

In 2017, Yemen made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Republic of Yemen Government signed the Safe Schools Declaration, which aims to promote and protect the right to education during armed conflict. The Republic of Yemen Government also participated in programs that supported educational and social services. However, children in Yemen engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation and armed conflict. Children also engage in child labor in fishing. Due to the ongoing armed conflict, the internationally recognized Republic of Yemen Government had limited operational control of its ministries in Yemen. As a result, it was unable to provide demobilization and rehabilitation services to children who have been recruited and used by various groups engaged in armed conflict.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Yemen engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation and armed conflict. (1; 2; 3; 4; 5) Children also engage in child labor in fishing. (6; 7; 8) According to the 2010 National Child Labor Survey, most working children were in the agricultural and domestic work sectors. (6) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Yemen.

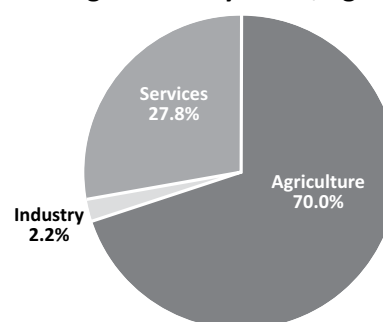
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

| Children | Age | Percent |
|-------------------------------|---------|----------------|
| Working (% and population) | 5 to 14 | 13.6 (834,866) |
| Working Children by Sector | 5 to 14 | |
| Attending School (%) | 5 to 14 | 68.0 |
| Combining Work and School (%) | 7 to 14 | 10.3 |
| Primary Completion Rate (%) | | 71.6 |

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2016, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018. (9)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from National Child Labour Survey, 2010. (10)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 5-14



Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity

| Sector/Industry | Activity |
|-----------------|---|
| Agriculture | Farming,† activities unknown (7; 11) |
| | Fishing,† activities unknown (6; 7; 8) |
| | Hunting, activities unknown (6) |
| Industry | Quarrying and mining† (6; 7; 8) |
| | Construction,† activities unknown (6) |
| | Working in carpentry† and welding† workshops (12; 13) |
| Services | Street work, including selling items, begging, and scavenging garbage (6; 14; 15; 16; 17; 18) |
| | Working in auto repair and mechanic shops† (7; 8) |
| | Domestic work† (6; 11) |
| | Selling goods in stores (6) |
| | Voluntarily recruited children used in hostilities by state armed groups (3) |

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Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (cont)

| Sector/Industry | Activity |
|---|---|
| Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡ | Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (19; 20; 4; 5) |
| | Use in illicit activities, including in drug trafficking (21; 5) |
| | Domestic work, begging, and working in small shops, each as a result of human trafficking (5) |
| | Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (1; 2; 3; 22) |

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

The civil war in Yemen continued throughout 2017. The UN called the situation the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. (23) In 2017, nearly 75 percent of the population, including 11.3 million children, were in need of humanitarian assistance. (23) The conflict led to the internal displacement of more than 2 million people, and the country was on the verge of famine. (24) Approximately 400,000 children were suffering from severe, acute malnutrition. (25) The Republic of Yemen Government had limited operational control over its ministries and remained unable to enforce regulations. (7) As of December 2017, there were 280,000 refugees and asylum seekers, primarily from Somalia and Ethiopia, at risk of exploitation in Yemen. (26; 27)

Reports indicate that, due to economic hardships, commercial sexual exploitation of children has increased over the past several years. Girls are subjected to human trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation within Yemen in hotels and clubs located in Aden, Sana’a, Ta’iz, and other cities. (5) Also, there is evidence that Yemeni children, mostly boys, migrate to Sana’a, Aden, and Saudi Arabia, where they are engaged in forced labor for domestic work, begging, or work in small shops. Limited evidence points to the existence of chattel slavery, as children are sold and inherited as property in the Al Hudaydah and Al Mahwit governorates. (5) In 2017, IOM stated that 25 percent of its services in Yemen were provided to unaccompanied child migrants, mostly boys ages 14 to 17 from Ethiopia. Some of these children were subjected to human trafficking. (21)

Various armed groups, including the Houthis, the Houthi-affiliated Popular Committees, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, and government forces, recruited and used child soldiers to serve as guards or fighters. (1; 2; 22; 3; 28) To remain alert, some child soldiers use *qat*, a mild narcotic that is legal in Yemen. (3) The UN documented that at least four child soldiers were killed during hostilities in Yemen in 2017, two of whom were affiliated with Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. (28)

