

OVERVIEW

In 2022, the key feature of the conflict in Yemen was the six-month truce commencing in April and ending in October between the Internationally Recognized Government of Yemen (IRG) and the de-facto authorities (DFA) in the north of Yemen (also known as the Houthis). The truce became a key driver of change and resulted in significant social impact. For one, it led to a change in conflict dynamics, including the causes of casualties, freedom of movement, and displacement.

The absence of active conflict also appeared to provide the DFA with increased opportunities to introduce measures to achieve greater control over the population and strengthen adherence to behaviours related to Houthi ideology (MEI 29/07/2022; Mwatana 05/01/2023). This can be seen in wide-ranging areas, from restrictions on women's movement by requiring a male guardian (Mahram) and impositions of dress codes to changes in the education system. These changes affect women, especially women-headed households and women without a Mahram, children, and university students the most. Although mostly imposed by the DFA in areas under their control, the Mahram requirement has also had implications in some IRG-controlled areas, such as Abyan, Ad Dali', and Lahj.

While the truce provided a break from active conflict, landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) continued to affect civilians as people took the opportunity to move around more freely. Data shows that as a result, there continued to be high numbers of casualties resulting from armed violence throughout the year despite the truce.

Worsening economic conditions also remained a concern throughout 2022 despite the support packages that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the United Arab Emirates provided following the truce. Eight years of conflict had led to the increased use of potentially harmful economic coping strategies, such as selling off important and even productive assets.

The number of Yemeni migrant workers returning from the KSA also increased in 2022 as a result of changing immigration regulations and economic conditions in KSA. Migrant workers from the Horn of Africa (HoA) also continued to face heightened protection threats throughout 2022.

Most of the themes covered in the 2022 quarterly reports of the Social Impact Monitoring Product (SIMP), including areas on the watch list, can be classified under four broad thematic areas, which remain relevant and are the focus of this 2022 SIMP overview:

- There was an increase in social restrictions, especially in DFA-controlled areas.
- Civilian casualty numbers remained largely unchanged compared to 2021, although the triggers were different.
- Economic conditions continued to increase the use of potentially detrimental coping strategies.
- Protection risks for Yemeni and non-Yemeni migrant workers increased.

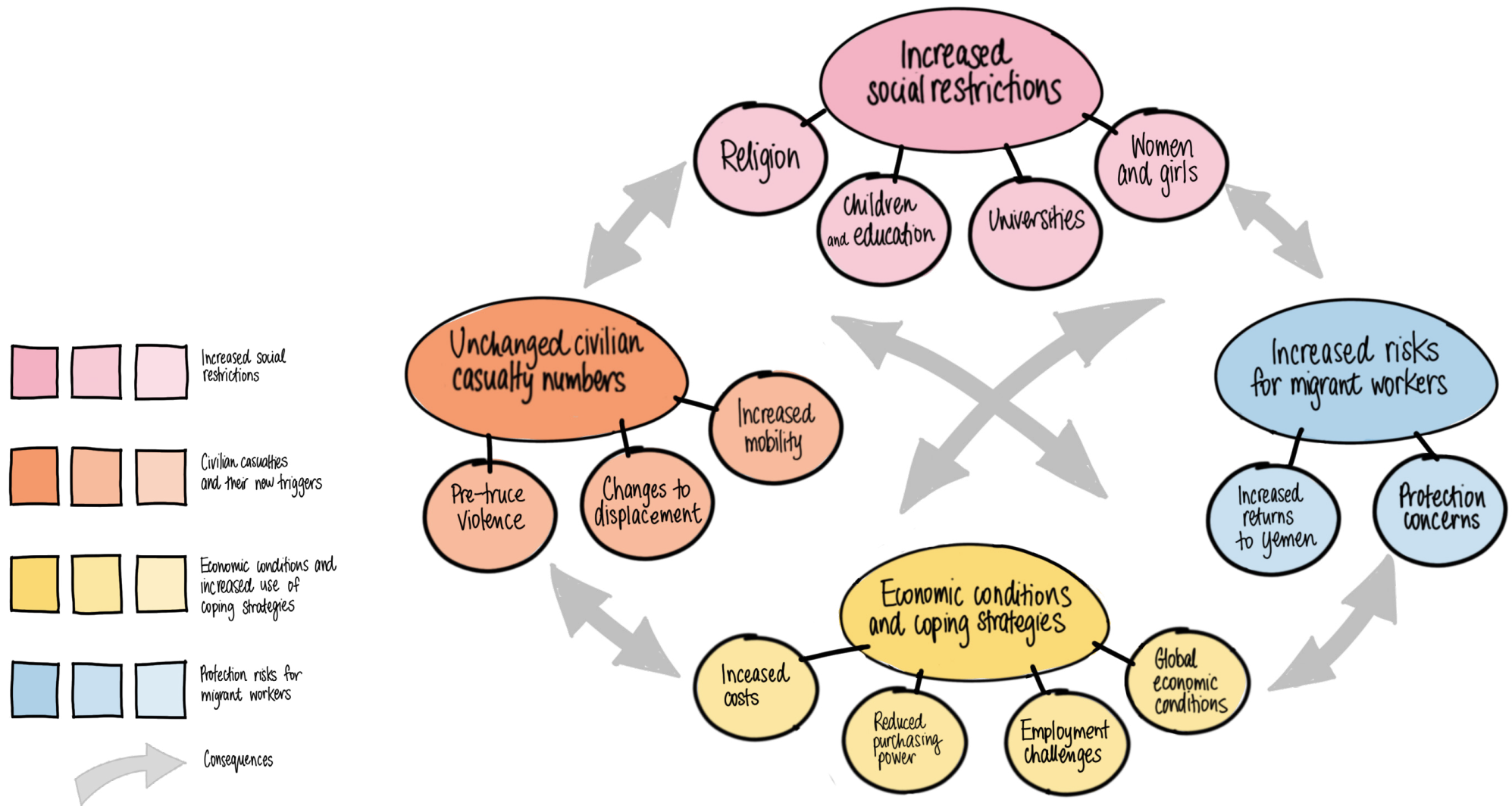
These four themes were chosen based on current events and impacts highlighting their continued relevance, as well as discussions with Yemeni civil society and humanitarian organisations in early 2023.

