

## Promoting Youth Civic Engagement Quarterly Report, January to March 2013

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*Cover photo: Azal School students in Aden celebrate their newly-painted and cleaned classrooms by Peer Network members.*

## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

America-Mideast Educational and Training Services	AMIDEAST
Community Engagement Workshop	CE Workshop
Community Grant	CG
Focus Group Discussion	FGD
Gulf Cooperation Council	GCC
Intermediate Result	IR
Internally Displaced Persons	IDPs
Middle East and North Africa	MENA
Ministry of Education	MoE
Ministry of Endowments and Guidance	MoEG
Ministry of Youth and Sports	MoYS
Monitoring and Evaluation	M&E
National Organization for the Development of Society	NODS
Participatory Analysis for Community Action	PACA
Peace Players International	PPI
Peer Network	PN
Performance Management Plan	PMP
Promoting Youth Civic Engagement	PYCE
Steering Committee	SC
Training of Trainers	TOT
United States Agency for International Development	USAID

## Promoting Youth Civic Engagement

The PYCE project is designed to support USAID's objective of increasing Yemen's stability through targeted interventions in vulnerable areas by (1) improving community-based institutions and mechanisms to ensure active participation in governance and locally driven solutions strengthened; and (2) improving access to and the delivery of quality services.

To support this USAID objective, the PYCE project objectives have sought: to strengthen the role of moderate religious actors in positively influencing Yemeni youth, and to establish and support youth sports and recreational programs. In response to changes in Yemen's political and socio-economic context, which has been influenced recently by the Arab Spring that led to the Yemeni Revolution, a new Transitional Government, and an ongoing process of national reconciliation and priority-setting known as the National Dialogue, the language of these objectives has been enhanced. These objectives have been expanded to foster a more diverse set of program components that can accomplish the overarching objectives of USAID in a new Yemen. The proposed, enhanced objectives are: 1) Strengthen and increase interaction between youth and influential community actors, including moderate religious actors; and 2) Empower youth to positively affect their local communities through sports, recreational programs, and other community-based engagement activities.

AMIDEAST and its proposed partners Peace Players International (PPI) and the National Organization for the Development of Society (NODS), in cooperation with the Ministries of Youth and Sports (MoYS), Endowments and Guidance (MoEG) and Education (MoE), will adopt a technical approach that will support strengthening youth participation in their communities and in the process of governance. Civic engagement is the collection of actions of individuals to improve quality of life in their communities. The foundations of civic engagement are volunteerism and a sense of responsibility towards one's community, and these are the values that PYCE seeks to enhance in Yemeni youth. It is only when these concepts are embraced and practiced can youth advance to become active citizens.

The PYCE strategy continuously incorporates the following elements.

- 1) Reaching out to youth through community and moderate religious actors who volunteer on steering committees
- 2) Preparing youth for their role as volunteers and in community assessment to identify the resources for locally driven solutions
- 3) Organizing youth under the guidance of the steering committees into peer networks
- 4) Providing training of facilitators to moderate-risk youth leaders to reach out to peers and to at-risk groups
- 5) Supporting community grants by peer network youth working with local officials as recommended by the steering committees
- 6) Ensuring availability of resources and services at youth center that serve as the spaces from which youth can operate
- 7) Securing proper facilities and renovations with community support as required to sustain youth activities
- 8) Preparing youth coaches to engage with their communities and increase volunteerism
- 9) Sports promoting community service

- 10) Raising awareness of community contributions, to promote stabilization-to-sustainability transition, through various media channels and with stakeholders.

### Preparing for the Peer Network



To prepare youth to influence and broaden the process of civic engagement, PYCE developed the pre-service platform. This platform, also known as the Community Engagement (CE) Workshop, is a 20-hour youth-centric learning opportunity that occurs over a five-day period. The objectives of this project workshop are to introduce PYCE to aspiring Peer Network members, as well as other community actors, and provide instruction and hands-on activities that will foster the development of skills in program planning and implementation, presentation, community research, civic engagement and photography as a tool to re-imagine their neighborhoods.