Limited evidence suggests that child recruitment increased because many children were unable to attend school. (1) There were 1,669 schools that were either partially or totally destroyed due to the conflict. According to UNICEF, more than 2 million children were unable to attend school. (24) Many families could not afford transportation costs to schools, and approximately 12,000 schools were closed because teachers were not being paid. (1; 29) UNICEF predicted that during the 2017–2018 academic year, 4.5 million children would be unable to resume classes. (30)

Among the *Muhamasheen* (“marginalized”) minority group, generally of sub-Saharan African origin, illiteracy rates are high, and child labor in the form of begging is prevalent. (14)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Yemen has ratified most key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor




| Convention | Ratification |
|---|--------------|
|  ILO C. 138, Minimum Age | ✓ |
| ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor | ✓ |
|  UN CRC | ✓ |
| UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict | ✓ |
| UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography | ✓ |

Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor (cont)

| Convention | Ratification |
|--|--------------|
|  Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons | |

The Republic of Yemen Government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Yemen's legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

| Standard | Meets International Standards: Yes/No | Age | Legislation |
|---|---------------------------------------|-----|--|
| Minimum Age for Work | Yes | 14 | Article 5 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013 (31) |
| Minimum Age for Hazardous Work | Yes | 18 | Article 7 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013 (31) |
| Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children | Yes | | Articles 7–8 and 15 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013 (31) |
| Prohibition of Forced Labor | No | | Articles 6(b) and 26 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013; Article 248 of the Penal Code (31; 32) |
| Prohibition of Child Trafficking | No | | Article 26 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013; Article 248 of the Penal Code (31; 32) |
| Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children | No | | Articles 147 and 163 of the Child Rights Law; Article 279 of the Penal Code; Article 25 of Ministerial Order No. 11 (33; 32; 31) |
| Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities | Yes | | Section 24 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013; Articles 148 and 162 of the Child Rights Law (31; 33) |
| Prohibition of Military Recruitment | | | |
| State Compulsory | N/A* | | |
| State Voluntary | Yes | 18 | Article 149 of the Child Rights Law (33) |
| Non-state | No | | |
| Compulsory Education Age | Yes | 15‡ | Article 18 of the General Education Law (34) |
| Free Public Education | Yes | | Article 87 of the Child Rights Law (33) |

* No conscription (35)

‡ Age calculated based on available information

While Article 248 of the Penal Code criminalizes buying, selling, and dealing in human beings, the legal framework does not appear to prohibit forced labor.

The legal framework does not adequately prohibit using, procuring, or offering a child in pornography and pornographic performances, or using a child in prostitution.

Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013 does not explicitly include all phases of child trafficking, such as harboring, transporting, and transferring children for exploitation. (31)

Research was unable to discover any law to criminally prohibit recruitment of children under 18 by non-state armed groups.

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The Republic of Yemen Government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, research found no evidence that the Republic of Yemen Government's law enforcement agencies took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms.

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Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

| Organization/Agency | Role |
|--|---|
| Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor's Child Labor Unit | Enforce child labor laws, conduct inspections, inform the Ministry of the Interior of any violations, and refer children found during inspections to appropriate social services. (8) |
| Ministry of the Interior | Enforce child labor laws. Police departments within the Ministry of the Interior handle human trafficking investigations. (8) |
| Ministry of Justice | Enforce child labor laws and prosecute and adjudicate child labor cases. (8) |
| Ministry of Human Rights, Ministry of Legal Affairs, Parliament, and the Social Fund for Development | Maintain supporting roles in combating child trafficking. (8) |

Labor Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether the Republic of Yemen Government's labor law enforcement agencies took actions to combat child labor in 2017. During the previous year, the Republic of Yemen Government was unable to enforce child labor laws due to the civil war. (7) Likewise, in 2016, no funding and training were provided for labor inspection, and there was no mechanism to receive child labor complaints. (7)

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor does not have the authority to enforce child labor laws in casual employment, farming, and domestic work. (36)

Criminal Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether the Republic of Yemen Government's criminal law enforcement agencies took actions to combat child labor.

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The Republic of Yemen Government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 6).