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The below diagram includes the themes and their impacts that were featured in 2022 and indicates the interconnections between them.

DIAGRAM 1. SOCIAL IMPACT OVERVIEW 2022



Source: ACAPS



About this report

ACAPS broadly defines social impact as the effect on people and communities of a specific action or event or the lack of action to intervene in a situation. Every quarter, ACAPS' Yemen Analysis Hub produces a SIMP report identifying the events and themes emerging from the information landscape on Yemen that have had, or are likely to have, a social impact. This report brings the four SIMP reports from 2022 together in a collected overview to reflect on the year in its entirety from a social impact angle. It focuses on the themes that appear to remain the most relevant to Yemen under current conditions.

Limitations: there is limited information available that is directly related to the impact of the conflict on specific groups and categories of people who might be more exposed to certain risks. Most of the available information is also qualitative, making it difficult to compare or aggregate data. To make the best use of the information available, ACAPS provides structure to the information we do have and conducts interviews and consultations with experts to gather a deeper understanding of the themes.

Methodology: the analysis presented in this report is based on the following:

- the consolidation of the four SIMP reports from 2022
- additional daily monitoring of relevant indicators logged in the ACAPS qualitative database
- the analysis of data from ACAPS' core dataset
- a secondary data review of documents published in and on Yemen
- key informant interviews and discussions with context experts.

IN 2022, THERE WAS AN INCREASE IN SOCIAL RESTRICTIONS, ESPECIALLY IN DFA-CONTROLLED AREAS

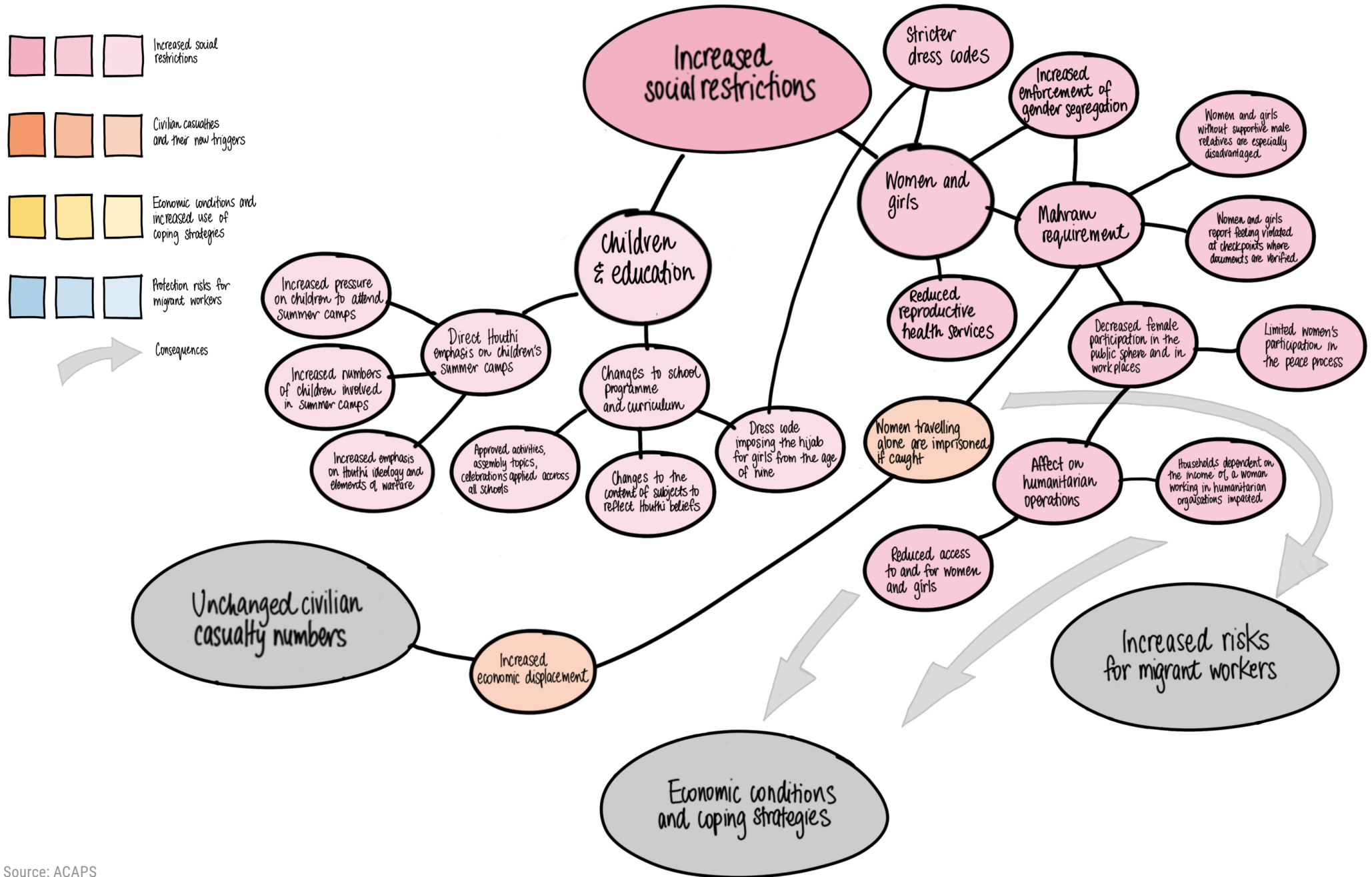
Social restrictions increased in 2022 and appeared to worsen with the truce that began in April 2022. The absence of widespread open conflict during the truce provided the DFA the opportunity to impose stricter restrictions on communities and increase their efforts to influence people's behaviour (MEI 29/07/2022; Mwatana 05/01/2023). The restrictions affected some groups more than others. These included women, children, university students, and female aid workers. (AI 01/09/2022; OHCHR 02/12/2022). The restrictions had both social and economic impacts. The DFA imposed restrictions not only on the types of permitted gatherings but also on who could attend and how they could relate with each other. At the same time, these restrictions resulted in costs associated with compliance and constraints on the opportunity of some people to be employed and earn an income, as in the case of women grappling with the Mahram requirement. The economic impact on households is difficult to disentangle from the social, especially as it results in reduced social capital (ACAPS 22/05/2022).

