SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND

A YEAR IN REVIEW

YEMEN 2020

MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

In 2020, the conflict dynamics that have plagued Yemen for years did not relent; actually, many of them grew deeper.

Violent conflict stretched toward a sixth year, with ever-increasing casualties and suffering. A protracted humanitarian crisis left millions of people on the edge of starvation. The historic COVID-19 pandemic piled new suffering on top of everything else. In many ways, Yemen was an inhospitable place in 2020—for hope as well as people.

Amidst the many challenges, three words capture the spirit of Search for Common Ground-Yemen: resolve, innovation, and resilience. Resolve, because we stayed the course and continued our life-saving work despite the disruptions of COVID-19. Innovation, because we implemented the first stages of a 10-year strategy set for Search for Common Ground as a whole. And resilience, because it took great courage and sacrifice from our staff—values that, more than anything else, speak to our success.

2020 marked an important milestone for Search-Yemen: 10 years of steady work. We have grown into a team of 70 determined peacebuilders bound by a mission of preventing violence. Over a decade, we have learned the vital need for a people-centered approach. Everything rests on trust: our long presence in communities across Yemen, our trained network of insider mediators, our relations with authorities, and our ties to donors. While it may not appear on any financial profile, trust is our most precious asset.

Institutionally, we joined the rest of Search for Common Ground in launching a 10-year strategy that aims at the 10 most consequential conflicts in the world—including violence in Yemen. This year, we will finalize a long-term strategy for the Arabian Peninsula as a conflict geography, with a goal of producing tangible peace dividends for conflict-affected communities in Yemen.

The essence of peacebuilding is finding hope in dire places, and then turning that hope into lasting change. With resolve, innovation, and resilience, Search-Yemen met this standard in 2020. To the Search-Yemen team: well done, and thank you for your determination.

Manzoor Ahmed
Yemen Country Director

Quentin Levet
MENA Regional Director

CONTENTS

Message from Leadership 2

2020 in Summary 4

Search-Yemen's Approach 5

Ten Years of Peacebuilding 6

Yemen's Context 8

Adapting and Delivering: COVID-19 9

IN FOCUS: A Peacebuilder's Approach to Security & Justice 10

IN FOCUS: Women & Peace 11

IN FOCUS: Cooperative Communities 12

IN FOCUS: Promoting Conflict Sensitive Programming 13

Ghada's Story 14

Search-Yemen in 2021 15

THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

Number of Staff:

Sana'a	Aden	Amman
25	39	6

Districts reached: 25

Governorates reached: 6

Conflict scans conducted: 296

Conflict resolution committees established: 7

Track II actors engaged: 30

Consultations with local authorities: 749

Number of Insider Mediators trained:

In 2020: 488
(251 Men / 237 Women)

2010 - 2020: 1246
(763 Men / 483 Women)

Community dialogues conducted: 48

Community initiatives implemented: 18

Thank you to the donors and partners who have provided steadfast support.

