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Exploring Social Responsibility of the Private Sector in Yemen: A Field Study in Taiz(*)

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Abstract

This study investigates the awareness and implementation of social responsibility (SR) by business leaders in Taiz, Yemen. It addresses the concept and practice of SR and identifies the primary challenges and obstacles private sector institutions face in their SR endeavors of unstable Yemeni environment. Employing a descriptive-analytical methodology, the research approach strategically sampled (27) business leaders and (21) civil society organizations, of which women represent about (20%).

The findings reveal that most participants are knowledgeable about SR, with common challenges identified across the sample, including security concerns that significantly impact the implementation of SR initiatives. The study highlights the critical role of local engagement in SR practices, advocating for strengthened local partnerships to ensure sustainable development and effective response strategies.

Keywords: Social responsibility, Yemeni businesspeople, localization, development, Yemen, Taiz.

Introduction:

Social responsibility is a priority in communities facing exacerbated issues related to human rights and citizenship due to successive stages of conflicts and political instability. Its importance lies in its ability to achieve social stability through providing a form of justice and equal opportunity policy, improving the quality of services offered to society, enhancing development by increasing education and social awareness at the individual level, fostering positive relationships with society, and promoting a sense of social solidarity among different segments of the community. For the state, it contributes to easing the burdens borne by the government, maximizing state revenues, contributing to technological advancements, and eliminating unemployment. Meanwhile, it brings benefits to private sector institutions by enhancing their reputation in society, improving the work environment, fostering a spirit of collaboration and cohesion. Therefore, social responsibility represents an effective response to the ongoing changes in societal needs (Khaira and Yazid, 2019, 357).

Given that functional and conflict perspectives emphasize the importance of structures that guide society and influence human behavior, social action theories assign greater importance to the role of action and interaction among members of society in shaping these structures. They focus on analyzing the manner in which actors behave in society. Despite Max Weber's recognition of the significance of social structures such as social classes, political parties, and individuals of status, he believed that it is the actions of individuals that create such structures (Giddens, 2005, 79). Consequently, businesspeople in all human societies play a vital role in the structure of society and its social and economic composition, influencing it through their key roles in the economy and in building, developing, and reconstructing their communities. This embodies the concept of social responsibility within these roles.

follows:

- 1- To what extent do businesspeople in Taiz understand the concept and practice of social responsibility?
- 2- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the internal environment, and the opportunities and threats of the external environment?
- 3- What are the challenges and risks facing the implementation of social responsibility and the activation of the role of the private sector?

Therefore, the study aims to:

- 1- Determine the extent of awareness among businesspeople in Taiz regarding the concept and practice of social responsibility.
- 2- Identify the main challenges and obstacles faced by private sector institutions in their pursuit of achieving social responsibility.
- 3- Assess the tangible achievements and impact of private sector social responsibility initiatives on humanitarian and developmental efforts.
- 4- Analyze how external factors and certain demographic aspects influence the private sector's engagement in social responsibility initiatives.

The significance of studying the social responsibility of businesspeople in Taiz, Yemen lies in enhancing the partnership of the private sector in building and developing the community through systematic and scientific foundations and institutional frameworks that make this partnership an organized, applicable, and sustainable process. The research attempts to serve as a referential study for multiple parties, including researchers, stakeholders, and decision-makers, and provides fresh knowledge and a deeper understanding of localizing certain concepts within the organizational structure of society by incorporating them into the regulations governing the work of the institutions and accommodating them through the executive authorities supervising and organizing these development partnerships. Being linked to a relatively modern and specialized subject, with a significant global and Arab trend towards adopting social responsibility for the private sector to meet the needs of current and future generations, this study, to the best of our knowledge, is the first of its kind addressing this issue, with particular focus on Taiz governorate in Yemen. The study provides data and information on analyzing the internal and external environments of the private sector, social responsibility, localization, enabling policy and decision-makers to implement appropriate strategies. Further, the importance of the study responds to contemporary global trends calling for the enhancement of the role of social responsibility for the private sector, in line with the current era's changes, societal needs, and labor market requirements.

Theoretical Perspectives, Procedural Concepts of the Study, and Literature Review:

Corporate social responsibility has emerged recently within the sphere of economic relations, whether on a national or international level. On one

hand, it has sparked reactions from anti-globalization advocates since the mid-(1990)s, particularly after the establishment of the World Trade Organization, creating a profound impact on multinational corporations regarding their new roles and responsibilities in addressing the growing issue of poverty and destitution worldwide due to the strict applications to liberate international trade. On the other hand, international non-governmental organizations, such as the International Organization of Employers, which includes (137) national federations of employers in (133) countries, have been evaluating the activities of their members and auditing their founding charters to remind them of their core responsibilities as representatives of the private sector and symbols of market economies in the era of globalization (Al-Suhaybani, 2009, 5).

AIN 1999, the initial proposal for the Global Compact on Corporate Social Responsibility was put forth by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, in his address to the World Economic Forum. The Compact was officially launched in its final stage at the United Nations headquarters in New York on July (26, 2000). It is a voluntary citizen initiative related to companies that offers facilitation and commitment through various mechanisms (dialogue policy, knowledge, local networks, and partnership projects). This Compact is based on general social responsibility, including corporate transparency, labor forces, and civil society, to initiate and participate in the essential performance related to monitoring the principles on which the Compact is based. These principles include (A. K. Sharma and B. Talwar, 2005, 35-45):

1- Human Rights:

- Business organizations must support and respect globally declared human rights.
- Ensure they are not complicit in any violations of human rights.

2- Labor:

- Actively eliminate child labor.
- Remove discrimination in employment and among employees.
- Eradicate all forms of violence and forced labor.

3- Environment:

- Encourage the development and dissemination of environmentally friendly technologies.
- Take initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility.
- Business organizations should support a preventative approach to environmental challenges.

4- Anti-Corruption:

- Business organizations should work against all forms of corruption, including bribery and extortion.

