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A Journey of Passion

**Yemeni Youth Join the Film Set of
the Burdened by Amr Gamal**

Cash for Work: Promoting Livelihood
Opportunities for Urban Youth in Yemen



Khaleej Aden Troupe began performing theatre plays more than 15 years ago despite the lack of stages since the early nineties. With passion, youth spirit, and the stage of Hurricane Cinema in Aden, the troupe revived the spirit of art by performing countless plays that won public admiration and achieved wide resonance across the country.

The UNESCO-EU project, Cash for Work: Promoting Livelihood Opportunities for Urban Youth in Yemen, and in partnership with SMEPS, provided small grants for 13 CSOs including Khaleej Aden Theatre Troupe to train young Yemenis. The troupe provided 14 young Yemenis the opportunity to join the film set of *The Burdened*, and gain filmmaking skills in directing, production, lighting, sound recording, set design, and makeup. The movie by the award-winning director, Amr Gamal, narrates the story of a Yemeni family struggling after losing their jobs amid the economic collapse of the country.

Hamzah Mostafa

A young Yemeni passionate about cinematography, hoped to gain the skill one day. Due to the lack of specialized training in the country as well as professional opportunities that require years of experience, Mostafa thought his dream is out of reach.

“The opportunity to train and participate in the film set of The Burdened by Amr Gamal is an opportunity of a lifetime. Hamzeh before the training is a completely different person from Hamzeh after receiving training” said Mostafa.

Mostafa received training from professional cinematographers using advanced cameras entering Yemen for the first time. After joining the set as an assistant cameraperson, Mostafa worked as a cinematographer on two TV series, and a short film in Yemen.

“The large-scale production of the film was difficult. The work that followed was not as difficult, so I was able to work as a cinematographer for many sets, and thank God, the results were impressive for everyone” said Mostafa. He hopes young Yemenis will receive similar opportunities, which will help them establish a stable career in the industry.



“ I was very surprised by the participants despite their young age. Their energy, commitment, and strong desire to be part of the film set benefited us very greatly. The foreign staff was very impressed with their work, and I received recommendations to work with them more in the future. ”

Amr Gamal
The Director of *The Burdened*



The training, both theoretical and practical, was an indispensable opportunity for young Yemenis to gain practical experience from international experts, a training difficult to organize due to the current conditions of the country.

**Fahd Shureeh,
Director of Khaleej Aden**

“ It was a great opportunity for us in Khaleej Aden, so we invested in every moment. This was greatly reflected in the work of youth after joining the training. Even I personally gained more administrative skills than all my previous years of work. ”



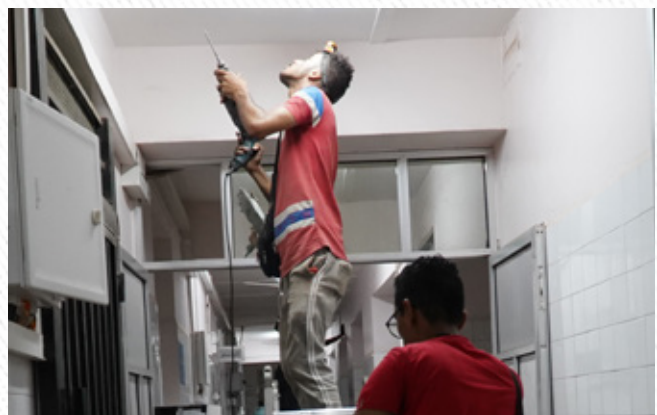
While shooting the movie, the trainees and crew faced many challenges. Once, armed clashes occurred near the crew residence, which forced the entire team to stay in the hotel for 48 hours with limited food and drinks. This period was one of the most disappointing times, but the team quickly regained their energy and returned to work.



In the absence of filmmaking culture, it was also difficult for the public to accept the presence of film crew in large numbers, professional equipment, and foreign staff in public areas. To find a solution, the crew involved the local community in the production process, which facilitated acceptance among people.



However, it was only possible to film after midnight in popular markets and various alleys. This allowed the crew to prepare shooting locations and various lighting comfortably, but it was still difficult to find more than one hundred background actors, especially actresses, to join the set during late hours. Through communication and providing safe spaces for everyone, the team was able to find numerous extras to join the set at required times.



When all crew members, actors, actresses, as well as extras gather on set to film after midnight, the electricity will turn off forcing the team to wait for hours for power to return. The generators owned by the team can hardly light up a house on the set to stimulate a real environment for the film. Despite numerous obstacles, the team endured and continued to shoot the film.



“Making a film with Amr Gamal was a dream coming true” said Ezzat Shaddad, a young trainee who joined the set as a director assistant. “The training transformed me from an aspiring filmmaker to a professional filmmaker. I gained technical experience in dealing with crew members, preparing shooting locations, and many other related skills. I can now assist in directing feature films, which has opened many doors for me in this field.”



Sally Abu Baker

A finance officer at Khaleej Aden, managed the troupe’s modest budgets, which was completely different from supervising a film production. The large number of staff and the constant transactions throughout the day made Abu Baker remain after set hours to match, arrange, and prepare for the next day.

“I used to document transactions before in regular papers. I just record the expenses and match them, but this training opened many horizons. I learned how to work better than before, and document all operations in an orderly manner” she said.



Joining the film set of *The Burdened* by Amr Gamal has changed the lives of young trainees. The quality of training due to the presence of film experts and advanced equipment for the first time in Yemen, made the training a unique opportunity for Yemeni youth. The participants are currently working in fields they were trained in and have a stable source of income.

“UNESCO and the EU are committed to empowering youth in Yemen by providing them with the resources and workshops to transform their talents into flourishing careers. Yemen’s economic situation has forced artists to pursue other jobs to provide for their families, although culture can be a key to reviving Yemen’s economy,” said Salah Khaled, Director of UNESCO Doha Office for Gulf States and Yemen.





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