Donors

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

Sida

USAID

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

JSI

UNFPA

Global Affairs Canada / Affaires mondiales Canada

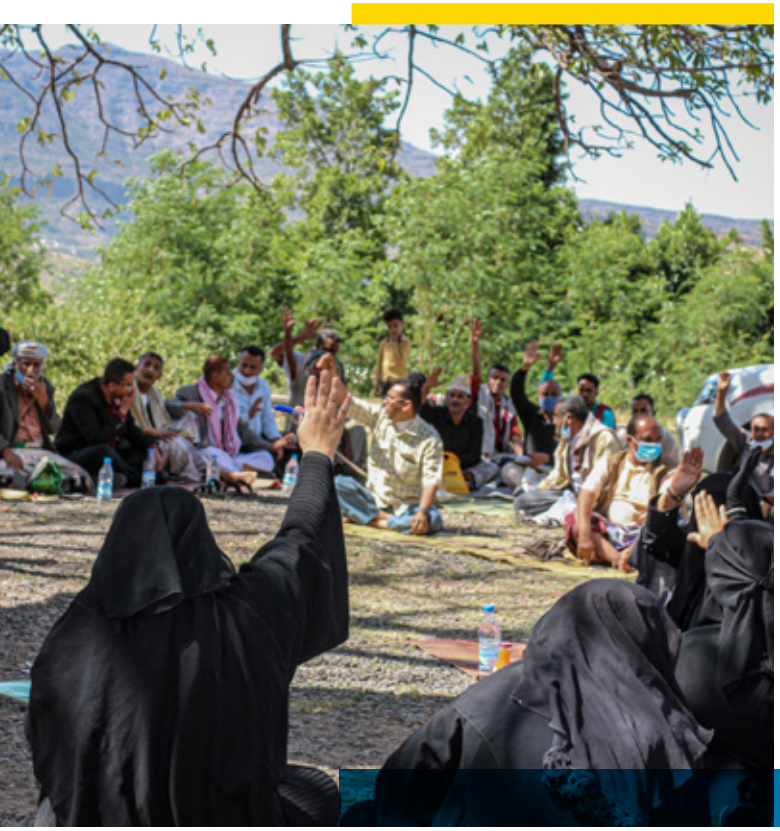
UNDP

Vision of Search in Yemen: A stable and prosperous Yemen, where men, women, boys, and girls live in peace and with dignity.

What ties us together will save us.
– Search Impact Report, 2019-20

SEARCH-YEMEN'S APPROACH

For the past 10 years, Search-Yemen has forged trust across dividing lines, encouraging people to see conflict not as a trigger for violence but as a chance for collaboration.



We have trained over 1,200 Insider Mediators and built networks across six governorates.

Our work falls into four categories:

Contributing to Stabilisation: We help people to create pockets of stability amidst violent conflict. Our goal is to strengthen local institutions: to foster governance that reflects local interests, service provision that addresses basic needs, and leaders who earn the trust of all community members. In everything, we support small initiatives to confront the root causes of violence.

Transforming a Culture of Violence: Yemen's long history of conflict has led many to expect, even to tolerate, violence. Our radio dramas, puppet shows, and social media campaigns celebrate nonviolence, building support for local mediation and peacebuilding.

Promoting Conflict Sensitivity: With Yemen facing the world's worst humanitarian crisis, building peace requires a multi-sectoral approach. Search seeks to connect peacebuilding insights—especially principles of conflict sensitivity—with humanitarian and development work.

Contributing to the National Peace Process: Through collaboration with the United Nations Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General to Yemen, we link our programming with the national peace process. We believe that, in order to last, any peace deal in Yemen must be inclusive. For this reason, we are amplifying the voices of community leaders across Yemen, broadening participation, and fostering coordination between grassroots peacebuilders (Track III) and unofficial advisors and bodies of the national peace process (Track II).

TEN YEARS OF PEACEBUILDING

Working in Yemen since 2010, Search has promoted a culture of nonviolence, teaching how to use collaboration to overcome conflict and creating lasting changes in the lives of men, women, and children.

2013
THE TEAM, DUTCH MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Reach: 120 radio and 25 TV episodes produced

Outcome: Promoted tolerance and teamwork through a fictional football team

2016
PARTNERSHIP FOR BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE, UNICEF

Reach: 75,600 Yemenis taught life-saving health practices through mass communications campaigns

Outcome: Built trust and collaboration between the community and local health services

2015
YEMEN COMMON GROUND INSTITUTE, EU

Reach: 54 civil society representatives trained in dialogue facilitation

Outcome: Reduced conflict and promoted a culture of dialogue among communities

2017
PEACE EDUCATION IN YEMEN, FRENCH MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Reach: 8 schools trained in advanced mediation, leading to student mediation clubs

Outcome: Fostered a collaborative culture of nonviolence between students, teachers, and parents

FUTURE CALLED PEACE, USAID

Reach: 24 key community conflict cases resolved by youth leaders

Outcome: Sustainably reduced local levels of violence through dialogue and youth-elder collaboration

2018
COOPERATIVE COMMUNITIES, DUTCH MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Reach: 88 local men and women leaders trained in conflict resolution and local councillors trained in responsive governance

Outcome: Increased trust and cooperation between local communities and governance structures

See more in the 'IN FOCUS' section below!

2019
ENHANCED SECURITY AND JUSTICE IN YEMEN, UNDP

Reach: 115 men and women security and justice actors trained in dialogue facilitation

Outcome: Improved access to formal and informal security and justice services

See more in the 'IN FOCUS' section below!

WOMEN & PEACE, GLOBAL AFFAIRS CANADA

Reach: 300 community leaders and 16 civil society organizations (CSOs) trained in gender responsive conflict management

Outcome: Advancing the inclusion of a diversity
of women in peacebuilding at the local and national level in Yemen

See more in the 'IN FOCUS' section below!