When it comes to the concerns of corporate social responsibility in the private sector, companies and private institutions contribute to activating social responsibility through several key aspects (Saleh, 2009, 8):

1- Cultural Aspect:

- Support cultural and civilizational development.
- Promote a culture of commitment to systems and values in society.
- Enhance national and historical culture.
- Global cultural communication.

2- Social Aspect:

- Respect different systems, values, and cultures.
- Promote ethical values and social solidarity.
- Address disasters and crises.
- Support sports and health activities.

3- Environmental Aspect:

- Implement proper environmental practices in the production process.
- Develop a conducive work environment.
- Environmental commitment at the local and global levels (ISO 14001).

4- Economic Aspect:

- Support social economic activities.
- Adhere to systems and laws in economic operations (“Ethical Aspect”).
- Care for employees through training, development, and fair and equal treatment.

5- Legal Aspect:

- Compliance with local and national laws during economic activities.
- Consideration of global and international laws.
- Transparency in disseminating global and international regulations for all employees and other legal entities to access.

One of the key benefits of business leaders embracing their social responsibilities in their communities is the social acceptance and positive relationship with society. This fosters a sense of social solidarity among different segments of society, creating a strong sense of belonging, especially for individuals with special needs such as the disabled. It also

raises awareness of the importance of full integration among different community organizations and interest groups, contributing to political stability and a sense of social justice. Since social responsibility is linked to fundamental concepts such as reducing secrecy in work and honesty in dealings, these aspects enhance social cohesion and community prosperity at various levels.

It is also a factor in social stability as it provides a form of social justice and upholds the principle of equal opportunities, which is at the core of corporate social responsibility for private sector companies (Al-Ghalibi and Al-Amiri, 2015, 53).

The dimensions of social responsibility are generally agreed upon in the literature, with four fundamental dimensions through which business organizations can practice corporate social responsibility, as outlined by Al-Harbi (2019, 12), pertaining to activities related to environmental resource development, activities serving the local community and the local environment, activities focused on human resource development, and activities aimed at enhancing products and services.

Important Concepts of the Study: Social Responsibility, Private Sector and Businesspeople:

Social Responsibility:

During the first half of the (20th) century, the concept of social responsibility was not clearly defined. The specific definition of corporate social responsibility, which would give it legal force at the national or international level, was not established. At its core, this responsibility remained ethical and moral, deriving its strength, acceptance, and spread from its voluntary nature. As a result, initiatives and activities varied based on the surrounding environment, the company's scope of operations, and its financial and human capabilities.

Corporate social responsibility is inherently dynamic and realistic, characterized by continuous evolution to adapt quickly to its interests and changing economic, political, and social variables. The International Institute of Islamic Thought in (1981) defined social responsibility as: "The commitment of an institution to participate in beneficial activities when carrying out its activities towards the various parties related to it, as

mandated in light of Islamic Sharia principles, with the aim of advancing the Islamic society, while considering elements of flexibility, capacity, inclusiveness, and justice” (Al-Hammouri Saleh, 2015,19). In (2002), the European Union defined it as “The concept through which institutions integrate social and environmental considerations with economic operations and interact with stakeholders on a voluntary basis” (Al-Osaimi, 2015,11).

Business for Social Responsibility Organization defined social responsibility as “the management of the institution in a manner that meets the ethical, legal, and commercial expectations of society, as well as the general expectations of that institution, or exceeds those expectations for the betterment” (Abu Al-Nasr Madah, 2015, 33). The World Business Council for Sustainable Development in (2004) characterized it as “the continuous commitment of institutions to act ethically and contribute to achieving economic development, working to improve the quality of living conditions for the workforce and their families, and the community as a whole” (Al-Ayeb, 2011, 50).

Abu Al-Nasr Madh also referred to the World Bank’s definition in 2005 as “the commitment of business entities to contribute to sustainable development by working with the local community to improve people's living standards in a way that serves the economy and development simultaneously.” Furthermore, the International Business Leaders Forum defines it as “business practices characterized by openness and transparency, based on ethical principles and respect for employees, the community, and the environment, designed to provide sustainable value for the community as a whole in addition to stakeholders” (M-F. Guyonnaud, 2004, 05).

The Economic Cooperation and Development Organization defined social responsibility as “the commitment of the institution to contribute to economic development while preserving the environment, working with employees and their families, the local community, and society at large, with the aim of improving the quality of life for all these parties” (United Nations Conference on Commerce and Development, 2004, 27).

As for the International Chamber of Commerce, they characterized social responsibility as “all efforts that contribute to voluntary - institutions striving to achieve development with ethical and social considerations.

Therefore, social responsibility relies on the goodwill initiatives of institutions without legally binding measures, and thus social responsibility is achieved through persuasion and education." (Al-Asrij, Hussein Abdul Matlub, 2011, 03).

The World Standards Organization in (2012) defined social responsibility as the responsibility of institutions for their decisions and activities that impact society and the environment, through their commitment to transparency and ethical behavior, which should (Abu Al-Nasr Madah, op. cit., 33):

- Align with sustainable development and societal well-being.
- Consider the expectations of stakeholders.
- Consider laws and align with global standards of behavior.
- Be integrated into the institution itself.

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development defined social responsibility as "the continuous commitment of business institutions to act ethically and contribute to achieving economic development, working to improve the quality of living conditions for the workforce and their families, in addition to the local community and society as a whole."¹

In this context, the study refers to social responsibility as the contribution of companies and private sector institutions in Taiz to development in its broad sense, through serving the community in which they operate, thus promoting concepts of interconnectedness, cooperation, and social solidarity between state institutions and the private sector, as partners in economic and social development. This is especially important as the increasing burdens and responsibilities of countries require the private sector to collaborate with or participate in carrying out these burdens and responsibilities, particularly since the private sector is the main funder and operator of most development projects in various productive and service sectors, and the largest employer of the workforce.

The Private Sector:

It refers to all companies and production, industrial, and investment institutions operating in Taiz, which contribute to improving the quality of life for the residents of the governorate.

