“Blessed Yemen” is a term we always repeated and memorized by heart; but this was not the case for girl's education, which in fact could not have been worse. The reality of girl's education in many areas in Yemen, particularly rural areas, is painful, while percentages and statistics reflect alarming indicators. Changing the reality in a context governed by customs and traditions will not take place by taking a decision...and here comes the role of tribalism, while its power is taken into consideration...here, the features of a great accomplishments sufficed, while the password that decoded a simple equation manifested in “shame”.

Here...we don't talk about a law or a constitution, but instead we talk about the power of the tribe that has imposed itself on the scene; it is only normal that the treatment came in accordance with the diagnosis, hence, the coalition sought to visit rural areas, where dialogue and discussion took place with the aim of altering convictions that inspire cultures that prevented the success of compulsory and free education laws.

Yes, the cure was actually the defect, such that if girl's education was considered shameful in the tribal code, going back on a promise is perceived as a compound shame; thus, this compound shame became the passport for the achievement of goals pertaining to girl's education. The coalition determined the side it will approach to deal with this shameful reality by seeking a written consent, which is what took place...it is true that there are other needs, but choosing to face the most difficult of all was a guarantee to surpass all other obstacles that could not be avoided, including lack of awareness and limited number of schools.

This was accompanied by the action of the coalition to establish effective partnerships and expand the base of action; in this sense, the coalition communicated with the UNESCO, Ministry of Education and local councils to persuade them with the idea. Hawri village, 30 km away from Sana'a, was
the launching point, as is it among the more literate areas in Yemen. Communication commenced with the Member of Parliament of Hawri, which proved to be a success in persuading the local leaders to draft a memorandum. This was followed by intensified efforts, investment in drafting the memorandum, in preparation for the completion of the procedures for signing the memorandum, hoping to be able to spread the ideas to elsewhere; all this made this activity resemble the inauguration of the media campaigns for the coalition to advocate for girl's education.

Raising the awareness in rural areas, communicating with tribes and culminating this effort with a memorandum on girl's education, were the good moments on our path to consolidate the commitment of the government, parents and tribes' leaders; if tribes' leaders sign a memorandum that considers lack of education for girls is a shame, this would be an unprecedented move and a guarantee that tribes will not back down on their promise, as in the tribal customs tribe leaders lose their honor, among other tribes, if they go back on their promise.

In order to complete the memorandum, steps and efforts included awareness-raising workshops, communications and meetings, discussions and dialogues, mobilization of the media, pamphlets and token gifts; in short: there was more than one methodology and the conclusion was to achieve the memorandum; but the story does not end here, so what are the remaining details? Al-Hawri...and Hadman governorate, and a creative solution to a problem that is keeping the coalition and education stakeholders concerned; it is a solution that was inspired by the tribal culture of the tribe and the power of its leaders, not only to commit to girl's education, but also to punish anyone who attempts to prevent it. Naturally, the accomplishment did not come from empty space, and here we are talking about Mr. Issam Alafi, Secretary General of the coalition in Yemen, who said “The memorandum that was signed on criminalizing lack of education of girls is the fruit and result of continuous work to communicate our message practically and tangibly; again, the commitment of the coalition to improve the status of girl's education will remain as one of the future priorities.”

When we succeeded in making the memorandum make the customs and traditions -that prevented girl's education- a lobbying tool for the favor of empowering girl's education and interaction of other tribes with the memorandum, and when we were able to communicate with leaders of other tribes, including the leader of JarfIsbeel in Thamar governorate, who informed us that he heard about the memorandum and is willing to sign it, we realized that the shame in going back on your word succeeded in serving the efforts to combat the “shameful” education of girls; they signed without hesitation while we notified them of the need to expand he school of the village to accommodate the expected increase in the number of students seeking to enroll in
literacy centers; hence, we contacted the governor and local council and asked them to participate in the activity to become familiar with the problem of the village.

To achieve your goal, there is more than one way...our way was to be inspired by the culture of the community...and the fruit was the memorandum, our ambition is closer than ever to being realized to a truth. Al- Hawri and Isbeel villages were the proof that the impossible is possible, and that there is no consolation for those who use the pretext of citing the “impossible”. The UNESCO, members of legislative council, representatives of the government, Ministry of Education, international organizations including Save the Children and volunteers were all efficient with the coalition, while the journey of this partnership and the consolidation of these efforts is definitely another worthy read.

Please accept my apologies that we will not reach an end...as this story is only the beginning; the most beautiful component of this is that the end paves the way for the beginnings and announces the birth of a new reality, while the demands of organizations from rural areas in implementing the same activity indicates that we are on the correct path. Don't forget: impacting tribal convictions and lobbying the government to meet the demands are two methodologies that rose, while if backing down from a commitment was a challenge along the road, and then this is the guarantee for sustainability. This is the truth; leaders of tribes have signed the memorandum, while an Arabic proverb said “those who have the resources will find a way”.

Note: black shame is a term that means in Yemen to deceive someone, a group or a tribe. When the shame deepens you realize that this shame will not be broken until both parties seek a neutral “mediator”. When the deceit is under the umbrella of a mediator and one of the parties backs down, the term “black shame” is used. Black shame ranks highest and has significant consequences.