NATIONAL CONTEXT

Six years of war have ravaged Yemen,

fueling what many have described as the world's worst humanitarian crisis. In 2020, the spread of COVID-19 exacerbated tensions, deprivation, and violence, yielding just over 2,000 reported cases and 600 deaths tied to COVID-19, though cases are thought to be underreported. With only half of Yemen's hospitals at functioning capacity, the pandemic has pushed the country to the brink.

While the country has deep needs, the 2020 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan is only 48% funded, with no further commitments for the year. Aid levels have once again fallen short of the basic needs of Yemenis, and funding for peace and stabilization programming is also quite limited.

Politically, the peace process has not taken hold. In 2020, Martin Griffiths and the United Nations Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General to Yemen aimed to broaden participation in the peace process through a mass online peace consultation and smaller sessions with Yemeni men, women, and youth. Yet violent conflict has continued, with the Stockholm Agreement stalling and calls for a nation-wide ceasefire going unanswered. Alongside everything else, the Riyadh Agreement between the Internationally Recognised Government (IRG) and the Southern Transitional Council (STC) led to the creation of a new government in late 2020.

Parallel to the national-level peace process, local-level efforts have made progress. Search-Yemen and other peacebuilding organizations often work at this level, promoting nonviolence and peaceful narratives at the grassroots level.

ADAPTING AND DELIVERING: COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic upended the already strained health system of Yemen and challenged social relations throughout the country. Months of forced peacebuilding organizations to imagine new ways of bringing people together across dividing lines and amplifying marginalized voices. Here at Search, we drew lessons from Search's response to the Ebola crisis in the Mano River Region on how to deliver programming safely and spread awareness about ways to mitigate the spread of infection. As much as possible, we adapted existing programs to reflect COVID-19 restrictions, and we designed new programming to respond to the pandemic.

Digital Approaches to Peacebuilding

Online video conferencing does not work for hard-to-reach communities in Yemen, a country where internet penetration is 27%. Early in the pandemic, Search pivoted to a virtual model based on WhatsApp, rolling out across 12 communities and, using voice notes, breakout groups, drawings, polls, images, and adapted exercises. Participants could set their own pace and engage when they had internet access. Using this approach, we trained 193 community leaders as Insider Mediators to resolve local conflicts exacerbated by the pandemic.

Rumour Management and Countering Dis-information

As in many countries, rumours and disinformation about the causes and cures for COVID-19 became rampant in Yemen, endangering lives in the process. Our team rapidly mobilized previously-trained Insider Mediators to launch a communications campaign that promoted credible information about COVID-19 and healthy practices. Working with specialized doctors across the country, we developed posters, social media messages, radio recordings, and videos. We distributed over 23,000 posters, and our social media campaign was viewed an estimated 24,500 times. The campaign also included messages of unity to counter narratives of stigma and hostility. The Ministry of Public Health and Population supported our materials and disseminated them through their own networks.

IN FOCUS

A PEACEBUILDER'S APPROACH TO SECURITY & JUSTICE

In Yemen, many women, young people, and Muhamasheen face tall barriers when seeking to access security and justice. To address this inequality, Search-Yemen worked with local communities to identify gaps in access, collaboratively design action plans, and implement these plans by forging partnerships between communities, justice and security actors, and local government authorities.

