

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

and Violations of Children's Rights in Yemen

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Transitional Justice and Violations of Children's Rights in Yemen

Prepared by

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-DT Institute

[DT Institute](#) is a non-profit organization committed to “implementing development differently.” We implement complex global development programs in conflict-affected, fragile, and closed environments. We also fund thought leadership initiatives that spur innovation and improve people’s lives through evidence-based programs. DT Institute partners with communities and leaders to help build and sustain more resilient, equitable, inclusive, and democratic societies.

-The Yemeni Coalition for Monitoring Human Rights Violations (Rasd Coalition) ([YCMHRV](#)) is a Yemeni civil society organization established in January 2015 under license no. 1240. Rasd Coalition monitors and documents all human rights violations in Yemen through its field team, issues specialized analytical reports on those violations and participates in submitting these reports to the relevant local and international entities to pave the way for accountability and justice and to ensure that perpetrators do not enjoy impunity. It also conducts training and advocacy on human rights issues at the local and international levels and raises awareness of human rights principles and concepts.

-Support Awareness and Facilitate Enforcement of Children’s Rights During Conflict – Phase II (SAFE II):

The SAFE II program, implemented by DT Institute in partnership with the Yemeni Coalition for Monitoring Human Rights Violations (YCMHRV), aims to align efforts to protect Yemeni children from grave human rights violations during armed conflict by strengthening local and international recognition of them and facilitating accountability for perpetrators. SAFE II seeks to achieve this through civic education campaigns directed at communities and victims to enable the safe reporting of grave violations; documenting and investigating these violations to shape dialogues on justice and accountability with international stakeholders using credible evidence; and launching a dialogue among Yemeni justice-sector stakeholders on protecting children from grave violations during and after the conflict.

- Transitional Justice and Violations of Children’s Rights in Yemen

This study monitors the impact of the ongoing armed conflict on childhood in Yemen, with the aim of supporting transitional justice approaches rooted in recognizing children as victims while strengthening their participation as active agents in peacebuilding. The research was conducted as part of the SAFE II Project implemented by the Yemen Coalition for Monitoring Human Rights Violations (YCMHRV), (also known as Rasd Coalition) in partnership with DT Institute. It is based on field data gathered through surveys that included three groups: individuals (comprising victims and experts), institutions working in the field of child rights, and representatives of political parties and entities. The study addresses a range of issues including legal awareness, patterns of violations, repercussions for children, local and international responses, and political perspectives on transitional justice. By providing an evidence base to inform national policy and legislation, it also aims to ensure that childhood-related concerns are fully integrated into community-based reparation processes in the post-conflict context.

Executive Summary:

This study examines the state of protecting children's rights in Yemen during the ongoing conflict since 2014, through an analysis of the legal and institutional framework, a mapping of patterns of violations and their multiple impacts, an assessment of local and international responses, a review of the positions of political parties and actors, and an exploration of opportunities to integrate child-related issues into the transitional justice process. It starts from the premise that the conflict has produced an unprecedented humanitarian crisis that has made children the most affected group, necessitating a comprehensive approach that addresses violations and establishes safeguards for non-repetition.

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach that included a legal and documentary analysis of relevant national and international legislation, and a review of international experiences that integrated children's rights into transitional justice processes. The study also conducted surveys covering 77 individuals, including victims and their families, as well as experts and specialists in child rights, in addition to 13 questionnaires with representatives of institutions working in the field of child rights and 14 questionnaires with representatives of political parties. Participation was geographically concentrated in Taiz Governorate in areas under the control of the Internationally Recognized Government.

The findings reveal a wide gap between Yemen's legislative and international commitments and actual protection practices. More than two-thirds of participants (73.3%) believe that the existing legal framework does not provide the minimum level of protection for children. The legislative review indicates significant gaps, such as setting the minimum age of marriage below 15; the absence of an explicit criminalization of the recruitment and use of children; conflicting provisions on juvenile criminal responsibility; and weak protection against crimes of sexual exploitation and sexual violence. The prescribed penalties are also not commensurate with the gravity of certain offenses, such as rape, which undermines the effectiveness of criminal policy and entrenches impunity.

The findings also underscore institutional and structural shortcomings. Most participants (79.7%) affirmed the absence of effective compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A majority rated the performance of government institutions in protecting children's rights as weak or very weak, with slight variations across different areas of control. The common denominator, however, is poor responsiveness and effectiveness in all cases, with Parliament inactive and the Higher Council for Motherhood and Childhood absent, leaving

protection plans dependent on donor support. Local civil society organizations were viewed by participants as having played an active role in monitoring, psychosocial support, education, and rehabilitation, but their impact remained limited by insufficient funding, security constraints, and the politicization of human rights and relief work.

Regarding violations on the ground against children, participants indicated that direct, militarized violations are the most widespread, followed by violations affecting bodily integrity and essential services. A total of 88.7% of participants said child recruitment is prevalent in their areas, followed by killing or direct injury (61.7%), sexual violence (51%), attacks on schools and hospitals (50%), and the denial of humanitarian assistance to children (35.3%). Kidnappings were also reported at a notable rate (51.4%). These findings confirm that violations feed into one another in a vicious cycle of violence and trauma, heightening children's vulnerability amid the conflict. Moreover, 91.7% of participants said that girls are the most affected by grave violations, followed by children with disabilities, then marginalized and displaced children, due to the intersection of gender, geography, and class.

As for the structural causes of the persistence of these violations, most participants agreed on several, foremost among them the absence of legal accountability (96.9%), weak protection mechanisms (86.8%), lack of institutional coordination (80%), alongside the continuation of armed conflict. Fragile coordination between official bodies and local and international organizations has also led to coverage gaps and the exclusion of vulnerable groups such as children with disabilities and child recruits.

On impacts, survey participants were asked to rank the most salient short- and long-term effects they observed among children affected by violations. In the short term, psychological impacts ranked first, followed by physical and then social impacts, while economic impacts ranked last. In the long term, chronic psychological difficulties ranked first, followed by loss of educational and employment opportunities, then potential engagement in violence or re-recruitment, in addition to an erosion of trust in family and community, social isolation, and relationship difficulties. This confirms that violations do not leave only immediate effects but generate interlinked repercussions that harm children's present and future.

In terms of responses, the review of local and international efforts to protect children revealed clear gaps in psychosocial support and reintegration programs, as these interventions remain limited in scope and do not reach all those affected, particularly in remote and most severely impacted areas. On the other hand, there are promising potentials for building upon scalable

successful local experiences, provided that institutional and financial support is available, as well as political and community readiness to cooperate with international and local organizations and to support the establishment of independent mechanisms to address violations.

The study also found that the positions of political parties toward integrating child-related issues into the transitional justice process are divided. While some participants support documentation of violations, redress, and institutional reforms, the inclusion of children's rights in political reconciliation and settlement agendas remains contentious. This reflects limited commitment and a lack of national consensus, posing a challenge to developing a transitional justice process that is fair to children as the most vulnerable group.

The study concluded that the success of any transitional justice process in Yemen will depend on its ability to make child protection a national priority, through comprehensive legal and institutional reforms, effective reparation mechanisms, engagement of civil society, and the provision of psychosocial support and reintegration services. It called for a package of recommendations targeting the government, the international community, conflict parties, and civil society organizations, to ensure the effective and sustainable protection of children and the meaningful redress of violations, recognizing that justice for children is essential for building a just peace and a stable future.

Introduction

Background of the Conflict and Significance of the Study

The ongoing conflict in Yemen since 2014 has become one of the deadliest armed crises of the 21st century, evolving from an armed confrontation between political and military actors into a comprehensive humanitarian catastrophe. Children have suffered the gravest consequences. According to reports from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), nearly 9.8 million children urgently need humanitarian assistance, and more than 2.7 million suffer from acute malnutrition. Nearly half of all children under five have developed chronic stunting due to a lack of food and essential healthcare¹. Since the beginning of the conflict, over 3,900 children have been killed, and around 7,600 have been injured or maimed, bringing the total number of child victims to over 11,500². It is important to note that these figures represent only the

¹ UNICEF. 9 Years of Conflict in Yemen: Millions of Children Are Malnourished and Stunted. 26 Mar. 2024, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/9-years-conflict-yemen-millions-children-are-malnourished-and-stunted>. Accessed 31 May 2025.

² Ibid

officially documented cases by United Nations entities, and the real numbers are likely much higher due to challenges in access and the absence of comprehensive monitoring mechanisms. International organizations, prominently Human Rights Watch, have reported that all parties to the conflict have committed violations against children, including indiscriminate attacks, landmines, the use of drones, and other severe abuses such as forced recruitment, sexual violence, and denial of humanitarian assistance. These constitute some of the six grave violations against children in armed conflict and, in many cases, amount to war crimes under international humanitarian law³.

Education is among the most violated rights. Repeated attacks and the use of educational facilities for military purposes have prevented more than two million children from continuing their studies. Approximately 3,000 schools have been destroyed or rendered dysfunctional, and according to the International Committee of the Red Cross, about one-fifth of usable schools have been closed because of security risks or their occupation by parties to the conflict⁴.

The situation is further worsened by the ongoing use of schools, mosques, and summer camps by Ansar Allah (the Houthis) as sites for recruiting children, in clear violation of international humanitarian law. Despite the signing of action plans with the United Nations to stop child recruitment by both Ansar Allah and the Government of Yemen, field reports continue to show that minors are still being drawn into combat, as confirmed by Yemeni civil society organizations⁵.

This tragic reality starkly demonstrates the devastating impact of armed conflict on the most vulnerable groups and underscores the breakdown of protection and essential care systems for children in Yemen. It threatens to perpetuate the cycle of violence if not addressed through comprehensive approaches that prioritize justice, not just relief.

The Role of Transitional Justice in Addressing Violations

Transitional justice offers a pathway toward sustainable peace that is grounded in recognizing the rights of victims and ensuring their genuine inclusion in post-conflict processes. In Yemen, children are among the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, having borne the greatest burden of the war. This makes the integration of child-related issues a key element in any

³ Human Rights Watch. "On International Children Day: Justice for Yemen Children Must Be Included in Peace Talks. 20 Nov. 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/11/20/international-children-day-justice-yemen-children-must-be-included-peace-talks>

⁴ International Committee of the Red Cross: Two million children in Yemen are unable to access education. Al Jazeera, <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2023/9/10/باليمن-طفل-مليونونا-الأحمر-الصليب>.

⁵ Human Rights Watch. "On International Children Day: Justice for Yemen Children Must Be Included in Peace Talks Human Rights Watch, 20 Nov. 2023, www.hrw.org/news/2023/11/20/international-children-day-justice-yemen-children-must-be-included-peace-talks.

transitional justice process, not only because they are victims of violations, but also as individuals capable of contributing to peacebuilding.

Transitional justice therefore emerges as a crucial tool for addressing grave violations committed against children, through accurate documentation, ensuring accountability for perpetrators, and activating individual and collective reparation mechanisms—including psychosocial and social rehabilitation. It also aims to safeguard against the recurrence of violations by reforming institutions responsible for child protection to ensure non-repetition.

This process also requires involving children in the development of roadmaps for peacebuilding and devising policies that reflect their real experiences and needs, restoring dignity to victims and preventing the reduction of their suffering to a mere byproduct of conflict. Ignoring these violations entrenches a culture of impunity and undermines prospects for genuine national reconciliation or future reforms that place childhood at the center of justice and development.

Structure of the Study:

The study consists of five chapters. Chapter One addresses the legal and institutional framework for protecting children's rights in Yemen. Chapter Two presents the patterns and multidimensional effects of violations. Chapter Three focuses on local and international responses to the protection of children during conflict. Chapter Four reviews the positions of political parties and actors regarding transitional justice and children's rights. Chapter Five explores children's rights within the transitional justice process from the perspective of opportunities and challenges.

Objectives of the Study:

The study aims to analyze the transformations affecting childhood in Yemen during the conflict period, by examining both the legal and institutional frameworks for protecting children's rights before and after 2014, documenting the patterns of violations committed against children, highlighting geographic and institutional differences in the practices of various parties, assessing local and international responses, and measuring their effectiveness in protecting children. The study supports transitional justice pathways that recognize children as victims and empower them as agents of peacebuilding. It also seeks to bridge the existing knowledge gap by providing a practical roadmap for integrating child-related issues into public policies, national legislation, and community-based reparation mechanisms in the post-conflict context.

Methodology:

The study adopted a multi-tool methodology designed to provide an in-depth analysis of childhood in the context of the Yemeni conflict and to offer a reliable knowledge base for drafting evidence-based recommendations. This supports decision-makers in developing a

transitional justice process that addresses the specific needs of children. The methodology included a legal analysis of relevant national and international legislation, a review of the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference and reports from concerned organizations, and a brief comparative study of international experiences integrating children's rights into transitional justice processes, in order to extract lessons adaptable to the Yemeni context. Field tools were also used, including surveys targeting three main groups: individuals, victims, experts, and specialists (77 surveys); institutions working in child rights (13 surveys); and representatives of political parties and actors (14 surveys). Survey topics ranged from legal awareness, patterns of violations, impacts on children, support and protection programs, to political perspectives on transitional justice. All surveys used a mix of open and closed questions as well as ordinal scales (three-point and five-point Likert scales), enabling an integrated qualitative and quantitative database for analysis. However, most participants in the study were from Taiz Governorate and areas controlled by the government, while access to other areas was limited by security restrictions and geographic divisions. This restricts the generalizability of the results across all of Yemen, making it more appropriate to treat the findings as analytical indicators that provide a foundation for monitoring overall trends and identifying priorities for child protection within the transitional justice process.

Sample Characteristics:

A. Individuals

The sample was characterized by demographic diversity reflecting the population and social variation among participants. The total number of individual participants was 77, with the largest age group being 26–35 years (36.4%), followed by those aged 36–45 (33.8%), indicating a predominance of adults of working age who are able to provide objective perspectives.

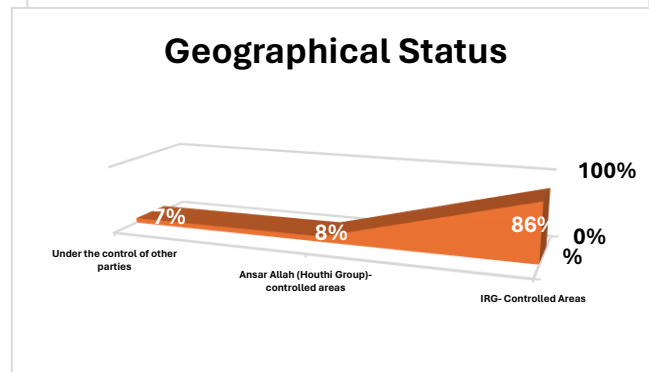
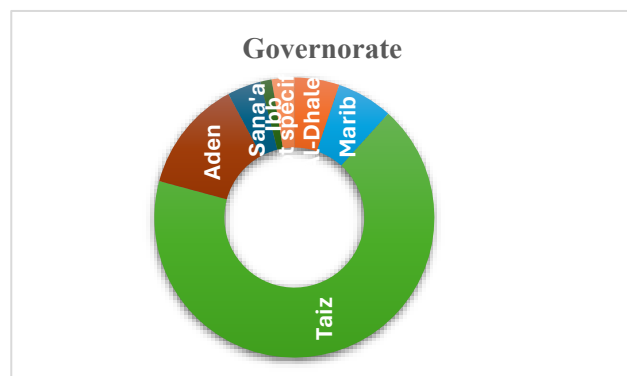
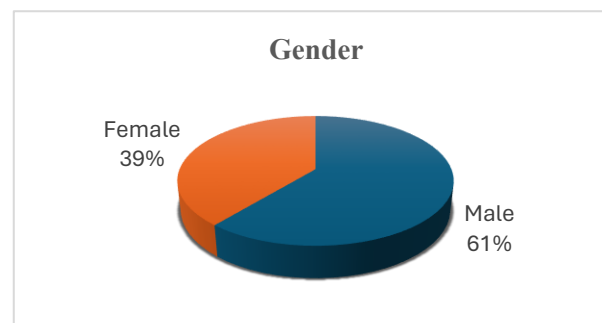
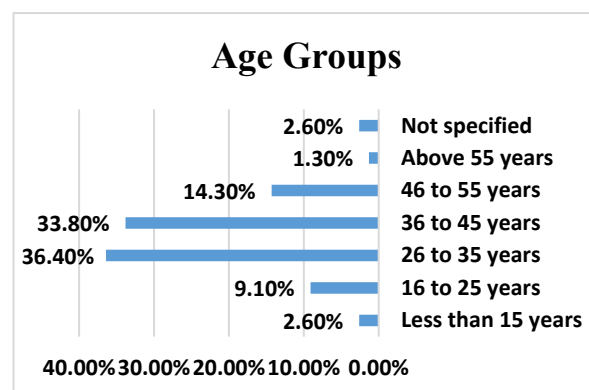
In terms of gender, males represented 61.0% of the sample, while females accounted for 39.0%, offering a reasonable level of female representation within the group.

Geographically, participation was concentrated in Taiz Governorate (67.5%), followed by Aden (13.0%), with limited representation from Marib (6.5%), Al Dhale'e (5.2%), Sana'a (3.9%), and Ibb (1.3%). Two participants did not disclose their governorate, which may somewhat constrain the generalizability of the findings.

The majority of participants reside in areas under the control of the internationally recognized government (85.7%), compared to 7.8% in areas controlled by Ansar Allah (the Houthis), and 6.5% in areas controlled by other parties.

Regarding living conditions, most participants live with their families (61.0%), while 33.8% reside in temporary or rented accommodation, 3.9% live in displacement camps, and 1.3% reported other types of residence.

The findings also show that 28.6% of participants are internally displaced, and 23.4% have been directly affected by the conflict, whether by losing their home, a family member, or suffering injury. This enhances the credibility of their views concerning childhood conditions during the conflict.

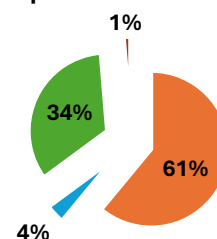


Results from the sample reveal noticeable variation in the local environments where children live, which has significant implications for childhood conditions and violations of rights. In terms of settlement type, nearly two-thirds of participants (59.7%) come from urban communities, compared to 18.2% from rural areas and 6.5% from displacement camps, while 15.6% selected 'other'. This high proportion from urban settings may in part reflect the relative ease of access for researchers but also indicates the concentration of children in densely populated areas that are often subject to intense pressure on basic services and protection opportunities.

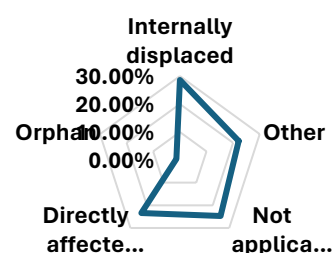
On the social and living conditions front, nearly half of the participants (45.5%) described their communities as suffering from poverty and a lack of basic services, while 23.4% pointed to division and tension, compared to only 7.8% who viewed their communities as cohesive. These findings highlight fragile environments characterized by weak solidarity networks, which increases the risks of children facing deprivation, dropping out of school, violence, or recruitment. Additionally, the fact that around a quarter of participants refrained from answering may signal sensitive or unclassified situations. Overall, the analysis indicates that poverty and weak social structures are the main challenges to protecting children, while declining social cohesion poses a heightened risk of the collapse of traditional protection systems. This threatens the psychological and social stability of children and makes them more vulnerable to violations.

The **profile** of study participants also shows clear diversity in their relationship to child rights issues, reflecting intersections between personal experience, professional knowledge, and civic interest. Members of local communities⁶ formed the largest group (35.1%), followed by activists and human rights defenders (31.2%), then experts specialized in child issues or

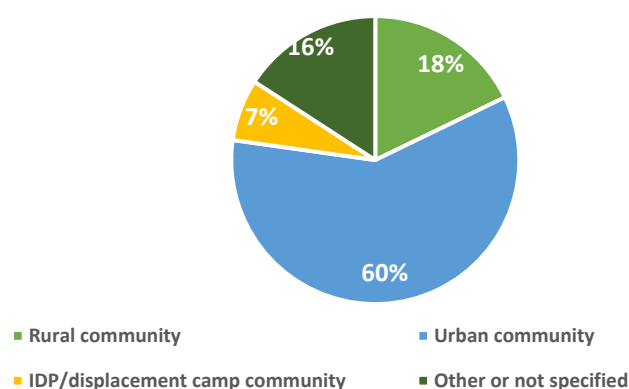
Place of residence
 ■ Home with family
 ■ IDP camp



Legal or social status



Nature of participants' local community (Housing status)



⁶ They are the participants who represent the social and cultural environment in which children live, and who are often the closest to noticing violations or changes affecting children's rights.

transitional justice (19.5%). There were also direct representation of child victims (5.2%) and their families (3.9%), parents and caregivers (2.6%), in addition to 2.6% from unclassified categories.

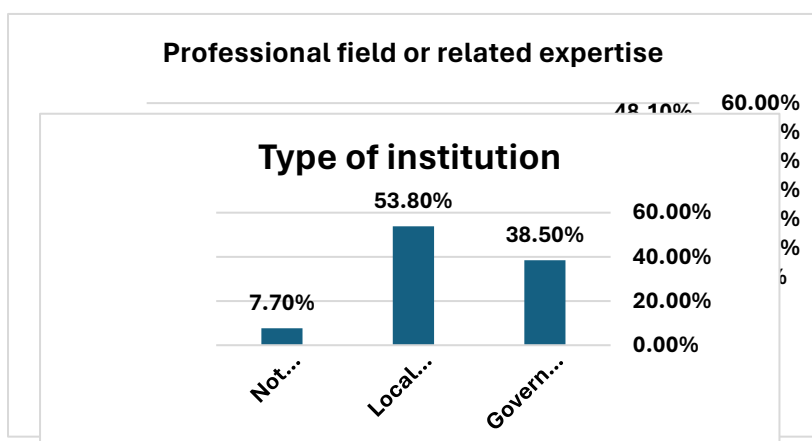
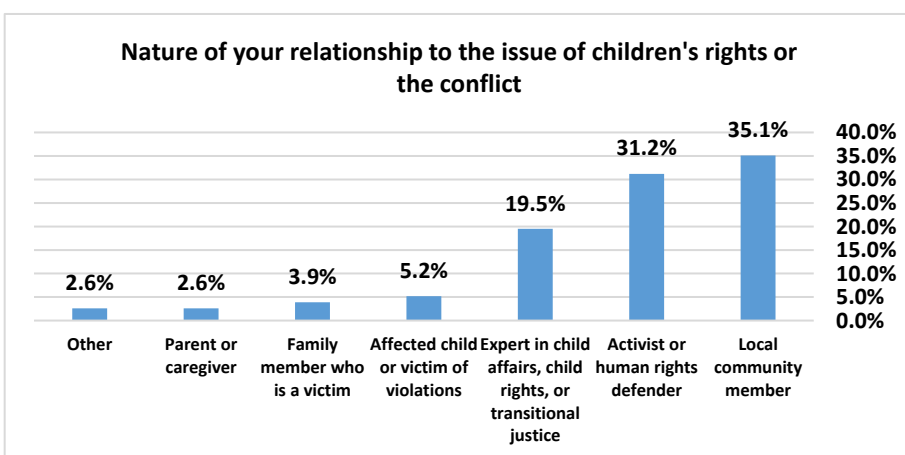
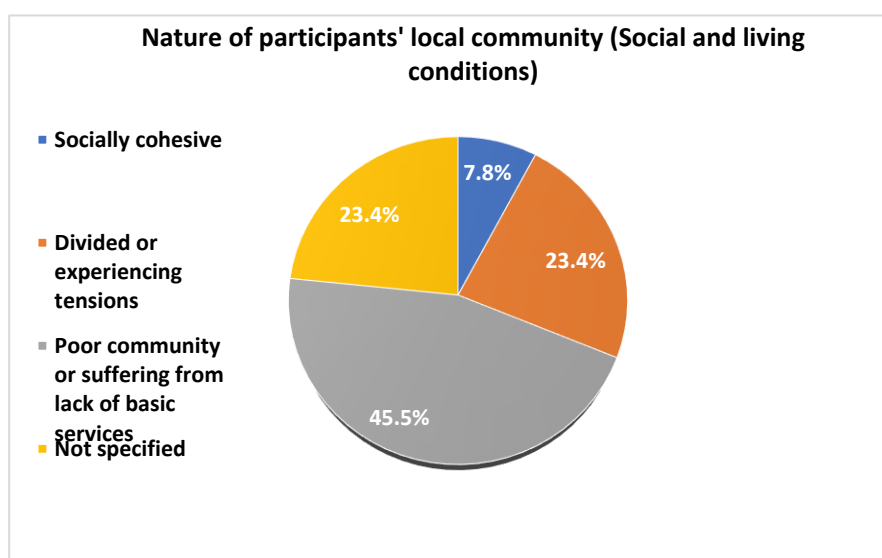
In terms of professional specialties, the field of human rights was most prominent (48.1%), followed by humanitarian and relief affairs (15.6%), law and justice (13.0%), education (10.4%), and psychological or social health (9.1%), with 3.9% in other fields. This provides the study with a range of expertise that supports the comprehensiveness of the analysis.

B. Institutions:

A total of 13 institutions participated in the study, distributed as follows: seven local non-governmental organizations (53.8%), reflecting their vital role in field response efforts, and five government institutions (38.5%), indicating a significant level of official engagement.

In terms of geographic distribution, Taiz ranked first with four institutions (30.8%), followed by entities operating nationwide with three institutions (23.1%). The remaining five institutions were distributed equally (7.7% each) across the governorates of Al-Mahweet, Hadhramaut, Lahj, Al Bayda, and Aden, as well as the liberated areas. This reflects a spatial diversity that enriches the findings of the study.

