. These projects can indirectly promote hope while documenting and archiving important aspects of the Yemeni society; they can promote a better transition and reconciliation post conflict which would contribute to sustainable peace.

## Recommendations

Recommendations made to address elements that have come up in the result analysis include scarce training opportunities, language and mentorship needs, infrastructure rehabilitation and raising awareness campaigns.

- **Education and training** - in cultural project management to develop projects that are sustainable and to step away from one-time projects that only accommodate funds for a short term.
- **Enhancing infrastructure** - for artists and cultural practitioners to have spaces to meet, share ideas and find support. These spaces can also be used for training, provide



access to equipment and materials and be a repository to archive and document art and culture productions and projects.

- **Create safe physical spaces:** a centralized space where cultural workers can meet, share ideas, and find support in different geolocations in the country.
- **A centre to receive training:** capacity building activities inside these spaces can directly be customized leveraging the Needs Assessment Report as a start and by applying a thorough review to improve practices, inform the design of projects, support participants knowledge building, and promote their work.
- **Access to equipment and art materials:** these spaces can host artists and cultural practitioners as well as help invest in buying equipment and provide the means to mitigate high costs of acquiring new equipment's that stop artists from producing quality artwork needed to compete on regional and international level.
- **A point of contact:** networks between artists and different institutions can be facilitated and managed by qualified staff providing a sustainable collaboration with relevant institutions and universities on the local, regional, and international levels on different topics in order to tackle obstacles and empower artists and cultural workers.
- **A repository to archive and document art and culture work/production:** to document, collect, and preserve current artwork of artists. Additionally, to record practises, representations, expressions, knowledge, and abilities of intangible cultural heritage, as well as the tools, materials, and artefacts connected to it.
- **English Language courses:** equipping cultural workers with the needed skills for a better chance at knowledge and engagement, to be able to navigate self-learning, communicating with foreign cultural institutes and actors, applying for opportunities, and securing funds.
- **Mentorship programs with international, regional, and local mentors:** tailored and enhanced to augment networking efforts between cultural workers locally, regionally, and internationally. It would act as an entry point to introduce them to an open and more inclusive artistic and cultural sphere, integrate them into wider community, and transfer necessary knowledge and previous experiences from a similar context.

- **More catered funding:** directly linked to cultural events and activities and not as a by-product to a bigger project, with a consideration of local values and customs of each city in design and implementation.
- **Awareness campaigns:** to repair the societal image of art and artists. To minimize additional disturbances in society, such activities must be carried out in a careful and non-provocative manner. Such campaigns should factor the current push against the arts and aim to integrate cultural workers in a very positive – added value – way so direct communities can benefit and support the process.
- **Promoting and exhibiting artists' work:** More funding and support should focus on featuring work and exhibiting it both online and physically where possible. This can directly improve artists' morale and help reintegrate the importance of art into society.
- **Creation and maintaining of networks:** creating a main point of contact and communication whether physically or online that function as a hub for artists to exchange important information and stay updated with each other's work and activities.
- **Influencing change around governmental processes:** increasing efforts to unify permit-issuing procedures and alleviating extra burdens for CSOs located away from central cities.



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