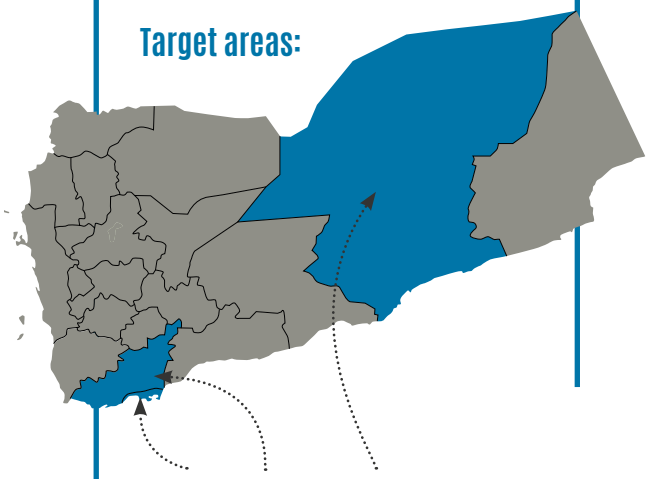
We trained 115 justice and security actors as Insider Mediators — a cohort that included police men and women, prison officials, public prosecution personnel, Sheikhs, youth activists, and religious leaders. Once trained, these Mediators partnered with local authorities to address issues of access to security and justice services. In Aden, for instance, the Insider Mediators found that women survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) often feel uncomfortable reporting crimes, as police are not trained to deal with such incidents and the police station does not offer much privacy. Search-Yemen responded by training police in GBV cases and establishing a private room in the station. The training is expected to be rolled out to multiple police stations across the governorates. We concluded this project by organizing two large summits in Hadramout and Aden that strengthened ties between Insider Mediators and law enforcement authorities. The local authority in Hadramout presented Search-Yemen with a shield of honour for our work.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, trained Insider Mediators also led a rapid-response intervention to distribute hygiene items to security and justice facilities across the six districts, reaching 8,178 Yemenis. This important initiative helped to bring local authorities closer to communities Each program activity reflects a larger ambition of Search-Yemen: to improve access to security and justice.

Enhanced security and access to justice at the local level in Yemen

Donor: EU and UNDP

Target areas:



Aden, Lahj, and Hadramout

IN FOCUS
WOMEN & PEACE

In Yemen, peacebuilding efforts — whether local or national — often exclude a key group: young women. Search-Yemen seeks to redress this, training women in mediation practices, fostering networks between women peacebuilders, and transforming norms around gender roles to ensure that the needs and insights of Yemeni women make it to the negotiating table.

Our project is directly targeting 300 Insider Mediators, 16 women-led CSOs, and national Track II groups. Using Search's own Community Dialogue Approach, we are helping communities to identify local conflict dynamics and address them through collaboration. Through a locally-led initiative, we can address a range of issues—from basic service delivery to good governance.

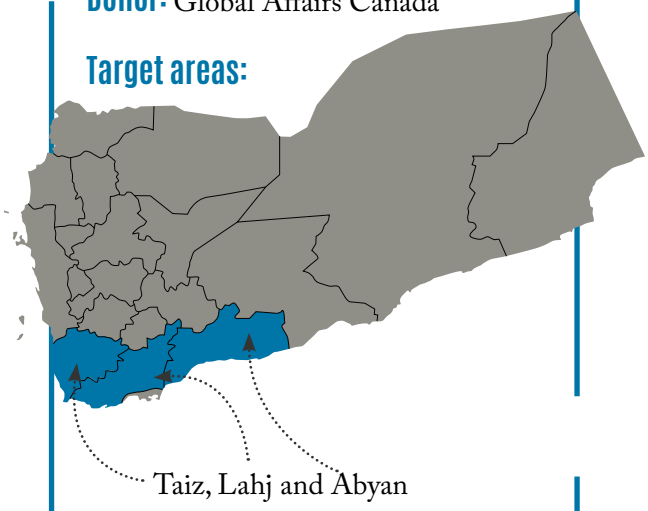
As women-led CSOs play an important role at the local level, Search is seeking to strengthen the internal systems of 16 women-led CSOs. A needs assessment for each organization can enable us to provide targeted support, whether around project management, monitoring and evaluation, financial management, gender sensitivity, or positive masculinities. Search will foster cross-learning by facilitating visits between the local women Insider Mediators and women already engaged in Track II.

Leveraging our global Media for Social Change practice, Search-Yemen will train media professionals on the creation of peace narratives, gender sensitivity, and women's involvement in the peace process. Working withInsider Mediators and young women mentees, these trained media experts will brainstorm concepts for content that will include diverse perspectives, reflect messages of peace, and resonate with specific regions in Yemen.

Women & Peace

Donor: Global Affairs Canada

Target areas:



To properly engage women in the peace process, we need to revisit the methodological approach to the peace process and understand that the peace process is most likely to fail when women are set back from participating. Including all groups of the community in the peace process is the main ingredient for a successful and sustainable peace.

– Woman from the Women's Center for Research and Training, Gender Analysis Workshop, June 2020

IN FOCUS
COOPERATIVE COMMUNITIES

The Cooperative Communities Project rebuilt trust in local government by using community dialogue and outreach to identify needs and revitalise social services.