Social restrictions that are already being imposed on a fairly society-wide scale are the enforcement of the Mahram requirement, changes to the education curriculum, stricter dress codes, the prohibition of reproductive health services (family planning and contraception), and increased segregation between men and women in universities and cafes. Houthi authorities have also attempted to formalise and coordinate how some Islamic celebrations are marked, such as by directing the funds dispersed at Eid by private companies and wealthy individuals through the DFA.

Reviewing the restrictions applied in DFA areas across 2022 and then looking back into 2021, a pattern can be observed in relation to how they apply restrictions. They initially pilot these at a small scale to understand and test the level of compliance and resistance, often in locations where they have strong support, such as Sa'dah and Hajjah, and sometimes in one specific university or even a single university department. Paying attention to these localised restrictions may aid in understanding the DFA's plans in terms of future social control. Examples to watch closely are freedom of movement for women, hate speech against female aid workers, restricted dress codes, and the exertion of more control over women-only spaces, such as gyms, coffee shops, and beauty salons. As summer approaches, it will also be important to see what emphasis is put on summer camps in 2023.

This overview highlights two of the areas where DFA control has been most evident. These are the increased enforcement of the Mahram requirement and the changes imposed in schools in DFA areas. DFA efforts in these two areas accelerated under the truce and show no signs of receding. Diagram 2 below illustrates the elements of these themes, as well as some of the ways they relate to each other and to other issues with their own social impacts.

DIAGRAM 2. INCREASED SOCIAL CONTROL OF WOMEN, GIRLS, AND CHILDREN IN DFA-CONTROLLED AREAS



Source: ACAPS



Increased enforcement of the Mahram requirement

Observers noted increasing vigilance in enforcing the Islamic male guardian (Mahram) requirement beginning in April 2022. The requirement for women to be accompanied by a Mahram is not part of Yemeni law, and authorities have not made any formal changes to legislation or related policies, but reports indicate that the DFA are increasingly enforcing it through verbal directives and written instructions given to employers and transportation companies (HRW 06/02/2023). The requirement has been observed mainly in DFA areas, but influential tribal leaders in IRG areas have been reported to be reciprocating it in Abyan, Lahj, and Ad Dali' governorates (OCHA 01/08/2022; AI 01/09/2022; SCSS 15/01/2023). Yemen remains one country as far as much of the population is concerned, and information travels swiftly between communities in the different areas of control (as was observed during the COVID-19 pandemic), so it is unsurprising that there are reports of some influential tribal leaders in IRG areas mirroring DFA practices, including the Mahram requirement (ACAPS 10/01/2022).

Social impact of the Mahram restrictions

Although restrictive gender norms and roles are common in Yemen, the measures currently being applied are a setback to the progress that had been made and compound the setbacks in women's participation and gender equality that had resulted from the social disruption caused by the war.

The requirement disregards the important roles that women had played before and during the war in peace-building, humanitarian assistance, capacity-building, and advocating women's rights. As a result, there are either no longer or very few women participants in peace negotiations despite their past experience (Oxfam 08/03/2023; SCSS 25/01/2023). Building on these setbacks, the Mahram restriction stifles women and girls agency and disregards the important roles they play in the community. It overturns the positive trend of increased female presence in the Yemeni labour force witnessed since the start of the war and heavily affects access and the delivery of aid and services, particularly to girls and women (SCSS 15/12/2019; KII 04/10/2022; Oxfam 08/03/202).

With the increasing economic challenges that households are facing throughout the war, many women have begun income-generating activities, including working outside the home. The increased enforcement of the Mahram requirement makes this more difficult and may see women forced out of the workforce, increasing households' challenges in meeting their needs (SCSS 15/12/2019).