(1) <http://www.wbcsd.org>

Businesspeople:

Are the ones who own property or shares, and manage a (commercial, industrial, service) activity in Taiz governorate using a combination of human, intellectual, and financial capital to drive development in the country.

Literature Review:

Many Arab research studies have approached the concept of social responsibility, sometimes referring to it through private sector companies and institutions, and at other times through civil society organizations with their associations and various institutions - associations, centers, foundations, organizations. Despite our extensive research on local studies focusing on the social responsibility of Yemeni business people, we only found one study (Al-Muqatri, 2007) "The Experience of the Yemeni Private Sector: The Case of Ha'il Saeed Anam Group, Its Contribution to Human Development and Its Effects on Sustainable Development," presented at the Sixth Arab Conference on Environmental Management: Human Development and Its Effects on Sustainable Development in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt. This study focused solely on the projects of Ha'il Saeed Anam Group, one of the prominent national businesspeople in Yemen, which contribute to human development and poverty alleviation, including the charitable association of Ha'il Saeed Anam, Saeed Foundation for Science and Culture, and Saeed Fund for supporting and encouraging scientific research. The study also highlighted some environmental projects and the experiences of the group's companies in environmental conservation, reflecting their practices of social responsibility driven by personal and national motives.

There are many Arab studies that have directly focused on the concept of social responsibility, including a study by Al-Dhubiani, Hassan (2022), which aimed to identify the role of social responsibility of the private sector in achieving community development in Yanbu city. It revealed that the lack of communication and integration with other sectors of society is one of the major obstacles to achieving the desired goal of social responsibility. Another study by Ziyada, Rania Mohammed (2021) aimed to understand the concept, objectives, and dimensions of corporate social responsibility and its mechanisms of implementation, as well as activating the role of companies

in achieving social development and welfare. It concluded by recognizing the concept and objectives of companies in activating social responsibility, the importance of the social role of private sector companies, and the positive impact on achieving community development.

The study by Fatina and Abdelsalam (2020) aimed to highlight the reality of multinational corporations' adoption of corporate social responsibility. The study discussed whether it is a commitment by these companies due to the negatives they leave on the environment of host countries, or is it a legal obligation imposed on them? It concluded that corporate social responsibility is a voluntary initiative where there is no law requiring actual practice. There was a mention of the necessity of regulating this aspect to make it obligatory to deter unethical practices and serve as an incentive for other companies.

On the other hand, the study by Khaloufi and Charit (2020) aimed to understand the implementation of corporate social responsibility in Algerian business organizations through an exploratory study. It discussed the standards and motivations of corporate social responsibility compared to business requirements in Algeria, identified priorities related to social and environmental issues, and evaluated the current business sector's response to societal and environmental challenges. The study revealed that the concept of corporate social responsibility remains unclear within business organizations, and the current business sector's response to societal and environmental issues is quite weak and requires further efforts.

Finally, the study by Eid (2019) aimed to identify the role of private sector social responsibility in achieving sustainable development and determining the appropriate mechanisms that enable the private sector to fulfill its social responsibilities towards sustainable development. It delved into the motivations and standards of social responsibility, the private sector's priorities for contributing to it, and the main challenges faced in meeting social responsibilities.

Numerous studies in this context have led to a key idea that there is still a lack of clarity and sufficient awareness of the concept of social responsibility of the private sector, its dimensions, evolution, effectiveness, and how to crystallize it for maximum benefit. Previous studies have shown that corporate social responsibility has become the most important issue in

the context of sustainable development, requiring companies to focus on comprehensive social responsibility programs that extend to investing in society and its members. This allows them to play an active role in raising the community's well-being and meeting its needs.

The current study on social responsibility of businesspeople in Yemen aligns with previous studies in emphasizing that the essence and boundaries of social responsibility do not exceed, to date, the framework of positive voluntary initiatives undertaken by institutions, whether independently or in collaboration and consultation with others. It stresses the importance of making social responsibility an institutional commitment with foundations, requirements, and programs in all economic, social, and ecological fields, including respecting all fundamental human rights.

Setting the Context: The Private Sector in Yemen and Social Responsibility:

The Private Sector in Yemen:

The Arab Non-Governmental Organizations Network for Development report pointed out that Yemen is a poor country with a population of approximately 31 million, currently suffering from an ongoing civil war that broke out in late 2014 and continues to affect many provinces (2021, 6). This has led to sharp divisions at political, economic, and social levels, leading to two executive authorities and governments in the country, and resulting in varying and sometimes conflicting financial and monetary policies.

Furthermore, there is a duplication of institutions and legislation that is increasingly distorted and divided due to successive violations of regulations and laws, and often a lack of compliance with prevailing legislation or freezing the implementation of some laws, and so on. As a result, our society faces numerous challenges that slow down its developmental plans.

Therefore, private sector companies have the opportunity to align actual developmental needs with social responsibility programs, moving beyond voluntary efforts to empower sustainable development in society, and playing an effective role in supporting sustainable development through social responsibility initiatives.

The private sector in Yemen has been profoundly impacted by the war, much like all other sectors, resulting in significant losses in its facilities, greatly affecting its interests and performance. This situation has prompted some institutions to objectively adapt to the new reality, while others have opted to transfer their capital and investments abroad. A survey conducted by the World Bank in October (2018) revealed that nearly (35%) of Yemeni companies have closed down, with over (51%) of surviving companies experiencing a reduction in size and a decline in business. Approximately (73%) of companies that ceased operations cited security obstacles, financial constraints, increased input costs, reduced demand, and loss of consumer base as the main reasons for the contraction of many businesses (Arab NGOs Network for Development, 2021, 8).

Numerous deep-rooted challenges in the business and investment environment confront the private sector in Yemen. The relationship between foreign investors and local business entities lacks consistent links, perhaps due to widespread corruption at various levels, including the judiciary, the prevalence of individualistic and family-oriented tendencies in private sector institutions, as well as the absence of legal and regulatory frameworks requiring foreign investments to engage in partnership relationships. These challenges have intensified with the ongoing conflict, leading Yemen to rank at the bottom of global business indicators, often occupying the last position (Humanitarian Response Plan January-December, 2019, 5).

