

In 2014, Yemen made a moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The Houthis captured Sana'a, the capital, in September and established de facto control over the ministries and army. Prior to this, the Government had launched an action plan to end and prevent the recruitment of children by the Yemeni Armed Forces and established a Joint Technical Committee to monitor the action plan's implementation. The Government also participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, children in Yemen are engaged in child labor, including in fishing, and in the worst forms of child labor, including in armed conflict. Gaps in laws, enforcement, policies, and programs to combat child labor remain. Non-state armed groups continue to use children in the country's internal conflicts. No evidence was found of Government efforts to provide demobilization and rehabilitation services to child soldiers who have been involved in combat.



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. (1-6) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Yemen.

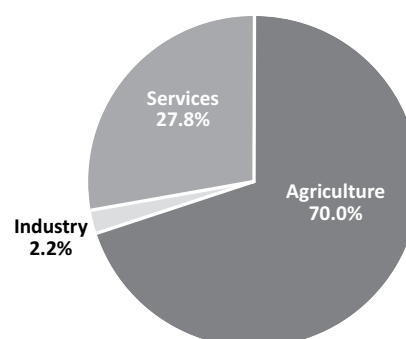
Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	5-14 yrs.	13.6 (834,866)
Attending School (%)	5-14 yrs.	68.0
Combining Work and School (%)	7-14 yrs.	10.3
Primary Completion Rate (%)		69.8

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2012, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015.(7)

Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from National Child Labor Survey, 2010.(8)

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



According to the 2010 National Child Labor Survey, the majority of working children were in the agricultural and domestic work sectors.(5) Based on data from 2013, the national average child labor rate was 23 percent, although there are significant variations across governorates.(9) It has likely increased since then as a result of continued political instability and an economic crisis.(6) 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 legal in Yemen) (2, 4)
	Production of cereals,* fruits,* and vegetables* (4)
	Fishing, activities unknown (3, 5, 6, 10-12)
	Hunting,* activities unknown (5)
	Raising livestock*, including sheep,* goats,* cows,* and chickens* (4, 5)

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

Sector/Industry	Activity
Industry	Working in rock quarries and mining (2, 5, 6)
	Construction,* activities unknown (2, 5)
	Working in auto shops,* washing cars* (6, 11)
Services	Working in welding,* glass shops,* and painting* (11)
	Street work, including begging (5, 6, 11, 13)
	Working in restaurants*† (2)
	Domestic work*† (2, 5)
	Waste collection* (6, 13)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Selling goods in stores* (5, 14)
	Commercial sexual exploitation sometimes as a result of human trafficking (11, 15, 16)
	Used in illicit activities, including smuggling of drugs and alcohol* (2)
	Forced labor, begging, and smuggling of <i>qat</i> each as a result of trafficking* (11, 16)
	Forced domestic work* and forced labor in agriculture* (14, 16)
	Used in armed conflict and armed guarding at checkpoints (6, 17, 18)

* 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.

Yemen witnessed armed conflict in 2014. The Houthis, based in northwest Yemen captured Sana’a, the capital, in September, and established *de facto* control over the ministries and the military. Armed conflict involving Houthi and tribal forces persisted in western and central areas of Yemen and between Houthi forces and al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula in the south.(19, 20)

Children in Yemen are vulnerable to recruitment and use in ongoing armed conflicts.(6, 21) In 2014, 156 boys between the ages of 9 and 17 were recruited and used by the Houthis and other non-state armed groups.(18) While a 1991 law prohibits the use of child soldiers, the Houthis and other armed groups continue to have children in their ranks.(6, 22)

Determining precise ages of children recruited for military activity is a problem due to the low number of birth registrations.(14) However, limited evidence suggests that 12- to 15-year-old married boys in northern tribal regions are considered adults, and therefore obligated to show their allegiance to their tribe by participating in different activities in the internal conflict. Some reports indicate that boys under age 18 were tribal fighters in conflicts; however, other sources indicate that boys were used only as guards.(14)




Girls are trafficked within Yemen to hotels in Aden, Sana’a, Ta’iz, and other cities for commercial sexual exploitation. (16) Yemeni children are trafficked to Saudi Arabia for commercial sexual exploitation, forced labor, forced begging, and smuggling of *qat*.(15, 16, 23) There is evidence that tourists, including those from Saudi Arabia, have entered into temporary marriages with Yemeni girls as a form of commercial sexual exploitation. Saudi tourists at times take the girls with whom they entered into a temporary marriage back to Saudi Arabia where the girls are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation or abandoned.(15, 16)

