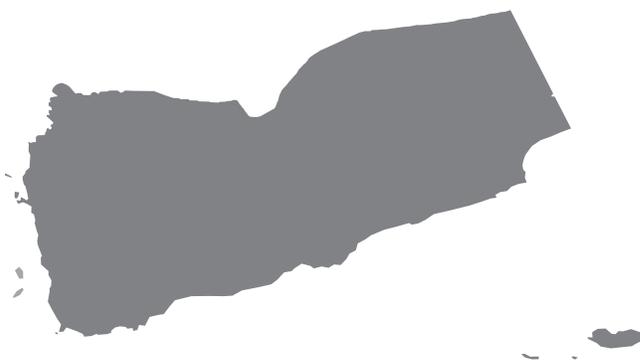


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In 2019, Yemen made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Republic of Yemen Government progressed in its implementation of the Action Plan to End and Prevent the Recruitment of Children by the Yemeni Armed Forces by appointing 90 child protection focal points within the Yemeni armed forces and training 40 of them to identify children within their ranks. In addition, the government released 25 children conscripted by Houthi forces and subsequently captured to the Marib interim care center for rehabilitation. Despite these initiatives to address child

labor, Yemen is receiving this assessment because it continued to implement practices that delayed advancement in eliminating the worst forms of child labor. There is evidence of recruitment and use of children in hostilities by state armed forces in contravention of Yemeni law and despite government efforts to counter child soldier recruitment. Furthermore, the government failed to make efforts to address discrimination in schools against children from the Muhamasheen community, leading to their increased vulnerability to child labor. Children in Yemen engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and armed conflict, including by Houthi insurgent forces and other armed groups. Children also engage in child labor in fishing. Research found no evidence of a policy on worst forms of child labor outside of soldiering, such as commercial sexual exploitation and child trafficking.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Yemen engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking, and armed conflict, including by Houthi insurgent forces and other armed groups. (1,2) Children also engage in child labor in fishing. (3-5) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Yemen.

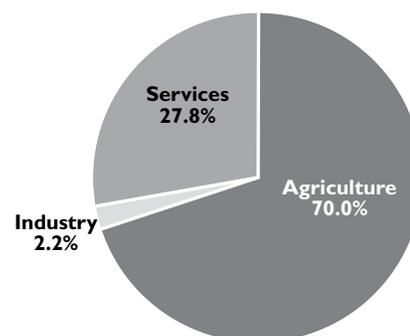
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5 to 14	13.6 (834,866)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	68.0
Combining Work and School (%)	7 to 14	10.3
Primary Completion Rate (%)		72.3

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2016, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020. (6)

Source for all other data: International Labor Organization's analysis of statistics from National Child Labour Survey (NCLS), 2010. (7)

Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 7-14



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,† including harvesting dates (8-10)
	Fishing,† activities unknown (3-5,8)
	Hunting, activities unknown (4)
Industry	Quarrying† and mining† (4,5,8)
	Construction† and brick production (3,4,10)
	Working in carpentry† and welding† workshops (3,11,12)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Street work, including selling items, and begging (4,10,13-17)
	Working in auto repair and mechanic shops† and car washes (5,8,10)
	Domestic work† (4,9)
	Selling goods in stores and transporting them (4,10)
	Working in bakeries, and in transportation as fare collectors on taxis (10)
	Voluntarily recruited children used in hostilities by state armed groups (18-22)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (1,3,23-26)
	Use in illicit activities, including in trafficking of drugs (3,27-29)
	Domestic work, begging, and working in small shops, each as a result of human trafficking (24,27)
	Recruitment of children by non-state armed groups for use in armed conflict (2,3,18,20,23,30)

† 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.

In 2019, Yemen’s protracted civil war resulted in the world’s worst humanitarian crisis, according to UN reporting. (31,32) The Republic of Yemen Government has lost control to Houthi forces of the northern region of the country, where most of the population resides. (33) As of July 2019, over 24 million Yemenis were in need of humanitarian assistance, including 12.3 million children. (32) Approximately 1.7 million Yemeni children were internally displaced and 4.7 million children were in need of educational assistance. (32) Yemen was also home to approximately 277,000 refugees and asylum seekers, mostly from Somalia and Ethiopia. Approximately 20 percent of these refugees were children. (34) Vulnerable populations, including IDPs and refugees, were at increased risk of child labor and human trafficking. (35,36)

Armed conflict in Yemen intensified in 2019, and security and access restrictions constrained further international observers’ ability to fully monitor grave violations, including the recruitment and use of children. Armed groups, including the Houthis and pro-Coalition militias, recruited for and used child soldiers in armed combat in 2019. (23,29,30,32,37) In addition, the Yemeni Armed Forces recruited and used children, typically ages 15 to 17, for these same purposes, in contravention of Yemeni law. (18,20) The government’s failure to institute effective mechanisms for age verification continued to be a factor in the continuation of this problem. According to UN reporting, the Houthis/Ansar Allah recruited and used 686 children in 2019, the Yemeni Armed Forces recruited and used 136 children, and other armed groups recruited and used an additional 67 children. Nineteen percent of these children were below the age of 15. (22)

There is evidence of chattel slavery, as children are owned, sold, and inherited as property, particularly in Al Hajjah, Al Hudaydah, and Al Mahwit governorates. (38,39) Yemeni children, mostly boys who migrate to Sana’a, Aden, and Saudi Arabia, are engaged in forced labor for domestic work, begging, or work in small shops. (27,38) Moreover, research indicates that commercial sexual exploitation and child trafficking have increased over the past several years. (24) Girls are subjected to human trafficking for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation within Yemen in hotels and clubs located in Aden, Sana’a, Ta’iz, and other cities. (27,38)

In Yemen, children faced significant barriers to access to education, including in areas under government control. Across the country, there were 2,500 schools that were out of use, some partially or totally destroyed because of armed conflict, and some used as shelters. (40-42) The armed conflict, attacks on schools, and displacement are additional barriers to education. According to UNICEF, more than 2 million children were unable to attend school. (43) Many families could not afford transportation costs to schools. (44) Teachers have not received salaries from the government over the past 2 years, disrupting the education of 3.7 million children. (43) The Republic of Yemen Government stated that Houthi forces have changed the school curricula in areas under their control to teach children about their ideology and have children attend militia events. (45)

Among the *Muhamasheen* (“marginalized”) minority group, generally of African origin, illiteracy rates are high, and child labor in the form of begging is prevalent. This community also suffers from general poverty and severe

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societal discrimination, including in distribution of humanitarian aid. (13,27,46-48) They also make up a large proportion of people living as IDPs. (42,47) Many *Muhamasheen* children do not have birth certificates, which are required for enrollment in schools. They face harassment, bullying, and violence at school, are dismissed from school, or are asked to clean the bathrooms, leading some to drop out. (46-48) *Muhamasheen* boys are vulnerable to sexual violence by armed actors, particularly while they engage in child labor, even if they are not directly involved in armed conflict. (46) Research did not uncover any government efforts to address discrimination.

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	✓
 Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	

The 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 laws prohibiting child trafficking.

Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor

Standard	Meets International Standards	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Article 5 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013 (49)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 7 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013 (49)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Articles 7–8 and 15 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013 (49)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	No		Articles 6(b) and 26 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013; Article 248 of the Penal Code (49,50)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	No		Article 26 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013 (49)
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 of 2013 (49-51)
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 (49,51)
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment	Yes	18	Article 149 of the Child Rights Law (51)
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military	N/A*		
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups	No		Article 6(b) of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013 (49)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 18 of the General Education Law (52)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 87 of the Child Rights Law (51)

* No conscription (53)

‡ 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. (50)

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The legal framework does not adequately prohibit using, procuring, or offering a child in pornography and pornographic performances, or using a child in prostitution. (49-51)

As the minimum age for work is lower than the compulsory education age, children may be encouraged to leave school before the completion of compulsory education.

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, research found no evidence that law enforcement agencies in Yemen took actions to combat child labor.

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor's Child Labor Unit	Enforces child labor laws, conducts inspections, informs the Ministry of the Interior of any violations, and refers children found during inspections to appropriate social services. (5)
Ministry of the Interior	Enforces child labor laws. Police departments within the Ministry of the Interior handle human trafficking investigations. (5)
Ministry of Justice	Enforces child labor laws; prosecutes and adjudicates child labor cases. (5)
Ministry of Human Rights, Ministry of Legal Affairs, Parliament, and the Social Fund for Development	Maintain supporting roles in combating child trafficking. (5)

The Republic of Yemen Government had limited operational control over its ministries and remained unable to enforce regulations. (3)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2019, labor law enforcement agencies in Yemen took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including a lack of complaint mechanisms.

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Labor Inspectorate Funding	Unknown	Unknown (3)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown	Unknown (3)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Unknown	Yes (3)
Initial Training for New Labor Inspectors	Unknown	Yes (3)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Unknown	Yes (3)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown	Yes (3)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	Unknown	182 (3)
Number Conducted at Worksites	Unknown	Unknown (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown	Unknown (3)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown	Unknown (3)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed that Were Collected	Unknown	Unknown (3)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Unknown (3)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Unknown	Unknown (3)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Unknown	Yes (3)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Yes (3)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Unknown	Unknown (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Unknown	Unknown (3)

In 2019, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor conducted labor inspections and noted several child labor violations; however, inspections remained suspended in conflict-affected areas and the Ministry's capacity in areas it controls is extremely limited. (3) Moreover, specific child labor inspection programs remain

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suspended. (3) Based on available information, in 2019, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor removed an unknown number of children who engaged in street work from the streets. No further information is available. (10)

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor does not have the authority to enforce child labor laws in casual employment, farming, and domestic work and lacks a referral mechanism for child labor complaints. (3,54)

Criminal Law Enforcement

Research did not find information on whether criminal law enforcement agencies in Yemen took actions to combat child labor. (3)

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2018	2019
Initial Training for New Criminal Investigators	Unknown	No (3)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	Unknown (3)
Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown	Unknown (3)
Number of Investigations	Unknown	Unknown (3)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown	Unknown (3)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	Unknown (3)
Number of Convictions	Unknown	Unknown (3)
Imposed Penalties for Violations Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	No (3)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Unknown	Yes (3)

The government was unable to investigate, prosecute, or convict government officials allegedly complicit in human trafficking offenses, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers by the Republic of Yemen Government's Armed Forces. (55)

In 2019, the Republic of Yemen Government did not take any proactive steps to investigate or prosecute the practice of chattel slavery. (3)

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including efficacy in accomplishing mandates.

Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Steering Committee to Combat Child Labor	Coordinates child labor issues in Yemen. Comprises representatives from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, other state agencies, the ILO, and local NGOs. (5) Research was unable to determine whether the National Steering Committee to Combat Child Labor was active during the reporting period.
National Network for Child Protection	Implements training programs and media awareness campaigns, and advocates for progress on children's issues. (5) 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	Implements and monitors the Action Plan to End and Prevent the Recruitment of Children by the Yemeni Armed Forces. (55) In 2019, the Joint Committee supported the implementation of the Action Plan. (30)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies related to child labor (Table 9). However, policy gaps exist that hinder efforts to address child labor, including covering all worst forms of child labor.

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Table 9. 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, prohibits the recruitment and use of children in armed forces, investigates allegations of violations, and facilitates UN access to monitor compliance. (22) In 2019, the government appointed 90 child protection focal points within the Yemeni armed forces, 40 of whom were trained to identify associated children. (56) In addition, 20 officers from the National Army and other security units received training on the risks of child recruitment in June 2019. Progress stalled in August 2019, with tensions erupting between the government and the Southern Transitional Council. (30,56)

‡ The government has other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor. (57,58)

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, such as commercial sexual exploitation and child trafficking. (2) In 2019, the government drafted a National Plan to Reduce Child Labor; however, the plan was pending approval at the end of the reporting period. The government emphasized that it could not implement the plan without donor support. (2)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2019, the government participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including adequacy of services to address the full scope of the problem in all sectors.

Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Educational Activities	UNICEF-funded programs conducted in cooperation with the Republic of Yemen Government that provide educational support activities and services. (59) In 2019, UNICEF paid incentives to 127,400 teachers, who have not been paid in over 2 years, to cover transportation and other basic expenses. (43) UNICEF and its partners also rehabilitated 13 schools and hygiene facilities in another 37. UNICEF supported the construction of 33 semi-permanent schools for internally displaced children, and provided psychosocial support training for over 1,200 teachers. (32) Over 15,000 children received school bags and essential supplies. (32)

In 2019, the Government of Saudi Arabia, which backs the internationally recognized Republic of Yemen Government, operated at least one rehabilitation center in Marib, a city that is currently under the control of the Republic of Yemen Government, through which former child soldiers are reunited with their families and provided rehabilitation. (20,61,62) During the reporting period, 25 children conscripted by Houthi forces and subsequently captured by Coalition forces were released to the center for rehabilitation. The center also trained its staff on the dangers of child soldier recruitment and how to prevent its occurrence. (56)

Although the Republic of Yemen Government participates in programs that address child labor and access to education, 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 11).

Table 11. 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 – 2019
	Ensure that forced labor is criminally prohibited.	2015 – 2019
	Ensure that trafficking of children, including recruitment, harboring, transportation, transfer, and receipt, for purposes of forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation, is criminalized.	2015 – 2019

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Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor (Cont.)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	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 – 2019
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 into non-state armed groups.	2016 – 2019
	Raise the minimum age for work to the age up to which education is compulsory.	2018 – 2019
Enforcement	Enforce laws prohibiting children under age 18 from joining Yemeni Armed Forces, including by implementing effective screening and age verification measures, and remove children under age 18 in the Yemeni Armed Forces and pro-government militias from engaging in combat.	2018 – 2019
	Ensure that the labor inspectorate has the capacity to enforce labor laws, including reestablishing a mechanism to receive child labor complaints.	2015 – 2019
	Proactively identify, investigate, and remedy cases of chattel slavery.	2018 – 2019
	Ensure that labor inspectors have proper funding and training to conduct inspections.	2009 – 2019
	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 – 2019
Coordination	Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies enforce child labor laws and publish information on enforcement activities.	2015 – 2019
	Ensure that all coordinating bodies are able to carry out their intended mandates.	2017 – 2019
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, such as commercial sexual exploitation and child trafficking.	2009 – 2019
Social Programs	Expand programs to improve children's equal access to education, particularly for child survivors of chattel slavery and child <i>Muhamasheen</i> .	2013 – 2019
	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 and fishing.	2011 – 2019

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