Figure 2: PACA graduates paint cleanliness pictures at Al Aldia Kindergarten

In addition to the CE Workshop, participants who aspire to join the Peer Network perform Participatory Analysis for Community Action (PACA) in their communities to assess youth needs and interests. This needs assessment serves as the basis of project concepts that Peer Network applicants submit to PYCE. Four concepts are selected for development, and Peer Network applicants are placed in cohorts in accordance with their common interests and neighborhood. These cohorts plan four micro-graduation projects, based upon the project concept and upon approval from the appropriate local officials. PACA teamwork projects provide youth with an experiential opportunity to practice connecting needs to action, while working in teams and using project-planning skills acquired in the project workshop. This pre-service platform thereby shapes youth to cultivate the skills they will need for longer-term service to their communities. Once the CE workshop and PACA are completed, youth can apply for membership into the Peer Network.

PN applicants and their volunteers have implemented graduation and micro-projects in Aden, Sana'a, Lahej and Marib through April 2013. The final selection of Peer Network members will be made by May 15, 2013.

While PYCE targeted 50 PACA activities, it has exceeded that number by completing 90 PACAs, 40 in this quarter alone.

As Peer Network members, youth can apply skills acquired through the CE Workshop and PACA to further demonstrate their commitment to civic engagement, through the following primary methods:

- 1) Role Models in K-12 schools
- 2) Community Grants
- 3) Sports and Activity Coordination
- 4) Maintenance and Sustainable Development of Youth Centers
- 5) Peer Facilitators
- 6) Peer Network Activity Councils
- 7) Summer Connections

While these methods relate to activities performed by the Peer Network, they also represent the active involvement of many community actors, including moderate religious actors. PYCE galvanized 60 community and religious actors in governorate level meetings this quarter. With the advent of new activities in May, PYCE expects this number to rapidly increase and ultimately, reach the project target of 250 by December 2013.

## **PEER NETWORK**

The centerpiece of the PYCE project is the Peer Network. The PYCE Peer Network (PN) is a group of youth from PYCE governorates who organize activities to involve other local youth in healthy volunteer, sports, recreational, or cultural activities. PN members are recruited based in part, upon their willingness to work in diverse teams and enhance the positive aspects of their communities. PN members are usually between 18 and 32 years old and serve as role models to area youth and catalysts in community development. They are dedicated to: re-imagining their neighborhoods, developing visions of communities which are connected and vibrant, and combining PYCE supportive mechanisms to cultivate more transparent, efficient and sustainable programs and services.

PN members serve their communities through training, coaching and facilitating discussions with other peers in PYCE-supported programs and planning social and cultural activities with Steering Committee members, who represent a wide-range of community actors including moderate religious actors. They also serve through planning and implementing PYCE-supported community grants and participating in the Peer Network Activities Council (PNAC), which both support and are mentored by youth center administrators and other Steering Committee members. The majority of these activities take place at PYCE-supported youth centers, which include clubs, schools, parks, universities, and their affiliated spaces, in Sana'a, Aden, Marib and Lahej.

In addition to workshops and a wide range of activities, these youth centers serve as vital space where PN members can develop the action plans needed for the implementation of new projects. The project target of 27 meetings at youth centers is expected to be achieved by December 2013. PN members held 9 meetings this quarter. PYCE expects this number to dramatically increase after PN members complete TOT training and new members are enrolled in May.

### **Peer Network members as Role Models for K-12 schools**

The impact of the PYCE Program is measured by the extent to which the Peer Network is active and effective. For the past two years, PYCE has developed and trained an extensive network of PN members. Despite the fluid security environment, these PN members are identifying needs in their neighborhoods and galvanizing their peers to respond. They are fast becoming role models and service leaders, making the connections between sports and development and emphasizing education as a priority among at-risk youth.

Through cooperation with the MoE, PYCE and PN members have renovated and conducted several projects at K-12 schools. These projects have been implemented consecutively, allowing PN members to revisit the same schools multiple times and form strong connections with students and school staff. PN members have labored with their own hands, to transform schools in disrepair into centers of discovery. They also donated supplies and trained students, to sustain efforts and increase capacity. Their impact is evident, as youth take responsibility to clean and properly maintain schools.

Through informal conversations and teambuilding skills, they have encouraged at-risk students to remain in school and supported the inclusion of girls in sports and competition. Their dedication, inspires students, who may not feel connected to or oriented toward positive alternatives to delinquent behavior. As relations between PN members, students and school grow stronger, the impact of the PYCE program can be recognized.



Figure 3: Al Intalak Club in Lahj without doors.



Figure 4: Peer Network members prepare to open new doors .

## Community Grants

Community Grants are PYCE financial support of Peer Network members' proposals for community-based interventions.

Community grants are centered upon needs assessments and appraisals that inform and enhance PN members' understanding of the most useful ways to positively impact the community. Conducting needs assessments also promotes community buy-in, as community members view the Peer Network as responsive to their needs and solutions. Results from the assessment are discussed among PN member teams, who then construct a larger project proposal that aligns the need with one or more potential activities. The proposal is vetted by the Steering Committee and forwarded to PYCE for approval. PYCE generally provides financial support up to 3,500 USD to each PN team. Community Grants are implemented on a volunteer basis by PN members, under the guidance of the Steering Committee and with the approval of the appropriate youth center staff, local official or ministry. While the activities may vary, the grant process promotes community actors' awareness of and participation in youth activities and offers a platform for youth to enhance their skills in program planning and implementation-a valuable career development opportunity.

PN members implemented 5 community grants this quarter and more than 1,400 community members have directly benefited.

## Sports and Activity Coordinator Program

The Sports and Activity Coordinator Program is implemented with Peace Players International (PPI) a PYCE subpartner. The SAC Program is centered upon the sports-for-

development model, which utilizes physical activity, competition through sports and play, to achieve development goals.

PPI conducted workshops and clinics for PN members, aspiring activity coordinators and youth volunteers, in three- to four-day training sessions. The workshops offered indoor sessions to instruct students in methods of coaching, teaching, facilitation and the strategies for positive behavior change. Outdoor sessions were focused upon teamwork, organized play and developing successful teams. The purpose of the training is to prepare youth to plan and implement their own sports and recreational programs and utilize these programs to promote positive behaviors such as volunteerism in their communities and other forms of civic engagement.

Peer Network members were selected for the SAC Program in part based upon their commitment to community-service, willingness to utilize recreational activities to promote life skills, and capacity to role model positive behaviors to at-risk youth.

With PYCE training from the Community Engagement Workshop and Sports and Activity Coordinator Program, PN members are prepared to identify, plan and organize activities for small groups of individuals and teams. They are also poised to establish guidelines and reward systems where teams are recognized more for their service to the community than they are for winning competitions and individuals are regarded more for their capacity to work well with others than their physical ability on the field. PN members have organized 1 team in this quarter and expects to add new teams once new PN Members are selected in the summer.

Over one-hundred PN members have been trained in the SAC program, 78 in this quarter alone. PYCE has surpassed the project target of 50, by more than double.

### **Maintenance and Sustainable Development of Youth Centers**

The maintenance and cleaning of youth centers by youth, is an important component of PYCE activities and increases their sense of responsibility, a key program output. As youth assume more responsibility for the maintenance of centers, and also plan, implement and sustain activities at these centers, the positive impact PYCE is achieving in the community can be sustained over the long-term.

Through new and on-going PYCE renovations in at least 11 youth centers in Aden, Sana'a, Lahej and Marib, PYCE has fulfilled its target and increased the capacity of youth centers to deliver services to community members.

