

## PRESS RELEASE



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### **UNDP awards top 10 innovative business ideas from Yemeni youth to revitalize local economy**

**Sana'a, 24 January 2016** – UNDP, in partnership with ROWAD, has selected 10 most innovative business projects carried by young Yemeni entrepreneurs from 1,660 applications received for the second edition of its Youth Innovation and Creativity Award supported by the Ministry of Industry and Trade. The “Afkar” Award is an initiative aiming at locally sourcing creative ideas, engaging Yemeni youth between age 18-30 in a constructive process to create innovative start-ups and generate jobs. This year’s award places a particular focus on solar energy, a sector which has seen its potential and significantly increase with the current ongoing crisis.

Over 1,660 business ideas collected nationwide were subjected to a set of criteria to assess their potential for award eligibility. In July 2015, the 100 candidates that were shortlisted were provided with phone-based coaching services to further develop their ideas and concretise their business aspirations. The training was also an opportunity to examine the community impact of their ideas, fostering the idea of social entrepreneurship as a means for UNDP to bridge private sector support and challenges experienced by affected populations. The winners of this second edition will be awarded USD 15,000 of seed capital for the creation of their businesses, along with mentoring and coaching services under the Block One incubator scheme managed by ROWAD.

As of August 2015, 27 percent of micro, small, medium and large enterprises had closed as a result of the ongoing crisis. Sourcing goods and commodities is made difficult due to import restrictions. Unemployment, which already stood amongst the highest in the region, is dramatically increasing as markets close and the economic activity comes to a standstill. Disrupted electricity supply and a heightened fuel crisis have forced millions of Yemeni population into darkness, meaning many communities are unable to operate their livelihood assets, as well as disrupting key function of key public services providers in hospital surgery rooms, collection of garbage and pumping of drinking water and irrigation.

Youth have promising innovative ideas but they need support to overcome the operational costs of starting up a business. “The Afkar Award has come as a savior for my idea, providing me with sufficient money to start my project without the fear of failure in light of the critical developments in the country,” said Ghaidaa Salim – a young female entrepreneur launching an innovative project to set-up a consultation firm helping Adeni business pioneers to establish their own businesses with little cost.



Selected business ideas include promoting access of local markets to e-commerce and providing timely home delivery of goods; production and marketing of Yemeni honey; importing raw materials of solar energy and producing it locally to cover the needs of the local market; building the capacity of the Yemeni labour force and the integration of Yemenis in the workforce through the provision of training and job opportunities; recycling the furniture of educational facilities to reduce cost and meet the demands of the market; and production of modern educational equipment tailored to the Yemeni society, amongst others.

“I am extremely happy to be selected for the award. The award seed money will help me and my partner to transform our idea into reality,” said 25 year-old Faisal Al-Shehabi, one of the selected entrepreneurs for the award. “Our company will be working on assembling solar panels and produce it locally to cover the high demands for electricity in the local market, creating seven job opportunities upon launch with possibility of increase to 12 in the second year,” he added.

Afkar is being implemented by UNDP’s Youth Economic Empowerment Programme and ROWAD Entrepreneur Foundation with the support from the Governments of Japan, Korea, Netherlands, Silatech, Spark, and the Ministry of Industry and Trade.



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To read more about UNDP Yemen's work during the ongoing conflict, [click here](#).

For additional information, please contact Farah Abdessamad, Programme Specialist in Sana'a (Mobile: +967 712221959, [farah.abdessamad@undp.org](mailto:farah.abdessamad@undp.org)) or Fuad Hazaea, Communications Specialist in Sana'a (Mobile: +967 712221686, [fuad.hazaea@undp.org](mailto:fuad.hazaea@undp.org)).

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