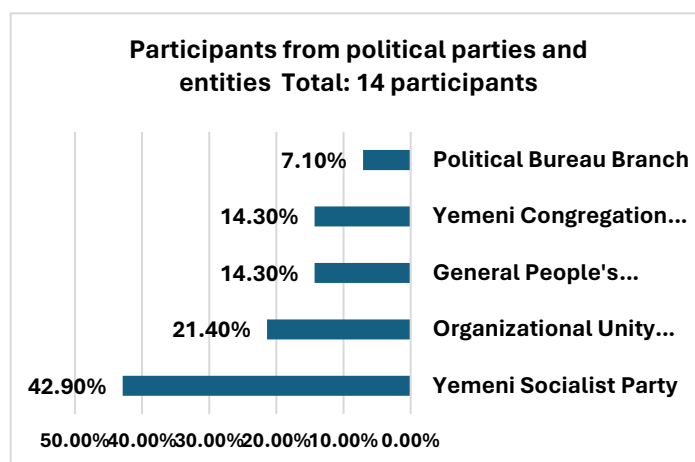
The participating institutions also varied in their fields of intervention. Child protection ranked first with 20.9%, followed by legal support and transitional justice, each accounting for 16.3%, indicating a growing awareness of the importance of legal accountability and empowering victims. Awareness-raising came next at 14.0%, followed by mental health at 9.3%. In contrast, education and



humanitarian relief recorded a low share of 4.7% each, possibly due to the specialization of certain institutions or the division of roles among different actors. Other areas accounted for 14.0%, encompassing non-traditional interventions that require further qualitative analysis to better understand their nature and impact.

C. Political Parties and Components

The study targeted a number of representatives from political parties and components, with a total of 14 participants. The data showed that the Yemeni Socialist Party topped the sample with 42.9%, reflecting its active role in issues of transitional justice and children's rights. The Nasserite Unionist People's Organization ranked second with 21.4%, while the remaining percentage was equally divided between the General People's Congress and the Yemeni Congregation for Reform (14.3% each). The branch of the Political Bureau recorded the lowest representation at 7.1%, indicating weak institutional engagement by this component with transitional justice issues.



It is worth noting that other political parties and components were weakly represented or absent altogether, which can be attributed to the sensitivity of the subject, weak organizational structures or the absence of specialized departments, as well as security restrictions and difficulties in access. In some cases, political forces were preoccupied with other priorities. This highlights the need to strengthen the participation of all components to ensure inclusive representation and national consensus.

Difficulties Encountered in the Study:

The preparation of the study faced several challenges, most notably the limited transparency and lack of updated databases, conflicting narratives, and the low prioritization of child protection. Additional difficulties stemmed from security restrictions and geographic fragmentation, which hindered access to areas under Houthi control or to front-line zones, as well as the collection of extensive data. Moreover, low awareness levels and the reluctance of victims and witnesses to participate made it difficult to obtain representative samples. This required adapting research tools to the cultural and psychological context, in the absence of a stable legal environment and amid conflicting political positions.

Chapter One: The Legal and Institutional Framework for the Protection of Children's Rights in Yemen

The legal and institutional framework for children's rights in Yemen represents the cornerstone for building an effective protection system. However, in practice, there are significant gaps between legislative texts and their actual implementation, especially in the context of armed conflict and institutional division.

Although Yemen has acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, and has enacted national legislation such as the Child Rights Law No. 45 of 2002 and the Juvenile Welfare Law No. 24 of 1992 and its amendments⁷, the lack of legislative updates, the weakness of enforcement mechanisms, and the multiplicity of authorities have stripped this framework of much of its effectiveness.

First: Children's issues in the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference

The National Dialogue Conference (2013–2014)⁸ marked a historic moment for rebuilding the state and shaping a new social contract. It was characterized by relatively inclusive political and societal representation, including women and youth. The conference addressed crucial issues through specialized working groups, most notably the Working Group on Issues of National Dimension, Reconciliation, and Transitional Justice. Within these discussions, the rights of vulnerable groups — foremost among them children — were included as a core element of a comprehensive approach to achieving just and sustainable peace.

Although there was no dedicated section on children's rights, childhood issues were incorporated into several areas, including rights and freedoms, development, and transitional justice. This resulted in a number of key commitments, such as the prohibition of child recruitment⁹, ensuring access to education and social care, and providing protection during times of conflict and disaster.

⁷ Yemen signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 and ratified it in 1991. It acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict in 2007, and to the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in 2004. (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Human Rights Indicators: Database on Ratification Status of International Human Rights Treaties. United Nations, <https://indicators.ohchr.org/>. Accessed 1 September 2025).

⁸ The Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism (November 2011) stipulated the convening of a comprehensive National Dialogue Conference with the participation of all political and social forces to address core issues and develop a vision for building the new Yemeni state. The conference was officially launched on 18 March 2013 and concluded on 25 January 2014, with the participation of 565 members representing various parties, including women and youth.

⁹ The outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference, through its various working groups, reflected a clear consensus on the criminalization of child recruitment, the prevention of their exploitation, and the safeguarding of their protection during conflict. This was explicitly stated in decisions and directives issued by:

- The Working Group on Issues of National Dimension, National Reconciliation, and Transitional Justice, Decision No. 106, Third Plenary Session, p. 74.
- The Working Group on the Foundations for Building the Army and Security and their Roles, Legal Directives, Item No. 19, Closing Plenary Session, p. 135.
- The Working Group on Rights and Freedoms, Constitutional and Legal Directives – Rights of the Child, Decisions No. 176 and 177, Closing Plenary Session, p. 210.

The outcomes also emphasized the need to harmonize national legislation with international conventions¹⁰, strengthen psychosocial support mechanisms, establish centers for the rehabilitation and psychosocial support of affected children¹¹, and launch care and protection programs, particularly for those who had lost their breadwinner due to the conflict¹². In addition, advanced approaches were introduced within the framework of transitional justice, underscoring the importance of truth-seeking while taking into account the specific nature of violations affecting children¹³, as well as the need for reparations, rehabilitation, and reintegration¹⁴. This was rooted in the recognition that children are victims, not perpetrators¹⁵.

At the preventive level, the recommendations stressed the criminalization of violence against children¹⁶, the fight against their trafficking and exploitation¹⁷, and the protection of the educational and media environments from incitement to violence¹⁸. They also called for strengthening children's culture and identity through the establishment of institutions and councils concerned with childhood¹⁹, in a manner that reinforces the best interests of the child²⁰.

- The Sustainable Development Working Group – Health Development, Item No. 39, Closing Plenary Session, p. 257.

¹⁰ The National Dialogue Conference Document, Decisions No. 61 and 62, Working Group on Issues of National Dimension, National Reconciliation, and Transitional Justice, submitted to the Third Plenary Session, p. 68.

¹¹ The National Dialogue Conference Document, Decision No. 12, Sa'adah Issue Working Group, submitted to the Third Plenary Session for adoption by the conference, p. 50.

¹² The National Dialogue Conference Document, Decision No. 39, Sa'adah Issue Working Group, submitted to the Third Plenary Session for adoption by the conference, p. 52.

¹³ The National Dialogue Conference Document, definition of "truth-seeking" within transitional justice concepts, as adopted by the Working Group on Issues of National Dimension, National Reconciliation, and Transitional Justice, Decision No. 2, p. 61.

¹⁴ The National Dialogue Conference Document, Working Group on Issues of National Dimension, National Reconciliation, and Transitional Justice, Decision No. 86, Third Plenary Session, p. 71.

¹⁵ The National Dialogue Conference Document, Working Group on Issues of National Dimension, National Reconciliation, and Transitional Justice, Decisions No. 76 and 77, Third Plenary Session, p. 70. The two recommendations called for the establishment of effective redress mechanisms for children associated with armed groups, recognizing them as victims rather than perpetrators, treating them in accordance with international standards, and developing policies to protect children who are victims of crimes, guided by the principle of the best interests of the child.

The National Dialogue Conference Document, Working Group on Issues of National Dimension, National Reconciliation, and Transitional Justice, Decision No. 120, Third Plenary Session, p. 75.

¹⁶ National Dialogue Conference Document, Team on the Independence of Specialized Bodies, High National Council for Motherhood and Childhood, Recommendation No. 1, Final Plenary Session, p. 174.

¹⁷ National Dialogue Conference Document, Team on Good Governance, Constitutional and Legal Guidelines submitted to the Final Plenary Session, Item No. 15, p. 111.

¹⁸ National Dialogue Conference Document, Team on the Independence of Specialized Bodies, Weapons – Recommendations, Recommendation No. 1, Final Plenary Session, p. 179.

¹⁹ National Dialogue Conference Document, Chapter on Constitutional Safeguards for the Protection of Rights and Freedoms, Item No. 210, Final Plenary Session, p. 212.

²⁰ National Dialogue Conference Document, Team on Sustainable Development – Health Development, Item No. 39, Final Plenary Session, p. 257.

However, these outcomes were not implemented as hoped, due to the political and security collapse after 2014. This resulted in a gap between ambitious political discourse and a faltering reality, highlighting today the need to resume building on the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference as a starting point for activating a legal and institutional process that brings children's issues back to the core of transitional justice.

Second: The Legislative Situation after the Outbreak of the Conflict in 2014

a. Legislative Paralysis

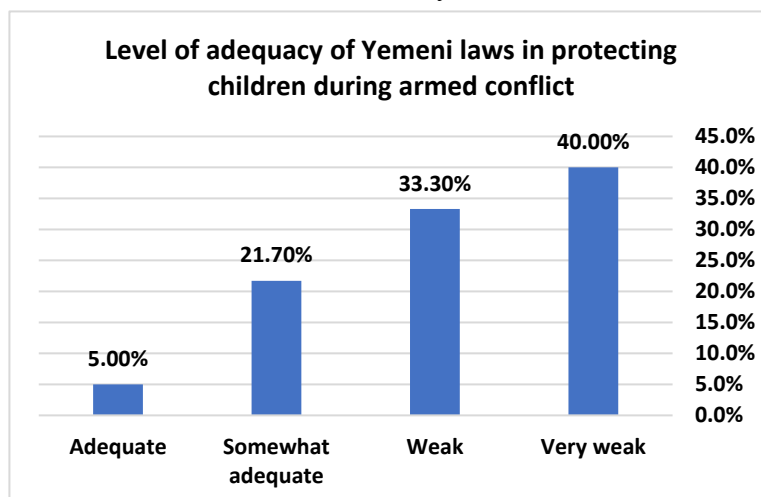
Since the Houthis took control of the capital, Sana'a, in late 2014, the parliamentary bloc under their authority, along with the parties allied with them at the time, continued to hold sessions in the Parliament in Sana'a, despite the absence of the constitutional quorum and the lack of international recognition of the legitimacy of these meetings. The group sought to consolidate its legislative authority through measures that included holding by-elections in April 2021 to fill some vacant seats, limited to constituencies within areas under its control²¹.

In contrast, the House of Representatives aligned with the internationally recognized government witnessed a state of stagnation, as its sessions were suspended for years, with only two limited exceptional sessions convened — the first in Sayun in 2019, and the second in Aden in 2022²². This chronic disruption of the council's work resulted in a de facto paralysis of the legislative and oversight process, obstructing the development and updating of laws, foremost among them the draft amendment to the Child Rights Law, which had been submitted to the council before the 2014 events. As a result, the current law remained unable to keep pace with subsequent developments and to incorporate emerging international standards, such as the Optional Protocols to the Convention, at a time when the need for more comprehensive protection for children was growing. This situation allowed the de facto authorities to impose an alternative legal framework, further weakening the legislative structure and producing profound negative impacts on the protection of rights, particularly children's rights.

²¹ The bloc under Houthi control continues to hold its sessions in Sana'a despite the absence of the constitutional quorum required to convene such sessions, and despite the lack of international recognition for the legitimacy of these meetings. In an attempt to reinforce its parliamentary presence, the Supreme Commission for Elections and Referenda, under Houthi control, announced in April 2021 the holding of by-elections to fill the seats of deceased members of parliament. The announcement declared 24 winners in electoral districts located in areas under Houthi control, and the winners were sworn in on 17 April 2021. Four seats remained vacant, belonging to electoral districts in areas controlled by anti-Houthi forces, reflecting the partial and controversial nature of this procedure.

²² A few sessions were held outside the capital, the most notable being the parliamentary session in the city of Sayun in Hadhramaut Governorate from 13 to 16 April 2019, which resulted only in the approval of the government budget and the election of the parliamentary presidium. Another subsequent session was held in Aden in 2022, coinciding with the swearing-in of the President and members of the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC), and the approval of the government's program.

These theoretical findings are directly linked to the results of the field survey, which reflected participants' perceptions of the adequacy of the Yemeni legal framework for the protection of children. The majority of participants stated that the laws were "very weak" (40.0%), followed by those who described them as "weak" (33.3%). This means that more than two-thirds of participants (73.3%) believe that the legal framework does not meet the minimum requirements for adequate protection of children. Meanwhile, only 21.7% considered it "somewhat adequate," and the percentage of those who viewed the laws as "adequate" dropped to 5.0%, with no participants at all rating them as "very adequate."



As for civil society organizations, their representatives unanimously (100%) agreed that the legal framework was inadequate. Moreover, 77% considered it ineffective, compared to only 23% who described it as effective. This reveals a dual gap at both the legislative and implementation levels and underscores the need for urgent legislative and normative reform as part of a transitional justice process that places the protection of children at the core of its priorities.

b. Measures Taken by the Government Amid Legislative Paralysis

Amid the legislative paralysis caused by the conflict, the internationally recognized Government of Yemen resorted to adopting executive alternatives in cooperation with the United Nations and international organizations. These measures included the issuance of emergency decisions and policies aimed at mitigating the impact of the conflict on vulnerable groups, particularly children. They covered relief programs and ministerial circulars in the fields of education and protection but often lacked clear implementation mechanisms and faced security and logistical challenges that prevented their application across the entire country. The most notable of these measures included:

1. In May 2014, the Government of Yemen signed an Action Plan with the United Nations to end the recruitment of children under the age of 18 into government forces. The plan included a commitment to release children associated with the forces, reintegrate them into their communities, and prevent further recruitment by aligning legislation with international standards, issuing orders prohibiting the use of children, investigating violations, holding those responsible accountable, and facilitating United Nations access to monitor implementation and compliance²³.

²³ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). "Children, Not Soldiers: Yemen." UNICEF, 14 May 2014, <https://www.unicef.org/mena/press-releases/children-not-soldiers-yemen>. Accessed 2 June 2025.

2. Ratification in 2017 of the Safe Schools Declaration to prevent the use of educational institutions for military purposes and to protect them from the impact of conflict²⁴.
3. Signing in 2018 of the Roadmap and Protocol concerning the handover of children in armed conflict²⁵.
4. Issuance of a military directive in March 2018 requiring the armed forces to comply with national laws and international instruments that criminalize the recruitment of children²⁶.
5. Launch of a joint technical committee to prevent the recruitment of children²⁷.
6. Signing of an agreement between the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor and UNICEF in February 2025 to launch the Child Social Protection and Social Policies Plan for the period 2025–2026²⁸.
7. Implementation of awareness and training campaigns for judges and employers on the harms of child labor and recruitment²⁹, along with the establishment of military focal points and field visits to army units³⁰.
8. In the field of education, the internationally recognized government took preventive steps, including joining the Safe Schools Declaration to protect education from attacks, and forming a special committee within the Ministry of Education for this purpose³¹.

c. Assessing the Adequacy of Interventions and Outcomes

Despite the legitimate government's adoption of measures to protect children, their impact has remained limited due to the ongoing conflict and weak enforcement mechanisms. The removal

²⁴ United States Department of Labor. "2020 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Yemen." U.S. Department of Labor, 2021, https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2020/yemen.pdf.

²⁵ Yemen Shabab Net, Signing of the Roadmap Agreement to End the Recruitment of Children between the Government and UNICEF, Aden, 18 December 2018, <https://yemen-shabab.com/news/42500>. Accessed on 01 September 2025.

²⁶ The directive stressed the need to hand over children apprehended during military operations to the relevant civilian authorities responsible for their protection, in order to rehabilitate and reintegrate them into society, in cooperation with the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center.

²⁷ "Minister of Human Rights launches the work of the National Commission for Investigating Human Rights Violations." 26 September Net, 06 November 2018, <https://www.26sepnews.net/2018/11/06/وزير-حقوق-الانسان-يبدشن-اعمال-اللجنة-ال>.

²⁸ "Ministry of Social Affairs and UNICEF sign Child Protection and Social Policy Plans." Yemen TV, 18 February 2025, <https://yementv.tv/2025/02/18/%d9%88%d8%b2%d8%a7%d8%b1%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b4%d8%a4%d9%88%d9%86-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a7%d8%ac%d8%aa%d9%85%d8%a7%d8%b9%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d9%88%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%8a%d9%88%d9%86%d9%8a%d8%b3%d9%8a%d9%81-%d8%aa.html>.

²⁹ United States Department of Labor. "2020 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Yemen." U.S. Department of Labor, 2021, https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2020/yemen.pdf.

³⁰ These checkpoints were established based on the directives of the Yemeni Minister of Defence, Lieutenant General Mohsen Mohammed Al-Daeri, No. 157 of 2022, which aim to monitor and prevent the recruitment of children into the armed forces. The functions of these checkpoints include verifying the recruitment procedures and the documents submitted by recruitment applicants, as well as enforcing Military Service Law No. 67 of 1991, which prohibits the recruitment of anyone under the age of 18.

"Conclusion of a training course in Aden on military liaison points." Yemen Now News, 31 October 2024, <https://yemennownews.com/article/2764726>.

³¹ Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack. "Safeguard Yemen's Future: Protect Education from Attack." Save the Children's Resource Centre, 2019, <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/safeguard-yemens-future-protect-education-attack>.

of the Yemeni Armed Forces from the annex of the United Nations Secretary-General's Report in 2021 is regarded as a political achievement, reflecting a commitment to ending child recruitment³². Some measures have also contributed to the reintegration of hundreds of underage recruits with their families.

However, these efforts have not translated into effective protection on the ground. Human rights reports indicate that violations continue at high rates, including the recruitment of more than 4,000 children by various parties to the conflict and the killing or injuring of over 11,000 children since 2015³³. In 2023 alone, human rights organizations documented around 250 serious violations, while the United Nations recorded 809 violations affecting 666 children³⁴.

Despite the legal prohibition, some government forces continue to recruit children according to the US Department of Labor, in the absence of effective enforcement mechanisms and comprehensive policies to address discrimination and protect the work environment. In areas outside the government's control, armed groups, most notably the Houthis, continue to recruit children in summer camps³⁵. The US Department of Labor's 2020 report highlights the government's limited operational control over its institutions and the ineffective enforcement of regulations combating child labor³⁶. The United Nations confirms that violations are increasing³⁷, calling for intensified efforts to secure a better future for Yemeni children, and relying on the government's commitment to implement the action plan³⁸. This underscores the need for a unified national policy, effective institutional coordination, and an updated legal framework that provides comprehensive protection for the most vulnerable groups.

³² Yemen Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "The Government of Yemen Welcomes the Signing of the Roadmap for the Implementation of the Action Plan to End the Recruitment of Children." Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, 30 April 2023, www.mofa-ye.org/Pages/18330.

³³ Human Rights Watch. "World Report 2024: Yemen." ecoinet, 2024, <https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2103150.html>.

³⁴ Research conducted by Watch for Human Rights (Watch4HR) and the Yemeni Coalition for Monitoring Human Rights Violations (YCMHRV) confirmed the documentation of 250 cases of grave human rights violations against children between January and September 2023. These violations included the recruitment of children (85 cases), killing and maiming (75 cases), attacks on schools and hospitals (45 cases), abduction (24 cases), sexual violence (14 cases), and denial of access to humanitarian aid (7 cases). Among the victims were internally displaced persons and members of the Muhamasheen, a marginalized ethnic group in Yemen. The vast majority of victims (79%) were boys. Most violations (84%) were committed by the Houthis, while the Government of Yemen and the Southern Transitional Council were responsible for 14%, and unknown officials for 2%. **Human Rights Watch**. "On International Children Day: Justice for Yemen Children Must Be Included in Peace Talks." Human Rights Watch, 20 Nov. 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/11/20/international-children-day-justice-yemen-children-must-be-included-peace-talks>.

³⁵ U.S. Department of Labor. 2020 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Yemen. Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 2021. https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2020/yemen.pdf.

³⁶ U.S. Department of Labor. Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Yemen. Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 2020. https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2020/yemen.pdf.

³⁷ United Nations. Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General. A/78/842-S/2024/384, 3 June 2024, <https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2111096/n2409507.pdf>. Accessed 2 June 2025.

³⁸ UNICEF. "Children, Not Soldiers." UNICEF Middle East and North Africa, 14 May 2014, <https://www.unicef.org/mena/press-releases/children-not-soldiers-yemen>. Accessed 2 June 2025.

Third: Yemen's International Obligations in the Field of Child Rights

Yemen ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991 and joined several other international instruments³⁹. The country sought to translate its commitments into national plans, but implementation has remained limited, especially since the outbreak of the conflict in 2014, which has deepened the fragility of institutional structures and weakened the legal protection system for children.

A. National Plans and Strategies for the Implementation of Child Rights Commitments

The Government of Yemen launched the National Strategy for Children and Youth (2006–2015), which covered education, health, and protection in cooperation with UNICEF and the World Bank⁴⁰. In addition, there were sectoral plans such as the Reproductive Health Strategy, the Nutrition Strategy⁴¹, and the Development of Basic Education⁴². The Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood was also established as a high-level coordinating body.

In 2014, the government signed an Action Plan with the United Nations to end the recruitment of children as part of the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign. This plan entailed commitments to release and prevent the recruitment of children, along with a joint monitoring mechanism⁴³. The government also cooperated with the International Labour Organization to combat child labor, and with UNICEF to implement programs for the protection and rehabilitation of children affected by the conflict.

B. Assessment of the Implementation of Commitments and Outcomes of Action Plans

Yemen made some legislative progress after ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This was reflected in the issuance of the Child Rights Law⁴⁴, the provision of necessary

³⁹ Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989): Ratified by Yemen in 1991 without reservations.

Optional Protocols: The Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (2007) and the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (2004).

International Labour Conventions: Convention No. 138 (Minimum Age for Admission to Employment) and Convention No. 182 (Worst Forms of Child Labour), both ratified in 2000.

Other Conventions: Yemen is party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1984), the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions (1990), and endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration (2017).

⁴⁰ Al-Shaheeri, Mohammed. "The National Strategy for Children and Youth." 14 October Newspaper, 17 February 2006, <https://14october.com/News/7SWPUAMJ-DH3KL51>

Republic of Yemen. 2006. National Children and Youth Strategy of the Republic of Yemen: 2006–2015. FAOLEX. <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/yem181092E.pdf>

⁴¹ World Health Organization. 2013. High-level Expert Meeting Report on Maternal and Child Health in Yemen. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean. https://applications.emro.who.int/docs/High_Level_Exp_Meet_Rep_2013_EN_14801.pdf.

⁴² UNICEF. 2014. Yemen Country Report on Out-of-School Children. Middle East and North Africa Out-of-School Children Initiative. https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/6691/file/Yemen%20Country%20Report%20on%20OOSC_EN.pdf

⁴³ U.S. Department of Labor. (2002, June 7). 2001 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor - Yemen. Bureau of International Labor Affairs. <https://www.refworld.org/reference/annualreport/usdol/2002/en/62204>

⁴⁴ Law No. 45 of 2002

protection for juveniles at work⁴⁵, and the criminalization of certain forms of human trafficking in the Penal Code and in laws relating to abduction and banditry⁴⁶. However, these steps were not accompanied by comprehensive legislative reforms and have proven insufficient to address the growing challenges, especially during the conflict.

Legislative review shows the presence of significant gaps, most notably the existence of a legal provision setting the minimum marriage age below fifteen. Additionally, the lack of explicit criminalization of child recruitment in national law is a major shortcoming, particularly in the context of conflict, weakening the effectiveness of legal protections and perpetuating impunity.

Furthermore, the system of Yemeni laws contains contradictions regarding the criminal responsibility of minors. Definitions and criteria differ across the Penal Code, the Juvenile Law, and the Child Rights Law, resulting in ambiguity in implementation and weakening consistent legal protection, especially for adolescents aged 15 to 18 years⁴⁷.

Regarding crimes of sexual exploitation of children, the legislative framework does not provide sufficient protection. Certain types of inducement or the exploitation of children's lack of awareness are not treated as forms of legal coercion that would absolve victims of liability, particularly in the case of children under fifteen, who are particularly vulnerable to manipulation⁴⁸.

Additionally, the penalties prescribed for perpetrators of child rape are not commensurate with the severity of the crime and its psychological and social impact on victims, raising serious questions about the consistency of criminal policy with Yemen's international obligations, especially in light of the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which requires states to take strict measures to protect children from all forms of violence and abuse.

At the institutional level, the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood was established as a national policy-making body, but in recent years it has been largely absent and has not played an effective role in monitoring, coordinating, or leading the response to child rights issues, particularly amidst rising violations.

Child protection plans have also lacked effective funding and have relied almost entirely on donor support, with no basis for sustainable government financing. This has undermined the state's ability to systematically and sustainably protect child rights. At the same time, education indicators have sharply declined, while drop-out rates have increased significantly due to

⁴⁵ Articles 48 to 53 of the Republican Decree Law No. 5 of 1995 on Labor and its amendments.

⁴⁶ Articles 246 and 249 of the Republican Decree Law No. 12 of 1994 on Crimes and Penalties and its amendments, and Article 2 of the Republican Decree Law No. 24 of 1998 on Crimes of Kidnapping and Banditry.