The Mahram requirement also limits the movement of women aid workers in Yemen, creating an information gap and limiting the ability of humanitarian responders to meet the needs of

women and girls. The reduced presence of female aid workers results in greatly reduced access to services for women and girls and less understanding of their situation, capacities, and humanitarian needs (AI 01/09/2022; The New Arab 23/03/2023). While it is difficult to prove that humanitarian access to women and girls deteriorated throughout 2022, the increased emphasis on the enforcement of the Mahram requirement indicates that it likely did – and that it will continue to do so if the rule is increasingly enforced.

Increased social control of children in DFA-controlled areas through exposure to only Houthi ideology in school and summer camps

Changes to the school curriculum in DFA areas began earlier in the war but appeared to have accelerated under the truce. By the start of the new school year in July 2022, multiple changes had been initiated, including the following:

- Changes were made to the history, geography, and Arabic and Islamic studies curricula (YPC 01/2023). The changes adopt a narrative of Islamic history focused on teaching Shia ideas and beliefs, such as the universal validity of the Imamate and the supremacy of the Hashemite bloodline, without references to the views of other branches of Islam (IMPACT-se 05/03/2021; SCSS 05/11/2021; ACLED 23/09/2021). These changes go far beyond the kinds of small updates expected in education systems and include significant changes to the content learners are exposed to. They ensure that children in DFA areas are exposed to a version of history and religion that reinforces Houthi beliefs and ideology and make the education system in DFA areas considerably different than in IRG areas.
- A list of scheduled activities, assembly topics, and celebrations based on Shia Islam was applied in all schools across DFA areas (KII 22/09/2022; KII 11/10/2022; openDemocracy 01/02/2022). Festivals and celebrations that were particular to one local area or group of people and celebrated or marked in schools in that area were eliminated for a blanket approach that included only those considered important by Houthi leaders.
- A dress code requiring girls from age nine to wear the hijab was introduced in all schools (both private and public) (KII 22/09/2022; KII 11/10/2022).

The seriousness with which the DFA are imposing these changes in schools is evidenced by the creation of a team from the Ministry of Education that makes regular visits to ensure that schools are complying with the regulations. Uncompliant schools are fined with non-payment, resulting in the threat of closure (KII 22/09/2022; KII 11/10/2022).

2022 also saw increased emphasis on the implementation of annual summer courses (a longstanding tradition in Yemen known as summer camps), which appeared to be used to reinforce the messages included in the school curriculum. Children learnt about Houthi ideology and beliefs and the value of enrolling in the war effort in these camps. In April 2022,



the DFA signed an action plan with the UN to end and prevent the recruitment, killing, and maiming of children in armed conflict (UN 18/04/2022). On 9 May, just less than a month later, DFA leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi in a speech encouraged the enrolment of children in the summer camps, calling the programme for the year 'Education and Jihad' (SCSS 16/05/2022). Anecdotal observations shared with ACAPS and discussions with experts working in Yemen suggest that compared to previous years, 2022 saw an increase in the number of camps, the level of children's involvement, and the emphasis put on encouraging and influencing children to participate in the camps. This included children themselves encouraging and pressuring other children to join.

Leaked images and videos of the summer camps shared on social media and observations shared with ACAPS also indicate that these expose children, including those in primary school, to Houthi ideology and train them in elements linked to becoming soldiers. The exposure of children to ideological concepts and their recruitment into armed groups are grave violations of children's rights and international humanitarian law (Schauer and Elbert 03/2010; UN accessed 20/04/2023).

CIVILIAN CASUALTY NUMBERS REMAINED LARGELY UNCHANGED IN 2022 COMPARED TO 2021, BUT THE NATURE OF CASUALTIES CHANGED

The truce that started in April 2022 and ended in October 2022 limited frontline violence for much of the year. That said, the overall number of civilian casualties largely remained unchanged compared to 2021. The distribution of casualties throughout the year is important; during the first three months of the year, the number of casualties averaged 365 compared to 156 in the months after the truce commenced (Protection Cluster 26/03/2023). The main reasons include:

- the high level of violence in early 2022 prior to the truce, including an air strike resulting in mass casualties in a prison in Sa'dah governorate, where 327 people died or received injuries
- an increase in landmine and UXO incidents mainly because of the increased movements of civilians after the enforcement of the truce.

Type of armed violence	Number of civilian casualties	
	Total number of civilian casualties per incident of armed violence in 2021	Total number of civilian casualties per incident of armed violence in 2022
Explosive ordnance (UXO, improvised explosive devices, land-mines)	418	718
Shelling	850	513
Air strikes	185	467
Small arms fire (including security incidents involving light weapons)	420	369
Small arms and light weapons	408	168
Others (hand grenades, sniper attacks, drone strikes, and weapons cash explosions)	227	261
Total	2,508	2,496

Source: Protection Cluster (26/03/2023)

Cumulatively, explosive ordnance resulted in 718 civilian casualties – the highest civilian casualty numbers in Yemen among all types of armed violence in 2022. Almost half of the casualties were reported in Al Hodeidah, which has seen heightened casualties since the frontlines shifted south in November 2021. Al Bayda, Al Jawf, Ma'rib, and Sa'dah also saw a 56% increase in casualty rates from landmines and UXO compared to 2021 (Protection Cluster accessed 28/04/2023). Casualties from explosive remnants of war (ERW) appear to be the result of people feeling safer to move around in neighbourhoods, towns, and agricultural areas because of the absence of active fighting resulting from the truce, inadvertently leading them to contaminated areas. This is particularly the case for children, who accounted for approximately half of UXO casualties and one-third of landmine casualties in 2022 (Protection Cluster 26/03/2023). The link between the increased mobility of the population and the risks associated with UXO and how this in turn can link to other social impact themes is illustrated in diagram 3 below.

Social impact of explosive remnants of war

The impact of ERW on Yemenis goes beyond the direct risk of injury or death and is felt both socially and economically, often with these being intertwined.

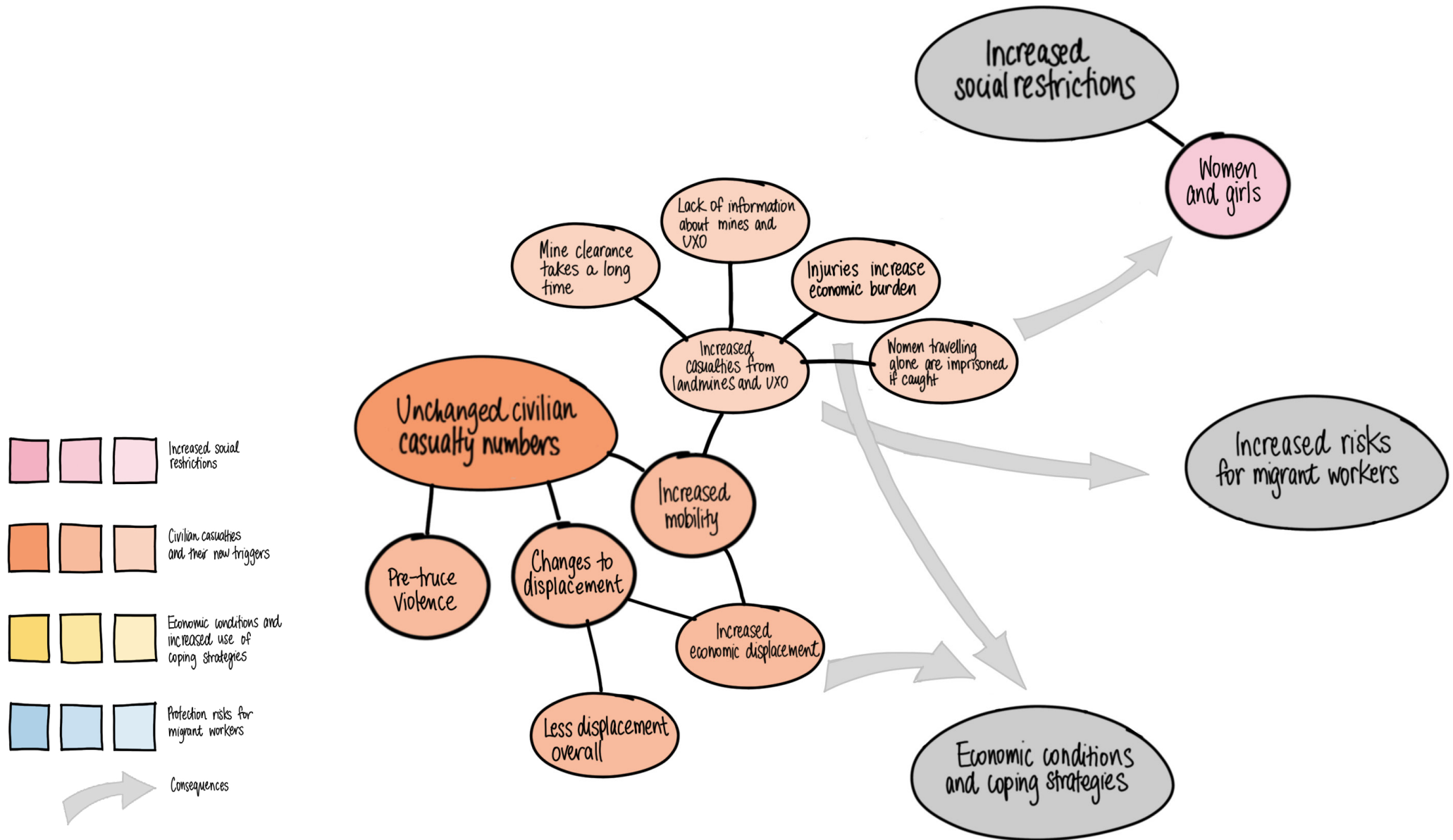
People in rural areas face greater challenges because of the impact of explosive ordnance on their lives. This includes the impact on their farming and cultivation activities because of the known or potential presence of UXO or landmines in agricultural land, on people's access to markets for selling and purchasing goods, and on maintaining social connections to visit relatives in areas where unpaved roads or pathways could be contaminated. The need to take alternate, known safe routes typically results in higher transport costs, and people also face the risk of injuries or deaths taking place far from adequate health facilities (Project Masam 03/04/2022; OCHA 20/12/2022).

People injured by landmines often become heavily dependent on family members, which can result in social isolation for the individual and the household (MSF 09/01/2019).

In some areas, people do not have information about areas of contamination, only learning about the presence of mines and other ERW by observing the pattern of injuries and deaths in the area.

Mine clearance is typically a lengthy and costly process, resulting in a long wait until land is suitable for farming again. Farmers affected by landmine contamination in Abyan, Ma'rib, and other governorates reported having been unable to continue working on their lands since 2015. The depreciation of the value of abandoned farmlands is another issue (MC/ACAPS 20/07/2022; FGD 30/06/2022).

DIAGRAM 3. UNCHANGED CIVILIAN CASUALTY NUMBERS DESPITE THE TRUCE



Source: ACAPS

CHALLENGING ECONOMIC CONDITIONS CONTINUE TO INCREASE THE USE OF POTENTIALLY DETRIMENTAL COPING STRATEGIES

The Yemeni rial remained relatively stable in 2022, ranging between YER 880–1,260 per USD 1 in IRG-controlled areas and between YER 560–607 per USD 1 in DFA-controlled areas (ACAPS accessed 20/04/2023). The truce helped prevent prices from increasing and the Yemeni rial from depreciating further. As part of the truce, an agreement was also reached allowing fuel to pass through Al Hodeidah port. The United Arab Emirates and the KSA also pledged a USD 3 billion aid package to help stabilise the Yemeni economy (UNSC 14/04/2022).

Reduced purchasing power and access to basic services

Despite these economic developments in 2022, many of the underlying causes of deteriorating living conditions for Yemeni households remained, and several factors continued to erode people's purchasing power, including:

- economic warfare between the IRG and DFA exemplified by the use of separate currencies under the different areas of control (SCSS 21/01/2020; ODI 14/12/2021)
- a lack of adjustments in public institution salary payments since October 2018 preventing salaries from keeping up with inflation, together with the frequently delayed or missed payment of salaries (MEI 23/02/2023)
- local market factors, such as increased taxes and price hikes in official and unofficial markets in response to shortages of key commodities (such as fuel and cooking gas) (WFP 12/09/2022)
- global factors, such as price increases and international transport increases, which are passed on to consumers in the local economy (FEWS NET 22/02/2023)
- the increased cost of the monthly minimum food basket (MFB), including oil, sugar, rice, wheat, and salt, by nearly five times in IRG areas, from an average of YER 1,000 per MFB in 2014 to YER 5,840 per MFB in 2022 (ACAPS accessed 28/04/2023).

In an ACAPS study, Yemeni households identified economic changes as the main factor causing their challenging living conditions and difficulties in meeting needs and accessing basic services. The households reported changes in their food consumption, with most only rarely consuming foods such as protein sources like meat, chicken, and fish, many types of fruits and vegetables, dairy products, and eggs (ACAPS unpublished).

Healthcare costs are another key factor preventing people from accessing services and contributing to increasing levels of household debt. Some households reported knowing or suspecting serious health needs within their family – such as the need for surgery, tests for potentially serious health conditions (such as the recurrence of cancer), and medication

– but not being able to afford treatment. The cost of medication to treat chronic conditions, such as asthma, diabetes, anaemia, and high blood pressure, is also prohibitive for many (OCHA 20/12/2022).

High transportation costs limit mobility in general. They create another barrier to accessing healthcare, contribute to children and university students dropping out of school, and prevent households from relocating even if they feel unsafe where they are living. Despite the increased availability of fuel in DFA areas following the approval of the passage of fuel vessels through Al Hodeidah as one of the terms of the truce, fuel costs remained high throughout 2022 because of global fuel prices.

Changing economic coping strategies, including an increase in potentially harmful strategies