Enrollment rates in schools have been seriously affected by Yemen’s internal conflict, high levels of violence, and internally displaced persons in the north and south. There is some evidence that these problems have prematurely closed schools and that school buildings have been destroyed during periods of violence.(10, 24, 25) The use of schools by parties to the armed conflict and subsequent attacks on such schools by other parties further limited access to education.(22, 26) In 2011, it was reported that less than half of all boys and about one quarter of girls attend secondary school.(15)

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 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	Article 5 of the Ministerial Decree No. 11 (27)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 4 of Ministerial Decree No. 56 (28); Ministerial Decree No. 11 (29, 30)
Prohibition of Hazardous Occupations or Activities for Children	Yes		Ministerial Decree No. 11 (29, 30)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Article 28 of the Ministerial Decree No. 56 (28)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Article 248 of Penal Code (31)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Article 163 of the Child Rights Act; Article 27 of the Ministerial Decree No. 56 (28)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 26 of the Ministerial Decree No. 56 (28)
Minimum Age for Compulsory Military Recruitment	N/A*		
Minimum Age for Voluntary Military Service	Yes	18	Child Rights Act; Ministerial Order No. 56 (15, 32)
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Ministerial Decree No. 56 (28)
Free Public Education	Yes		General Education Law No. 45 (33)

* No conscription.(32)

Because Article 3 of the Labor Code excludes certain type of work from the labor code's protections, including workers engaged in domestic work and certain categories of agricultural work, children working in those industries are not protected by the Labor Code's minimum age provisions.(34)

There is no criminal law that prohibits foreign tourists from sexually exploiting children in Yemen.(14) In September 2014, the Ministry of Human Rights, in cooperation with the ILO, held a 3-day national workshop to revise the current anti-trafficking draft law, in which representatives from the Government, academia, and civil society participated.(35)

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

The 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'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.(30, 36) Receive complaints of child labor.(6)
Ministry of Interior	Enforce child labor laws. Police agencies within the Ministry handle trafficking investigations.(16, 30, 36)
Ministry of Justice	Enforce child labor laws and prosecute and adjudicate child labor cases.(36)
Ministry of Human Rights, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Legal Affairs, Parliament, and the Social Fund for Development	Maintain supporting roles in combating child trafficking.(37)

Research found no evidence that law enforcement agencies took actions to combat child labor, including its worst forms.

Labor Law Enforcement

In 2014, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor's Child Labor Unit lost all funding and did not perform formal inspections. Complaints received were handled on an *ad hoc* basis by the Director of the Child Labor Unit personally or through her immediate staff.(6) Research did not find further information on the number of child labor law violations and possible citations or penalties.

Criminal Law Enforcement

In 2014, research found no information on the number of investigators, investigations, prosecutions, convictions, as well as on the implementation of penalties.

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

The Government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor, including its worst forms (Table 6).

Table 6. 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; consists of representatives from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, the Higher Council for Motherhood and Childhood, the Chamber of Commerce, ILO-IPEC, and local NGOs.(37)
Technical Committee on Combating Trafficking in Persons	Develop a national strategy to combat human trafficking. Established in 2012, composed of government officials and representatives of the IOM, and meets on a weekly basis.(38)
National Network for Child Protection	Established by the Higher Council for Motherhood and Childhood. Its 2014 plan consists of establishing branches in Aden, Lahej, Taiz and Dhamar provinces; training programs and media awareness campaigns, and advocating children's issues.(9, 39)
Joint Technical Committee to prevent recruitment of children in Yemeni Armed Forces*	Implement and monitor the Action Plan to end and prevent the recruitment of children by the Yemeni Armed Forces. Composed of the Ministry of Defense, the Higher Council for Motherhood and Childhood, the Civil Status and Registration Authority, and UN representatives.(40)

* Mechanism to coordinate efforts to address child labor was created during the reporting period.

V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

The Government of Yemen has established policies related to child labor, including its worst forms (Table 7).