⁴⁷ Ali Morshed Al-Arshani, "Criminal Responsibility of Children in Yemen: Between Contradictory Provisions and the Ghost of Implementation." *MarocDroit*, 20 January 2025. https://www.marocdroit.com/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%A4%D9%88%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B7%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%84-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%B6%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%B5%D9%88%D8%B5-%D9%88%D8%B4%D8%A8%D8%AD_a11660.html

⁴⁸ Ibid

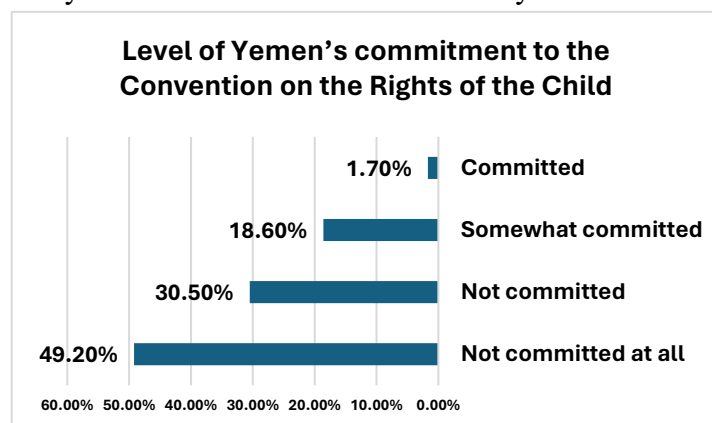
poverty, early marriage, and child labor, making children more vulnerable to exploitation, particularly by parties to the conflict⁴⁹.

C. The Gap Between Commitments and Practice

In May 2014, the Government of Yemen signed an Action Plan with the United Nations to end child recruitment and began initial steps toward implementation. However, the process came to a halt after the Houthis took control of the capital and the conflict intensified later that year. In 2018, efforts resumed through meetings of the Joint Technical Committee, which led to a roadmap outlining measures to stop recruitment and reintegrate child soldiers⁵⁰. Yemen also submitted periodic reports to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, partially responded to its recommendations, and launched national protection plans.

Despite these efforts, reports from the United Nations Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict have highlighted a significant gap between commitments and actual practices. Both governmental and non-governmental parties have been listed among violators of children's rights, due to the recruitment of minors, attacks on schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian aid⁵¹.

This discrepancy is clearly reflected in practical reality and in the results of the survey conducted for this study. The majority of respondents believe that Yemen is "not committed at all" to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (49.2%), while 30.5% think it is "not committed." This means that nearly four out of five participants (79.7%) do not see any real compliance with the Convention's provisions. Meanwhile, 18.6% consider there is "somewhat" commitment, and only 1.7% described the state as "committed." No participant classified Yemen as "fully committed."



This pattern of responses shows a lack of confidence in the alignment of official practices with international commitments and underlines the need to strengthen oversight and implementation mechanisms related to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Yemeni context.

Usually, these gaps can be traced to structural factors, such as weak political will, institutional divisions, insufficient oversight, the lack of sustainable funding, and the prevalence of corruption. The conflict's repercussions have also caused the collapse of essential services and the migration of skilled professionals.

⁴⁹ Save the Children. "Humanitarian Aid in Yemen Slashed by Over 60% in Five Years." *Save the Children*, September 25, 2023. Accessed June 24, 2025. <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/humanitarian-aid-yemen-slashed-over-60-five-years>

⁵⁰ "Yemen activates the joint committee with UNICEF to end the recruitment of children." *Asharq Al-Awsat*, 06 November 2018, <https://aawsat.com/home/article/1452141>.

⁵¹ "News Report: The United Nations adds all parties to the war in Yemen to the 'blacklist' of violators of children's rights." *Xinhua Arabic*, 07 October 2017, https://arabic.news.cn/2017-10/07/c_136663855.htm.

Therefore, there is an urgent need for comprehensive reform of the legal and institutional framework, integrating international commitments within a holistic transitional justice approach. This should focus on holding violators accountable, strengthening legal protection mechanisms, building a national system for monitoring and response, and making children's rights a priority in transitional policies to ensure effective protection under conflict conditions.

D. Challenges Hindering Fulfillment of Commitments

Yemen's legislative system faces clear gaps in aligning with international child rights standards. Although the Child Rights Law was issued in 2002, some national legislation remains inconsistent with international child rights norms. For example, the Personal Status Law sets the minimum age for marriage below fifteen⁵², legitimizing child marriage and putting girls' rights to development and protection at risk. The Nationality Law contains discriminatory provisions between men and women in passing on nationality to children born before its amendment⁵³, negatively affecting children's rights to identity and belonging. Additionally, the Crimes and Penalties Law does not criminalize "disciplinary beating" of children, which runs counter to the principle of protection from all forms of violence and abuse⁵⁴.

These issues are exacerbated by the absence of effective oversight, continuing child labor, exploitation in begging and illegal work, weak institutional capacities, widespread corruption, and societal tolerance of violations not popularly considered crimes against children. Since the outbreak of armed conflict in 2015, the state has experienced intense political and institutional division, leading to parliamentary paralysis and a halt in legislative updates. This has deepened the lack of accountability and weakened the rule of law. Institutional capacities have declined with the suspension of salaries, migration of skilled personnel, and destruction of care and service facilities.

At the institutional level, the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood has failed to fulfill its coordination role within the absence of an updated national strategy and a divided authority between Sana'a and Aden. Corruption and poor administration have undermined the effectiveness of donor support, while wartime and security priorities have overshadowed issues concerning children, leaving institutional protection almost absent from reality.

The war has been the most destructive factor, contributing to a surge in grave violations such as forced recruitment, killing, maiming, and sexual violence. It has also led to massive displacement, the collapse of education and health sectors, and the resurgence of preventable diseases. The economic crisis has increased family vulnerability, pushing children into labor or child marriage, while community awareness and advocacy campaigns have faded.

In summary, legislative and institutional challenges, political divisions, and the impact of conflict have combined to paralyze the child protection system in Yemen, creating a deep gap between international commitments and actual implementation. This calls for extraordinary

⁵² Article No. 15 of the Republican Decree by Law No. 20 of 1992 concerning Personal Status and its amendments.

⁵³ Article No. 2 of Law No. 6 of 1990 concerning Yemeni Nationality and its amendments.

⁵⁴ Ending corporal punishment of children. State report: Yemen – Ending corporal punishment of children. November 2024, Ending Corporal Punishment, https://endcorporalpunishment.org/wp-content/uploads/country-reports/Yemen_AR.pdf. Accessed on 01 September 2025.

intervention to rebuild and ensure a minimum level of protection in an extremely fragile context.

Fourth: The Situation of Childhood in Areas Controlled by the Houthi Group

Since the Houthi group took control of Sana'a and wide areas of northern Yemen in 2014, it has established a parallel legislative and administrative framework to state institutions, imposing policies that have profoundly impacted children's rights in fields such as education, social protection, recruitment, health, justice, and legislation, resulting in a series of documented violations.

a. Militarization of Education and Child Recruitment

The Houthi authorities have used education as a tool for ideological indoctrination by introducing significant amendments to school curricula, reducing the number of school days, and including content that promotes fighting and obedience⁵⁵. They rely on summer centers held at schools and mosques to instill the group's ideology and train children in activities with a quasi-military character⁵⁶.

Human rights organizations have documented the use of more than 700 schools as centers for recruiting children, and the transformation of school activities and broadcasts into tools for ideological mobilization⁵⁷. During the 2024 academic year, seven phases of the military-themed "Al-Wafa'a lil Aqsa" [Loyalty to Al-Aqsa] courses were held inside schools, followed by two new phases at the start of 2025 under the "Missionary Student and Teacher Program," all at the expense of educational time and its civilian purpose⁵⁸.

The group has also adopted a systematic policy of recruiting children⁵⁹, despite signing an Action Plan with the United Nations in 2022 to end the recruitment of minors and to rehabilitate them⁶⁰. Instead, mobilization increased even further afterward. In late 2023, the group announced the mobilization of thousands of people—including children under the age of fifteen—as part of a promotional campaign for the war in Gaza, an act considered a war crime

⁵⁵ Belqees TV, "Recruitment of Children into Houthi Centers and Its Impact on Yemen's Future." 06 April 2025. <https://belqees.net/reports/اليمين-على-مستقبل-اليمن>

⁵⁶ Asharq Al-Awsat. "Raids in Sana'a Shut Down Houthi Summer Centers for Child Recruitment." 14 April 2025. <https://aawsat.com/العالم-العربي/5132263-اقتحامات-في-صنعاء-تغلق-مراكز-صيفية-حوثية-لتجنيد-الأطفال>

⁵⁷ Yemen Now News. "Rights Report: Houthis Use 700 Schools to Recruit and Train Children for Combat." 14 February 2025. <https://yemennownews.com/article/2875126>

⁵⁸ Belqees TV, "Recruitment of Children into Houthi Centers and Its Impact on Yemen's Future," previously cited.

⁵⁹ According to Article No. 149 of the Yemeni Child Rights Law of 2002, "The Yemeni State shall respect the applicable rules of international law concerning armed conflicts related to children, and shall protect children by prohibiting the carrying of weapons by children, protecting children from the effects of armed conflict, safeguarding children facing issues of revenge, preventing the direct involvement of children in war, and prohibiting the recruitment of any person under the age of eighteen."

⁶⁰ Asharq Al-Awsat. "Agreement Between the United Nations and the Houthis to End Child Recruitment." 18 April 2022. <https://aawsat.com/home/article/3601526-اتفاق-بين-الأمم-المتحدة-والحوثيين-على-وقف-تجنيد-الأطفال>

under international law. Reports, including the Human Rights Watch report issued in February 2024, indicate that this mobilization targeted individuals aged between 13 and 25, including hundreds of children. Recruitment has become an institutionalized policy, involving the creation of training camps, organization of graduation ceremonies, and the establishment of brigades of minors with official sponsorship, resulting in the Houthis' continued listing on the United Nations "list of shame" for violations of children's rights⁶¹.

Despite the group's public commitments, no mass release of recruited children has been announced, nor have any measures been taken to hold those responsible for these violations accountable. This clearly reflects the lack of political will on the part of Houthi authorities to end this grave practice that threatens the present and future of childhood in Yemen.

b. Absence of Legislative and Social Protection

Although the Child Rights Law No. 45 of 2002 remains in force and its draft amendment has been frozen since 2014, Houthi authorities have not introduced any new regulations that explicitly criminalize child recruitment or strengthen the protection system. These issues have largely remained confined to official discourse⁶².

Simultaneously, amendments to the Judicial Authority Law allowed the President of the Political Council to appoint judges from outside the judiciary to the Supreme Judicial Council and to various positions and grades within the judicial authority and restricted the work of lawyers. These changes have undermined the guarantees of a fair trial for children⁶³. As a de facto authority that is not constitutionally or internationally recognized, the legitimacy and authority of its decisions and legislation are limited and lack unified national legitimacy.

This normative deficiency has clearly manifested in practice through consistent indicators: the expansion of child labor without deterrence, the use of humanitarian aid as a tool to pressure families into sending their children to the front lines⁶⁴, and raids on orphan care institutions to impose promotional activities that affect children's cultural identity. These practices further entrench the fragility of social protection⁶⁵.

⁶¹ Human Rights Watch. "Yemen: Houthis Recruit More Children Since 07 October." 13 February 2024. <https://www.hrw.org/ar/news/2024/02/13/yemen-houthis-recruit-more-child-soldiers-october-7>

⁶² Yemeni Parliament. "The House of Representatives Reviews and Approves the Report of the Freedoms Committee Regarding the Third Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child." 28 April 2019. <https://yemenparliament.gov.ye/Details?Post=753>

⁶³ Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies. "Amendments Introduced by the Houthi Authorities in the Judicial Authority Law." Yemen Review: July – September 2024, 16 October 2024, Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, <https://sanaacenter.org/ar/the-yemen-review/july-sept-2024/23646>. Accessed on 01 September 2025

⁶⁴ Yemen Daily News. "UNICEF Projects Unaffected Despite Reports of Houthi Exploitation of Schools for Child Recruitment—Why?" 11 September 2024. <https://ydn.news/?p=5628>

⁶⁵ Asharq Al-Awsat. "A New Series of Houthi Violations Against Yemen's Orphans." 12 September 2019. <https://aawsat.com/home/article/1900306/سلسلة-جديدة-من-الانتهاكات-الحوثية-بحق-أيتام-اليمن>

Al-Quds Al-Arabi. "Yemeni Source: Houthis Stormed the 'Orphanage' in Sana'a and Recruited its Child Residents for War." 29 December 2017. [https://www.alquds.co.uk/الأ-المصدر-يمني-الحوثيون-اقتحموا-دار-الأ-السايل-الغربي](https://www.alquds.co.uk/الأ-مصدر-يمني-الحوثيون-اقتحموا-دار-الأ-السايل-الغربي)
Al-Sahil Al-Gharbi (The West Coast). "Houthi Summer Centers Under Scrutiny: From Care Institutions to Frontlines—How the Militia Exploits Orphan Children in Armed Conflict." 25 May 2024. <https://alsahil.net/news32355.html>

c. Health Conditions of Children

The Houthi authorities have not issued any new legislation to protect children's health. Instead, they have adopted policies that contributed to the deterioration of children's health conditions, most notably by suspending vaccination campaigns against childhood diseases since 2018, as a result of promoting rhetoric that casts doubt on vaccines. This led to the re-emergence of polio, with UNICEF documenting 257 new cases, most of them in areas under the group's control⁶⁶.

The health crisis has further worsened with the spread of cholera, malnutrition, limited availability of medicines, and restrictions on the work of humanitarian organizations⁶⁷. The authorities have not initiated emergency measures despite rising rates of death and disease among children, leaving millions of children exposed to ailments that are easily preventable.

d. Absence of Judicial Protection and Expansion of Repression

Although there is a legal framework regulating juvenile justice—including the Juvenile Care Law, the Child Rights Law, special provisions in the Penal Code, and dedicated juvenile courts—practices by Houthi authorities have shown serious violations of children's rights that disregard even the minimum guarantees of a fair trial. Notably, in September 2021, nine civilians were executed in Sanaa, including a minor who was under eighteen at the time of his arrest. This was in direct violation of legal provisions and international standards, following a trial marred by allegations of torture and forced confessions. The execution drew wide condemnation from the United Nations and human rights organizations⁶⁸.

United Nations reports have also documented the arrest of children at checkpoints or from their homes, their use as hostages to punish or pressure their families, in clear violation of international humanitarian law⁶⁹. The United Nations has confirmed that children represent nearly one third of combatants in Yemen⁷⁰, and some of them have been detained in poor conditions, subjected to mistreatment, including torture and enforced disappearance⁷¹. The United Nations has repeatedly called for their release and for an end to their recruitment and use in hostilities.

⁶⁶ Asharq Al-Awsat. "Yemen: 257 Cases of Polio, Accusations Against Houthis of Preventing Vaccination." 17 July 2024. <https://aawsat.com/العالم-العربي/5041014-اليمن-257-إصابة-بشلل-الأطفال-واتهام-للحوثيين-بمنع-التطعيم>

⁶⁷ Philbrick Yadav, S. (2024, October). *Consolidation through Crackdown: Understanding Houthi Rule in Yemen* (Middle East Brief No. 161). Crown Center for Middle East Studies, Brandeis University. <https://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/middle-east-briefs/meb161.html>

⁶⁸ United Nations. (2021, September 20). *Secretary-General Strongly Condemns Executions in Yemen, Questioning Houthi Movement's Adherence to Due Process Standards under International Law*. <https://press.un.org/en/2021/sgsm20914.doc.htm>

⁶⁹ Amnesty International. (2024, July 4). *Yemen: Huthi authorities must immediately release arbitrarily detained staff from UN and civil society organizations*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/07/yemen-huthi-authorities-must-immediately-release-arbitrarily-detained-staff-from-un-and-civil-society-organizations/>

⁷⁰ Harneis, J. (2015, April 9). *Third of fighters in Yemen are children, says Unicef*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/09/third-of-fighters-yemen-children-unicef>

⁷¹ Human Rights Watch. (2016, June 2). *Yemen: Free Captive Children*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/06/02/yemen-free-captive-children>

In light of the above, these practices not only constitute violations of children's rights under national law but also represent a grave breach of Yemen's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly Articles No. 37 and 40, which require State Parties to take the necessary legislative, judicial, and administrative measures to ensure protection and guarantee the rights of children in practice.

e. Overall Impact on Children's Rights

These policies and practices have deepened the suffering of children, depriving them of education and care, and resulting in thousands of deaths and injuries, as well as exposing them to grave violations that amount to war crimes under international law⁷².

Both local and international reports have documented the widespread nature of these violations. The Human Rights Office in Sana'a recorded more than 11,000 violations in just one year, including killings, recruitment, and abduction⁷³. UNICEF estimated that at least 10,000 children were killed or injured across Yemen during the period 2015–2021⁷⁴.

This situation reveals that the official discourse of the group remained propagandistic, while violations became entrenched as systematic policies supported by executive and security authorities. Therefore, the process of transitional justice must include a review of these violations, documentation of the policies behind them, the launch of rehabilitation and compensation programs, accountability for those responsible, reform of legislation and institutions, and the creation of a safe educational and health environment that promotes peace and human rights.

Fifth: Evaluation of Government Institutions' Performance in Protecting Children's Rights

The findings of the study show an almost unanimous consensus on the weak performance of government institutions in protecting children's rights, with slight variations between different areas of control. However, the common denominator across all cases is a clear deficiency in responsiveness and effectiveness.

a. Executive Authority

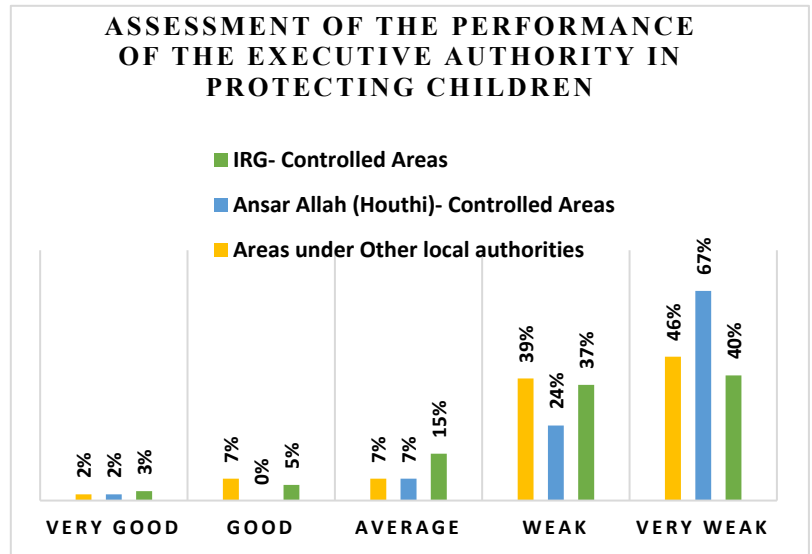
In areas controlled by the internationally recognized government, about 40.0% of participants described the performance of the executive authority as "very poor," while 36.7% rated it as "poor." This means that more than three-quarters of the sample (76.7%) expressed clear dissatisfaction with the level of response and implementation in these regions. Positive assessments were limited, with 15.0% rating the performance as "average," and only 8.3% considering it "good" or "very good."

⁷² Mayyun for Human Rights. "Rights Report: Houthis Use 700 Schools to Recruit and Train Children for Combat." Yemen Now News. 14 February 2025. <https://yemennownews.com/article/2875126>

⁷³ Belqees. "On World Children's Day... Who Is Responsible for Violations of Children's Rights in Yemen?" 21 November 2023. <https://belqees.net/reports/انتهاكات-حقوق-الاطفال-في-اليمن>

⁷⁴ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). "'Shameful Milestone' in Yemen: 10,000 Children Killed or Maimed Since Fighting Began." UNICEF, 19 October 2021. https://www.unicef.org/mena/press-releases/shameful-milestone-yemen-10000-children-killed-or-maimed-fighting-began?utm_source=chatgpt.com

In areas under the control of the Ansar Allah group (Houthis), the evaluation was even more negative, as 67.3% of participants considered the performance "very poor," and 23.6% "poor," bringing the total to 90.9% who believe that executive performance in these areas is extremely low. This reflects a deep crisis in the effectiveness of public administration amidst the ongoing conflict. The remaining positive evaluations did not exceed 10%.

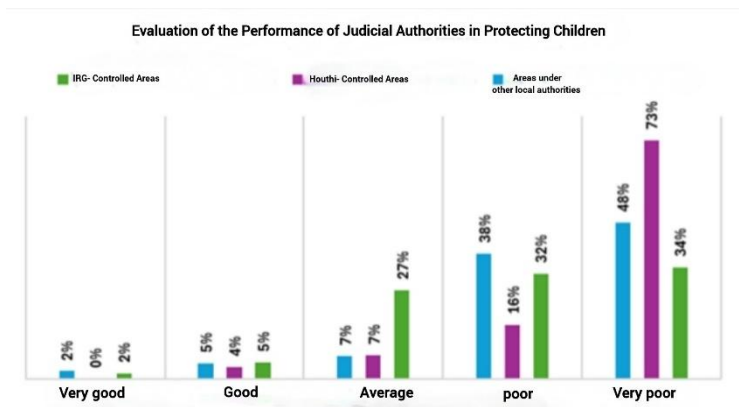


Regarding other local authorities, the same pattern of negative evaluation continues, with 45.5% describing the executive authority as "very poor," and 38.6% as "poor." This indicates that more than 80% of participants in these regions do not see effective or sufficient performance in protecting children's rights.

b. Judicial Authority

In areas controlled by the internationally recognized government, opinions were less severe than those concerning the executive authority. Here, 33.9% described judicial performance as "very poor," and 32.2% as "poor," while 27.1% rated it as "average." This points to a relative acknowledgment of the judiciary's role, despite the overall negative assessment and a scarcity of positive views (only 1.7%).

In Ansar Allah (Houthi) controlled areas, the evaluation of the judicial authority was highly negative, with 72.7% describing it as "very poor," and 16.4% as "poor," totaling 89.1%. This reflects a clear deterioration in the credibility and independence of the judiciary in these areas, and a marked lack of community trust in official justice.



In other local authorities, the percentage of "very poor" evaluations reached 47.6%, and "poor" 38.1%, expressing a high level of dissatisfaction with judicial performance outside the main regions. This highlights the absence of unified standards of justice or even a minimum of effective legal response to children's rights in the context of the conflict.

c. Institutional Protection Challenges for Children's Rights Amid the Conflict

The findings of the study show that executive and judicial authorities across various areas of control face deep and complex challenges that restrict their ability to protect children's rights. While these challenges vary somewhat depending on the nature of the governing authority, they share the common element of severe institutional weakness and a gap between legal frameworks and their practical application. This has worsened the vulnerability of children during the armed conflict. The main challenges include the following:

1. Weakness of official institutions and the fragmentation of the state in areas governed by the internationally recognized government, due to widespread corruption, overlapping authorities, and lack of coordination—factors that undermine law enforcement. The weak infrastructure and basic services, especially in education, health, and justice, make children more exposed to violence and exploitation.
2. Authoritarian dominance in areas controlled by the Houthis, where state institutions are used as oppressive tools, education is exploited to promote a single ideology, child recruitment continues, public services have collapsed, and cooperation with international organizations is very limited.
3. Breakdown of governance and fragile local authorities in other areas, where there is no effective legal framework, a lack of qualified personnel, widespread nepotism, absence of coordination between security and judicial agencies, and a lack of a stable and secure institutional environment, all preventing any meaningful progress in ensuring children's rights.

Chapter Two: Patterns of Violations and Their Multi-Dimensional Impacts

Analyzing the patterns of violations of children's rights and their impacts in Yemen forms a fundamental entry point for the process of transitional justice. Systematic documentation enables the classification of the nature of violations, whether systematic or random—the measurement of their prevalence, and the identification of those responsible. This provides a legal basis for holding perpetrators accountable and compensating victims.

In the absence of effective mechanisms for accountability, these violations have continued without restraint⁷⁵. This makes it necessary to combine legal analysis with data collected from surveys and questionnaires directed at individuals, institutions, and political entities. Such an approach allows for the alignment of legal classifications with the real-life experiences of children during the conflict, leading to the development of practical, evidence-based solutions that address their needs and uphold their rights.

⁷⁵ Human Rights Watch. "On World Children's Day: Justice for Yemen's Children – They Must Be Included in Peace Talks." Human Rights Watch. 20 November 2023. <https://www.hrw.org/ar/news/2023/11/20/international-children-day-justice-yemen-children-must-be-included-peace-talks>.

First: The International Legal Framework Criminalizing Violations Against Children

Children enjoy special protection under international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and international criminal law, which impose legal obligations on states and parties to armed conflict alike.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted in 1989, established children's rights to life, survival, development, and protection at all times. It requires states to take all necessary measures to respect the rules of international humanitarian law in armed conflicts involving children. Article No. 38 specifically provides for special care and protection for children affected by conflict, obligates states not to recruit anyone under the age of fifteen into their armed forces, and to take all practical measures to ensure that children do not participate directly in hostilities⁷⁶. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2000) further strengthens these protections by requiring states to raise the minimum age for compulsory recruitment and direct participation in combat to 18 years and prohibits non-state armed groups from recruiting children under the age of 18⁷⁷.

On the other hand, international humanitarian law (IHL) lays down strict principles for the protection of children during armed conflict. In addition to the general protection granted to civilians, children are accorded a special status as a vulnerable group not involved in combat⁷⁸. The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols have emphasized the need to spare children from the horrors of war. For example, the First Additional Protocol of 1977 prohibits the recruitment of persons under the age of 15 and their involvement in hostilities.

Similarly, the Second Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, concerning the protection of victims of non-international armed conflicts, obliges parties to the conflict to prevent the participation of children under 15 years of age in fighting and to provide them with necessary care⁷⁹. These provisions are no longer just contractual obligations but are considered peremptory norms of customary international law, making the prohibition on recruiting children under 15 binding on all parties, including non-state armed groups⁸⁰.