In an effort to provide positive alternatives to at-risk youth, solar panels have been installed at five youth centers in Aden. Additionally, solar panels have been installed in Marib and Sana'a, and Lahej is in process. Solar panels provide electricity for lights, which make it possible for youth centers to conduct recreational and sport activities in the evening and night. Evening activities are an important positive alternative, particularly in summer months when youth are not in school, yet frequent power outages have limited such opportunities. More than 2,800 youth have benefited from having solar power as an alternative supply of

energy through the increased availability of sports and recreation, and they are also volunteering their efforts to care for the systems that provide this benefit.

### **Peer Network Facilitators**

The Training-of-Trainers (TOT) Program is implemented with the National Organization for the Development of Society (NODS), a PYCE subpartner. The PYCE TOT is an approximately 12-day training course designed to prepare youth to serve as facilitators for peer education and other activities. The training materials are reviewed by the MoEG and will be made available to the ministry for its institutes of guidance.

The TOT serves to advance skills in facilitation, participatory and reflective training, community needs assessment, competency-based techniques and the evaluation of participant learning. PN members are expected to utilize the TOT Program to activate other youth by identifying topics informed by their own community appraisals or assessments that are relevant to the needs of their peers, and organizing a workshop to serve as a platform where youth discuss and/or address these topics.

It is important to note that PYCE does not require TOT graduates to use PYCE materials. Rather, trainers are empowered to pursue topics that they can further develop into two-hour training workshops. Through the process of planning course materials and activities, trainees are encouraged to practice learner-centered techniques, prepare a report with detailed self-assessments and reflect upon their capacity to promote positive behaviors, including civic engagement among youth.

TOT candidates are selected in part based upon their previous involvement in PYCE and membership in the Peer Network. TOT candidates are interviewed with a standardized guide to establish their aptitude to identify creative programs and activities, suggest resources that could facilitate implementation, and link his or her program ideas to needs in the community.

PYCE is reaching its project target of 48 PN members trained in peer facilitation. Thirteen PN members have been trained this quarter. Moreover, more than 40 PN members are scheduled to complete the TOT program by the end of May 2013. Upon completion, PN facilitators will inform the wider community of their upcoming activities via technology such as social media and everyday interactions with peers. Twenty communications have been fulfilled in total, 8 in this quarter alone.

To be trainers for PYCE, candidates must be recommended by NODS staff upon completion of the TOT Program and evaluated in an interview conducted by Steering Committee members and/or subcommittee members. Once facilitators are selected in May 2013, PYCE expects communications to rapidly increase and reach its target of 90 by December 2013.

The PYCE TOT Program cultivates activities organized by and for youth, depends upon youth awareness of their communities, and enhances the skills of both trainers and youth participants - key outputs. In addition, TOT graduates facilitate workshops in cooperation with PYCE-supported youth centers and other relevant youth centers, which in turn increases the resources available to youth in their communities.

All workshops are provided to youth without charge and are often scheduled before or after school to discourage delinquency and offer an opportunity to become positively engaged. As a result, youth have a vehicle with which they can become involved in the processes that serve to strengthen access to and delivery of services—a key USAID objective.

### **Peer Network Activity Council**

A Peer Network Activity Council (PNAC) is a team of up to 4 Peer Network members who are chosen by the PN membership to have oversight of the programs and activities implemented at youth centers.

PNAC members work collaboratively to identify the activities that can be most useful to youth, particularly at-risk youth, and fulfill the necessary logistical, planning and administrative duties in order to conduct these activities at PYCE-supported youth centers. These include but are not limited to: submitting proposals to and working alongside Steering Committee members, reserving rooms with youth center administration and conducting outreach to promote activities through various communication channels. At the end of each activity, PNAC members submit materials that can include participant attendance lists, videos and pictures, success stories, program descriptions and observations. While the impact of each activity will vary, the PNAC serves to increase the resources available at youth centers, which guarantees youth have positive alternatives to negative behaviors and otherwise rare opportunities for self-development.