Therefore, the private sector in Yemen, as previously outlined, operates in complex conditions within an unstable political, economic, and security environment, characterized by corruption, bureaucracy, inadequate infrastructure at all levels, failed reform programs, security imbalances, the repercussions of the civil war, and the country becoming inhospitable to investments and capital. This is compounded by a corrupt judiciary and ineffective legislation, significantly impacting the development potential of the private sector, especially its productive capacity, and hindering its anticipated role in developmental tasks (World Bank Group, Doing Business 2019).

Social Responsibility of the Private Sector:

The social dimension is largely absent from the agenda of the Yemeni private sector, with business activities still disconnected from the social

development needs and sustainable development goals. Moreover, the concept of social responsibility, which business institutions are expected to uphold, remains relatively new to these entities and is not effectively implemented, except for the voluntary charitable activities carried out by a few large institutions selectively, rather than as a legally binding duty that mandates them to incorporate and prioritize social development initiatives within their organized and continuous institutional work programs. There is a need for investing in the community itself and addressing its needs through diverse projects that help lift people out of poverty, hunger, and unemployment, while ensuring rights, insurances, acceptable wage levels, and promoting the development of local communities. This includes contributing to providing healthcare, education, training, clean water, energy, environmental protection, women's empowerment, supporting scientific research, innovation, and more.

The social responsibility, as mentioned in the (2019) Humanitarian Response Plan, is not solely the responsibility of the government but is to be shared by all sectors of society, including business institutions. It is imperative for these institutions to commit to transparency in information related to their investment programs in this regard and to disclose it, allowing the community to exercise its right to hold them accountable. Various strategic development visions until (2025), the Second Five-Year Plan (2005-2011), and subsequent reform and development programs (2012-2014) under the supervision of the World Bank have all heavily relied on the private sector playing a pivotal role in achieving high and sustainable economic growth rates, enhancing the partnership between the public and private sectors, with the latter taking the lead in achieving economic and social development.

Despite the neglect and setbacks suffered by the private sector before and during the conflict in Yemen, it remained a key factor that prevented the humanitarian crisis from worsening significantly. Between January to March (2017), (96.5%) (or 1.3 million metric tons) of total food shipments were transported by commercial importers, with humanitarian aid shipments making up the remaining percentage. Regarding fuel, nearly (526,000) tons were imported by commercial importers. The importance of the private sector in relief efforts was underscored by the Humanitarian Coordination

Office, emphasizing that humanitarian aid alone cannot replace public institutions, nor can it substitute for commercial imports and functioning local markets that meet the vast majority of survival needs (United Nations Office for Humanitarian Affairs, Yemen Humanitarian Needs Overview (2018), Decembre 2017).

Methodology:

The current study employs a descriptive-analytical approach to explore the social role played by businesspeople in Taiz. This is achieved through various methods, including:

- Secondary data sources: utilizing existing data sources, such as census data, official records, and previous research studies, to supplement the primary data collection efforts and provide additional context to the study.
- Surveys: conducting exploratory surveys to understand the size of the private sector. A purposive sample is selected from the most active and currently available sectors, focusing on the service, industrial, and agricultural sectors. Additionally, a purposive sample is selected from officials at the Commerce and Industry Office, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Taiz, and the Director of Planning Office in the governorate. This approach aims to gather valuable insights and data regarding the social responsibility initiatives and contributions of these key sectors and officials in Taiz.
- Interviews: In-depth structured interviews with experts to provide more detailed insights into the nature and extent of efforts undertaken by the private sector, whether by individuals or institutions, both in the private and public sectors, in addressing developmental, environmental, and livelihood challenges in the community. It is also to identify the types of currently implemented social responsibility initiatives, and assess the scope and scale of these initiatives, whether at the village/district level, governorate level, or national level. The tool allowed for a systematic and in-depth exploration of the interviewees perspectives, experiences, and insights regarding social responsibility initiatives and the private sector's role in driving community development in Taiz.

Study Sample (sociodemographic data):

The study sample comprises individuals from diverse socio-demographic backgrounds, including details related to social and demographic

characteristics such as age, gender, education level, occupation, income, marital status, and geographic location. These socio-demographic data provide valuable insights into the makeup of the study participants and help in understanding how different factors may influence their perspectives or behaviors in relation to the research topic at hand.

1- Businesspeople:

- The sample size of businesspeople consists of (27) individuals, including (5) females (19%) and (22) males (81%).
- Their business nature consists of (7) businesspeople themselves, while the rest of the sample included 13 general managers and (7) executive managers or authorized representatives by the owners.
- In terms of business activities, there are (3) major industrial activities (dairy and food factory, Hariby furniture factory, and Harmain plastic factory), (20) representatives of commercial activities (import-export companies, sales, and commercial shops), and (4) service sector representatives with diverse activities in education, health, and exchange.
- The geographic aspect covers Taiz governorate urban and rural areas.
- The sizes of the include 6 large, (20) medium, and 1 small.
- The founding dates of the business institutions of the sample ranged from the oldest to the newest activities between (1970) and (2017).
- The number of years of active participation in social responsibility initiatives by the businesspeople sample varied, with 6 of them having three years or less, 8 having five years or more, and finally 13 businesspeople with over ten years of participation.

2- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs):

- The sample size is (21) CSOs, (3) women (14%) and 18 men (86%).
- The CSOs' activities comprise (5) humanitarian responses and (16) developmental responses.
- Geographically, (3) organizations in Taiz city and 18 in rural areas.
- The sample individuals comprise (5) organization owners, (8) executive directors, and 8 project managers.
- The establishment dates varied from the oldest organization in the 1980s (1986) to the newest in (2023).
- The number of years of active participation in social responsibility initiatives ranged from (3) organizations working for three years or less, (6) organizations with five years or more, and (12) organizations with over ten years of participation.

3- Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Office of Industry and Commerce, and Office of Planning and International Cooperation:

- The sample size includes 4 individuals, (1) female (manager of the women's business administration) and (3) males (general manager of the Chamber of Commerce, branch manager of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Turbah, businessman and board member).
- Also, the Deputy Director General of the Planning and International Cooperation Office in the city.
- The sample from the Office of Industry and Commerce is represented by the general manager of the Taiz Industry and Commerce Office, the deputy general manager of the Taiz Industry and Commerce Office, and the general manager of the Industry and Commerce Office in Turbah.

4- Implemented Projects:

- The sample size of projects is (20), including one female owning a recreational service project and the rest male owners. Among the males, (6) humanitarian response projects and (14) developmental projects, including (5) educational, (3) health-related, and (12) services covering roads, water, lighting, rehabilitation and training, cultural, agricultural, and entertainment.
- Geographically, these projects include 13 in urban city and 7 in rural areas of Taiz governorate.
- The oldest project, a water project in rural areas, was established in 1986, and the newest, an agricultural project, in 2022.
- The individuals interviewed include 1 project owner, 6 executive directors, and 13 with diverse business natures ranging from general managers, branch heads, project managers, project engineers, and others. These projects are still active to this day.

Scope of the Study:

- 1- Geographic: Taiz Governorate
- 2- Human: Stakeholders (Company Owners, Executive Managers of Civil Society Organizations or Projects, Officials in the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Planning Office, and International Cooperation)
- 3- Temporal: The study takes between January to July 2024.

Discussion:

Our analysis is organized under three main themes all related to the topic of the study. These include social responsibility practices, the reality of the private sector and civil society organizations: challenges and risks, as well as collaboration and localization.

Social Responsibility Practices:

The concept of social responsibility was found to be very familiar to (56%) of the businesspeople interviewed, somewhat familiar to (30%), and unfamiliar to (14%) This indicates that the majority of the businesspeople interviewed has a clear understanding regarding the concept, while those who still find it unclear or somewhat clear are those who approach community development primarily from a humanitarian perspective only. Among the civil society organization respondents, the concept was very familiar to (95%) of them and somewhat familiar to (5%), showcasing the awareness of the importance of practicing social responsibility among CSOs' members. As for the concept among the respondents from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, it is familiar to (50%) of them and somewhat familiar to other (50%), indicating the varying levels of understanding and practice among the registered businesspeople at the Chamber.

As for the Commerce and Industry Office, the concept is very familiar to (33%) of them, while (67%) found the concept somewhat familiar. This is despite interviewing the General Manager of the Commerce and Industry Office, his deputy, and the Director of the Commerce and Industry Office in the Turbah branch. This indicates that the practice of this concept is weak in the activities and tasks of the Commerce and Industry Office. Regarding the Planning Office, they responded that the concept was very familiar.

In regard to the types of initiatives implemented by the private sector, the research inquired about a range of initiatives that have been practiced in recent years by the private sector in partnership with local and international non-governmental organizations. These initiatives are seen to encompass humanitarian response, development response, peacebuilding, volunteering initiatives for employees, environmental sustainability, and community development.

As per the businesspeople respondents, humanitarian response and community development projects ranked first (33%), while development response projects ranked second (29%). This indicates that businesspeople in Taiz have developmental orientation, although the humanitarian aspect remains the primary motivation for initiating projects. This was evident through interviews conducted with projects officials, where 6 projects are humanitarian and (14) developmental. Among these (14) development response projects, (5) are educational (schools, universities, training institutes), and (3) healthcare (hospitals, pharmacies), while other 12 service projects included road repairs, water supply, lighting, rehabilitation and training, cultural, agricultural, and recreational initiatives.

Furthermore, within the context of collective initiatives, one of the businesspeople respondents mentioned that the private sector, as part of humanitarian response initiatives, established the Yemeni Medicine Bank as a non-profit charitable organization aimed at providing essential and emergency health and medical services to reduce disease and alleviate pain for the most vulnerable and impoverished groups. Through collaboration and coordination among businesspeople, government entities, and international and local civil society organizations, the Medicine Bank has implemented a number of projects and programs benefiting over (183) individuals by the end of (2018).

The civil society organizations respondents rank the initiatives carried out by the private sector in Taiz to be mainly humanitarian response (95%), while development response is (76%), followed by community development (43%). This indicates a consensus between businesspeople and civil society organizations on the nature of the initiatives undertaken by the private sector, as being humanitarian and developmental. This may be due to the conditions of the war that the society has been experiencing and the urgent needs during the past nine years, including poverty, unemployment, and various social phenomena associated with the conflict, which still persist until today.

On the other hand, the members of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry unanimously (100%) agree that the initiatives carried out by the private sector are focused on humanitarian response, development response, and community development projects respectively. This clarity in the nature

of initiatives implemented by the private sector is evident among businesspeople, local civil society organizations, and members of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Taiz, all emphasizing humanitarian and developmental responses. This sentiment was also echoed by the respondents from the Commerce and Industry Office and the Deputy Director of the Planning and International Cooperation Office in Taiz.

The scope of corporate social responsibility initiatives managed by private sector institutions and civil society organizations in Taiz has become clear through business people's perspective. The majority of initiatives carried out by the private sector are at the governorate level (74%), followed by (22%) at the rural level, and (15%) at the national level. On the other hand, civil society organizations manage their initiatives at the governorate level (71%), (47%) at the national level, and (24%) in rural areas. This distribution may be influenced perhaps because some civil society organizations (Hael Sa'id Ana'm Charitable Society, National Cancer Foundation Taiz, Al-Hikma Al-Yamania Society) have branches in other governorates in which they practice activities and initiatives similar to those activities and initiatives that are run in Taiz governorate. And in recent years, due to the sensitivity of the conflict, we find that most of the initiatives are implemented in accessible areas, i.e. within the safety zone of community work, and this is observed through the responses of the sample members.