⁷⁶ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). "Convention on the Rights of the Child," Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Accessed on 16 June 2025. <https://www.ohchr.org/ar/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>.

⁷⁷ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). "Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict." Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Accessed on 16 June 2025. <https://www.ohchr.org/ar/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/optional-protocol-convention-rights-child-involvement-children>.

⁷⁸ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). "Definition of a Minor in International Humanitarian Law." The Humanitarian Law Guide. Accessed on 16 June 2025. <https://ar.guide-humanitarian-law.org/content/article/5/tfl/>.

⁷⁹ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. "Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949." <https://www.ohchr.org/ar/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-additional-geneva-conventions-12-august-1949-and-0>.

⁸⁰ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). "Rule 135 – Children." Customary International Humanitarian Law Database. Accessed on 20 June 2025. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ar/customary-ihl/v1/rule135#title-2>.

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998) serves as the key legal reference for holding those who commit grave violations against children accountable. It classifies the recruitment or use of children under the age of 15 in hostilities as a war crime in both international and non-international conflicts (Article No. 8). The Statute also enables the prosecution of other crimes such as killing, torture, rape, and forced displacement as war crimes or crimes against humanity⁸¹.

Serious violations against children in armed conflict include acts such as the deliberate killing of civilian children, the intentional targeting of civilian infrastructure, such as hospitals and schools, and indiscriminate attacks that cause large numbers of child casualties. These also involve crimes of sexual violence, enslavement, abduction, and torture, especially when committed as part of a widespread assault on civilians⁸².

The United Nations has outlined these crimes under what is known as the "Six Grave Violations Against Children." These are: killing and maiming of children; recruitment or use of children in military operations; sexual violence; abduction; attacks on schools and hospitals; and denial of humanitarian assistance⁸³. This classification is based on elements from the Convention on the Rights of the Child, international humanitarian law, and standards of international criminal law, including the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Together, they provide a comprehensive normative framework to measure the scale and severity of violations committed against children during armed conflict and to establish legal responsibility for them.

Second: Impact of War Violations on Children

Violations against children in the context of the Yemeni conflict have resulted in deep and interconnected effects that go beyond physical harm, extending to psychological, educational, social, and economic dimensions. These impacts are part of a broader pattern of structural violence. Analytical frameworks such as collective trauma and intersectional analysis help explain the overlap of these effects and provide a deeper understanding of their long-term consequences.

On the psychological level, the conflict has left a mix of trauma from violence, loss of security, displacement, and family separation. Symptoms such as post-traumatic stress disorder and depression have become widespread, with unprecedented levels of fear, anxiety, and apathy. Some studies have described this situation as "collective trauma" afflicting an entire generation, weakening social cohesion and hindering reconciliation efforts⁸⁴. It is estimated that one in five people in Yemen suffers from psychological disorders, while access to psychosocial support

⁸¹ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. "Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court." Accessed on 19 June 2025. <https://www.ohchr.org/ar/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/rome-statute-international-criminal-court>.

⁸² Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. "The Six Grave Violations." Accessed on 20 June 2025. <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/ar/six-grave-violations/>.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights. "Increased Sexual Violence and Child Marriage Due to Instability in Yemen." Accessed on 20 June 2025. <https://www.ecdhr.org/increased-sexual-violence-and-child-marriage-due-to-instability-in-yemen/>.

services remains extremely limited⁸⁵, highlighting the urgent need for rehabilitation and community reconciliation programs.

Educationally, the war has made safe access to schools extremely risky, as seen in the city of Taiz, where many children have had to change schools or drop out entirely for fear of shelling or clashes. There are tragic stories of classmates being killed on their way to school⁸⁶. In such conditions, many families have kept their children at home, sent them to work, or, in some cases, allowed them to join the fighting. This constitutes a complex violation of children's rights and threatens the future of an entire generation.

On the social level, the war has led to the breakdown of families and the displacement of communities, exposing children to risks of exploitation and violence, particularly gender-based violence against girls⁸⁷. The stigma attached to child soldiers exacerbates their isolation and complicates their reintegration into society, another facet of structural violence resulting from the collapse of protection and social care networks.

Economically, the conflict has forced many children into the labor market due to loss of breadwinners and worsening living conditions. Afaf, an 11-year-old girl from a displacement camp in Hodeidah, says, "My father lost his leg and arm and is no longer able to work, so all my siblings had to leave school and look for work."⁸⁸ This situation deepens the cycle of poverty and deprivation, driving many families to marry off their daughters at a young age to escape economic burdens⁸⁹. Marginalized groups also face further deterioration of their well-being, due to increased exclusion and the absence of protection mechanisms⁹⁰.

Based on this framework, the study classified the impacts into two main categories:

- Short-term impacts, which relate to immediate responses to trauma and violations.
- Long-term impacts, representing the accumulation of trauma and its transformation into lasting patterns that affect children's futures and their opportunities in life.

⁸⁵ United Nations Population Fund – Yemen. "Gender-Based Violence." Accessed on 20 June 2025. <https://yemen.unfpa.org/en/topics/gender-based-violence>.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights. "Increased Sexual Violence and Child Marriage Due to Instability in Yemen." Accessed on 20 June 2025. <https://www.ecdhr.org/increased-sexual-violence-and-child-marriage-due-to-instability-in-yemen/>

⁸⁸ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). "Yemen: Conflict Leaves Millions of Children Without Proper Education." Published on 13 October 2022. Accessed on 20 June 2025. <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/yemen-conflict-leaves-millions-children-without-proper-education>.

⁸⁹ European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights. "Increased Sexual Violence and Child Marriage Due to Instability in Yemen." Accessed on 20 June 2025. <https://www.ecdhr.org/increased-sexual-violence-and-child-marriage-due-to-instability-in-yemen/>

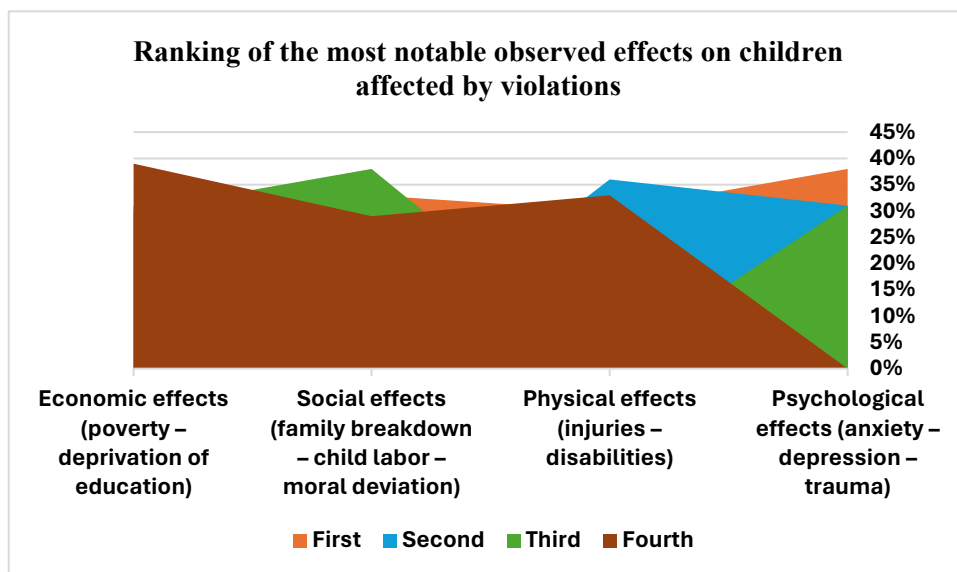
⁹⁰ Justice4Yemen Pact. "The Muhamasheen's Struggle for Justice in the Context of Systemic Discrimination and Deprivation in Yemen." Justice4Yemen Pact. Published on 22 November 2024. Accessed on 21 June 2025. <https://justice4yemenpact.org/articles/muhamasheens-struggle-for-justice-in-the-context-of-systemic-discrimination-and-deprivation-in-yemen/>

a. Short-term impacts on children affected by violations

Participants in the survey were asked to rank the most prominent impacts they observed on children affected by violations.

Psychological impacts ranked first at 37.7%, with trauma, anxiety, and depression representing the greatest burden on children's daily lives. Physical impacts followed at 36.4%, resulting from injuries and disabilities caused by violations. Social

impacts came in third (37.7%), reflecting the extension of harm to the family and community spheres through child labor or the breakdown of family ties. Economic impacts ranked last. This ranking highlights the participants' awareness of the seriousness of the psychological and physical dimensions in the immediate term, with social and economic impacts continuing as threats to the child's future and their integration into society.

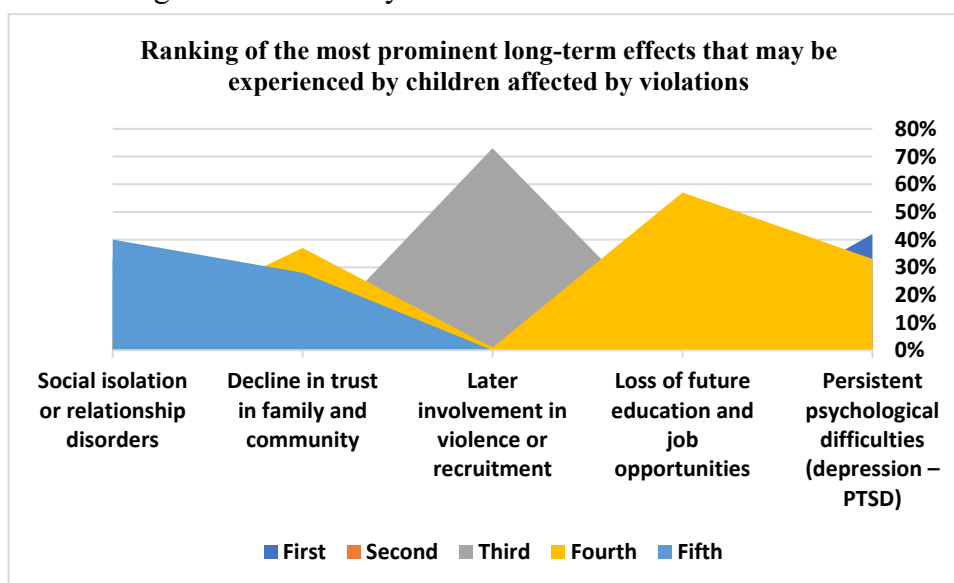


b. Long-term impacts on children affected by violations

Participants in the survey were also asked to rank the most prominent long-term impacts that children affected by violations may face.

Chronic psychological difficulties, such as depression and post-traumatic stress

disorder, ranked first at 41.6%, confirming the depth and persistence of psychological effects. Loss of future educational and employment opportunities came second at 37.7%, extending the harm to children's professional and economic prospects. Subsequent involvement in violence or recruitment ranked third at a very high rate of 72.7%, indicating a risk of perpetuating the cycle of violence in the absence of protection. Decline in trust within the family and community ranked fourth at 36.8%, while social isolation and relationship disorders were fifth at 39.5%.



These results confirm that the impacts of violations are multidimensional and interconnected, requiring comprehensive and long-term interventions that combine psychosocial support, guarantee the right to education, protect against re-engagement in violence, and promote trust and community integration.

Third: Patterns of Violations in the Yemeni Context – Field Analysis

The findings of the study provided a clear picture of the main violations suffered by children in conflict areas, classifying them according to frequency and severity to reflect the realities on the ground.

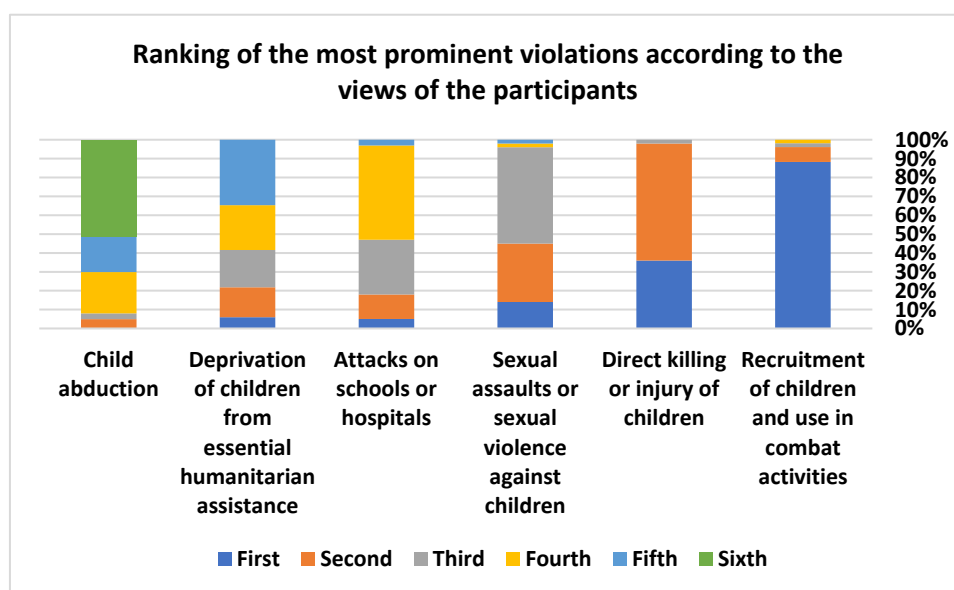
At the individual level, the recruitment and use of children in combat operations ranked highest among violations, with 88.7% of participants

reporting its prevalence in their areas. This indicates the scale of forced involvement of children in armed conflict, a clear violation of both national and international laws.

This finding underscores the urgent need for effective national and international intervention to limit this exploitation. Killing or direct injury of children ranked second at 61.7%, reflecting their direct exposure to violence amid weak protection mechanisms and inadequate medical care. Sexual assault or gender-based violence ranked third at 51.0%, highlighting the seriousness of these violations and the need to strengthen legal and social frameworks to protect children, as well as to increase community awareness.

Attacks on schools and hospitals ranked fourth at 50.0%. The destruction of these facilities denies children access to education and healthcare, increasing the long-term impact of the conflict.

The deprivation of children from humanitarian aid ranked fifth at 35.3%, reflecting the challenges in delivering food, water, and health services.



Although child abduction ranked sixth, 51.4% of participants confirmed its occurrence, highlighting the severity of this threat to children's safety and security and the need to assign it special priority in protection and legal efforts.

At the institutional level, the data showed some differences in the ranking of documented violations. Child recruitment

ranked first among 66.7% of institutions, followed by killing and direct injury (33.3% as the first and 44.4% as the second priority). Estimates regarding sexual violence varied, likely due to social sensitivities and the difficulties of documentation.

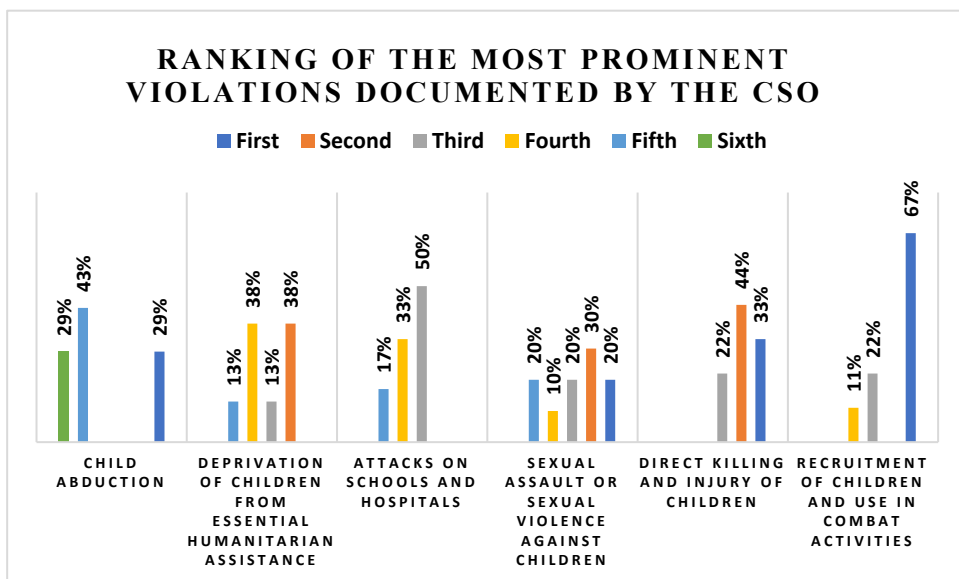
Attacks on schools and hospitals were most frequently recorded in the third (50%) and fourth (33.3%) positions, while deprivation of children from humanitarian aid appeared as both a second and a fourth priority (37.5% each). Child abduction appeared at various levels, most notably in the second position (42.9%), as well as in the first and sixth positions (28.6% each).

These results indicate that violations of a military and direct nature are the most widespread, followed by violations affecting physical dignity and essential services. This underscores the need for multidimensional responses that include legal protection, psychosocial support, and ensuring accountability. It is also clear that these violations feed into one another, creating a vicious cycle of violence and trauma that undermines prospects for long-term recovery. Therefore, any transitional justice process in Yemen must place children's rights at its core, recognizing that children are not only victims of war, but also potential partners in building peace. Providing redress and protection for children is essential for achieving a stable future.

Fourth: Geographical and Political Differences in Patterns of Violations

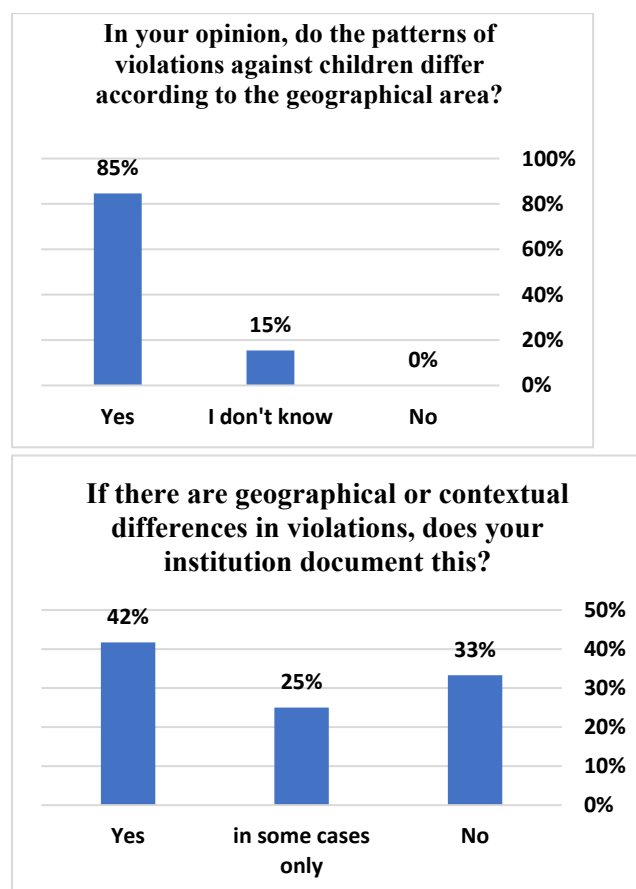
Although all parties to the conflict in Yemen have been involved in committing serious violations against children, the patterns and severity of these violations vary according to different areas of control and are influenced by local policies as well as diverse social and security contexts.

Field indicators clearly reflect this variation. Among survey participants, 65.3% stated that the patterns of violations against children differ depending on which group controls the area, highlighting the impact of the nature of authority and institutional behavior on the level of respect for or abuse of children's rights, as well as the role of politicization and militarization in managing local populations. In contrast, 18.7% expressed uncertainty, while 16.0% believed that violations are similar across all regions.



At the institutional level, 84.6% of child protection CSOs interviewed confirmed the existence of geographical differences in the patterns of violations, compared to 15.4% who were unsure; no CSO gave a definitive denial. Despite this awareness, the results revealed a gap in practice: only 41.7% of CSOs regularly document these differences, compared to 33.3% that do not, and 25% that record them only in certain cases, due to limited resources and the absence of standardized monitoring methodologies.

These findings indicate the need to develop documentation mechanisms that take geographical and contextual specificities into account. This would improve the accuracy of response efforts and strengthen advocacy based on evidence, supporting the integration of these differences into transitional justice strategies.



a. Areas under the control of the internationally recognized government

Violations against children in these areas centered around aerial bombardment and the deterioration of essential services. During the years of conflict, coalition forces carried out airstrikes that occasionally targeted civilian gatherings, resulting in child casualties⁹¹. At the same time, children in areas effectively managed by the government or its local partners face severe living challenges due to the collapse of basic services, as seen in the city of Aden, where the decline in health and education services has become a major concern⁹². The situation is further compounded by the widespread presence of landmines and explosive remnants of war in former conflict zones, which continue to claim the lives of children, even after the fighting has subsided⁹³.

Findings from the study reveal that these violations are influenced by environmental, political, and security factors. Patterns observed include weak legal protection due to a fragile judicial system, the prevalence of sexual violence in displacement camps in the absence of accountability mechanisms, and repeated targeting of schools in areas of clashes. Children are also exploited economically, being forced into begging and labor, especially in Aden. These violations have been exacerbated by ongoing insecurity, lack of oversight in shelter centers, and rising numbers of internally displaced people, creating a hazardous environment for the safety and rights of children.

b. Areas under the control of the Houthis

Violations in these areas have taken on a systematic and institutionalized character. In the military sphere, the recruitment and deployment of children to the front lines is among the most serious practices. Estimates indicate that more than 10,000 children were recruited up to 2021⁹⁴, despite the group signing a United Nations action plan in 2022 to end these violations⁹⁵.

In the humanitarian sphere, the blockade imposed on cities such as Taiz and prevention of aid delivery have worsened malnutrition and deprived children of access to healthcare⁹⁶. In the education sector, the group has politicized school curricula and used schools for ideological indoctrination, representing a form of sustained cultural violence.

⁹¹ Human Rights Watch. "Yemen: Warring Parties Escalate Threats Against Civilians and Humanitarian Aid." World Report 2024: Yemen. Accessed on 23 June 2025. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/yemen>

⁹² Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies. "Aden in the International Press." All Publications, 21 December 2022. Accessed on 23 June 2025. <https://sanaacenter.org/ar/publications-all/19193>

⁹³ Human Rights Watch. "Yemen – World Report 2024." World Report 2024, 11 January 2024. Accessed on 23 June 2025. <https://www.hrw.org/ar/world-report/2024/country-chapters/yemen>

⁹⁴ Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies. "Lost Childhood: The Persistent Phenomenon of Child Recruitment in Yemen." The Yemen Review Quarterly: January–March 2024. Accessed on 23 June 2025. <https://sanaacenter.org/ar/the-yemen-review/jan-mar-2024/22456>

⁹⁵ Human Rights Watch. "Yemen: On Universal Children's Day – Justice for Children Must Be Included in Peace Talks." Human Rights Watch, 20 November 2023. Accessed on 23 June 2025. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/11/20/international-children-day-justice-yemen-children-must-be-included-peace-talks>

⁹⁶ Human Rights Watch. "Yemen: Humanitarian Situation Deteriorates Amid Continuing Violations of Civilian Rights." World Report 2024 – Yemen. Accessed on 23 June 2025. <https://www.hrw.org/ar/world-report/2024/country-chapters/yemen>

On the security front, the planting of landmines in frontline areas or during withdrawals resulted in the killing or injury of a child every two days in 2022, according to United Nations reports. This demonstrates the widespread and indiscriminate nature of this violation⁹⁷.

Such violations are not confined to these regions alone. Grave incidents, such as the airstrike on a school bus in Sa'adah in August 2018, which claimed the lives of dozens of students, illustrate that children remain the most affected victims across all fronts of the conflict⁹⁸. Qualitative data also reveals patterns of forced recruitment through schools and summer centers, deprivation of education as a result of curricular changes or the use of schools for military purposes, and restricted access to humanitarian assistance due to the politicization of relief work. In addition, there have been arbitrary arrests, use of children as human shields or for guard duties, and reported cases of social discrimination against children, particularly in Sa'adah.

c. Areas under other local authorities

These areas include governorates in the south and east under the control of the Southern Transitional Council, as well as districts in Al Hudaydah and Taiz under the Political Bureau of the National Resistance. It also covers places that have seen temporary activity by extremist groups such as Al Qaeda. Children in these regions suffer from multidimensional violations, including school closures for extended periods, indiscriminate shelling of residential neighborhoods, and a rise in crime rates that exploit instability to involve children in illegal activities. Children have also been subjected to recruitment and forced participation in conflict, in the near-total absence of state institutions and overlapping authority of controlling groups. All of this has undermined protection and worsened the situation of children in these areas.

d. Disputed and frontline areas

Several respondents reported violations directly linked to the context of war, including killings and injuries from mines, sniper attacks, and shelling, as well as cases of child abduction and family separation during displacement. They also noted intense recruitment of children at battlefronts (such as Al-Kadaha and Al-Dhabab), and sexual violence in specific areas (such as Al-Mahariq and Al-Basateen). According to their accounts, these violations are driven by various factors, most notably proximity to combat zones, widespread weapons and drugs, the weakness of state institutions, and the social collapse caused by the ongoing war.

e. Violations against children in Taiz by controlling party: Qualitative analytical reading

Participant testimonies revealed clear differences in patterns of violations against children depending on the controlling authority. In Houthi-controlled areas, practices were systematic and widespread, including forced recruitment, ideological indoctrination, conversion of schools into military sites, politicization of humanitarian aid, and use of children as human

⁹⁷ Human Rights Watch. World Report 2024 – Yemen. Accessed on 23 June 2025. <https://www.hrw.org/ar/world-report/2024/country-chapters/yemen>

⁹⁸ Human Rights Watch. "Yemen: School Bus Bombing Likely War Crime." Human Rights Watch, 2 September 2018. <https://www.hrw.org/ar/news/2018/09/02/321959>. Accessed on 1 September 2025.

shields. In areas controlled by the internationally recognized government, although systematic targeting was absent, violations arose from fragile institutions and the presence of multiple security actors, such as arrest without legal safeguards, poor services and education, lack of accountability, and harm to children from Houthi shelling.