Table 6. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

| Coordinating Body | Role and Description |
|---|--|
| National Steering Committee to Combat Child Labor | Coordinate child labor issues in Yemen. Comprises representatives from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, other state agencies, ILO-IPEC, and local NGOs. (8) Research was unable to determine whether the National Steering Committee to Combat Child Labor was active during the reporting period. |
| Technical Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons | Develop a national strategy to combat human trafficking. (37) Research was unable to determine whether the Technical Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons was active during the reporting period. |
| National Network for Child Protection | Implement training programs and media awareness campaigns, and advocate progress on children's issues. (8) Research was unable to determine whether the National Network for Child Protection was active during the reporting period. |
| Joint Technical Committee to Prevent Recruitment of Children in the Yemeni Armed Forces | Implement and monitor the Action Plan to End and Prevent the Recruitment of Children by the Yemeni Armed Forces. Comprises the Ministry of Defense, the Higher Council for Motherhood and Childhood, the Civil Status and Registration Authority, and UN representatives. (38) Research was unable to determine whether this Committee was active during the reporting period. |

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The Republic of Yemen Government has established policies related to child labor (Table 7). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including covering all worst forms of child labor.

Table 7. Key Policies Related to Child Labor

| Policy | Description |
|---|---|
| Action Plan to End and Prevent the Recruitment of Children by the Yemeni Armed Forces | Ensures that national laws comply with international standards, prohibit the recruitment and use of children in armed forces, investigate allegations of violations, and facilitate UN access to monitor compliance. (39) Research was unable to determine whether activities were undertaken to implement this policy during the reporting period. |

In 2017, the Republic of Yemen Government signed the Safe Schools Declaration, which aims to promote and protect the right to education during armed conflict by deterring parties to the conflict from using schools and by investigating violations. (40; 41)

Although the Republic of Yemen Government has adopted the Action Plan to End and Prevent the Recruitment of Children by the Yemeni Armed Forces, research found no evidence of a policy on other worst forms of child labor.

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2017, the Republic of Yemen Government participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including adequacy of services to address the full scope of the problem.

Table 8. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

| Program | Description |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Child Protection Activities | UNICEF-funded programs designed to provide psychosocial support, including access to sports and arts, in community-based and mobile centers. (42) In 2017, UNICEF provided psychosocial support to more than 519,000 children in 16 governorates through fixed and mobile child-friendly spaces and youth clubs. More than 323,000 children received skills training on how to protect themselves in emergency situations. (24) |
| Educational Activities | UNICEF-funded programs conducted in cooperation with the Republic of Yemen Government that provide educational support activities and services. (42) In 2017, 600,000 students gained access to education through the rehabilitation of 430 schools and the provision of temporary learning spaces. More than 409,000 students received school bags and recreational kits. (24) UNICEF also provided community-based classes, which brought 30,000 out-of-school children back to school. (24) |

Although Yemen has programs that target child labor, the scope of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, particularly in commercial sexual exploitation, child soldiering, and fishing.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Yemen (Table 9).

Table 9. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor

| Area | Suggested Action | Year(s) Suggested |
|-----------------|---|-------------------|
| Legal Framework | Accede to the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons. | 2013 – 2017 |
| | Ensure that forced labor and all phases of child trafficking are criminally prohibited. | 2015 – 2017 |
| | Ensure that the law is sufficiently comprehensive to prohibit using a child for prostitution and using, procuring and offering a child for pornography and pornographic performances. | 2015 – 2017 |
| | Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 into non-state armed groups. | 2016 – 2017 |
| Enforcement | Ensure that the Labor Inspectorate has the capacity to enforce labor laws, including reestablishing a mechanism to receive child labor complaints. | 2015 – 2017 |
| | Ensure that labor inspectors have proper funding and training to conduct inspections. | 2009 – 2017 |
| | Ensure that authorities enforce minimum age protections in all sectors in which the worst forms of child labor are prevalent, including in agriculture and domestic work. | 2009 – 2017 |
| | Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies enforce child labor laws. | 2015 – 2017 |
| Coordination | Ensure all coordinating bodies are able to carry out their intended mandates. | 2017 |

Table 9. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (cont)

| Area | Suggested Action | Year(s) Suggested |
|---------------------|--|-------------------|
| Government Policies | Implement the Action Plan to End and Prevent the Recruitment of Children by the Yemeni Armed Forces. | 2009 – 2017 |
| | Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, such as commercial sexual exploitation and child trafficking. | 2009 – 2017 |
| Social Programs | Expand programs to improve children's access to education. | 2013 – 2017 |
| | Institute a rehabilitation and reintegration program for children engaged in armed conflict and children involved in other worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, child soldiering, and fishing. | 2011 – 2017 |

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