Stable communities rely on effective local governance. Even amidst violent conflict, strong institutions can make a community resilient. Under this project, we trained 90 community leaders as Insider Mediators, focusing on dialogue processes, and we trained 69 local councillors in responsive governance. A total of 683 people participated in community dialogue sessions led by Insider Mediators.

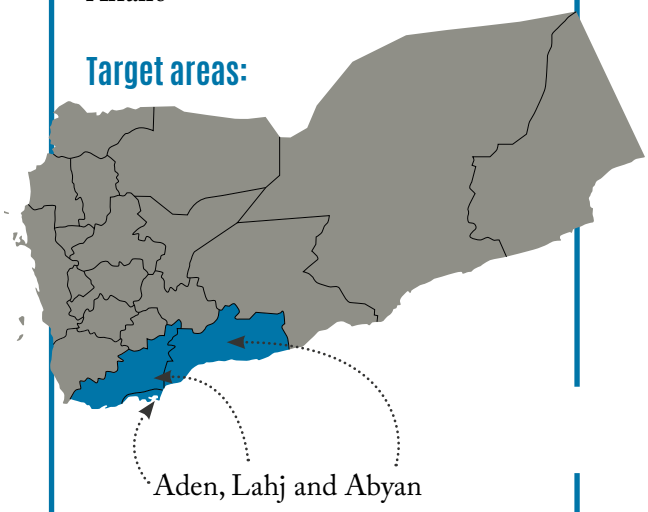
One of the trained Insider Mediators, Hussein, has seen how stretched resources and social services can drive tensions in Abyan, where he lives. Newly trained to mediate conflicts and find common ground, Hussein returned to Abyan and diffused a two-year dispute over faulty waste disposal services that had previously blocked roads, preventing people from reaching schools, hospitals, and water sources. Local private donations allowed the community to set up a new waste disposal system—and to build a new road to allow for the safe delivery of water.

A final evaluation of the project found that many of the Insider Mediators put their training to use, devising a win-win solution for community disputes. Roughly 90% of survey respondents knew of at least one Search-motivated project underway in their communities, and 73% of them had benefited directly from some initiative. All community members stressed the value of conflict scan meetings, which enable people to discuss shared problems and craft solutions.

Women & Peace

Donor: Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Target areas:

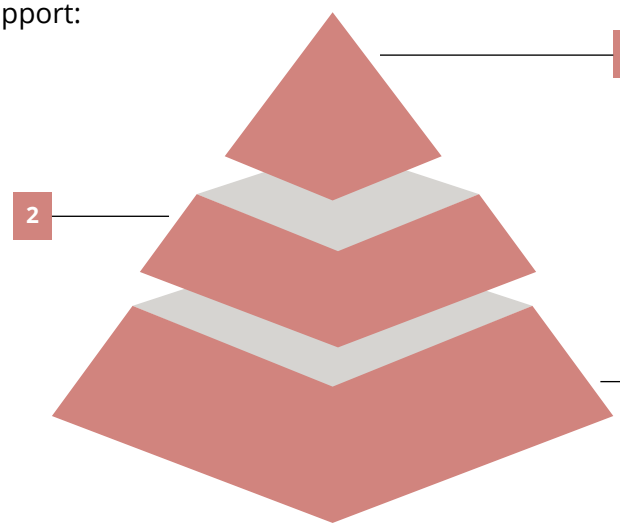


IN FOCUS

PROMOTING CONFLICT SENSITIVE PROGRAMMING

YCSP | YEMEN CONFLICT SENSITIVITY PLATFORM

Provides three levels of support:



Donor engagement

3 **Technical and advisory support** to donors and policymakers on aid strategies through the *Donor Advisory Group (DAG)* of donors and the policymakers.

Lesson sharing between aid agencies

2 **Inter-agency learning** on how to deliver aid in a conflict sensitive manner, through the *Technical Working Group (TWG)* of aid delivery agencies.

Training and capacity-building

1 **Capacity assistance** to agencies delivering aid in Yemen through standard trainings, online resources, and a draw-down facility.

Funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO) and implemented by Search-Yemen in partnership with Seton Hall University (SHU), the Yemen Conflict Sensitivity Platform is a hub for humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actors. The Platform collects knowledge about conflict sensitivity in Yemen, lays out lessons, and supports conflict sensitive approaches across the humanitarian, development, and peace nexus.