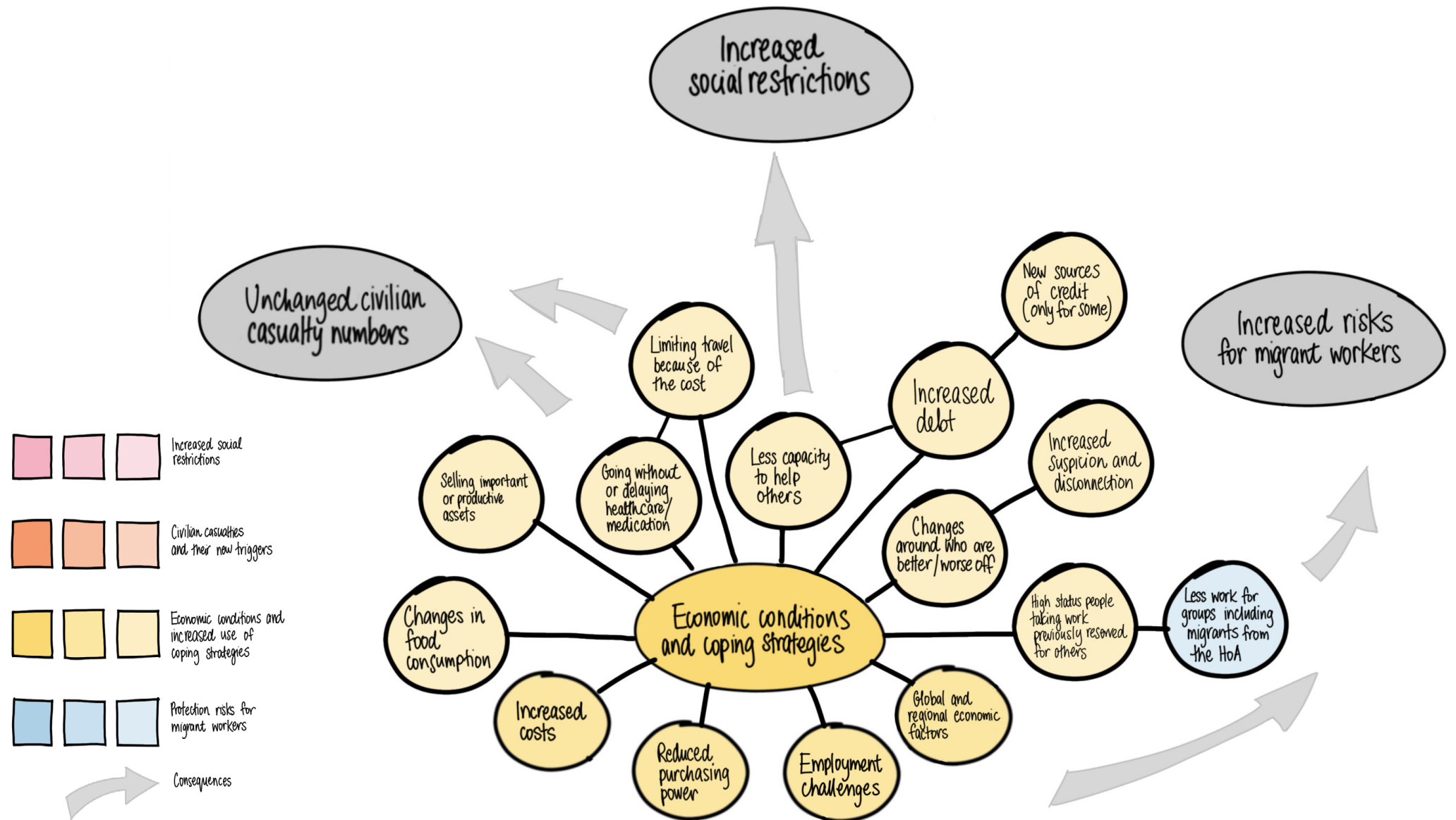
Social capital is key to how society functions in Yemen, bringing with it connectivity and trust. Debt and credit networks are common among Yemeni households, who build social capital by lending, borrowing, and repaying loans in the form of cash or in-kind commodities. The sharing and giving of resources and the support and interactions found in shared celebrations are also key elements to it (ACAPS 22/05/2022). People usually borrow from their neighbours, relatives, and extended families and have a line of credit with local supermarkets in the neighbourhood. Conversations with households in 2022 revealed that changes in the circumstances had led people to start borrowing more from a broader range of shops and vendors who did not previously offer credit, such as pharmacists, ice vendors, and fishmongers, and less from neighbours and extended family (Oxfam 17/02/2021; KII 15/02/2023).

As businesses, instead of individuals, become the key sources of credit, it remains to be seen what the repercussions of being unable to repay loans and the longer-term impacts of this change on social structures, social capital, and connectivity may be.

Another negative coping strategy is the selling of important or productive assets, which people resort to in order to pay off accumulated debt or cover the costs of critical healthcare. Households acknowledged the seriousness with which they deliberated over the sale of assets in recognition of the fact that once an asset was gone, it would require a significant change in circumstance to be able to replace it. An unpublished ACAPS study indicates that more households are practicing this strategy more often (Oxfam 17/02/2021; WB 01/2019; ACAPS 22/05/2022; ACAPS unpublished).

Traditionally before the war, Yemeni society looked down upon some of the occupations typically carried out by low-status people, but economic challenges have increased the number of people taking on these types of occupations. This has had a positive impact on higher-status groups by providing them an additional source of income, but it has affected lower-status groups by reducing the available coping strategies for them (ACAPS 22/05/2022).

DIAGRAM 4. IMPLICATIONS OF CHALLENGING COPING STRATEGIES THAT LEAD TO SOCIAL IMPACTS



Source: ACAPS



INCREASED NUMBERS OF MIGRANT WORKERS RETURNING TO YEMEN FROM THE KSA AND FACING PROTECTION RISKS

In 2022, there was a significant increase in Yemeni migrant workers returning to Yemen from the KSA, with over 65,700 migrant workers returning (IOM 08/03/2023). There was also an increase in the flow of migration from the HoA to Yemen, with the aim to enter the KSA, exposing migrant workers to the protection risks associated with dangerous migration routes (IOM 10/02/2023).

Economic conditions and changes in work regulations are forcing migrant workers out of the KSA and make finding work opportunities in the KSA harder (NLC 12/12/2019; ACAPS 15/10/2021). This not only involves Yemenis but also non-Yemenis, mostly from the HoA, returning to Yemen or sometimes not even making it beyond Yemen into the KSA at all. Migrant workers sometimes use dangerous routes through and into Sa'dah governorate, putting them at risk of detention, harassment, kidnapping for ransom, and other protection risks. When expelled or forcibly returned, Yemeni and non-Yemeni migrant workers are deposited into a deserted area about 10km from the Yemeni border without access to services (KII 08/02/2023; IOM 10/02/2023).

The risks that labour migrants are facing fall within the context discussed previously about challenging economic conditions for Yemeni households and increased mobility resulting from the decrease in active conflict, with both factors having implications on migrant workers inside Yemen as indicated in diagram 5.