Regarding the allocated funds for social responsibility initiatives, most businesspeople were reluctant to disclose specific amounts, viewing these initiatives as part of humanitarian charity work. Some mentioned that there are no fixed amounts, rather a percentage of profits or based on available resources or supported project nature, sometimes reaching millions. This lack of clear strategies and institutional budgeting for projects related to social responsibility among the sample businesspeople suggests a need for more structured approaches in this regard.

In terms of the presence of specific strategies or programs for social responsibility by businesspeople, (51%) of the respondents state they have such programs and strategies, while (49%) state there is not. This highlights the importance of practicing social responsibility for some businesspeople, especially national business owners of factories and large companies with a long history in humanitarian and development work. Others still perceive

these initiatives more as charitable humanitarian efforts rather than sustainable development. On the other hand, respondents from civil society organizations (90%) report having specific strategies or programs for social responsibility, indicating that social responsibility is a priority for the majority of the civil society organizations sample.

Private Sector: Challenges and Risks:

To understand the current state of the private sector in recent years from the perspective of the respondents, we find that the majority of businesspeople (85%) believe that the private sector has somewhat declined. Similarly, the majority of the respondents from civil society organizations (71%) also perceive a decline in the private sector's role. As for the respondents from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, (50%) state that the private sector has become less present than before. As one respondent mentioned, the private sector has a presence but slightly declined. The Commerce and Industry Office respondents unanimously agree that there has been a slight decline, a view also shared by the Deputy Director of the Planning and International Cooperation Office. According to their perspective, the governorate has become repellent by all standards due to the conditions of the ongoing war, the emigration of many national capital owners to other countries and provinces, and the displacement of others to safer areas. Weak services, high prices of oil derivatives, and currency exchange rate instability are among the major obstacles faced by the private sector in Taiz.

In particular, the main challenges that hinder or limit the participation of private sector institutions and civil society organizations in development efforts in Yemen are identified by the respondents as follows:

- Private sector respondents highlight that security concerns are the biggest challenge (70%), followed by financial and human resource shortages (44%). Lack of awareness or understanding of local needs and lack of coordination with other stakeholders are also noted as challenges (26%).
- For respondents from civil society organizations, the primary challenge is identified as the lack of financial and human resources (90%), followed by security concerns and lack of awareness or participation from stakeholders (48%).
- The Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Commerce and Industry Office, and the Deputy Director of Planning and International Cooperation

respondents unanimously agree that security concerns are the top priority, followed by limited outreach to the affected areas.

It is clear that security concerns are a common challenge among all the respondents, which is understandable given the impact of war and internal conflicts that have weakened the role of the state, private sector, and civil society organizations. This has led to the outflow of capital owners abroad, displacement to other regions, destruction of many industrial facilities, partial or complete production stoppages at times, imposed siege on the city, continued strikes at times, and weakened basic services.

Moreover, the assassination and forced disappearance of some civil society workers by Ansar Allah (Houthi group) have further contributed to the decline of many organizations, with some ceasing operations. Civil society organizations also face the significant challenge of limited financial resources, relying on international grants or financial support from businesspeople, which is often scarce and lacks sustainability for many projects. Some respondents also perceive other internal challenges related to response efforts activities, such as political classification, economic deterioration, and the inaccuracy of available data.

When examining the nature of the strategies used by private sector institutions or civil society organizations to address or overcome challenges in monitoring development efforts in Taiz, the respondents from the business community (56%) indorse that cooperation with other stakeholders is the primary strategy. This is followed by enhancing communication with stakeholders and involving them (44%), highlighting the importance of partnerships for businesspeople with their development partners, whether they are local or international civil society organizations, government institutions, local authorities in the city, community committees, or security forces, to work in a safer and more peaceful environment.

On the other hand, the respondents from civil society organizations (65%) see that seeking external funding or partnerships is the primary strategy. This underscores that the lack of funding is the biggest challenge for them.

Therefore, they have adopted a strategy of seeking funding as a priority to overcome the funding shortfall, followed by enhancing communication with stakeholders and involving them (52%). This strategy aligns with the

business people's strategy regarding the importance of partnership in addressing challenges in monitoring development efforts in Taiz. Both the businesspeople and the civil society organizations respondents believe that these strategies they follow are somewhat effective in the current stage to confront the overall challenges they face in carrying out their development tasks in society.

As for the potential benefits of integrating corporate social responsibility practices into humanitarian and development response, the businesspeople respondents (78%) see the most important benefit as improving the effectiveness and efficiency of all response efforts, followed by enhancing local ownership and community participation (60%), and then the positive impact on the company's reputation and brand image (56%). The civil society organizations respondents see that enhancing local ownership and community participation, and having a positive impact on the institution's reputation and brand image equally (57%) are potential benefits of integration. The last benefit, is enhancing partnerships and collaboration with other stakeholders (52%). The respondents from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry believe that the most important benefits are improving the effectiveness and efficiency of response efforts, while those in the Commerce and Industry Office believe that enhancing partnerships and collaboration with other stakeholders is the most important benefit of integration. The latter also aligns with the views of the respondents from the Planning and International Cooperation Office.

Collaboration and Localization:

Most of the respondents interviewed believe that integrating corporate social responsibility practices can help address the unique needs and challenges of local communities during response efforts in Yemen. They expressed that the participation of the private sector in certain humanitarian projects contributes to sustainable local development by enhancing trust between private and public sectors, linking humanitarian project needs with private sector capabilities, and supporting small and medium projects to enhance project efficiency through existing private sector expertise (i.e., management). It is also possible to allocate a portion of private sector profits to finance humanitarian projects by providing them with a matrix of sustainable development projects that have been established according to

clear studies and needs from the current reality. In times of war and crisis, they believe that the private sector plays a crucial role in stabilizing and preserving the society.

The respondents emphasize the significance of having organized mechanisms for the private sector's humanitarian and development work. These mechanisms should include regulations and laws governing the work to showcase the role played by the private sector in an organized manner. They also highlight the importance of involving the public sector in terms of coordination to define the scope and responsibilities of the private sector's work. Moreover, designing accountability mechanisms for the private sector in project implementation is also deemed crucial.

When it comes to private sector partners in achieving and implementing humanitarian and development projects, from the perspective of the respondents, business leaders view community committees as the primary partners in implementing humanitarian and development response projects, followed by local authorities, local civil society organizations, and finally international organizations. The role of community committees emerged prominently during the ongoing war, particularly after the decline of the local councils, because they work to maintain security and contribute to providing and sustaining certain community services. Working in partnership, local authorities play a role in interacting and in facilitating tasks, whereas local civil society organizations contribute to prioritizing and organizing projects based on importance. As for the respondents from local civil society organizations, they see international organizations along with local authorities as the most important partners in project implementation, perhaps because, as they previously mentioned, their biggest challenge is funding, which can only be achieved through agreements and facilitation by local authorities represented by the Planning and International Cooperation Office in the governorate.

On the other hand, respondents from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry see the Social Development Fund as an active partner in this context, in addition to some international organizations that focus on supporting projects and their sustainability. As for the Industry and Commerce Office, the respondents see local civil society organizations as the true partners of the private sector in implementing development projects

because they are concerned with conducting studies and plans based on the needs of local communities.

The respondents' opinions varied in seeking mechanisms or strategies that can contribute to the creation of a sustainable and effective partnership among development partners from the government, private, and civil society sectors in achieving social responsibility programs. Businesspeople believe that the best strategy is to create initiatives to establish a social responsibility fund that addresses all humanitarian and developmental responses. On the other hand, respondents of the civil society organizations state that establishing a government department at the local level specifically for social responsibility, alongside departments in the private sector and civil society organizations to coordinate among themselves, is the optimal mechanism for creating a sustainable partnership for implementing humanitarian and developmental projects. Meanwhile, participants from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, and the Office of Planning and International Cooperation, based on their supervisory and oversight roles and their role in facilitating tasks, believe that enacting laws and regulations for all government institutions, private sector entities, and civil society organizations focusing on their roles towards social responsibility is the best strategy and mechanism for implementing and sustaining humanitarian and developmental projects.

It is apparent that each perspective is influenced by the nature of each sector's work. Businesspeople, for example, are inclined towards humanitarian and developmental work but are preoccupied with developing their financial resources. To actively participate in community development, they require a clear and defined operational mechanism within an organizational framework and structure that can handle tasks such as project analysis, creating matrices, and long-term plans, as well as a dedicated team for implementation and monitoring. On the other hand, civil society organizations tend to lean towards partnerships due to the challenges they face during project execution and sustainability. Their work is inherently linked to conveying the needs of local communities to relevant authorities, seeking funding, and facilitating the implementation of projects.

Some of the respondents emphasize the importance of localizing response mechanisms in Yemen, stating that it is crucial for project

implementers to be local entities rather than international ones. They also highlight the significance of building the capacities of local civil society organizations through tailored workshops. This includes establishing all necessary procedures, mobilizing resources, ensuring oversight of implementation, and focusing on the importance of media awareness campaigns to promote the shift towards localizing response mechanisms in Yemen.

The study brings the following aspects into the discussions with the participants, regarding the involvement of the private sector in humanitarian and development projects by identifying the ongoing humanitarian and development projects supported by the private sector in Taiz, Yemen:

- Understanding of the concept of social responsibility by project stakeholders.
- The primary supporters and their adequacy in execution and sustainability.
- Challenges faced during project implementation and their nature.
- Preferred entities for project support.
- Potential benefits of integrating social responsibility practices in humanitarian and development responses from their perspective
- Integration of social responsibility practices in addressing the unique needs and challenges of local communities during response efforts in Yemen
- Private sector participation in some humanitarian projects for sustainable local development.
- Mechanisms or strategies that contribute to establishing sustainable and effective partnerships among government, private sector, and civil society organizations in achieving social responsibility programs and organized mechanisms for private sector collaboration with civil society organizations in humanitarian and development endeavors.

In synthesizing the data, (95%) of the respondents find the concept of social responsibility very familiar to them. They perceive the private sector as the primary supporter for establishing and executing the developmental and humanitarian projects they manage (30%), followed by partnerships involving all parties (civil society organizations, international organizations, private sector) (30%). This indicates that the private sector is considered the major supporter of projects in all cases. While civil society organizations and international organizations equally got (20%) in terms of contribution.

Furthermore, half of the sample states that the support was sufficient, while the other half mentioned it was insufficient due to some circumstances such as the spread of diseases, high needs of the targeted families, and student overcrowding. This suggests that projects lacking adequate support are service-related projects linked to health and education. Perceiving service-related projects as rights that should be provided by the government, it is clear why they may not receive enough support, when the private sector is perceived playing a complementary role rather than primary. However, with the declining role of the state in the midst of war, the private sector bears the greater responsibility in meeting those services for the community it operates in, hence it may not be sufficient.

Most of the respondents (65%) believe that development response projects are the best in terms of implementation and sustainability, compared to humanitarian response projects. This is attributed to the fact that development response projects aim for empowerment and bringing sustainable development to the community, rather than being temporary or emergency-based addressing specific circumstances or temporary societal needs.

Regarding the challenges in project implementation and their nature, (38%) of the respondents state that there are no difficulties, while (42%) highlight a number of challenges such as war repercussions, economic downturn, service interruptions, rising fuel and operational costs, insufficient availability of raw materials and equipment, and the declining role of the government in regularly allocating budgets to basic service ministries such as the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education.

In identifying the preferred entities for project support, the majority of the respondents (62%) state that international organizations (INGOs) are the best entities for support. This is attributed to some INGOs ability to provide comprehensive support throughout the project stages and their focus on sustainability.

When it comes to the potential benefits of integrating social responsibility practices in humanitarian and development projects, according to the perspective of the respondents (80%), enhancing local ownership and community engagement is considered the primary benefit. This is followed by the positive impact on institution's reputation and brand

image (65%), then the improvement in response efforts' effectiveness and efficiency (60%), and finally, the sustainability of developmental projects (55%). By prioritizing these benefits, it can be inferred that project stakeholders believe that the benefits will primarily return to the private sector through enhancing their ownership and positively influencing their reputation and brand image. This means they see their involvement in establishing and executing projects as serving their interests first and foremost.

Moreover, the majority of the sample (70%) perceive that integrating social responsibility practices helps significantly address the unique needs and challenges of local communities during response efforts in Yemen. While (30%) also consider integration to be somewhat important. Therefore, there is a collective agreement that integrating social responsibility practices during response efforts in Yemen helps address the challenges faced by local communities.

The respondents (90%) highlight that private sector participation in certain humanitarian projects contributes to sustainable local development and community resilience, with emphasis on the need for organized mechanisms for private sector collaboration with civil society organizations. They believe that coordinated and organized work ensures justice and assists to expand outreach to a larger segment of society without duplicating the same service or project or even the beneficiaries. One of the major challenges identified is the repetition of projects within the same community without extending the benefits to other communities that have the same degree of need or even greater.

Thus, the research focuses on understanding the mechanisms and/or strategies that can help in guiding towards establishing sustainable and effective partnerships among multiple stakeholders working on development field, and in achieving social responsibility programs. As per the responses, the mechanisms are listed in order as follows:

- (65%) Working on initiatives to establish a social responsibility fund that addresses all humanitarian and developmental responses.
- (55%) Establishing laws and regulations for all government institutions, private sector entities, and civil society organizations dedicated to their social responsibility role, and.

- (50%) Establishing a governmental social responsibility department in the local authority, with departments in the private sector and civil society organizations responsible for the coordination among these sectors.

Additionally, the majority of the respondents (90%) support the idea of localizing humanitarian and developmental responses at present.

Key Findings:

- It is evident that the majority of the respondents have knowledge of the concept of social responsibility.
- The most significant challenges and obstacles facing private sector institutions in their pursuit of achieving social responsibility include security concerns, which is a common challenge among all the respondents. This situation has led to capital flight, displacement to other areas, destruction of many industrial facilities, partial or complete production stoppages at times, imposed sieges on the city, occasional strikes, and weakened basic services. The assassination of some workers in civil society organizations, their arrest, or their forced disappearance by Ansar Allah led to the decline in the role of many organizations, with some ceasing operations. Additionally, some respondents see other internal challenges related to the response efforts themselves, such as political classification, economic deterioration, and the lack of accuracy in available data.
- Tangible achievements and impacts of private sector social responsibility initiatives in humanitarian and developmental efforts are recognized. The majority of the respondents express their opinions about the initiatives adopted by the private sector in Taiz, with most being primarily humanitarian and developmental initiatives. A group of projects is identified, including (20) projects (6 humanitarian and (14) developmental). Among these projects (5) are educational, (3) healthcare, and (12) service projects covering roads, water, lighting, rehabilitation and training, cultural, agricultural, and recreational aspects. The geographical distribution of these projects includes (13) projects in the city of Taiz and (7) projects in rural areas. The oldest project was established in 1986, focusing on water in rural areas, while the newest project, agricultural, in (2022).
- The private sector so far contributes to sustainable local development through various humanitarian projects. As for the potential impacts and

benefits of integrating social responsibility practices in humanitarian and developmental responses, they include enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of response efforts, promoting local ownership and community engagement, and positively influencing the company's reputation and brand image.

- External factors and certain demographic aspects significantly impact the private sector's engagement in social responsibility. The private sector in Yemen faces numerous entrenched factors in the business and investment environment, such as the relationship between foreign investors and local businesses lacking substantial links, possibly due to widespread corruption at various levels, including the judiciary, the prevalence of individualistic tendencies and familial nature within private sector institutions, as well as the absence of legal and regulatory frameworks essential for foreign investments to engage in partnerships. These challenges have escalated amid the ongoing conflict, with the private sector operating in complex conditions amidst politically, economically, and security-wise unstable climates dominated by corruption, bureaucracy, inadequate infrastructure at all levels, failed reform programs, alongside security imbalances and sieges imposed on some areas and difficulty accessing many affected areas. This has turned the country into an investment-repelling environment, with a corrupt judiciary and ineffective legislation significantly hampering the private sector's development prospects, especially its productive capacity, impeding its anticipated growth to fulfill its developmental roles.
- Another critical factor influencing the private sector's engagement in social responsibility is the institutional division within state entities, leading to a split in public policies, particularly impacting the economic aspects such as the Central Bank, financial and monetary policies, and the instability of the local currency exchange rate.

Based on the information collected in this study, we can summarize that implementing a range of mechanisms or strategies can enhance the role of businesspeople and facilitate the creation of sustainable and effective partnerships among development partners from the government, private sector, and civil society organizations in achieving social responsibility programs. Some key proposals include:

- 1- Establishing a multistakeholder fund for social responsibility that focuses on all humanitarian and developmental responses, with collective supervision and funding.
- 2- Establishing a government department within the local authority dedicated to social responsibility, alongside departments in the private sector and civil society organizations to coordinate efforts and align initiatives. The department shall help also in facilitating communication and knowledge-sharing among stakeholders to enhance collaboration and maximize impact. Additionally, it shall help in conducting regular assessments and evaluations to monitor the progress and effectiveness of social responsibility programs, ensuring transparency and accountability.
- 3- Creating laws and regulations for all governmental institutions, the private sector and civil society organizations that deal with their role towards social responsibility.
- 4- Involving the private sector in shaping economic policies and government plans for reconstruction and development.

Conclusion:

In recent years, the private sector in Yemen has been operating in an unstable environment due to political, security, and economic sensitivities stemming from the ongoing conflict. This has resulted in many businesspeople being displaced or migrating, and with the state's diminished role in providing basic services to society, Yemeni private sector institutions have taken on a pivotal role in assuming social responsibility. They have embarked on various humanitarian and charitable initiatives encompassing financial, food, health, and educational services. The majority of businesspeople believe that their involvement in social responsibility activities is a form of contributing to humanitarian work, prompting the need to reassess institutional methodologies to capitalize on this shift towards localizing social responsibility for sustainable community benefit.

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