Through the platform, over 100 aid agency and donor staff participated in conflict sensitivity trainings in 2020, with the Platform also developing a Yemen-specific training manual on conflict sensitivity — updated regularly with local case studies. The Platform also conducted governorate-level analyses of Aden and Shabwa this year, recommending how the aid community can take conflict sensitive approaches when interacting with authorities. Finally, a "Technical Working Group" of aid agencies — with experts drawn from the humanitarian, development, and aid sectors — and a "Donor Advisory Group" facilitated by the Platform cumulatively engaged over 35 international aid agencies and donors in 2020, representing many of the major actors in the Yemen response.

GHADA'S STORY

Ghada Almaqtari

"A woman among men?"

"The last thing we need to witness is a woman bypassing Sheikhs and taking on their roles!"

"Men themselves couldn't do anything about it. What do you think you can do as a woman?"

These are some of many dismissive words said to Ghada Almaqtari when she took initiative to repair the road that links Demnat Shargab and al-Dahmasha in al-Maqatira sub-district, Lahj, and resolve an armed conflict which dignitaries and notables in the sub-district failed to solve.

For many years, neither cars nor buses could pass through the road, preventing more than 2000 people from accessing resources and services to fulfil basic needs. Sick patients would be carried by others to reach the nearest hospital and girls dropped out of university.

It started when a landowner refused to give up a small portion of his land where the road passes through, demanding financial compensation. Even though financial contributions were made to repair the road, the landowner's demands for financial compensation turned the issue of the road into a community conflict, exacerbated by verbal and physical assaults.

This had its toll on the two villages, whose inhabitants are bound by kinship, intermarriage, and common interests. The conflict often intensified during the rainy season due to irrigation ditches across the road, which heightened tensions between the two villages and worsened the condition of the road.

It was then that Ghada, who is head of the Women's Entrepreneur Association and one of Search-Yemen's Insider Mediators, stepped in. She hurried to the land in question and measured the dimensions of the path, a skill she learned from her father.

To everyone's surprise, Ghada was able to convene the community committee and sheikhs where they agreed that repairing and paving the road was the best solution to end the conflict between the two villages.

Using her mediation skills, Ghada reached a negotiated agreement with the landowner to allow the road to pass through his land so that reconstruction could take place and the suffering of the people would end.

The next day, Ghada collected quotations from the market for the construction materials needed for paving the road including rocks, cement, and other materials and transported them to the villages.

The process of repairing and pavement of the road took one week under the day-to-day supervision of Ghada, marking the end of years of suffering. Ghada was admired for her willpower and determination in putting an end to the conflict through finding common ground.

SEARCH-YEMEN IN 2021

In 2021,

we will continue our core work of promoting collaboration as a tool to navigate conflict and reduce violence. Priorities for the upcoming year include strengthening program quality, mainstreaming gender, and promoting conflict sensitivity and do-no-harm principles in humanitarian, development and stabilization work. Entering its second decade in Yemen, Search will build upon deep connections with communities and leverage the narratives of solidarity that emerged in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Seeking to strengthen a culture of nonviolence, we will:

1 > Expand pockets of stability

By training more community leaders as Insider Mediators, reaching new geographic areas, and deepening ties with humanitarian and development actors, we hope to make more communities in Yemen resilient to violence.

2 > Diversify voices in the peace process

Our grassroots peacebuilding approach gives us access to community voices not often heard at the national level. We plan to enhance vertical cohesion — from the top to the bottom of Yemeni societies — through exchange visits, summits, mentorship opportunities, strategic partnerships, consultations.

3 > Build conflict sensitive approaches

The Yemen Conflict Sensitivity Platform, has helped varied aid actors in Yemen grapple with conflict sensitivity. We know that success depends on the collaboration of humanitarian, development, and peace (HDP) actors. During 2021, we will refine our existing HDP consortia programs, focusing on durable solutions and governance.

In 2021, we commit to designing bold and innovative programming to respond to Yemen's deepest crises by working with our dedicated staff, partners, and local stakeholders. We hope that you will be with us each step of the way.

A YEAR IN REVIEW

YEMEN 2020

www.sfcg.org/Yemen
facebook.com/SFCGYemen
twitter.com/SFCG_YEMEN
instagram.com/sfcg_yemen
youtube.com/user/SFCGYEMEN

SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND