

In 2015, Yemen made no advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The armed conflict and economic crisis in Yemen exacerbated child labor problems, including its worst forms. Children in Yemen are engaged in child labor, including in fishing, and in the worst forms of child labor, including in armed conflict. Due to ongoing armed conflict and political instability caused by the Houthis taking control of state institutions, the Republic of Yemen Government remained in exile in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, during this period and had limited operational control of its ministries in the capital, Sana'a. As a result it was unable to enforce the minimum age protections of the law. Non-state armed groups recruited and used children in combat during this period. Given that the Republic of Yemen Government remained outside the country in 2015, it was unable to provide demobilization and rehabilitation services to children who have been involved in armed conflict.



I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Yemen are engaged in child labor, including in fishing. Children are also engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including in armed conflict.(1-5) According to the 2010 National Child Labor Survey, the majority of working children were in the agricultural and domestic work sectors.(4) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Yemen.

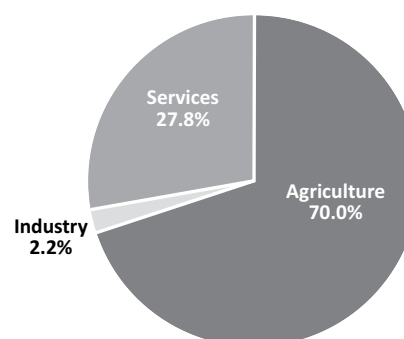
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5-14 yrs.	13.6 (834,866)
Attending School (%)	5-14 yrs.	68.0
Combining Work and School (%)	7-14 yrs.	10.3
Primary Completion Rate (%)		69.2

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2013, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015.(6)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from National Child Labor Survey, 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	Production of qat* (a mild narcotic that is legal in Yemen) (3)
	Production of cereals,* fruits,* and vegetables* (3)
	Fishing,† activities unknown (2, 4, 5, 8)
	Hunting,* activities unknown (4)
	Raising livestock,* including sheep,* goats,* cows,* and chickens* (3, 4)
Industry	Quarrying and mining (4, 5)
	Construction,*† activities unknown (4)
Services	Street work, including begging* (4, 5, 9, 10)
	Working in auto shops* (5)
	Domestic work† (4)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Waste collection* (5)
	Selling goods in stores (4)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor†	Commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking (5, 11, 12)
	Use in illicit activities, including in the smuggling of drugs*(12)
	Begging as a result of trafficking* (11, 13)
	Forced domestic work* and forced begging* (12)
	Use in armed conflict by non-state armed groups, sometimes as a result of forced or compulsory recruitment (9, 12, 14-17)

* Evidence of this activity is limited and/or the extent of the problem is unknown.

† 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 crisis in Yemen escalated in the beginning of 2015 with the abrupt departure of the President and senior Republic of Yemen Government officials from the capital. By the end of the reporting period, non-government forces had extensive control over the north-west regions of Yemen, including Sana’a, rendering the government incapable of addressing non-essential matters.(5) Many government institutions, including around 1,094 schools, remained closed due to the conflict, notably in the Sa’ada and Taiz Governorates.(18)

Girls are trafficked within Yemen to hotels in Aden, Sana’a, Ta’iz, and other cities for commercial sexual exploitation.(12) In addition, some children are trafficked to Saudi Arabia for commercial sexual exploitation, forced begging, and smuggling of drugs.(11-13) There is evidence that Yemeni children, mostly boys, migrate to Sana’a, Aden, and Saudi Arabia, where they are engaged in forced labor in domestic work, begging, or working in small shops.(12) Tourists, including those from Saudi Arabia, enter into temporary marriages with Yemeni girls as a form of commercial sexual exploitation. At times, Saudi tourists take these girls with whom they entered into a temporary marriage back to Saudi Arabia where the girls are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation or abandoned.(11, 12)

Various armed groups recruited and used child soldiers, including the Houthis, *Al Qaeda* in the Arabian Peninsula, the Popular Committees, tribal militias, and government forces.(9, 12, 14) In 2015, the Houthis increased recruitment of child soldiers. Some children served as guards or fighters, carried food and ammunition to the front line, provided first aid, or helped retrieve killed or wounded fighters.(14) The UN reported that sometimes recruitment was a result of coercion or deception.(19) Some children are recruited as young as age 7.(16) Child soldiers may receive payment, meals, and *qat*, a mild narcotic that is legal in Yemen.(15, 16, 20) A UNICEF official estimated that a third of fighters engaged in the armed conflict are children.(21) Limited evidence suggests that boys 12 to 15 who are married in northern tribal regions are considered adults, and therefore are obligated to show their allegiance to their tribes by participating in the internal conflict, including in fighting.(22) Likewise, tribal communities may associate manhood with the ability to use weapons, which encourages children to become involved in fighting.(20)




Enrollment rates in schools have been seriously affected by the internal conflict in Yemen, high levels of violence, and internal displacement. In spring 2015, approximately 3,600 schools were temporarily closed due to airstrikes and street fighting.(18, 23, 24) Although 14,500 schools reopened for the new academic year in November, nearly 1,100 schools remained closed due to damage to their building or a lack of security. Also, 216 schools remained closed because they were being used as shelters for internally displaced persons.(18, 24) The UN reported attacks on schools and military use of schools, which hindered access to education.(25) With attendance rates ranging from 35 percent to 90 percent, depending on the location of the school, at least 1.8 million school-aged children were out of school, increasing their risk of involvement in the worst forms of child labor.(18)

Among the *Muhamasheen* (“marginalized”) minority group, generally of sub-Saharan African origin, illiteracy rates are high and child labor is prevalent in begging and entertainment at weddings and other ceremonies.(9) Syrian refugee children are also engaged in begging.(12)

II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORST FORMS OF 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 Republic of Yemen Government has established laws and regulations related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 4).

Table 4. Laws and Regulations Related to Child Labor

Standard	Yes/No	Age	Related Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Section 5 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013 (26)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Section 7 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013 (26)
Prohibition of Hazardous Occupations or Activities for Children	Yes		Sections 7, 8, and 15 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013 (26)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Section 26 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013 (27)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Section 26 of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013; Article 248 of the Penal Code (25, 27)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 147 and 163 of the Child Rights Law; Articles 272-274 and 279 of the Penal Code (25, 28)
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 (27, 28)
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A*		
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	Yes	18	Article 149 of the Child Rights Law (28)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15‡	Article 18 of the General Education Law (29)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 87 of the Child Rights Law (28)

* No conscription (30)

‡ Age calculated based on available information

Research did not find any legal prohibition of debt bondage and slavery. The legal framework does not appear to explicitly prohibit forced labor.

Research could not determine whether the legal framework adequately prohibits the use, procurement, offering or benefiting from a children in pornography and pornographic performances, or whether it prohibits using a child in prostitution, because a public version of Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013, which replaced Ministerial Order No. 56 of 2004 containing some protections, was not available.

Based on available information, Ministerial Decree No. 11 of 2013 does not appear to explicitly include all phases of child trafficking, such as harboring, transporting, and transferring children for exploitation.(27)

A new constitution was drafted in January 2015, explicitly prohibiting slavery, forced labor, and human trafficking; establishing a minimum age for marriage of 18; and reiterating age 18 for recruitment or engagement in armed conflict.(31) The draft

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Constitution has not yet been adopted, considering the circumstances of the armed conflict by the *Houthis* and the Republic of Yemen Government remaining in exile in Riyadh for most of 2015.(32)

Article 18 of the General Education Law makes education compulsory for nine years, starting from age six. Children are therefore 15 when they finish compulsory education.(29)

III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Republic of Yemen Government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor, including its worst forms (Table 5).

Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor 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. Receive complaints of child labor.(5)
Ministry of the Interior	Enforce child labor laws. Police agencies within the Ministry handle human trafficking investigations.(5)
Ministry of Justice	Enforce child labor laws, and prosecute and adjudicate 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)

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2015, law enforcement agencies in Yemen did not take actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms (Table 6). As a result of widespread violence and instability in Yemen in 2015, the Republic of Yemen Government had limited operational control of its ministries.(5)

Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2014	2015
Labor Inspectorate Funding	0 (33)	0 (5)
Number of Labor Inspectors	Unknown	Unknown
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	Yes (34)	Yes (34)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
■ Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	No (5)
■ Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Unknown	N/A
■ Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown	No (5)
Number of Labor Inspections	Unknown (33)	0 (5)
■ Number Conducted at Worksite	Unknown (33)	N/A
■ Number Conducted by Desk Reviews	Unknown (33)	N/A
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	Unknown (33)	0 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties Were Imposed	Unknown (33)	N/A
■ Number of Penalties Imposed That Were Collected	Unknown (33)	N/A
Routine Inspections Conducted	No (33)	No (5)
■ Routine Inspections Targeted	N/A	N/A
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Unknown	Unknown
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Unknown	Unknown (5)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (33)	No (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Unknown	Unknown

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor's General Administration of Labor Inspection does not have the authority to enforce child labor laws in agriculture and domestic work.(34)

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2015, criminal law enforcement agencies in Yemen did not take actions to combat the worst forms of child labor (Table 7).

Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2014	2015
Training for Investigators		
■ Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	No (5)
■ Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Unknown	N/A
■ Refresher Courses Provided	Unknown	No (5)
Number of Investigations	Unknown	0 (5)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown	0 (5)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown	0 (5)
Number of Convictions	Unknown	N/A
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	Unknown	Unknown

IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Republic of Yemen Government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor, including its worst forms (Table 8).

Table 8. Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor

Coordinating Body	Role & Description
National Steering Committee to Combat Child Labor	Coordinate child labor issues in Yemen. Comprises representatives from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, the Higher Council for Motherhood and Childhood, the Chamber of Commerce, the ILO-IPEC, and local NGOs.(5)
Technical Committee on Combating Trafficking in Persons	Develop a national strategy to combat human trafficking. Established in 2012, comprises government officials and representatives of IOM, meets weekly.(35)
National Network for Child Protection	Established by the Higher Council for Motherhood and Childhood to implement training programs and media awareness campaigns, and advocate progress on children's issues.(5)
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.(36)

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Republic of Yemen Government has established policies related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 9).