High protection risks in Yemen for increased numbers of migrant workers from the Horn of Africa

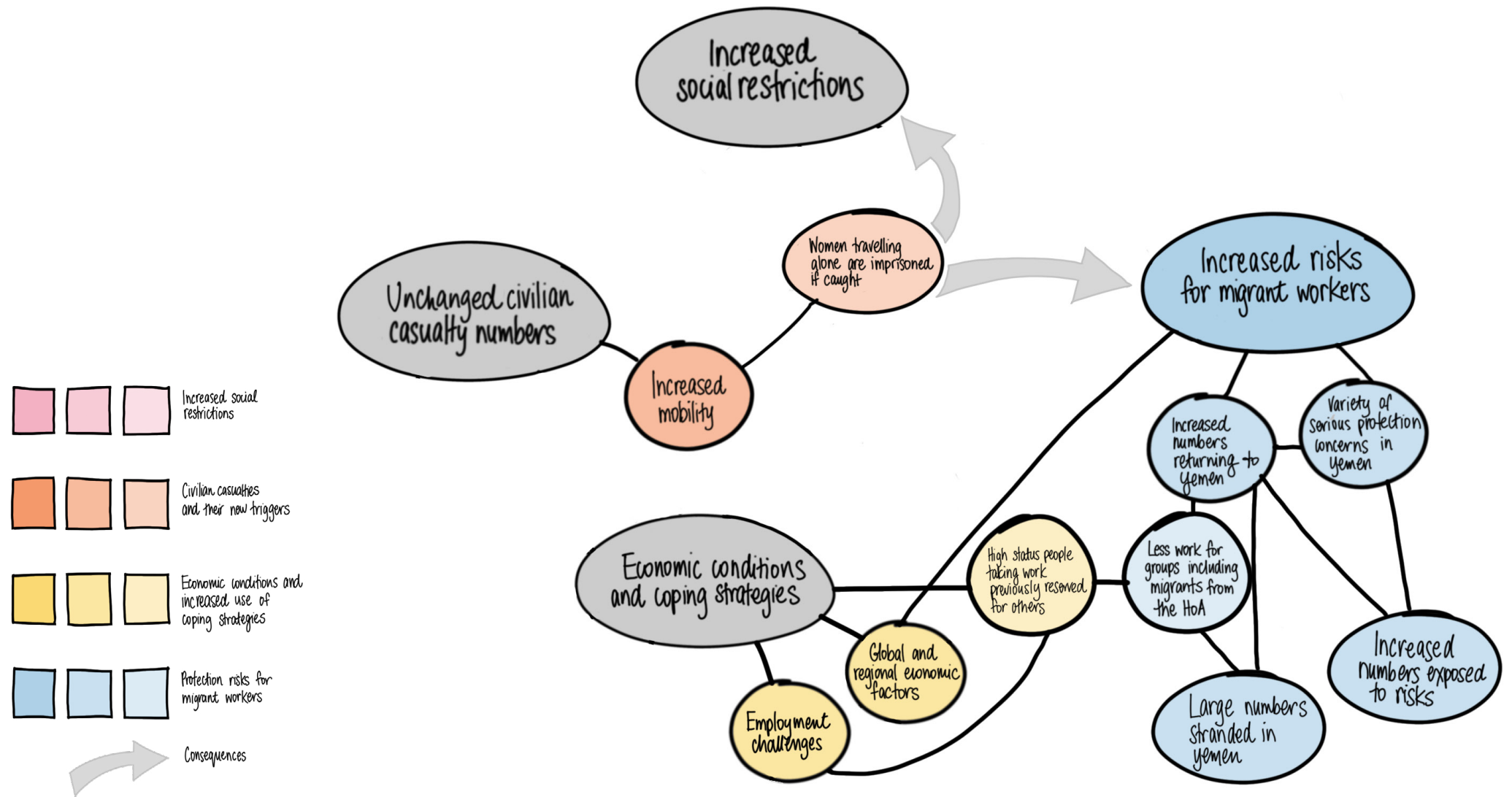
In 2022, the number of migrant workers arriving in Yemen (73,200 people) more than doubled compared to 2021 (28,500 people). These numbers are likely to be an underestimate, as many, such as smuggled migrants, are not registered. While migrants from the HoA hope to find work in Yemen or to pass through on the way to the KSA, in reality, they often end up facing protection threats, such as detention and forced relocation, and having limited access to humanitarian assistance. It is estimated that nearly 43,000 migrant workers are stranded throughout the country (IOM 10/02/2023).

Reports indicate that once in Yemen, migrant workers are forcibly transported between smugglers' camps across Yemen in remote areas of Al Bayda, Al Maharah, Ma'rib, and Shabwah governorates. Some of these camps hold up to 1,500 migrant workers. They are not allowed to move, have no access to services, and are subjected to forced labour in khat plantations and in ports with no pay (IOM 15/03/2023).

Smugglers and traffickers control primary migration routes, where there is limited, if any, humanitarian presence. Reports indicate that migrants are exposed to the risks of detention, extortion, forced or unpaid labour, and rape, among other forms of abuse (HRW 07/12/2022). Anecdotal information indicates that a network of smugglers operates across the country. The network has connections within different spheres of influence, including military officials, local sheikhs, and members of local authorities. Despite advocacy campaigns to raise awareness of the protection concerns migrants are facing, the issue gets very limited attention, and there are ongoing challenges in obtaining official approval for programmes that specifically address the issue (ISS 11/12/2017; KII 08/02/2023).

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DIAGRAM 5. INCREASED RISKS AND REDUCED OPPORTUNITIES FOR MIGRANT WORKERS



Source: ACAPS