

A New Generation of Public Leaders in Yemen

Reigniting the Flame

Throughout the 2011 uprising and ensuing transitional period in Yemen, youth played a critical role in driving forward efforts to reform the country's systems of governance to be more accountable to and inclusive of Yemenis from all walks of life. However, despite Yemen's rapidly growing youth population, young leaders have been marginalized since the end of the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) and beginning of the ongoing conflict. The resulting social polarization has fragmented existing youth networks and closed off any remaining space for Yemen's diverse youth to share experiences and problem-solve across party lines.

To help empower Yemen's future peacemakers and public leaders and equip them with the skills to lead with integrity, DeepRoot is launching **A New Generation of Public Leaders in Yemen**. The 18-month project, starting in May 2020 and funded by the European Union, is aimed at strengthening the political capital of Yemeni youth leaders and their participation in decision-making processes. Based on DeepRoot's participatory and inclusive approach, a select group of young leaders from around the country will be actively engaged in the following complementary streams:

1– Bridging the Generational Gap

The local stream of the project will seek to facilitate the **generational transfer of knowledge** between Yemenis who emerged and established themselves over the past decade, and young men

and women who have demonstrated the potential to take on similar leadership roles in the near future at the local (governorate) level in two target governorates, a select but diverse group of former youth leaders will mentor distinguished 18 to 29-year-olds, who will collectively develop a peacebuilding initiative in their respective governorate. The project will provide logistical, technical, and financial support as the youth take the driver's seat and implement their initiatives.

2– The Hikma Fellowship

The rising generation of youth in Yemen have developed their political and social worldviews largely within the context of civil war and violent political movements. To escape this cycle of conflict, new leaders must embrace a culture of dialogue and be more amenable to compromise with their peers across the political spectrum for the sake of Yemen's long-term stability. In this light, for the national stream of the project DeepRoot is launching the **Hikma Fellowship for Public Leaders**, bringing together 15 emerging leaders from various political parties and movements, civil society groups, and independent youth, including those from regions often underrepresented in the national political arena.

These promising young men and women will undergo a carefully curated program of workshops, dialogue meetings, capacity-building modules, and participant-led activities that will sharpen their leadership skills and encourage collaboration, cultivating a diverse community of

young public leaders and helping to build a **common vision for Yemen's future**. In addition to tackling core national-level issues, the Fellows will complete advanced training modules on organising and building social movements, public leadership skills, and leading with integrity, delivered by internationally renowned institutions.

Another component of the Fellowship Program is constructive engagement with Yemeni and international stakeholders. Using innovative polling methods, thousands of Yemeni youth will be polled at intervals throughout the project in order to feed their perspectives into the discussions of the Fellows and ground them in the realities facing young people across the country. At the same time, the Fellows will engage high-level Yemeni, regional and international stakeholders through consultations and briefs, conveying the unique insights Yemeni youth have to offer and opening new lines of communication with key actors.

3– The Yemen-Gulf Forum

Yemen's history is closely intertwined with that of its neighbors, sharing strong religious, political, tribal, economic, and social ties. The ongoing conflict has made the bonds that link Yemen with the countries of the Gulf all the more important, as efforts to achieve peace in Yemen cannot be extricated from the broader geopolitical realities in the Gulf and wider region. Therefore, the

regional stream of the project will center around a forum bringing together emerging leaders from Yemen with peers and counterparts from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman.

In the **Forum of Emerging Leaders from Yemen and the Gulf**, the participants will work toward a common vision on a range of issues related to peace, security, and economic development in Yemen and the Gulf. These discussions will build on previous EU-supported work DeepRoot has done to foster greater Yemeni-Gulf dialogue, and provide further opportunity for young Yemenis from diverse political and social backgrounds to develop greater consensus on issues of mutual concern.

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DeepRoot is a leading social enterprise working on advancing inclusive, sustainable solutions to a range of political, economic, and developmental issues in Yemen. DeepRoot has extensive experience in providing platforms for dialogue on peacebuilding, producing in-depth reports and expanding stakeholder understanding of the local dynamics in different areas of the country. DeepRoot has implemented multiple track II initiatives in direct and indirect support of the Office of the UN Special Envoy to Yemen's efforts to negotiate a political settlement to the conflict.

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