Table 7. Policies Related to Child Labor

Policy	Description
National Strategy for Combatting Trafficking in Persons	Drafted by the Ministry of Human Rights, includes raising awareness, increasing cooperation between Yemen and neighboring countries, training officials, and creating protection procedures for victims of human trafficking. The strategy has not been finalized.(16)

Table 7. Policies Related to Child Labor (cont)

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 is designed to ensure national laws comply with international standards, prohibit the recruitment and use of children in the armed forces, investigate allegations of violation, and facilitate UN access to monitor compliance.(41) Due to political instability, the Government could not implement the Action Plan.(6)

† Policy was approved during the reporting period.

In January 2014, most major Yemeni political factions approved the National Dialogue Conference outcomes, which included extensive new provisions for protecting children's rights. However, the worsening political crisis during the reporting period prevented its implementation.(6)

VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2014, the Government of Yemen participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor, including its worst forms (Table 8).

Table 8. Social Programs to Address Child Labor

Program	Description
Phase IV of the Social Fund for Development (SFD) (2011–2015)	\$154 million, Government of UK-funded, 5-year project implemented by the SFD to improve access to education and provide employment opportunities and reduce vulnerability for disadvantaged groups.(42) Special needs groups, including child laborers and street children, are 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. Includes improving centers for street children and developing safe child health and educational services.(43)
Social Welfare Fund Institutional Support Project* (2010–2017)	\$10 million, World Bank-funded, 7-year project, implemented by the Social Welfare Fund to provide low-income individuals with vocational skills and economic opportunities, including small- and micro-enterprise development, in order to eventually graduate from the cash transfer program.(44, 45)
Temporary classrooms in conflict-affected areas	Government of Japan-funded project to support construction of 25 new schools in areas affected by conflict in Aden, Lahj, Abyan, Al Dhale, and Shabwa Governorates.(46)
Middle East Partnership Initiative projects	Government participates in project run by the USDOS that offers business training for high school youth; may encourage decent work for youth and reduce their vulnerability to worst forms of child labor. One such project targets youth in Sana'a and Aden for training and internships.(47, 48)
The Child Protection Sub-Cluster (CPSC)*	Coordinated by UNICEF, the CPSC in 2014 monitored grave violations in Al-Dale'e Governorate, provided after-school safe spaces for children and trained new volunteers to work in the centers.(49) It also launched the Minimum Standards on Child Protection Intervention in Emergencies, guiding compliance with international standards in areas of injuries, sexual violence, and unaccompanied children.(50)
Campaign to register birth certificates	Civil Status and Registration Authority, working in cooperation with UNICEF to issue birth certificates for children who lack registration. In 2014, more than 30,000 children received birth certificates in Aden, Abyan, and Taiz.(22, 51)
Global Partnership for Education School Rehabilitation program	UNICEF, in cooperation with the Government, rehabilitates many affected schools and constructs temporary schools in conflict-ridden areas. In 2014, schools in Sada, Sana'a, Mareb, and Aden Governorates received furniture.(51, 52)

*The impact of this program on child labor does not appear to have been studied.

Efforts to combat trafficking in persons in Yemen have been hampered by a lack of government funding and by weakened governance during the 3-year transitional Government.(53, 54) Research found no programs intended to remove and rehabilitate children recruited into the armed forces.(33) 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.(30)

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 9).

Table 9. 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 – 2014
	Establish legal minimum age protections for children engaged in domestic and all agricultural work.	2014
	Ensure laws criminalize the sexual exploitation of children by foreign tourists.	2013 – 2014
Enforcement	Ensure there is sufficient funding for inspections to be carried out, and that inspections are targeted in the sectors in which the worst forms of child labor are prevalent.	2009 – 2014
	Track and make publicly available information on the enforcement of child labor laws, including its worst forms.	2010 – 2014
Government Policies	Adopt a policy that addresses all relevant worst forms of child labor, such as trafficking in persons.	2009 – 2014
	Implement the Action Plan to end the use of children in armed conflict.	2009 – 2014
Social Programs	Institute programs to improve children's access to education.	2013 – 2014
	Assess the impact that existing programs may have on child labor.	2011 – 2014
	Institute a demobilization and rehabilitation program for children recruited into armed conflict.	2011 – 2014
	Institute programs to address the worst forms of child labor, particularly in fishing.	2011 – 2014

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