Violations in Houthi areas stem from an ideological mobilization targeting children as part of a political-military project, whereas in government-held areas, structural issues of neglect and weak governance are predominant. This calls for transitional justice programs to hold each party responsible, guarantee protection for education, monitor aid, and strengthen local institutions' capacity for documentation and accountability.

f. Variation in patterns of violations between urban and rural areas

Analysis of the study's data shows a clear difference in the patterns of violations against children in urban and rural areas covered by the research. In major cities such as Taiz and Aden, participants noted that violations related to sexual violence, begging, child labor, and recruitment linked to financial incentives or drug use were prevalent. These issues are attributed to weak family oversight, ineffective police and security forces, and high rates of urban poverty, which are exploited by armed actors or criminal networks.

In contrast, in rural areas such as Al-Ma'afar, Shar'ab, and the countryside around Sa'adah, participants indicated that violations are more organized and violent, characterized by systematic mass recruitment, almost complete deprivation of education, and deaths caused by landmines. This often takes place within a religious mobilization narrative that encourages fighting and sacrifice, relying on cultural traditions that legitimize participation in conflict, amid the absence of educational institutions and weak public awareness programs.

This analysis shows that the drivers of violations in urban areas are mainly related to weak law enforcement, while in rural areas they are linked to cultural and incitement factors. Effective protection approaches should therefore be tailored to fit each context, including precise monitoring mechanisms tied to the involved parties, guarantees for accountability and deterrence, and addressing the underlying structural issues that allow recruitment and denial of education to persist. Such measures are essential to compensate victims, restore their rights, and rebuild child protection institutions on comprehensive and fair foundations.

Fifth: The Most Affected Groups – Gender and Geographic Perspective

Although all children in Yemen have been affected by the war to varying degrees, girls, rural children and marginalized communities, as well as children with disabilities, have faced more complex violations resulting from overlapping factors of gender, geography, and social or class affiliation.

Girls have experienced a significant rise in school dropout rates, with an estimated 36% deprived of education⁹⁹. Cases of child marriage have also increased due to economic and security circumstances¹⁰⁰, along with growing levels of gender-based violence amid weak legal protection and limited psychosocial support services¹⁰¹.

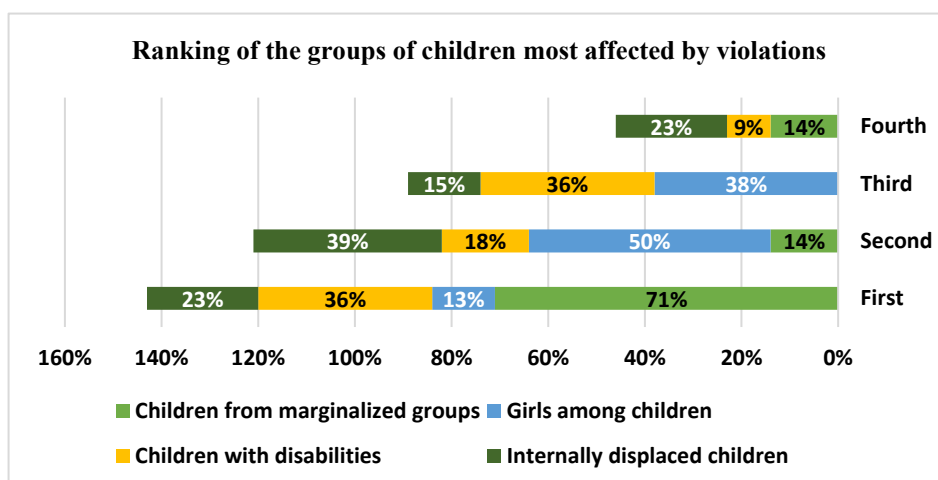
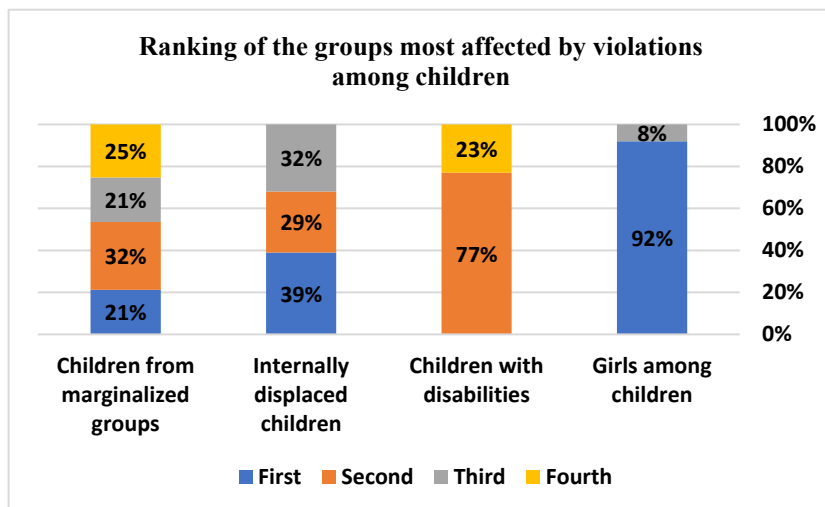
Children in rural and remote areas have suffered from double deprivation due to poor infrastructure, long distances to schools, the prevalence of landmines and shelling, and the conversion of schools into shelters or military outposts.

These conditions have further disrupted education; boys have been directed to work in agriculture, while girls have often been confined to the home, isolating them from any educational or recreational opportunities.

Marginalized

communities—including the socially outcast—are among the most severely affected groups. These have faced historical exclusion long before the war, and their vulnerability has only grown as a result of the conflict. Their children have suffered

from hunger, lack of protection, and exposure to sexual violence in displacement settings, with almost complete neglect from different authorities¹⁰². Children with disabilities have endured



⁹⁹ International Rescue Committee. "4 Ways War Has Impacted Women and Girls in Yemen." International Rescue Committee, 25 March 2019. Accessed on 23 June 2025. <https://www.rescue.org/article/4-ways-war-yemen-has-impacted-women-and-girls>

¹⁰⁰ European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights. "Yemen's Daughters: The Battle Against Child Marriage Amidst War." European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights. Accessed on 23 June 2025. <https://www.ecdhr.org/yemens-daughters-the-battle-against-child-marriage-amidst-war/>

¹⁰¹ United Nations Population Fund – Yemen. "Gender-Based Violence." Accessed on 23 June 2025. <https://yemen.unfpa.org/en/topics/gender-based-violence>

¹⁰² Justice4Yemen Pact. "The Struggle of Marginalized Communities for Justice amid Systematic Discrimination and Deprivation in Yemen." Justice4Yemen Pact, 22 November 2024. Accessed on 23 June 2025. https://justice4yemenpact.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Incident-Report-14-Muhamasheen-Nov10.2024_AR.pdf

compounded neglect due to the interruption of care and the difficulty of accessing medication or services, which has worsened both their physical and psychological suffering¹⁰³.

This was confirmed by the findings of the study at the individual level, which showed that girls topped the list of the most affected groups, with 91.7% of respondents reporting that girls had been subjected to severe violations. They were followed by children with disabilities, who accounted for 76.9%, due to weak protection and the lack of appropriate services. Displaced children ranked at different levels (39.3%, 28.6%, 32.1%), reflecting differing views on their vulnerability, despite their loss of education and stability and their exposure to exploitation or recruitment. Children from marginalized groups also received varied assessments, most notably ranking second (32.1%) and fourth (25%), despite their chronic suffering from poverty and structural discrimination.

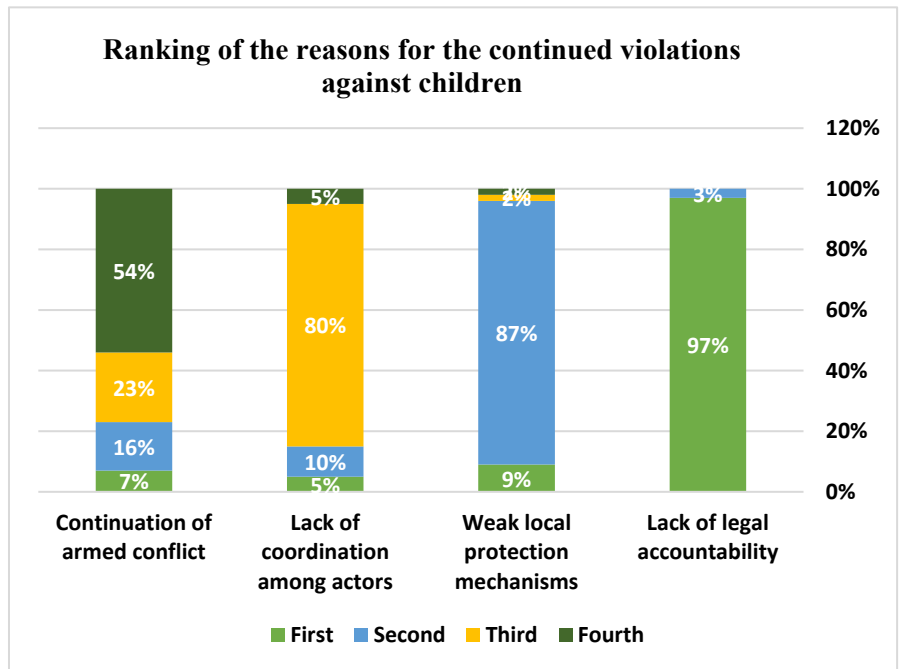
At the institutional level, 71.4% of participants classified marginalized children as the group most exposed to violations, followed by girls (50% placed them second and 37.5% placed them third), indicating the high risks of sexual violence and early marriage. Children with disabilities were ranked in both first and third positions at similar rates (36.4%), reflecting awareness of the challenges related to disability in an environment lacking specialized services. Displaced children occupied several ranks: second (38.5%), first (23.1%), and fourth (23.1%), highlighting the diversity of risks associated with displacement.

These findings show that the conflict has had different impacts on children depending on gender, disability, social belonging, and displacement. This calls for differential responses that take these specificities into account. It is essential to adopt a comprehensive approach that integrates special protection with transitional justice, including holding perpetrators accountable, providing legal safeguards, and offering psychosocial rehabilitation programs. Additionally, the safe return of children must be ensured, in line with the commitment to the principle of non-impunity and the right of children to a safe, fair, and discrimination-free future.

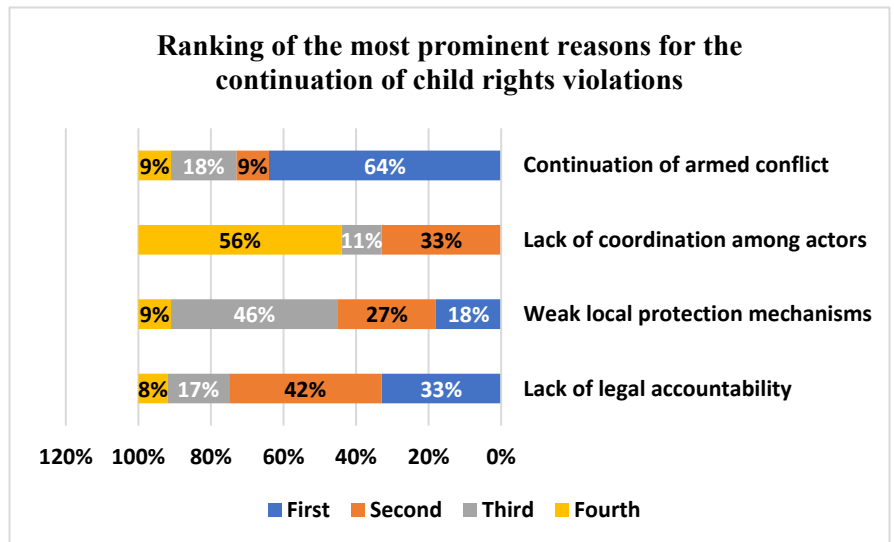
¹⁰³ Humanity & Inclusion US. "Alarming New Report on the Dire Situation for People with Disabilities in Yemen." Press release, May 23, 2022. Accessed June 23, 2025. <https://www.hi-us.org/en/alarming-new-report-on-the-dire-situation-for-people-with-disabilities-in-yemen>

Sixth: Causes for the Persistence of Violations – Structural and Institutional Analysis

Survey results at the individual level indicate that the absence of legal accountability is the leading cause for the continuation of violations, cited by 96.9% of respondents. This reflects a widespread awareness of the dangers of impunity and the weakness of the judiciary. This is followed by weak local protection mechanisms (86.8%), and a lack of coordination among key actors (80%). Ongoing armed conflict ranked last (54.1%), suggesting that participants consider institutional and operational reforms more urgent than simply waiting for the war to end.



At the institutional level, ongoing armed conflict was most frequently identified as the main cause (63.6%), followed by the absence of legal accountability (75% in the first and second ranks), then weak local protection mechanisms (45.5%). Lack of coordination ranked lowest (55.6% in fourth place).



These findings demonstrate that addressing violations requires a multi-level approach that combines ending the conflict, strengthening accountability, improving protection systems, and enhancing coordination among local and international actors to ensure a more effective and sustainable response.

Chapter Three: Local and International Responses to Protect Children During the Conflict

Despite the intensity and complexity of the conflict in Yemen, a variety of local and international initiatives have emerged to alleviate the suffering of children. These efforts have focused on providing psychosocial, social, and educational support, utilizing approaches that

account for local circumstances. This chapter reviews the frameworks of these initiatives and protection efforts at both local and international levels, the level of coordination between different actors, and the main challenges that limit their effectiveness

First: Local Initiatives to Protect Children During the Conflict

With the weakening of state institutions and the escalation of violations, Yemeni non-governmental organizations have become key partners in protecting children. They have documented grave abuses against children, including attacks on schools and hospitals, recruitment of minors, and child marriage. Notable organizations include the Monitoring and Reporting Coalition (Rasd), SEYAJ Organization, and SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties. These organizations have helped build comprehensive databases that serve as essential foundations for any future justice process.

Specialized organizations such as Rasd Coalition and SEYAJ Organization have played active roles in monitoring violations and coordinating with local authorities to provide protection and support to victims¹⁰⁴. Other local organizations, supported by international partners, have implemented programs for the rehabilitation of child soldiers, provision of temporary care, psychosocial support, and non-formal education, preparing children for reintegration into their families and communities. The "Kafak" project, implemented by the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center in partnership with Wethaq Foundation since 2017¹⁰⁵, stands out as a prominent example, rehabilitating hundreds of children. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, through its local branches, has also provided emergency psychosocial support, especially during periods of escalation and displacement.

Other initiatives have also emerged, such as the creation of child-friendly spaces in cities like Amran. These centers, supported by UNICEF, offer safe environments through artistic, sporting, and guidance activities, successfully reaching thousands of children and providing restorative psychological support¹⁰⁶. Some programs are targeted at empowering the families of affected children, particularly widows and female caregivers, by training them in crafts and small enterprise management. This has enhanced family capacity to care for children and reduced the impact of educational disruption and displacement¹⁰⁷.

Local customs have also played a clear role in protecting children. Tribal mediation committees and elders have helped contain disputes and stop acts of revenge, reducing violence and creating safer environments for children, even if indirectly. Women activists have emerged as influential actors in community peacebuilding—they have mediated ceasefires, opened

¹⁰⁴ SEYAJ Organization for Child Protection. "Monitoring and Protection Center." Accessed on 23 June 2025. <https://ar.seyaj.org/m-p-center>

¹⁰⁵ Alkhaleej Online. "A Saudi Project: How Has 'Kafak' Helped Rescue Recruited Yemeni Children?" Accessed on 23 June 2025. <https://alkhaleejonline.net/%مجمع/مشروع-سعودي-كيف-ساهم-كفك-بانقاذ-اطفال-يمنيين-مجندين>
King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center. "Child Soldier Rehabilitation Program: Happy Children and Beautiful Smiles." 23 February 2019. Accessed on 23 June 2025. <https://www.ksrelief.org/Pages/NewsDetails/0de432d1-9eaa-4a79-97a7-314c9070efca>

¹⁰⁶ UN Yemen. "UNICEF Yemen Support for Child Protection Amidst Displacement." *United Nations in Yemen*, accessed June 23, 2025 <https://yemen.un.org/ar/273272-اليمن-ضمان-بيئة-آمنة-للأطفال-الضحايا-في-اليمن>

¹⁰⁷ Ibid

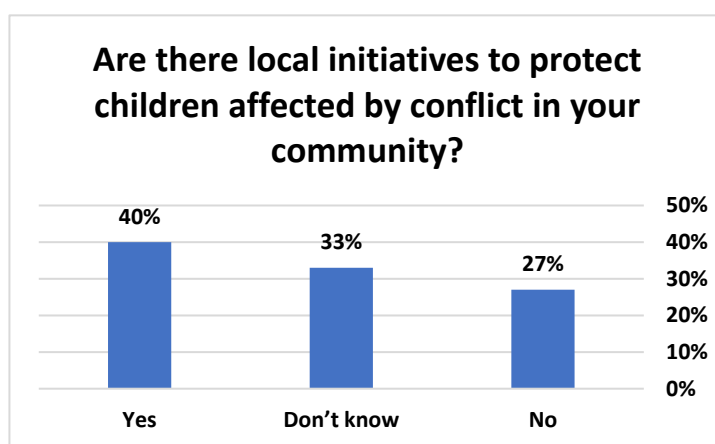
humanitarian corridors, and participated in negotiations leading to the release of detainees, including child soldiers and abducted children¹⁰⁸.

These experiences underline that transitional justice pathways must be built through broad local participation that respects cultural specificity and connects psychosocial support, economic empowerment, and community reconciliation mechanisms. The 2023 Yemeni Declaration of Justice and Reconciliation emphasized the importance of these mechanisms, considering that transitional justice extends beyond judicial accountability to include customary and community-based remedies, provided they are compatible with human rights standards¹⁰⁹.

The results of the study present a complex picture of the reality of local initiatives aimed at protecting children affected by conflict, in terms of their existence, types, targeted groups, impact, and the need for further development.

a. Existence of Local Initiatives

A total of 40.3% of participants confirmed the existence of local initiatives aimed at protecting children affected by conflict. Meanwhile, 32.5% were not aware of such initiatives, and 27.3% stated that these initiatives do not exist. These findings highlight the limited outreach or weak communication regarding these initiatives, and emphasize the need to enhance coordination among local actors, government institutions, and civil society to ensure children in different areas receive adequate protection, especially in conflict-affected environments.



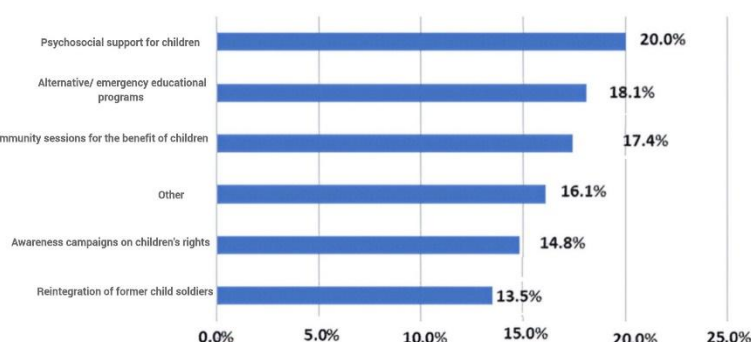
¹⁰⁸ Bramble, Alexander. *Pathways Towards an Inclusive Peace Process in Yemen*. Inclusive Peace, November 2022. Updated January 25, 2023. Accessed June 23, 2025. <http://inclusivepeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Policy-Brief-Pathways-Yemen-Nov-2022-updated-25Jan.pdf>.

¹⁰⁹ Yemen Justice. "Yemen Declaration of Justice and Reconciliation." Accessed on 23 June 2025. <https://yemenjustice.org/ar/>

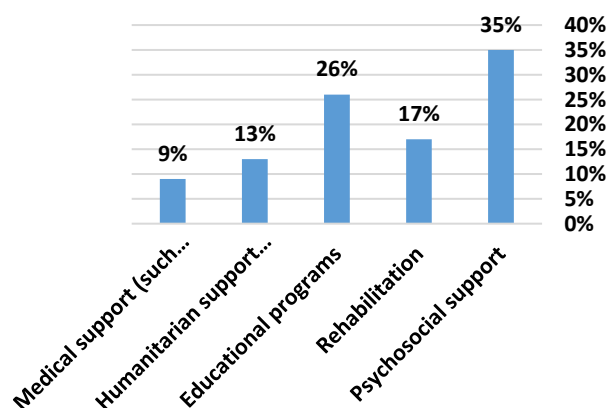
b. Types of Local Initiatives Implemented to Protect Children Affected by Conflict

Survey participants were asked to identify the types of initiatives implemented to support children affected by violations. The results showed the diversity of local efforts led by civil society organizations, local communities, government entities, and charitable institutions to mitigate the impact of conflict on children. Psychosocial and social support programs ranked highest at 20.0%, followed by alternative and emergency education programs at 18.1%, community sessions at 17.4%, and child rights awareness campaigns at 14.8%. Reintegration initiatives for former child soldiers accounted for 13.5%. Other initiatives made up 16.1% and included humanitarian aid, legal support, and cultural or sports activities. This reveals a multi-dimensional response but also signals the need to expand geographic coverage and scale up reintegration efforts.

Types of local initiatives implemented to protect children affected by the conflict



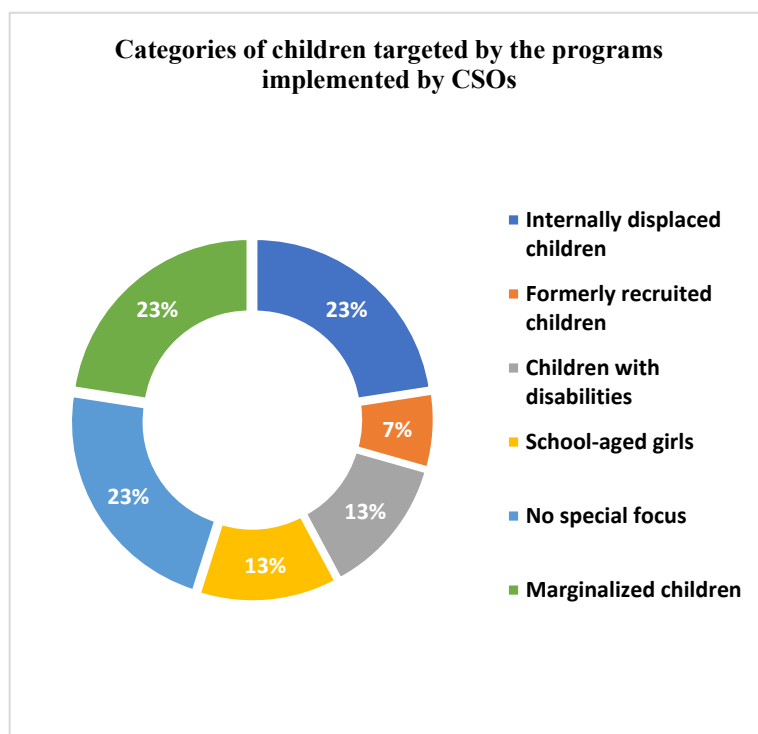
Types of programs implemented by the CSO to support child victims



Institutions participating in the survey were also asked to specify the types of programs they implement to support child victims. Results indicated that psychosocial support is the most common type of assistance (34.8%), followed by educational support (26.1%). Rehabilitation (17.4%), humanitarian support (13.0%), and medical support (8.7%) were less prevalent, indicating a relative weakness in healthcare and humanitarian response.

c. Categories of Children Targeted in Implemented Programs

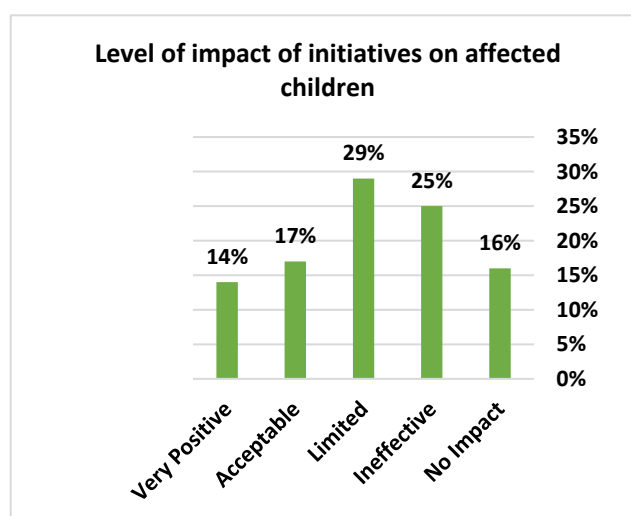
The targeted categories of children varied, with some institutions aiming to reach more than one group, raising the cumulative percentage to 258.3%. Internally displaced children and children from marginalized groups were the most targeted, accounting for 58.3% of the sample and 22.6% of repetitions for each group. School-age girls and children with disabilities followed with 33.3% of the sample and 12.9% of repetitions each. Former child soldiers were the least targeted, at 16.7% of the sample and 6.5% of repetitions. This points to the need to develop more balanced targeting policies to ensure fair treatment of the most vulnerable groups, particularly child soldiers, children with disabilities, and girls.



These findings reveal the diverse roles of actors and relative complementarity between international and local efforts. However, there are shortcomings in geographic coverage and large-scale reintegration of child soldiers, as well as gaps in protection policies and the absence of some actors in certain regions. This underscores the need for a comprehensive national intervention map that ensures fair distribution of resources and expands partnerships between local and international actors to guarantee holistic and sustainable child protection.

d. Impact of Initiatives on Affected Children

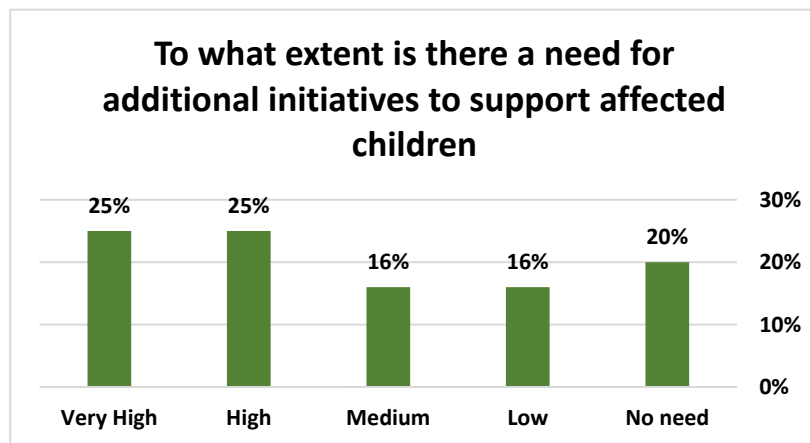
Survey results reveal a community assessment that is largely negative regarding the effectiveness of local initiatives aimed at protecting children affected by the conflict. Of the participants, 28.6% described the impact of these initiatives as "limited," while 24.7% considered them "ineffective." These figures highlight a clear gap between the actual needs of children and the support provided through these interventions, whether in geographical coverage, quality of services, or sustainability. They also point to weak institutional coordination and the absence of comprehensive intervention strategies based on rights standards and accurate data, resulting



in many initiatives being partial, seasonal, and fragmented. On the other hand, 31.2% of respondents rated the impact of these initiatives as ranging from "acceptable" to "very positive," which suggests that there are successful local experiences that could be further developed and expanded if resources and institutional support are available.

e. Need for Additional Initiatives to Support Affected Children

Regarding the need for further interventions, nearly half of respondents (49.4%) affirmed the necessity of strengthening support through new initiatives at a "high" or "very high" level, indicating widespread recognition of existing protection gaps and the need for innovative and comprehensive solutions. In contrast, less than one fifth of the sample viewed the need for new initiatives as "low" or "nonexistent," which may be related to limited awareness or differing priorities from one region to another.



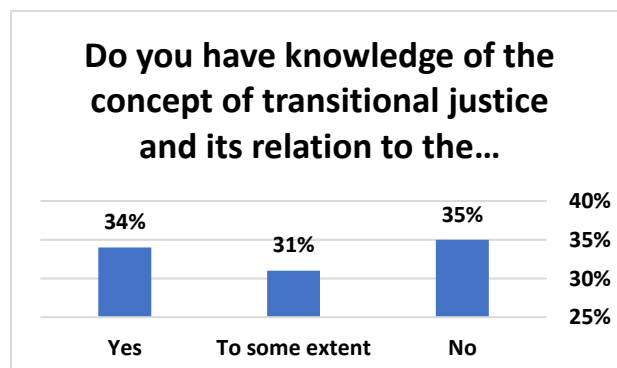
These results confirm that the effectiveness of existing initiatives remains in question and requires critical review and systematic evaluation to identify areas of weakness and success. They also highlight an urgent community need to expand and improve these initiatives to ensure comprehensive and sustainable protection for children affected by conflict.

Second: Community and Institutional Awareness of Transitional Justice and Child Protection

The survey results revealed significant variation among participants in the degree of awareness and understanding of transitional justice, as well as in their recognition of the importance of addressing children's needs in this context and their knowledge of the reality of local initiatives for child protection.

a. Level of Knowledge About Transitional Justice

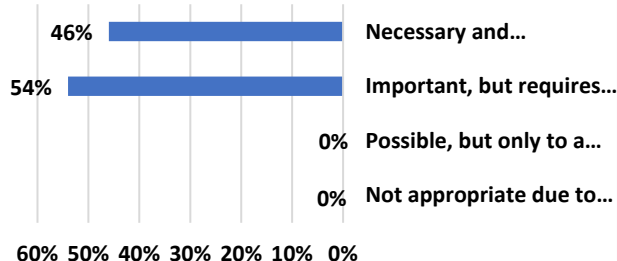
The analysis showed that only a limited portion of participants (33.8%) have a clear understanding of the concept of transitional justice, while 31.2% have limited knowledge, and 35.1% are not familiar with the concept at all. These results reflect the insufficient dissemination of knowledge on this topic within society and highlight the need for comprehensive awareness programs to strengthen understanding of transitional justice,



especially in its relationship to peacebuilding and the protection of vulnerable groups such as children.

At the institutional level, 61.5% of institutions participating in the study demonstrated strong (practical and theoretical) knowledge of transitional justice issues as they relate to children, while 30.8% had general familiarity, and 7.7% showed limited knowledge. However, actual involvement was

How important is it to involve children and their families in the design and implementation of transitional justice mechanisms?



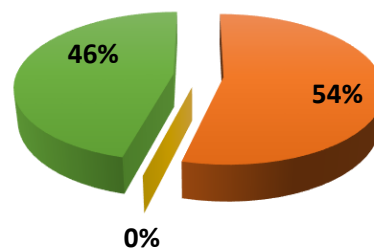
lower, with only 46.2% having participated in related efforts, and none having clear future plans. All institutions agreed on the importance of engaging children and their families, though opinions differed on the conditions: 53.8% considered engagement contingent on creating a safe environment, while 46.2% saw it as essential and necessary.

b. The Importance of Justice for Children Within Transitional Justice Pathways

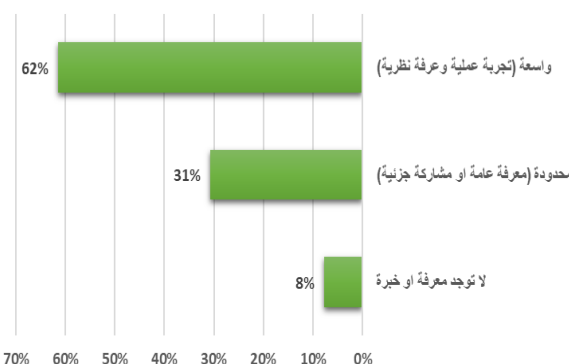
The majority of participants (approximately 69%) recognized the importance of integrating children's rights into transitional justice processes. Of these, 39% considered it "very important," while 35.1% regarded it as "somewhat important." In contrast, 26% saw this issue as not important, indicating a gap in the societal prioritization of childhood

Has your organization participated in any efforts related to the welfare or rights of children within transitional justice approaches?

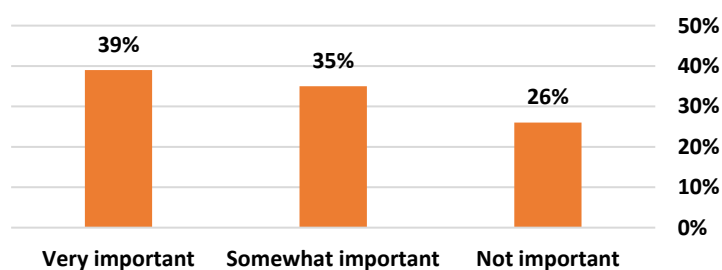
■ No ■ Previously planned ■ Yes



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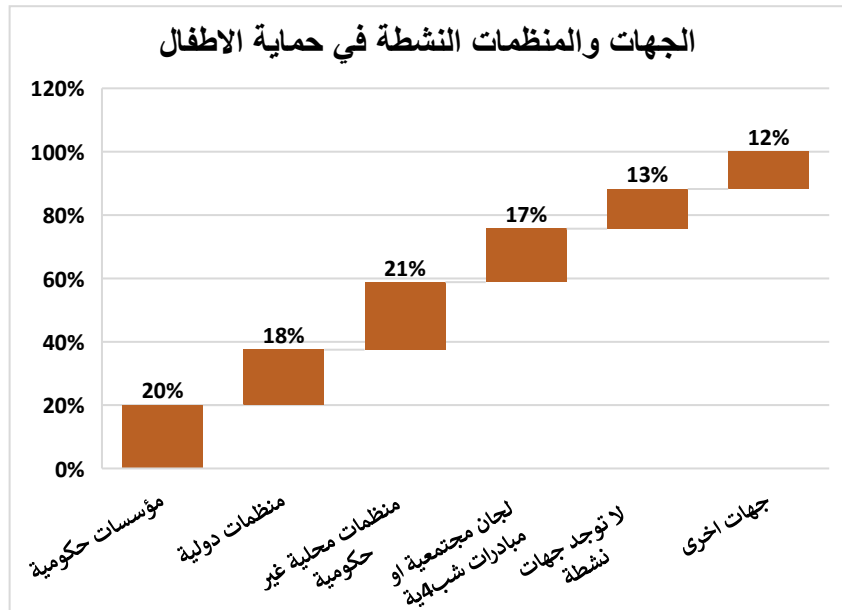
Importance of achieving justice for children within transitional justice processes



matters. This may be due to limited awareness, or the impact of living conditions and ongoing conflict on individual priorities.

These findings affirm that building sustainable social awareness of transitional justice, and prioritizing children's rights in justice and recovery agendas, require a combination of awareness-raising, transparency, and

expansion of local initiatives, with an emphasis on involving communities in the design and implementation of child protection policies.



Third: Efforts of International, Regional, and Local Organizations in Protecting Children

Local initiatives in Yemen have worked in tandem with substantial regional and international efforts aimed at protecting children from the consequences of war. These efforts have included providing psychological, social, and educational support, documenting violations, and rehabilitating victims.

a. International and Regional Efforts

At the forefront of these efforts is the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which has implemented comprehensive field programs including the creation of safe spaces for children, provision of psychosocial and social support services, and rehabilitation of schools to ensure the continuity of education in conflict-affected areas¹¹⁰. In 2021 alone, UNICEF provided psychosocial assistance to more than 410,000 children and caregivers, while mine risk awareness campaigns reached over 5.5 million people. UNICEF also supported services for protection against gender-based violence¹¹¹ and led the coordination of the Child Protection Working Group as part of the humanitarian response, in partnership with organizations such as Save the Children and the International Organization for Migration¹¹².

¹¹⁰ UN Yemen. "UNICEF Yemen Support for Child Protection Amidst Displacement." *United Nations in Yemen*, accessed June 23, 2025 <https://yemen.un.org/ar/273272-يونسف-اليمن-ضمن-بيئة-أمنة-للأطفال-الضحايا-في-اليمن>

¹¹¹ UNICEF Yemen. "Child Protection Programme." Accessed 23 June 2025. [https://www.unicef.org/yemen/ar/حماية-الطفل:contentReference\[oaicite:7\]{index=7}](https://www.unicef.org/yemen/ar/حماية-الطفل:contentReference[oaicite:7]{index=7})

¹¹² Mueller, Chissey. "Protecting Children in Yemen." *IOM Blog*, July 12, 2023. Accessed June 23, 2025. <https://weblog.iom.int/protecting-children-yemen>

Save the Children also implemented multi-sectoral programs in nine governorates, covering protection, health, nutrition, and education¹¹³. The organization supported referral mechanisms and the monitoring of violations, while training specialists to respond to cases of child recruitment and abuse¹¹⁴.

The International Committee of the Red Cross and the Yemen Red Crescent Society focused on providing medical care and relief, as well as physical rehabilitation programs for children with limb amputations. They also worked to restore family links for children who were detained or separated from their families, emphasizing respect for international humanitarian law and ending child recruitment¹¹⁵.

In addition to these agencies, other international organizations such as War Child UK¹¹⁶ and World Vision contributed to creating child-friendly spaces and providing psychosocial and social support, particularly in the most affected regions¹¹⁷. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) established dozens of safe spaces in cities such as Aden and Sana'a, which facilitated the delivery of psychosocial and social support services to children and their families within their local communities¹¹⁸.

b. Distribution of Active Entities and Their Areas of Work

Data indicates that the entities active in child protection are distributed across various groups, having different levels of impact and presence. Participants in the study identified local non-governmental organizations as the primary actors, representing 21.3%. This reflects the growing role of these organizations, driven by their flexibility and proximity to local communities. Government institutions were next, accounting for 20.0%, despite the challenges posed by conflict and institutional division. International organizations followed with 17.5%, as they maintain a presence despite ongoing security and bureaucratic obstacles.

Community committees and youth initiatives accounted for 16.9%, reflecting the emergence of alternative local dynamics that provide partial protection for children, especially in areas where state authority is weak or where international response is absent.

In contrast, 12.5% of participants indicated the complete absence of active entities, highlighting critical protection gaps and calling for urgent intervention to strengthen the presence of local and international actors. Other entities were mentioned by 11.9% of respondents, including

¹¹³ Save the Children, "Humanitarian Aid in Yemen Slashed by Over 60% in Five Years," 25 September 2023. Accessed 23 June 2025. <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/humanitarian-aid-yemen-slashed-over-60-five-years>

¹¹⁴ ODIHRN. "The Dynamic Approach to Child Protection in Armed Conflicts." Accessed 23 June 2025. <https://odihpn.org/النهج-الديناميكي-لحماية-الأطفال-في/>

¹¹⁵ International Committee of the Red Cross. "Repatriation of 27 Yemeni Minors." Accessed 23 June 2025. <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/repatriation-of-27-yemeni-minors>

¹¹⁶ War Child, "Child Protection and Support Programs in Yemen," Accessed 23 June 2025. <https://www.warchild.net/yemen/>

¹¹⁷ World Vision. "World Vision Yemen Response Country Profile." Accessed 23 June 2025.

¹¹⁸ Mueller, Chissey. "Protecting Children in Yemen." *IOM Blog*, July 12, 2023. Accessed June 23, 2025. <https://weblog.iom.int/protecting-children-yemen>

non-traditional groups such as social, religious, or media personalities, who play varying roles in direct or indirect protection efforts.

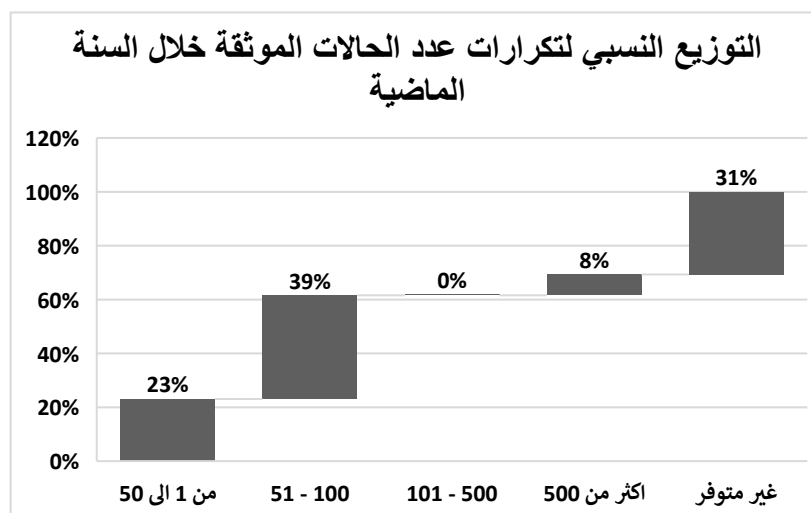
c. Child Protection Policies within CSOs

Survey results show that 77% of institutions (10 out of 13) have policies or programs to protect children during the conflict, while 23% reported the absence of such policies. This highlights the need to support these institutions in strengthening their preventative and responsive roles.

d. Monitoring and Documentation Capacities of CSOs

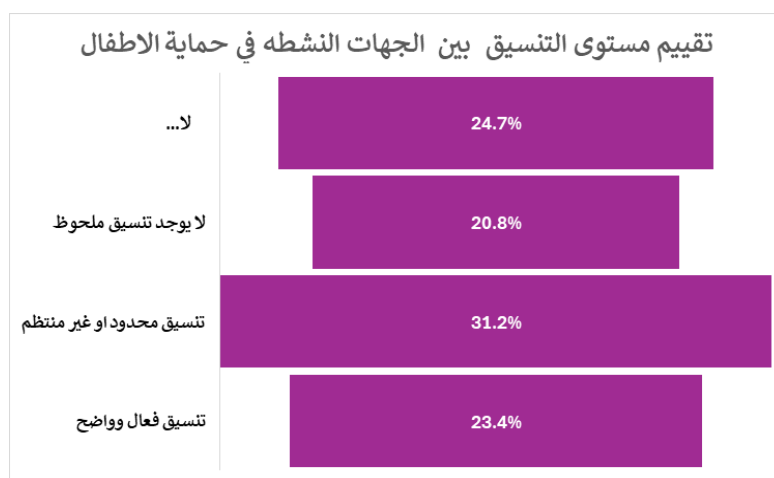
The data reveals differences in the institutions' documentation capacities last year. About 23.1% reported documenting between 1–50 cases of violations against children, while 38.5% documented between 51–100 cases, indicating moderate efforts that vary depending on the size and resources of the institution. Only one

institution documented more than 500 cases, reflecting a higher capacity for monitoring. Meanwhile, 30.8% of institutions did not provide precise numbers, possibly due to limited capabilities or the sensitive nature of the information. These results highlight the need to enhance documentation capacities and develop better monitoring tools to ensure more accurate and consistent data.



e. Level of Coordination Among Child Protection Actors

The findings of the study indicate noticeable differences in participant assessments of coordination among organizations active in child protection in Yemen. This suggests an absence of a unified vision or comprehensive institutional framework to organize such coordination. Approximately 31.2% of respondents described existing coordination as "limited or irregular," which points to widespread individual or fragmented efforts that lack sustainable mechanisms or joint planning and information-sharing.



In contrast, 23.4% of participants noted "effective and clear coordination," reflecting the existence of successful local or sectoral models. However, the limited percentage suggests these experiences remain isolated and are not applied nationally. Additionally, 20.8% did not observe any form of coordination, signaling a concerning gap among actors that may lead to duplication of efforts or neglect of certain child protection priorities.

The percentage of respondents who answered "I do not know" stood at 24.7%, which may indicate a lack of transparency in coordination efforts or weaknesses in communication and media channels, or even a general lack of community awareness regarding child protection activities and initiatives.

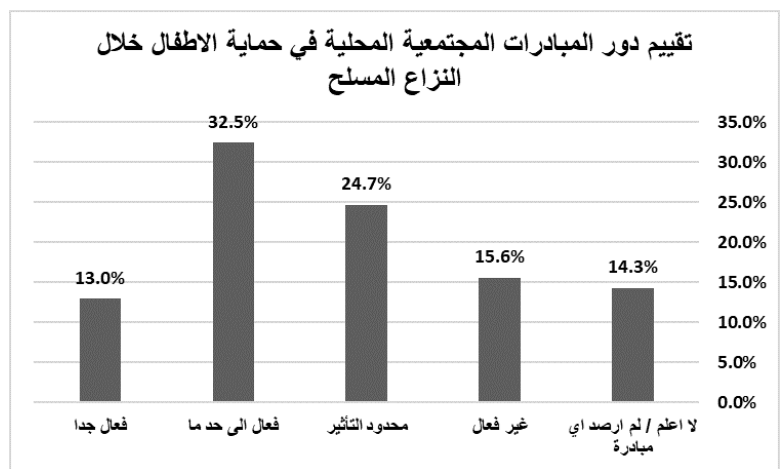
Fourth: Assessing the Role of Local Community Initiatives in Protecting Children During Armed Conflict

The survey results showed a range of assessments regarding the effectiveness of local community initiatives focused on protecting children during the armed conflict in Yemen. This variation reflects differences in experience and levels of exposure to these initiatives in terms of their scope and impact.

The category "somewhat effective" was ranked highest at 32.5%, indicating a general recognition of the value of these efforts, while acknowledging that they have not yet reached the desired level of efficiency or impact. This assessment places the initiatives in an intermediate position between achievement and shortcoming, highlighting the need to strengthen their capacity and expand the scale of their interventions.

The "limited impact" category followed at 24.7%, pointing to clear shortcomings according to nearly a quarter of respondents; such limitations may be due to insufficient funding, a lack of qualified staff, or restricted geographic and sectoral coverage. The "ineffective" category received 15.6%, while 14.3% reported being unaware of any active initiatives, indicating weak outreach or a lack of accompanying media coverage of these activities.

By contrast, only 13.0% of participants considered these initiatives "very effective," a low rate that reveals a significant gap between expectations and reality. This underscores the need for strategic interventions, including sustained institutional and technical support and broader partnerships with local and international actors, to ensure more comprehensive protection for children in conflict situations.



Fifth: Challenges Facing Organizations Active in Child Protection

Despite the considerable momentum of local and international initiatives to protect children in Yemen, their effectiveness continues to face several structural and operational obstacles that undermine their impact and limit their sustainability.

a. Weak Coordination and Multiplicity of Actors

The child protection sector in Yemen is marked by overlapping roles among international and local organizations and government agencies. The dual authority between the internationally recognized government and the de facto authorities leads to conflicts of responsibility and repeated efforts. Although UNICEF and Save the Children lead the "Child Protection Cluster," various security and logistical hurdles—such as movement restrictions, requirements for security clearances, and complex bureaucratic procedures—obstruct the flow of information and affect the quality of services provided. Field activities often experience repeated delays and limitations on actual implementation¹¹⁹.

Some community awareness programs are met with resistance from local actors who see them as intrusive or ineffective, prompting some organizations to adapt their messaging and link it to practical outcomes to increase local acceptance¹²⁰.

Additionally, 12.2% of the study's participants indicated that weak coordination is the most significant challenge faced in child protection efforts. This leads to duplicated interventions, conflicting roles, and lower efficiency, especially in the absence of a unified national framework to organize joint work.

b. Fragile Security Situation

Unstable security conditions pose a major challenge to child protection efforts, highlighted by 18.9% of respondents in the survey. Large areas experience clashes, a general lack of security, and direct targeting of educational and health facilities¹²¹. These conditions have resulted in the death and injury of humanitarian workers¹²², the closure or suspension of centers and activities, and the deprivation of thousands of children from essential services at critical times. The targeting of child-friendly spaces or the presence of armed groups within their vicinity has also raised growing concerns among families, causing them to hesitate to send their children to these facilities¹²³.

¹¹⁹ ODI Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN). "Dynamic approaches to child protection in the humanitarian response in Yemen." Humanitarian Practice Network. Published approximately five years ago. Accessed 23 June 2025. <https://odihpn.org/publication/dynamic-approaches-child-protection-humanitarian-response-yemen/>

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ According to the United Nations Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR), since the escalation of the conflict in March 2015, 502 incidents of attacks on and military use of educational facilities, and 199 incidents of attacks on and military use of health facilities have been recorded in Yemen. For more, see: https://www.unicef.org/yemen/child-protection?utm_source=chatgpt.com

¹²² Islamic Relief. "NGOs Condemn Killing of Humanitarian Staff in Yemen and Stand in Solidarity with WFP." July 24, 2023. Accessed June 23, 2025. <https://islamic-relief.org/news/ngos-condemn-killing-of-humanitarian-staff-in-yemen-and-stand-in-solidarity-with-wfp/>

¹²³ Save the Children Canada. "Yemen: 60% of Children Whose School Came Under Attack Have Not Returned to Education." *Save the Children Canada*, April 14, 2024. Accessed June 24, 2024.

In this environment, most organizations have been forced to rely on local staff to minimize risks, but these staff also face psychological pressure while working in a divided and exhausted context¹²⁴. Security challenges are particularly severe in areas controlled by de facto authorities (Ansar Allah), where numerous cases of repeated arrests of international organization staff have been recorded. These staff have faced accusations of espionage or "collaboration," and some have been referred to courts that lack international recognition, attracting widespread human rights criticism¹²⁵. The assassination of a United Nations employee in Al-Turbah in July 2023¹²⁶ served as a stark indicator of the increasing risks faced by humanitarian workers.

c. Challenges of Funding and Sustainability

Data from the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan highlight significant funding gaps in the child protection sector, with only 7.5 percent of the total needs met. As a result, the number of social workers has been reduced, psychosocial support sessions have been scaled back, and the scope of child-friendly spaces has been limited. In the education sector, funding did not exceed 10 percent, contributing to deteriorating facilities and higher dropout rates, especially among girls¹²⁷.

According to 12.2 percent of study participants, insufficient funding is a major challenge to child protection efforts. The issue is not limited to a lack of resources but also includes the absence of flexible and sustainable funding capable of supporting long-term strategic programs such as institutional capacity building, strengthening mental health services, and implementing community reintegration programs for children¹²⁸.

d. Weak Official Institutional Presence

Some 18.9 percent of participants indicated that the lack of qualified personnel, especially experienced psychological and social specialists, is a fundamental challenge that directly affects the quality of interventions aimed at protecting children. The official institutional presence has diminished due to political divisions and the conflict, leaving the responsibility of child protection largely to international and local organizations in the absence of comprehensive national policies. Although some sporadic government initiatives have emerged, they lack sustainability and a comprehensive legislative and operational framework.

https://www.savethechildren.ca/article/yemen-60-of-children-whose-school-came-under-attack-have-not-returned-to-education/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

¹²⁴ Elnakib, Shatha, et al. "Providing Care Under Extreme Adversity: The Impact of the Yemen Conflict on the Personal and Professional Lives of Health Workers." *Social Science & Medicine* 272 (March 2021): 113751. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.113751. Accessed June 24, 2025. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33588206/>

¹²⁵ South24. "Houthi Practices Threaten International Humanitarian Work in Impoverished Yemen." South24 News & Analysis. 23 June 2024. Accessed: 24 June 2024, <https://south24.net/news/newse.php?nid=4035>

¹²⁶ World Food Programme. "WFP Statement on the Death of a Staff Member in Yemen." World Food Programme (WFP), 21 July 2023, <https://ar.wfp.org/news/wfp-statement-death-staff-member-yemen>. Accessed on 01 September 2025.