Table 9. Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
Action Plan to End and Prevent the Recruitment of Children by the Yemeni Armed Forces	Signed in May 2014 by the Minister of Defense, the Action Plan was designed to ensure that national laws comply with international standards, prohibit the recruitment and use of children in armed forces, investigate allegations of violation, and facilitate UN access to monitor compliance. (37) Due to political instability, the Republic of Yemen Government could not implement the Action Plan in 2015.(5)
National Basic Education Development Strategy (2003–2015)*	Aimed to increase enrollment in basic education (grades 1–9) to 95 percent for children ages 6 to 14, particularly girls in rural areas.(38)

* Child labor elimination and prevention strategies do not appear to have been integrated into this policy.

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 forms of child labor. In 2014, the Ministry of Human Rights drafted a National Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Persons, with an aim to raise awareness, increase cooperation between Yemen and neighboring countries, train officials to identify victims, and create protection procedures for victims of human trafficking. The strategy has not been finalized.(12)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2015, the Republic of Yemen Government participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms (Table 10).

Table 10. Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Phase IV of the Social Fund for Development (SFD) (2011–2015)	\$154 million Government of United Kingdom-funded, 5-year project implemented by the SFD to improve access to education, create employment opportunities, and reduce vulnerability for disadvantaged groups.(39) Special needs groups, including child laborers and street children, were targeted under the SFD for social protection and education programs in partnership with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, and the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation.(40)
Second Basic Education Development Project (2013–2018)	\$66 million World Bank-funded, 5-year project implemented by the Ministry of Education to improve student learning and increase access to basic education in selected areas.(38) The World Bank suspended activities in March 2015.(41)
Social Welfare Fund Institutional Support Project (2010–2017)	\$10 million World Bank-funded, 7-year project, implemented by the Social Welfare Fund to support the delivery of social services, including those related to children’s health and education through improving the cash transfer program.(42, 43) In May 2015, the World Bank suspended operations, but until then, limited support activities continued, including the consolidation of beneficiary databases.(44)
Child Protection Sub-Cluster (CPSC)	Led by UNICEF, the CPSC provides psycho-social support, including sports and arts, in community-based and mobile centers. In 2015, UNICEF provided psycho-social support to more than 348,000 children; provided information to 408,000 individuals, including children, on how to avoid physical injury in conflict areas; and documented more than 1,000 cases of grave child rights violations.(18)
Education Cluster	\$6.8 million program implemented by UNICEF, in cooperation with the Republic of Yemen Government, provides educational support activities and services. In the Back to School campaign in 2015, the program supported 555,000 out-of-school children to reintegrate into the education system, including by providing backpacks, books, and school supplies; and served more than 31,000 children by providing temporary learning spaces and repairing school buildings.(18) The Ministry of Education and UNICEF trained school teachers and staff, parents, and community members on psychological support for children affected by conflict.(18, 45)

In 2014, the Civil Status and Registration Authority, in cooperation with UNICEF, carried out a campaign to issue birth certificates for children who lacked them. The program was not continued in 2015.(5)

Research found no programs intended to remove, rehabilitate, and reintegrate children engaged in armed conflict.(19) 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 fishing.

VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor, including its worst forms, in Yemen (Table 11).

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Accede to the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons.	2013 – 2015
	Make publicly available the Ministerial Order No. 11 of 2013.	2015
	Ensure that debt bondage, slavery, and all phases of child trafficking are criminally prohibited.	2015
Legal Framework	Ensure the law is sufficiently comprehensive to prohibit the use, procurement, offering of a child for prostitution, child pornography, and pornographic performances, as well as benefiting from a monetary or in-kind transaction involving the sexual exploitation of children.	2015
Enforcement	Ensure that labor inspectors have sufficient funding to conduct inspections.	2009 – 2015
	Make information publicly available on the number of labor inspectors, whether unannounced inspections are permitted, and whether there is a reciprocal referral mechanism among labor authorities, criminal authorities, and social services.	2010 – 2015
	Ensure that labor inspectors and criminal investigators receive child labor training.	2015

Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor, Including its Worst Forms (cont)

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Enforcement	Strengthen the Labor Inspectorate by initiating targeted inspections based on analysis of data related to risk-prone sectors and patterns of serious incidents.	2015
	Re-establish a mechanism to receive child labor complaints.	2015
	Ensure that authorities can enforce minimum age protection in all sectors in which the worst forms of child labor are prevalent, including in agriculture and domestic work.	2009 – 2015
	Ensure that criminal law enforcement agencies can enforce child labor laws.	2015
Government Policies	Implement the Action Plan to End the Recruitment and Use of Children in Armed Conflict.	2009 – 2015
	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, such as human trafficking.	2009 – 2015
Social Programs	Expand programs to improve children's access to education.	2013 – 2015
	Resume birth registration campaign, in particular, to facilitate age verification of recruits into the armed forces.	2015
	Institute a rehabilitation and reintegration program for children engaged in armed conflict and children involved in other worst forms of child labor, including fishing.	2011 – 2015

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