### **Summer Connections (Summer 2013)**

The Summer Connections Program affords at-risk youth the opportunity to participate in educational games, sports and competitions that take place in the summer while students are out of school. The Summer Connections Program will be implemented in 2013 at PYCE-supported youth centers.

Participants will be invited to select from a variety of activities that will be organized and facilitated by Peer Network members who have received training from NODS and/or PPI. Peer Network facilitators will promote life skills, address educational challenges and mentor youth.

PN members are aware that youth are especially vulnerable in the summer, where there are few opportunities to self-develop, pursue or continue one's education. Students, particularly low-income and public school students, do not have access to summer enrichment programs. They can neither enroll in tutoring programs in order to reach grade level nor participate in educational activities that can counter the learning declines that often accompany summer vacation. Moreover, many youth cannot afford the costs associated with education.

Summer Connections will be under the supervision of our partners and relevant stakeholders to include the PYCE Steering Committee and the governorate offices of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Endowments and Guidance and Education.

The Peer Network will plan and implement a series of educational games and competitions to strengthen greater connections between student and school. With PYCE financial and material support, they will distribute school bags and learning tools. These activities and learning tools communicate education as an important, year-round life skill and are aimed at motivating students toward academic progress when school begins. Through basketball, football and other sports, youth will have access to the equipment and structure of organized play that limited resources often inhibit. They will also form new relationships and receive recognition for working well with others rather than for performance based upon physical attributes alone.

### Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is an integral part of the PYCE project, as each Steering Committee helps guide PN members and their activities. A Steering Committee (SC) is a team of between 10 to 20 community actors, including but not limited to moderate religious actors, sports enthusiasts, educators, governorate or ministry officials, and other active community members who meet regularly for the purpose of providing guidance and resources to the PYCE project and its Peer Network. They are contacted because they serve as current administrators at MoYS clubs or MoE schools in PYCE-supported districts or have been recommended as involved community actors in PYCE districts by other SC members, ministerial stakeholders, PYCE staff, PN members, or USAID. SC members are selected in part, because of their interest in the PYCE project, positive attitude, willingness and availability to attend SC meetings monthly, willingness to volunteer time to counsel youth and attend youth activities and openness to working with a diverse team of other community actors.

Their service centers upon the following.

- 1) *Interviewing* applicants for PN membership
- 2) *Interviewing* PN members for the Training-of-Trainers and Peer Facilitators Program
- 3) *Advising* PN youth on activities and Summer Connections
- 4) *Evaluating* community grant applications
- 5) *Mentoring* PNAC members
- 6) *Conducting* observations and site visits of PYCE-supported activities
- 7) *Promoting* PYCE activities with stakeholders and their community networks to facilitate community buy-in.



**Figure 5: Peer Network member and Steering Committee member planning activities for Al Intalak Club in Lahj, which appears between them, as a drawing in the sand**

### **Leadership and Development**

The Steering Committee is an opportunity to bridge gaps and make connections. SC members have exceeded the PYCE target of 25 meetings in selected governorates, with 9 this quarter and nearly 40 in total. Yet it is through informal meetings and conversations with individuals, that the PN is guided and developed into leaders.

The PN is committed to implementing at least 2 activities per month, thereby increasing the capacity of youth centers and increasing access to free recreation and self-development. Many of these activities will involve training youth participants and describing ways they can link their knowledge, skills and aspirations to potential careers. Almost 400 participants have been trained in total, 23 in this quarter. A rapid increase in this number is expected, once PN facilitators complete their training and under the tutelage of the SC, begin to develop leaders from their communities. This cycle of leadership development promotes sustainability and positions PYCE as well-suited to achieve its target for participants trained by PN members of 1,350 by December 2013.