¹²⁷ Save the Children. "Humanitarian Aid in Yemen Slashed by Over 60% in Five Years." *Save the Children*, September 25, 2023. Accessed June 24, 2025. <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/humanitarian-aid-yemen-slashed-over-60-five-years>

¹²⁸ ODIHPN. "Dynamic Approaches to Child Protection in Yemen." Humanitarian Practice Network, published approximately 5 years ago. Accessed on 23 June 2025, <https://odihpn.org/publication/dynamic-approaches-child-protection-humanitarian-response-yemen/>

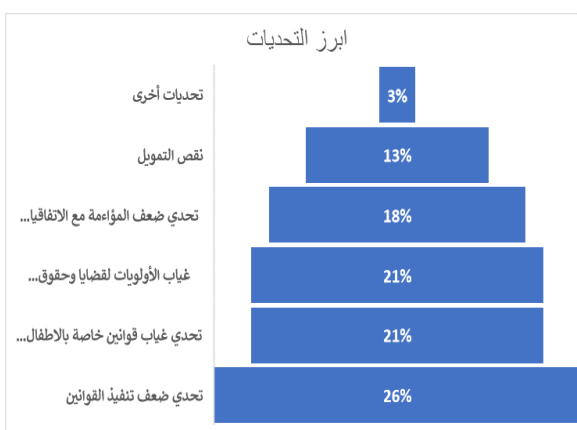
e. Politicization of Humanitarian and Human Rights Work

The phenomenon of politicizing protection efforts is one of the most serious barriers to effective humanitarian programs. According to 18.9 percent of participants, linking interventions to political considerations has undermined the neutrality and community acceptance of some initiatives, and negatively impacted their independence and credibility, thereby limiting their impact and eroding trust.

f. Difficulty Reaching Target Groups

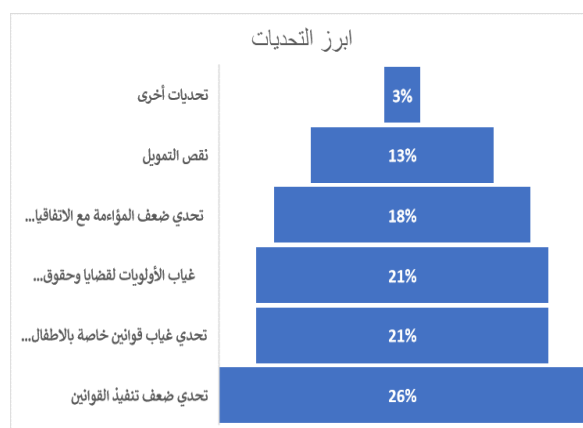
Limited access on the ground is a practical challenge facing child protection efforts. Armed conflicts, administrative divisions, and movement restrictions hinder actors from reaching children in need, especially those in remote areas or in territories controlled by warring parties. This challenge was highlighted by 18.9 percent of participants, reflecting its significance and direct impact on the effectiveness of the humanitarian response.

At the institutional level, the findings of the study's reveal fundamental structural and practical challenges that hinder the work of agencies responsible for child protection. Of the participating institutions, 25.6% identified poor enforcement of laws as the main challenge, reflecting a significant gap between legislation and actual implementation. Two challenges followed, each cited by 20.5% of respondents: the absence of priorities for children's issues and the lack of conflict-specific laws, indicating limited legislative and institutional attention to these issues. Additionally, 17.9% mentioned weak alignment with international conventions, while funding shortages accounted for 12.8% of responses. Remaining challenges did not exceed 2.6%, suggesting that problems are concentrated in a few key areas that require comprehensive and targeted reforms to ensure effective and sustainable protection for children.



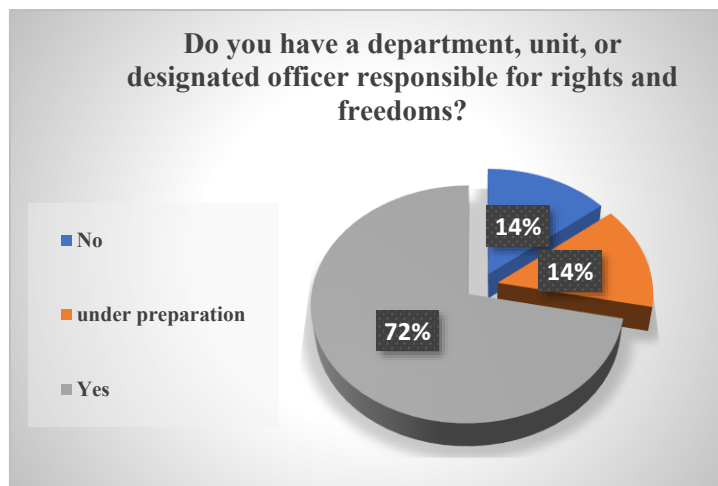
Summary of the Evaluation of Responses and Their Connection to the Transitional Justice Process

Analyzing local and international responses to protect children during the conflict made it possible to identify strengths and weaknesses in current interventions, whether in terms of geographic coverage, inclusion of the most affected groups, or the sustainability of program impact. The assessment showed that some initiatives, despite limited resources, succeeded in offering scalable models, while others faced challenges that hindered their effectiveness. This evaluation provides an essential foundation for moving forward to discuss the opportunities and challenges along the path of transitional justice, where successes can be built upon and shortcomings addressed to develop mechanisms that are more comprehensive and effective. Chapter Five of this study explores these issues in detail.



Chapter Four: The Positions of Political Parties and Entities Regarding Transitional Justice and Children's Rights

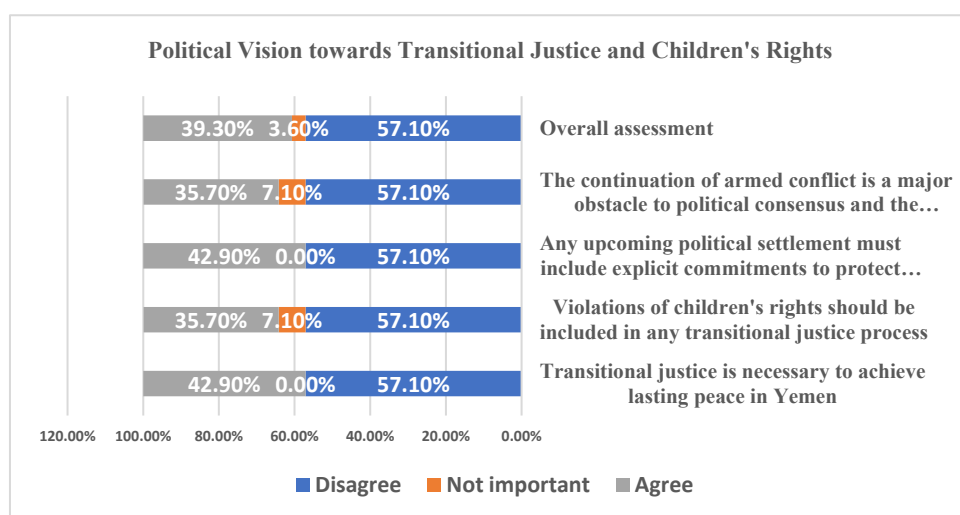
The political stance of parties and influential groups is one of the key factors in determining the extent to which children's rights issues are incorporated into transitional justice processes. This stance reflects the level of institutional and programmatic commitment to post-conflict reforms. This issue takes on particular importance in the Yemeni context, where the political landscape is intertwined with ongoing conflict, and the urgent need for a national consensus to ensure justice for victims and the protection of the most vulnerable groups, especially children, is growing.



This study targeted several representatives from political parties and entities, with a total of 14 participants. Of these, 72 percent stated that their parties have a dedicated sector or department for rights and freedoms, while 14 percent reported the absence of such a specialty, and another 14 percent indicated that such a department is currently being established. This reflects a moderate level of institutional interest in human rights, with signs of a growing organizational expansion to institutionalize this area within party structures.

First: The Political Vision Towards Transitional Justice and Children's Rights

The results assessing the level of agreement among representatives of political parties and entities with the proposed statements—which serve as indicators of their political vision—point to a greater tendency towards opposition than agreement. The findings



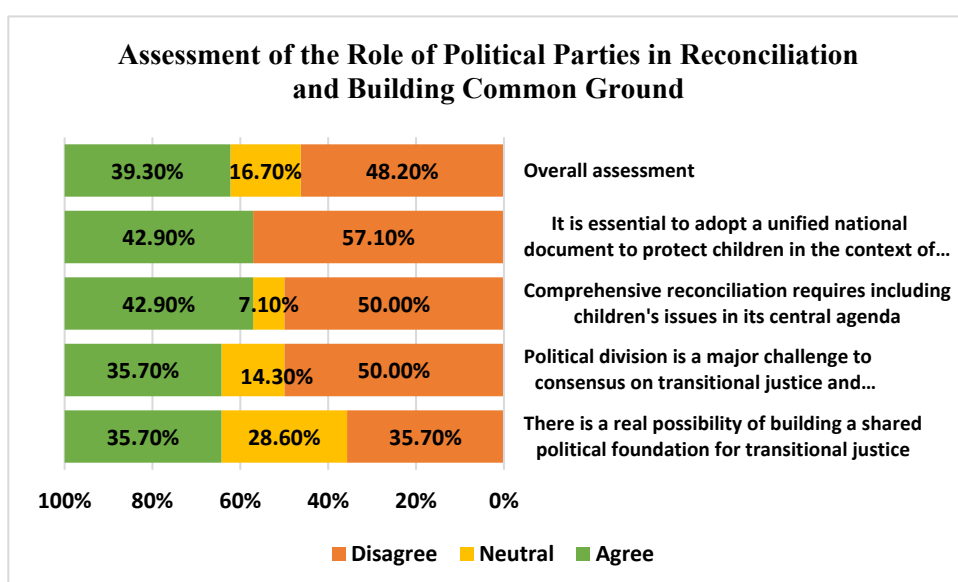
show that 57.1 percent of participants do not agree that transitional justice is necessary to achieve lasting peace in Yemen, compared to only 42.9 percent who supported this view. This highlights varying levels of conviction regarding the role of transitional justice in building peace. Regarding the inclusion of violations of children's rights in any transitional justice process, the majority of participants (57.1 percent) did not agree, while only 35.7 percent supported this, and 7.1 percent remained neutral. This indicates an absence of clear political

consensus on child-related issues. With respect to explicitly including commitments to protect children in any upcoming political settlement, the same pattern was observed: 57.1 percent rejected this proposal, and 42.9 percent supported it, demonstrating the persistence of division. Regarding the view that the ongoing armed conflict is a barrier to political consensus and transitional justice mechanisms, 57.1 percent disagreed, 35.7 percent agreed, and 7.1 percent remained neutral, revealing differing perceptions about the relationship between ongoing conflict and hindering transitional justice.

Looking at the overall evaluation, more than half of the participants (57.1 percent) rejected the statements collectively, while 42.9 percent expressed agreement, with no significant neutral percentage. This clearly indicates that the issues of transitional justice and children's rights still lack broad political consensus among Yemeni parties and entities, which could hinder future efforts to establish joint mechanisms in this area.

Second: The Role of Political Parties in Reconciliation and Building Common Ground

The results assessing the level of agreement among representatives of political parties and entities regarding the role of parties in reconciliation and building common ground demonstrate a clear divergence of views, with a general tendency towards rejection rather than acceptance. Regarding the possibility



of establishing a political consensus on transitional justice, participants were almost evenly split between those rejecting (35.7 percent) and those supporting (35.7 percent), while 28.6 percent remained neutral. This reflects the absence of a unified vision or general agreement on this issue.

As for whether political division is a challenge to reaching consensus on transitional justice and children's issues, half of the participants (50.0 percent) did not see this as correct, whereas 35.7 percent considered it a real challenge, with a minority (14.3 percent) remaining neutral. This indicates differences in how the impact of political division on transitional justice is assessed.

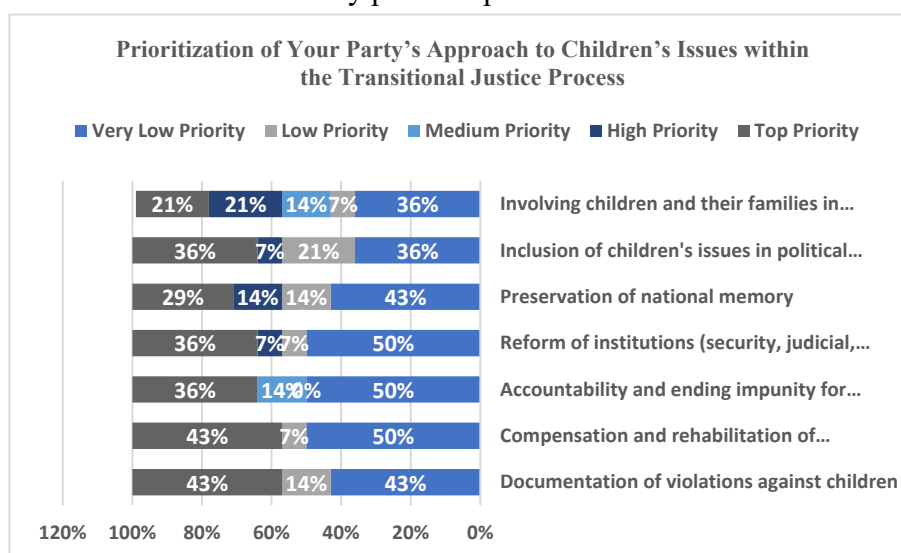
Regarding the necessity of including children's issues within a comprehensive reconciliation agenda, half of the participants (50.0 percent) rejected this proposal, while 42.9 percent agreed, pointing to a clear divide on the prioritization of children's issues in reconciliation efforts.

The idea of adopting a national charter for the protection of children within the framework of the peace process faced relatively higher opposition (57.1 percent), compared to 42.9 percent in favor, with no neutral responses. This underscores the sensitivity of this proposal and the difficulty of its political adoption at the present stage.

The proposal to adopt a comprehensive national document for the protection of children within the peace process encountered relatively high opposition, with 57.1% of respondents rejecting the idea compared to 42.9% supporting it, and no respondents expressed a neutral stance. This reflects the sensitivity of the subject and the considerable political challenges involved in securing its adoption at this stage. Regarding the overall assessment, 48.2% of participants voiced opposition to the proposed role of political parties, while 39.3% expressed support, and 16.7% remained neutral. These findings indicate a lack of broad political consensus on the role of political parties in advancing reconciliation and building common ground, particularly as it relates to issues of transitional justice and childhood.

Third: Political Priorities Regarding Children and Transitional Justice

The findings on the prioritization of children's issues by political parties and entities within the transitional justice framework reveal a clear focus on documenting violations, providing redress, and rehabilitating affected children as top priorities (43 percent). Holding perpetrators accountable, reforming institutions, and integrating children's issues into political dialogue were also considered relatively important (36 percent). By contrast, community participation by children and their families in shaping policies and solutions was seen as a medium priority overall.



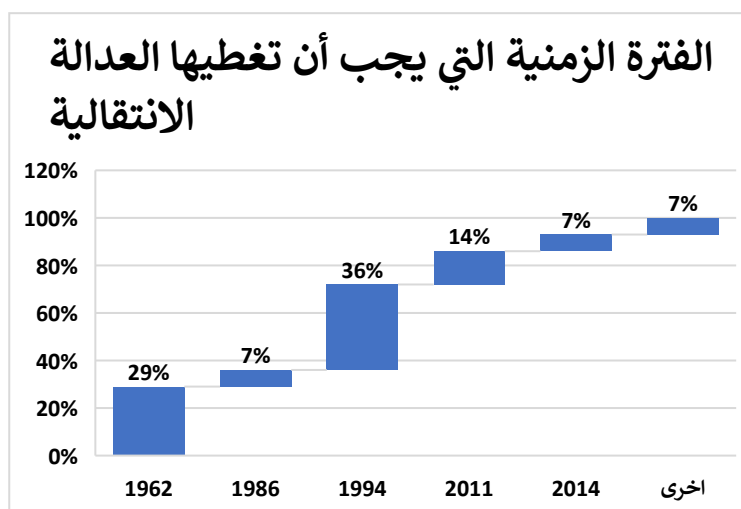
In summary, the priorities can be outlined as follows:

- The main concern of political parties and entities is addressing violations, providing redress, and reforming institutions.
- Community participation of children and their families is considered a lower priority compared to other issues.
- There is a certain inconsistency in evaluating some issues as either low or high priority, which may reflect differences in the opinions of participants regarding the importance of each topic.

Fourth: Suggestions and Future Perspectives

a. Reference Timeline for Transitional Justice

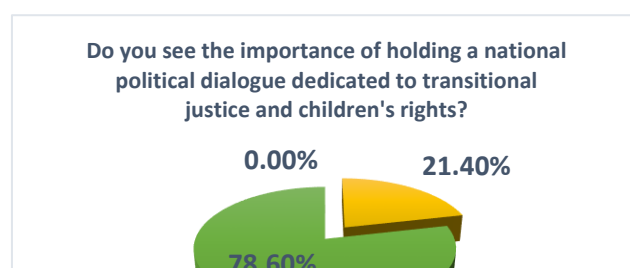
Participants expressed varying views regarding the appropriate reference timeline for transitional justice. Of those surveyed, 36 percent selected the year 1994 as a suitable starting point, considering it a turning point following the civil war between the two unification partners. Meanwhile, 29 percent chose 1962, associating it with the republican transformation and the onset of political conflict. Another 14 percent viewed 2011 as the



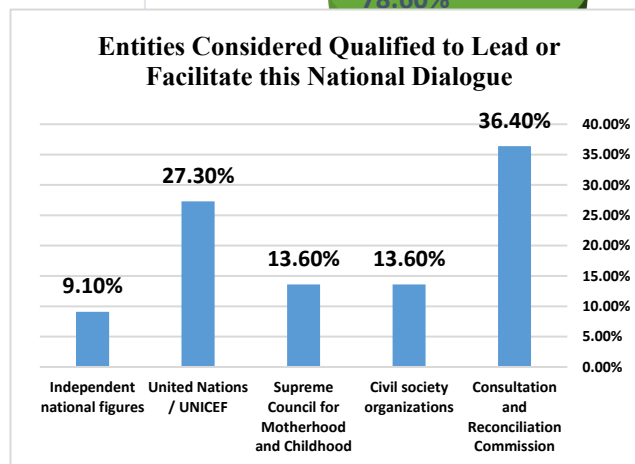
starting point, relating it to the Arab Spring uprisings and the resulting violations. The years chosen less frequently included 1986 (referring to the events of 13 January 1986) and 2014 (the Houthi coup), with other options each receiving 7 percent of the responses. This distribution highlights the absence of a national consensus on the starting point for transitional justice, with differences in political reference points and regional memories posing a challenge to formulating a unified national narrative for the transitional justice path in Yemen.

b. National Dialogue on Transitional Justice and Children's Rights

A total of 78.6 percent of participants supported holding a dedicated national political dialogue on transitional justice and children's rights, while 21.4 percent tied their approval to prevailing conditions, with no direct opposition recorded.



Confidence in the leadership of this dialogue was distributed among the Consultation and Reconciliation Commission (36.4 percent), the United Nations/UNICEF (27.3 percent), civil society organizations and the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood (13.6 percent each), and independent national figures (9.1 percent). These numbers reflect a preference for a participatory approach that includes official, international, and community stakeholders.



Fifth: Challenges to integrating children's rights into transitional justice processes

Participants highlighted the emergence of a range of challenges to integrating children's rights into transitional justice processes, reflecting a complex and interwoven set of political, legal, institutional, and social factors.

Foremost among these are the protracted war and the collapse of state institutions, the absence of security, and the control of armed groups over large swathes of territory, all of which exacerbate children's suffering and render the implementation of justice mechanisms exceedingly difficult. Structural impediments also include deficiencies in national legislation and its misalignment with international instruments on the rights of the child, notably the Convention on the Rights of the Child, alongside the absence of specific legal provisions on transitional justice for children, which hinder the enforcement of rights and accountability.

Added to this are weak child protection institutions, a shortage of qualified expertise, and a debilitated civil society, resulting in poor coordination and reduced effectiveness in response efforts. The absence of rigorous documentation and the difficulty of monitoring violations stand out as a core obstacle to building coherent legal case files, compounded by weak public awareness and inadequate official statistics. At the social and political levels, the continued marginalization of children and the limited inclusion of them and their families in the design and implementation of transitional justice pose a challenge that constrains the prospect of achieving comprehensive justice. Conditions are further aggravated by economic and livelihood hardships, the weakness of the education system, and the exploitation of children in conflict, which makes them more vulnerable to ongoing violations.

Compounding these challenges is the lack of sufficient political will to implement commitments related to the protection of children, reflecting a limited seriousness in integrating childhood issues into reconciliation agendas. Several participants also pointed out that ignorance of, or deliberate disregard for, children's rights constitutes a fundamental obstacle, necessitating intensified awareness-raising and institutional and community capacity-building at all levels.

Sixth: The position of political parties on the issue of child recruitment and its treatment within the transitional justice process

The positions of political parties and political actors reveal a suite of initiatives to address the issue of child recruitment within a transitional justice framework, grounded in a comprehensive approach that brings together legal, social, educational, and political dimensions. These initiatives focus on promoting awareness of a children's rights culture through community campaigns and on reforming the legislative framework to ensure effective protection in line with international instruments. They also call for providing a safe and supportive environment for children's development and enabling their participation in policies that affect them, alongside the development of a national strategy for their protection and social inclusion.

The initiatives underscore the importance of cooperation with international organizations and civil society, and of adopting codes of conduct that proscribe violations against children, coupled with measures to ensure that such abuses are criminalized and do not go unpunished,

thereby ending impunity. They also call for the implementation of psychosocial support programs and for embedding a children's rights culture in school curricula. Overall, these initiatives reflect growing political commitment to making child protection a core component of transitional justice efforts and comprehensive national reform.

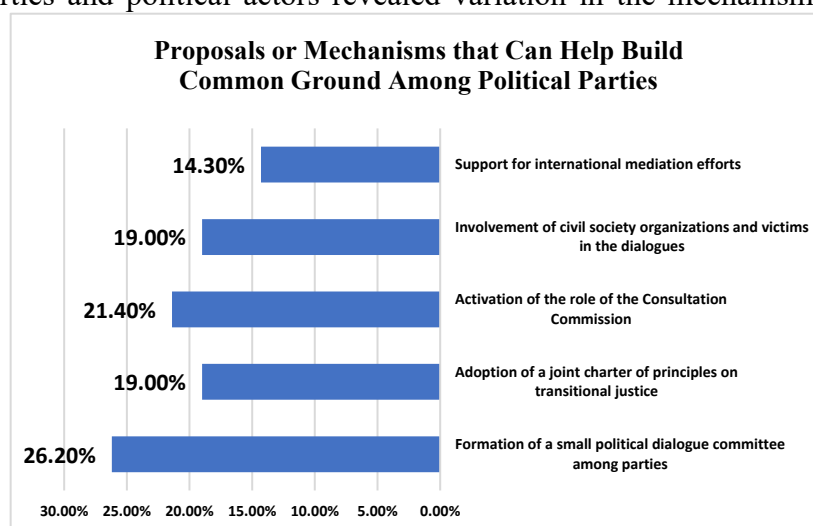
Seventh: Proposed political messages and discourse on children's rights

The findings of the study indicate that the proposed political discourse to advance children's rights adopts a holistic vision based on the integrated interplay of legal, social, and educational dimensions, with the aim of protecting and empowering children and ensuring their enjoyment of their fundamental rights. This discourse rests on several key pillars, notably: sustained awareness-raising on children's rights through the media and school curricula; presenting children as the cornerstone of the nation's future and stressing the need to invest in their education and protection; emphasizing the inclusion of children's rights in political agreements and in the new constitution; and amending national laws to align with international instruments.

The discourse also calls for establishing and supporting specialized child protection institutions; activating the role of the family and community in providing a safe environment; and confronting the exploitation and recruitment of children. It urges the mainstreaming of children's rights within political party programs and regards ending the war and resuming the political process as a prerequisite for their protection. In addition, it calls for empowering human rights organizations and strengthening their role in combating child labor, and for ensuring the continuity of protection through government policies. In this way, the discourse reflects a political and societal commitment to making children's rights an integral part of state-building and sustainable peace.

a. Building common ground on transitional justice and children's rights

The positions of political parties and political actors revealed variation in the mechanisms proposed to build common ground, while converging on ultimate goals of enhancing national consensus and protecting children's rights within transitional justice pathways. Forming a small inter-party political dialogue committee ranked first at 26.2%, reflecting a clear desire to create a direct space for bridging viewpoints. This was

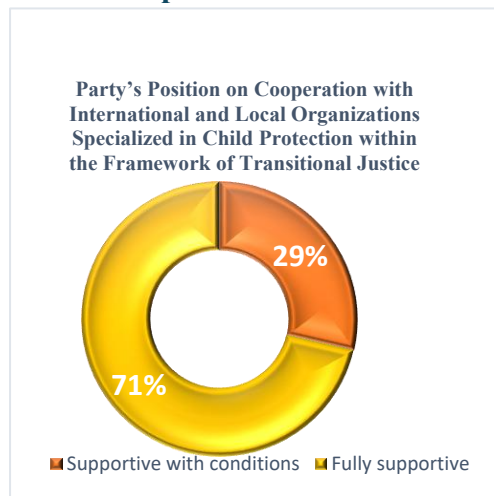


followed by activating the role of the Consultation and Reconciliation Commission at 21.4%, indicating a measure of confidence in this body as an institutional coordinating platform.

Both the adoption of a joint charter of principles and the inclusion of civil society organizations and victims in dialogues received 19% each, underscoring the importance of agreed references and of integrating directly affected constituencies into the process to ensure its transparency and effectiveness. International mediation received a lower share, at 14.3%, despite continued recognition of its importance as external support.

