

The background of the entire page is a light blue color with a faint, white line-art map of Marib, Yemen. The map shows a complex network of streets and building footprints, with a central area that is more densely packed. The lines are thin and delicate, creating a subtle texture behind the text.

Marib Urban Profile

*«a precarious model
of peaceful co-existence
under threat»*

March 2021

UN  **HABITAT**
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This document presents the Marib Urban Profile. It has been prepared by UN-Habitat. Data collection and data analysis has been conducted in end 2019-2020. Some of the data related to population figures may be slightly outdated at time of publication.

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FUNDING

This project was generously funded by the UN Development Account (11th tranche). The project would not have been possible without the in-kind support from the UN-Habitat Yemen Office.

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Urban Profiling

UN-Habitat seeks to provide up to date, holistic documentation and analysis of the impact of the crisis in key cities, through City Profiles, synthesising information and insight from existing sources and priority sectors, supplemented by direct field research by UN-Habitat teams based in each city. This profile is part of a regional urban profiling exercise that aims to develop urban profiles for the cities of Basra, Sinjar, Derna (Libya), Marib (Yemen) and Dara'a (Syria). UN-Habitat's experience in urban analysis, community approaches and crisis contexts have informed the development of the City Profiling process. All City Profiles are developed in close association with the concerned governorates and municipalities.

The structure of the City Profile provides a pre-crisis baseline and data from the current situation to understand the impact of the crisis accompanied by narrative description and analysis. Furthermore, City Profiles review the functionality of the city economy and services, understanding of capacities and coping mechanisms and the identification of humanitarian or development priorities. They do not provide comprehensive data on individual topics, but seek to provide a balanced overview. The City Profile affords an opportunity for a range of stakeholders to represent their diagnosis of the situation in their city, provides a basis for local discussions on actions to be taken and helps to make local information and voices accessible to external stakeholders seeking to assist in development responses.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GPC	General People's Congress
HDI	Human Development Index
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IOM	International Office of Migration
IRG	Internationally Recognized Government (of Yemen)
NDC	National Dialogue Conference
NLF	National Liberation Front
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PDRY	People's Democratic Republic of Yemen STC Southern Transitional Council
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
STC	Southern Transitional Council
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Program
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
YAR	Yemen Arab Republic
YSP	Yemen Socialist Party

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since Marib was first settled over three thousand years ago, it has seen its fortunes rise and fall with the cycles of history. Now, Marib City, the site of the Arab world's oldest kingdom has transformed into one of the fastest growing modern cities in the Arab region. In the past five years, Marib City's wartime growth in revenue and its 12-fold increase in population¹ has catapulted the city from the periphery to the very core of Yemen's political, economic and security dynamics. Marib has become a central hosting destination for communities primarily displaced by Yemen's civil war.

Much of the city's sudden growth has been credited to the strong stewardship of the governorate. Its success in preserving Marib as a safe haven for internally displaced persons (IDP)s and in negotiating natural resource revenue-sharing contracts with the central government² and neighboring countries that elevated Marib's status to the level of a quasi-microstate. This profile seeks to capture what this growth looks like from the ground; to look behind the statistics in order to better understand how it has been able to simultaneously rise above the devastation of Yemen's conflict while also being a product of it. The profile research process has been designed to identify the core factors and patterns for the city and the surrounding environs, to develop a clearer picture of how Marib's distinctive character and culture has turned it into a promising case study of how to address urban growth and

gas has enabled the governorate to resume paying public salaries when very few local governorates were able to do so.³ The revenue stream negotiated by the governor has enabled a basic level of public service provision for judges, which has ensured a degree of 'law' alongside the 'order' provided by the governorate's security forces.⁴ Marib Central Bank now operates independently from that in Aden, which has come with some challenges that are now being addressed.⁵ Marib's renegotiated oil revenue, along with investment support from Saudi Arabia⁶, and a growing tax base from many new businesses which have decided to relocate to Marib has given the municipality a rare liquidity and ability to pay public salaries in the context of Yemen's war. This virtuous cycle has enabled modest public sector growth and critical provision of basic services. With its central location Marib has become a hub once again of trade routes and is in a position to be proactive in investing in local electricity, water, and transportation infrastructure, local security, and established its first university. On the surface, the list of strategic advantages that have propelled Marib into a privileged position are largely tied to its natural resources and public services management, but there are other structural, cultural advantages which are more subtle though equally important to factor into urban development.

A major component of Marib's success is not just its oil wealth but also the distributed, decentralized nature of

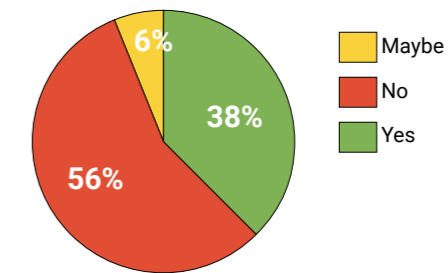


FIGURE 1. Marib Survey Measure of Public Interest in Participating in future Focal Group Discussions



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