These results point to an overall orientation towards strengthening internal political dialogue, engaging affected communities, and adopting shared reference frameworks that guarantee national consensus and lay the groundwork for a more inclusive and equitable transitional justice process, particularly with regard to children's rights.

b. Cooperation with international and domestic child protection organizations

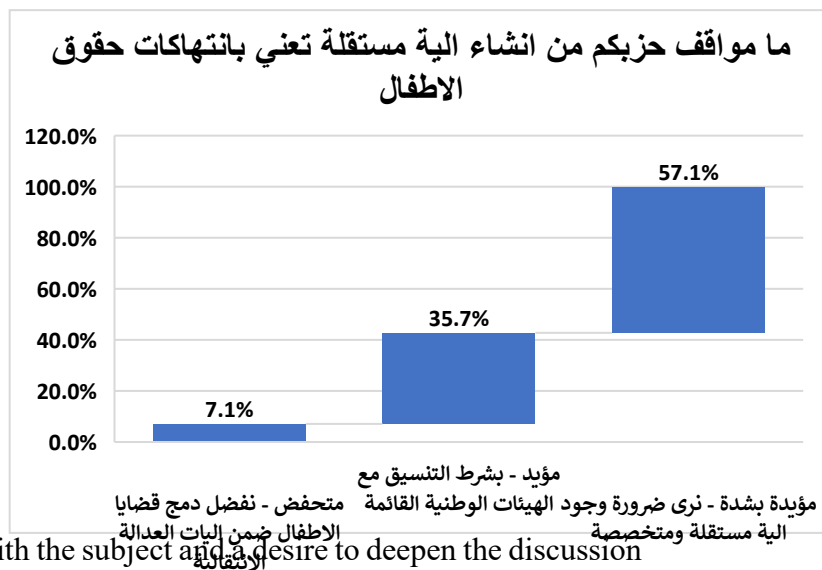


The findings showed complete consensus among the participating political parties on the importance of cooperation with international and domestic organizations specialized in child protection within the transitional justice process: 71.4% supported such cooperation unconditionally, while 28.6% did so conditionally.

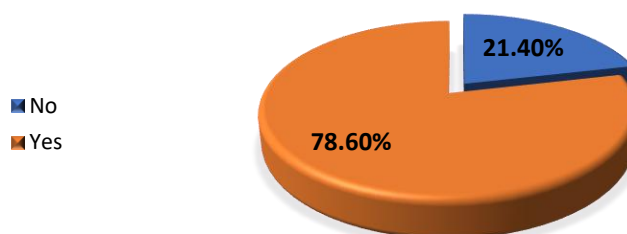
c. Establishing an independent mechanism to address violations of children's rights

Some 57.1% supported the establishment of an independent mechanism to address violations of children's rights, compared to 35.7% who preferred to coordinate this work with existing national bodies, while 7.1% expressed reservations, favoring its integration into broader, general mechanisms.

In addition, 78.6% of participants indicated their willingness to take part in follow-up interviews, reflecting serious engagement with the subject and a desire to deepen the discussion and develop proposed solutions.



**WOULD YOU LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN A
FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW RELATED TO THE
QUESTIONNAIRE TOPIC?**



Chapter Five: Children's Rights in the Transitional Justice Process: Opportunities and Challenges

Integrating children's issues into the transitional justice process is a decisive step to address the legacy of violations and to build sustainable peace in Yemen. While numerous international experiences have underscored the importance of involving children and their families in mechanisms of truth, accountability, and reparation, the Yemeni context presents realistic opportunities to build upon, even as it imposes complex challenges related to the political and institutional environment and the prevailing fragmentation.

In this chapter, we review lessons learned from comparative experiences and identify opportunities for children's participation in justice processes, then analyze the effectiveness of proposed mechanisms to confront violations, before turning to the principal challenges and proposing the contours of a child-friendly transitional justice framework.

First: Lessons from comparative experiences — integrating children into transitional justice

Children's issues are among the most pressing challenges in transitional justice pathways, as they are the group most harmed by armed conflicts. A review of international experiences such as Rwanda, Uganda, Colombia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo underscores the importance of integrating children's rights and specific needs to ensure a comprehensive response that upholds their dignity and future.

In Rwanda, following the 1994 genocide, a national Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program was implemented, through which approximately 18,500 former combatants, including 2,500 children, were demobilized between 1997 and 2001¹²⁹. These children received vocational training, basic education, and psychosocial support to enable their safe return to their communities¹³⁰. The program emphasized rehabilitation rather than punishment, with attention to age-appropriateness. Nonetheless, violations affecting children under fourteen were recorded in the years after the genocide, highlighting challenges in implementation on the ground¹³¹. This was accompanied by social policies to care for orphans and integrate them into society, to strengthen support and stability for affected children¹³².

¹²⁹ World Bank. "Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration: Policy and Operational Guide." World Bank, February 2009, accessed on 24 June 2025, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/776831468324547527/pdf/514150NWP0DDR0no01190Box342027B01PUBLIC1.pdf>, p. 6.

¹³⁰ World Bank. "Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration: Policy and Operational Guide." World Bank, February 2009, accessed on 24 June 2025, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/776831468324547527/pdf/514150NWP0DDR0no01190Box342027B01PUBLIC1.pdf>, p. 2.

¹³¹ Human Rights Watch. "Lasting Wounds: Consequences of Genocide and War for Rwanda's Children." Human Rights Watch, 03 April 2003. Accessed on 24 June 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2003/04/03/lasting-wounds/consequences-genocide-and-war-rwandas-children>

¹³² World Bank. "Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration: Policy and Operational Guide." World Bank, February 2009, accessed on 24 June 2025, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/776831468324547527/pdf/514150NWP0DDR0no01190Box342027B01PUBLIC1.pdf>, p. 9.

Under the demobilization and reintegration program in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, around 30,000 recruited children were demobilized, with support for their social and economic reintegration. UNICEF and Save the Children, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), implemented specialized projects to facilitate these children's reintegration¹³³.

In northern Uganda, which suffered from the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency and widespread abduction and forced recruitment of children, the state adopted a dual approach combining amnesty with traditional reconciliation. Parliament enacted the Amnesty Act in 2000, granting a general amnesty to insurgents, including recruited children, which encouraged them to lay down arms and return to their communities¹³⁴. In addition, traditional justice mechanisms were employed, most notably the Mato Oput ritual in the Acholi region, which allows former fighters—including children, to acknowledge what they committed and receive community forgiveness in a symbolic rite of moral purification. This contributed to children's psychosocial and social recovery and to their sense of acceptance¹³⁵.

Rehabilitation centers were also established with support from UNICEF and local organizations to provide psychosocial support and education prior to reintegration into their villages¹³⁶. Despite the absence of formal transitional justice mechanisms, this flexible cultural policy facilitated acceptance of formerly recruited children and reduced their stigmatization, offering an important lesson in adapting justice to local contexts.

In Colombia, the 2016 peace agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP) included explicit provisions for the protection of children. Underage recruits were handed over to UNICEF and treated as victims without criminal prosecution. By contrast, FARC leaders were held accountable for child recruitment under the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP). Reparation programs were also established for child victims, encompassing education, health care, and the restoration of legal identity¹³⁷.

These experiences demonstrate that the success of transitional justice pathways requires the effective inclusion of children, whether victims or forcibly recruited—through the following:

¹³³ World Bank. "Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration: Policy and Operational Guide." World Bank, February 2009, accessed on 24 June 2025, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/776831468324547527/pdf/514150NWP0DDR0no01190Box342027B01PUBLIC1.pdf>.

¹³⁴ "Transitional Justice and Tradition in Uganda," *JurisAfrica*, October 2021, <https://www.jurisafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Transitional-Justice-and-Tradition-in-Uganda-min.pdf>.

¹³⁵ **Department for International Development**. 2007. "Memorandum Submitted by the Department for International Development: Prospects for Sustainable Peace in Northern Uganda." Uncorrected Evidence (UK Parliament, House of Commons, International Development Committee), 2006–07 Session. منشور على موقع Parliament.uk. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmintdev/ucuganda/ucm102.htm>

¹³⁶ Allen, Tim, and Mareike Schomerus. *A Hard Homecoming: Lessons Learned from the Reception Center Process in Northern Uganda*. London School of Economics, commissioned by USAID and UNICEF, Aug. 2006. P 50.

https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/39129-doc-93_a_hard_home_coming_lessons_learned_from_the_reception_center_process_in_northern_uganda.pdf

¹³⁷ Human Rights Watch. 2024. "Colombia Charges Former FARC Leaders with Child Recruitment." *Human Rights Watch*, 20 November 2024. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/11/20/colombia-charges-former-farc-leaders-child-recruitment>

- Establishing child-sensitive institutions that provide an enabling environment for their rehabilitation.
- Adopting targeted reparation programs that address long-term psychological and social harms.
- Operationalizing credible accountability mechanisms that prosecute perpetrators while protecting children from criminalization or stigmatization.
- Ensuring that children's voices are included in truth-seeking and narrative processes, thereby fostering recovery and societal recognition of their suffering.

Yemen, at a crossroads between war and a political settlement, can draw on these models to build a national transitional justice process that places children's rights and dignity at the heart of recovery and reconciliation, transforming suffering into an opportunity to establish a more just and peaceful environment for generations to come.

Second: Opportunities to Enhance the Participation of Children and Their Families in Justice Processes

As Yemen begins its transition from a stage of conflict to a trajectory of peace, a unique opportunity has emerged to strengthen the participation of children and their families in transitional justice efforts. Historically, the experiences of children have often been marginalized within traditional truth and accountability mechanisms, despite them being among the most affected groups. This reality necessitates the creation of innovative mechanisms that guarantee their safe and effective participation, afford them space to articulate their suffering, and enable them to contribute in shaping frameworks for redress and reparations.

a. Hearings and Truth-Telling

The Truth Commission in Yemen could organize hearings specifically dedicated to children or gather testimonies from families regarding violations suffered by children. This approach draws on the experience of Sierra Leone, which established “child-friendly hearings” in age-appropriate settings with the presence of psychological specialists¹³⁸, as well as on the Kenyan commission's model, which developed a protection plan for children during participation in hearings and listening sessions, and conducted two special hearings with children, receiving over 2,000 testimonies from them¹³⁹.

While the involvement of children raises concerns related to retraumatization or psychological harm, the adoption of precautionary measures—such as securing informed family consent,

¹³⁸ Sullo, Pietro. 2012. “When Hurbinek Survives. Transitional Justice and Children's Rights: Lessons Learnt from Rwanda.” In *Re Member: Rehabilitation, Reintegration and Reconciliation of War Affected Children*, edited by Ilse Derluyn, Cindy Mels, Stephan Parmentier, and Wouter Vandenhoe, 127–52. Cambridge: Intersentia. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781839700705.008>.

ReliefWeb. 2022. “Sierra Leonean Children Tell Their Side of the Story.” ReliefWeb, 27 March 2022. Accessed on 27 June 2025. <https://reliefweb.int/report/sierra-leone/sierra-leonean-children-tell-their-side-story>.

¹³⁹ International Center for Transitional Justice. *Including Children in Truth-Seeking Processes for Sustainable Change*. New York, n.d. Accessed on 26 June 2025. <https://www.ictj.org/ar/node/21302>.

maintaining confidentiality, and providing concurrent psychological support—can achieve a necessary balance between protection and the right to participate¹⁴⁰.

Child rights experts affirm that involving children not only provides a platform for them to express themselves but also helps to reveal hidden dimensions of the conflict and strengthens their trust in justice and reconciliation. Although earlier commissions, such as that in South Africa, expressed reservations about the impact of participation on children, recent experiences have demonstrated that such involvement is both feasible and safe when implemented in accordance with clear procedures. The International Center for Transitional Justice has documented practical examples of how to strike this balance between protection and participation¹⁴¹.

b. Documenting Violations and Community Memory

Listening to the testimonies of children is a crucial tool for uncovering violations that adults may find difficult to detect, such as siege, forced displacement, and sexual abuse. This not only sends a clear message that justice is an inherent right for children but also strengthens their confidence in institutions and supports community reconciliation¹⁴².

Community memory serves as an essential source for documenting the testimonies of thousands of child victims of war. It can be activated through field teams composed of young people, including survivors and activists, to record incidents such as school bombings, the recruitment of minors, and famine, thereby integrating children's narratives into the broader course of comprehensive justice.

Initiatives have already been launched in this regard, such as the United Nations Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) in collaboration with local organizations. The involvement of families further enhances the reliability of testimonies and anchors evidence within affected communities¹⁴³. The Yemeni Justice Declaration has underscored the necessity of comprehensive documentation of war crimes, including violations against children, as a fundamental prerequisite for achieving redress and ensuring non-repetition¹⁴⁴.

¹⁴⁰ International Center for Transitional Justice. *Children and the Truth: Accountability, Truth-Telling and Children's Participation*. New York: ICTJ, 2010. <https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Global-Children-Truth-2010-English.pdf>.

¹⁴¹ International Center for Transitional Justice. *Including Children in Truth-Seeking Processes for Sustainable Change*. New York, n.d. Accessed on 26 June 2025. <https://www.ictj.org/ar/node/21302>.

¹⁴² These links provide transcripts of live testimonies from children and their families during hearings organized by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Liberia, highlighting the importance of involving children and their families in transitional justice processes and reparation programs:

<https://www.trcofliberia.org/transcripts/31.htm>

<https://www.trcofliberia.org/transcripts/47.html>

<https://www.trcofliberia.org/transcripts/57.html>

¹⁴³ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. *The Role and Achievements: Monitoring and Reporting*. No place of publication, n.d. Accessed on 27 June 2025. <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/ar/about/the-mandate/الإبلاغ-والرصد-والأمن-مجلس-الأمن>

¹⁴⁴ Yemen Justice. *The Yemen Declaration for Justice and Reconciliation*, 2023. https://yemenjustice.org/files/The_Yemen_Declaration_for_Justice_and_Reconciliation_ar.pdf

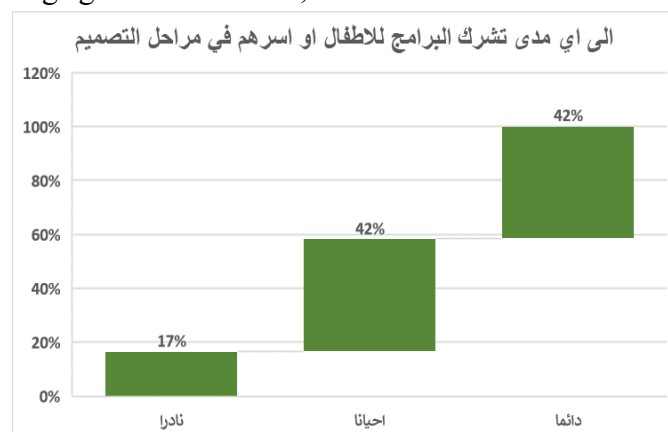
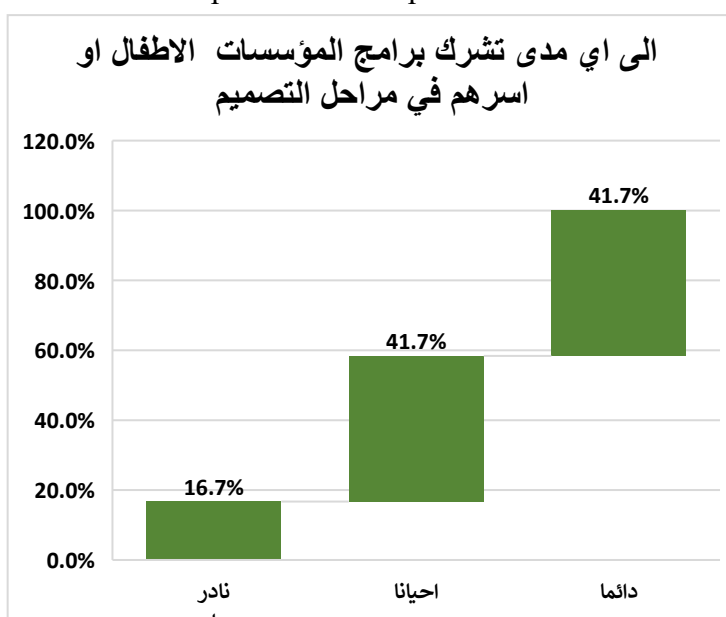
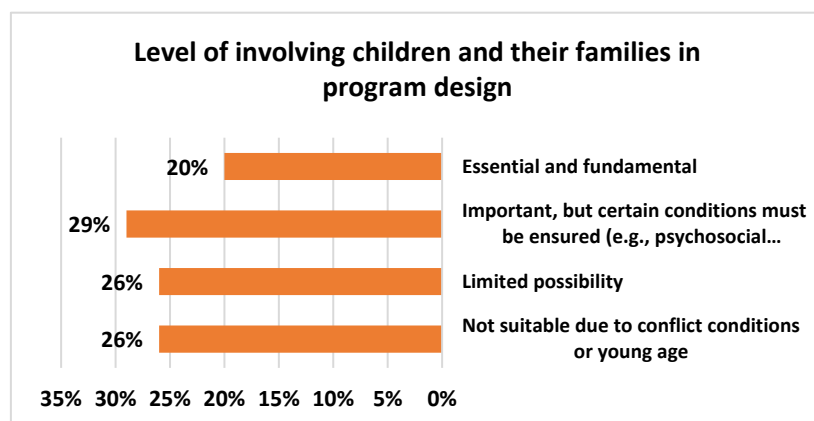
c. Designing Reparation Programs

The participation of affected children and their families in the design of reparation programs is a fundamental prerequisite for achieving comprehensive transitional justice. Such engagement ensures that responses are tailored to the actual needs of target groups and reinforces community ownership and empowerment. Effective programs cannot be imposed in a top-down manner without considering the voices of victims—particularly in a complex context like Yemen, where forms of harm range from loss of family and education to disabilities and psychological trauma.

The experience of the Sierra Leone Child Victims Trust Fund offers an adaptable model, as it succeeded in providing sustainable education for child victims up to advanced levels within a transparent framework involving victims and their representatives. Yemen could draw

upon this experience by establishing a similar national fund, grounded in principles of good governance and managed through genuine community participation to ensure resources are directed towards true priorities.

At the individual level, survey results revealed diverse attitudes toward the participation of children and their families. Of respondents, 26.0 percent considered such participation “inappropriate” due to the ongoing conflict or the young age of the children, while another 26.0 percent believed it was possible but only to a limited extent and with the provision of ethical and psychological safeguards. A further 28.6 percent adopted a moderate view, supporting participation provided there is a safe environment and psychological support, while 19.5 percent emphasized the necessity of participation to ensure that programs meet victims’ needs and enhance their effectiveness.



At the institutional level, 41.7 percent of organizations reported that they always involve children or their families in program design, with a similar percentage (41.7 percent) doing so occasionally, and 16.7 percent indicating that participation is rare, with no cases of “absolute non-participation.” These figures reflect a growing awareness of the importance of inclusion, but also reveal variation in practice, highlighting the need to develop consistent participatory methodologies that adhere to child protection and best interest principles, to ensure more effective and sustainable outcomes.

d. Community Reconciliation and Restorative Justice

The desired scope of participation in transitional justice also extends to include community justice and reconciliation at the local level. This can take the form of revitalizing customary norms, community initiatives, and civil society organizations to convene reconciliation sessions that are mindful of children's rights. Support can also be directed toward local youth-led initiatives organizing joint activities for children from rival communities, serving as a proactive instrument of intergenerational restorative justice.

The post-genocide experience in Rwanda serves as an inspiring example, where civil society organizations—most notably Aegis Trust—organized summer camps that brought together adolescents from both perpetrator and victim families, within volunteer and dialogue-based programs such as Youth Champions and Youth Ambassadors, with the aim of building trust and fostering mutual understanding¹⁴⁵. Similar activities could be adopted in Yemen among children from different regions to help bridge the divides left by war.

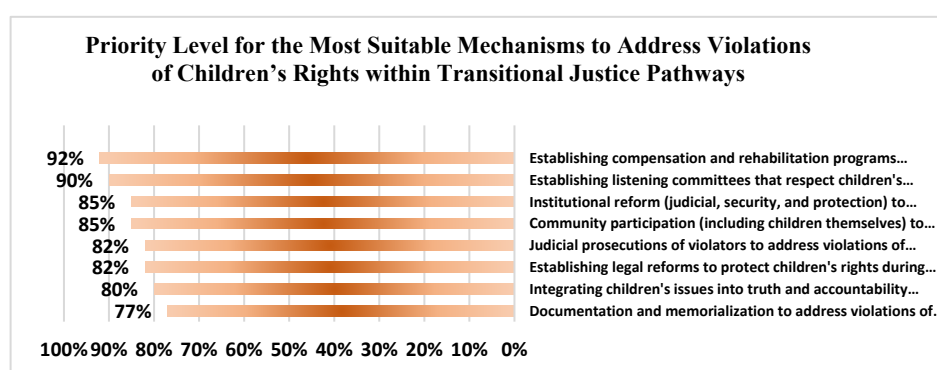
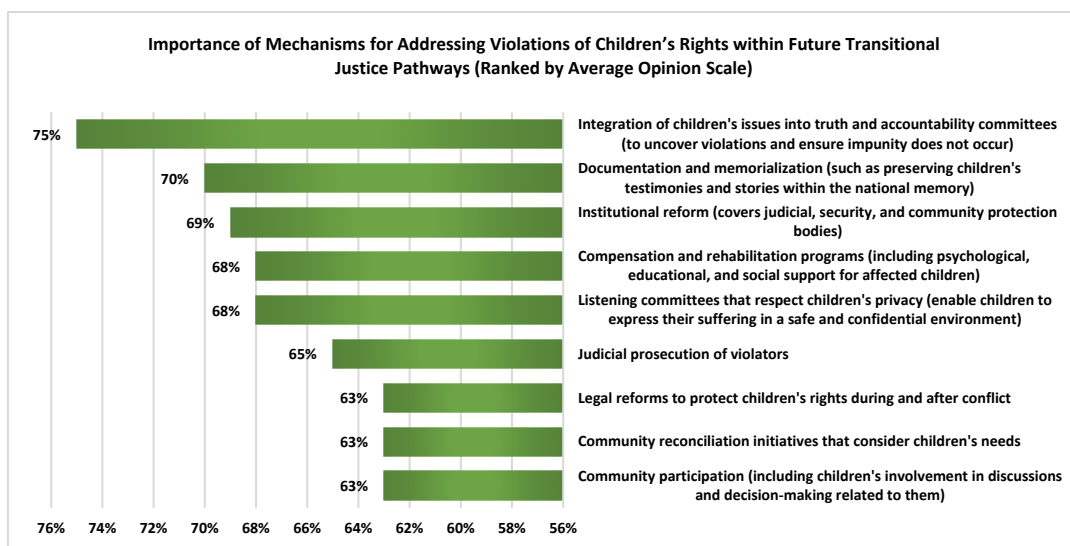
In this context, a genuine opportunity arises to transform children and their families from passive recipients into active agents within transitional justice processes, whether through truth-telling, contributing to the design of reparations programs, or leading community reconciliation initiatives. This transformation requires genuine political will and specialized technical support, but it holds the potential to imbue justice efforts with a deeper human and ethical dimension and to nurture a generation that is more confident in justice and better equipped to overcome the legacy of the past.

Third: The Importance and Effectiveness of Transitional Justice Mechanisms in Addressing Violations of Children's Rights

a. Community and Institutional Priorities in Transitional Justice Mechanisms Related to Children's Rights

¹⁴⁵ Aegis Trust. “Rwanda Youth Programmes.” *Aegis Trust*. Accessed August 17, 2025. <https://www.aegistrust.org/what-we-do/activities/students-youth/rwanda-youth-programmes/>.

Survey results indicate that community priorities tend to favor mechanisms that ensure the recognition and preservation of violations against children. Most notably, the integration of children's issues into truth and accountability commissions ranked highest (74.5 percent), followed by documentation and the



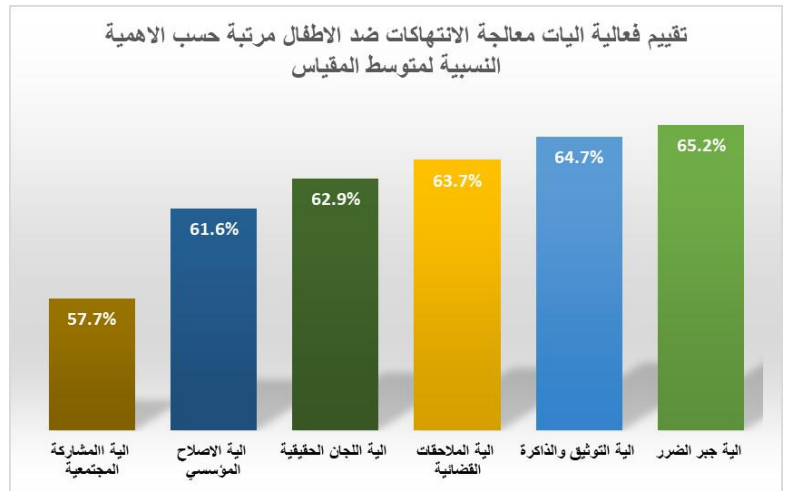
preservation of memory (70.1 percent), then institutional reform (68.8 percent), and compensation and rehabilitation programs (68.4 percent).

Dedicated child hearings received 68.0 percent, whereas judicial prosecutions scored lower (64.9 percent), reflecting a lack of confidence in judicial systems amidst ongoing conflict. Legal reforms accounted for 63.2 percent, while at the bottom of the list were children's community participation and community reconciliation initiatives (62.8 percent).

On the institutional level, a clear preference emerged for direct remedial and structural mechanisms. Compensation and rehabilitation programs were ranked first (92.3 percent), followed by child-friendly hearing committees (89.7 percent). Community participation and institutional reform followed closely (84.6 percent). Legal reforms and judicial prosecutions both received 82.1 percent, whereas the integration of children's issues into truth commissions (79.5 percent) and documentation (76.9 percent) ranked lower, with community reconciliation mechanisms last at 66.7 percent. This demonstrates that institutions tend to favor tangible interventions that produce direct remedial outcomes over symbolic or reconciliatory mechanisms.

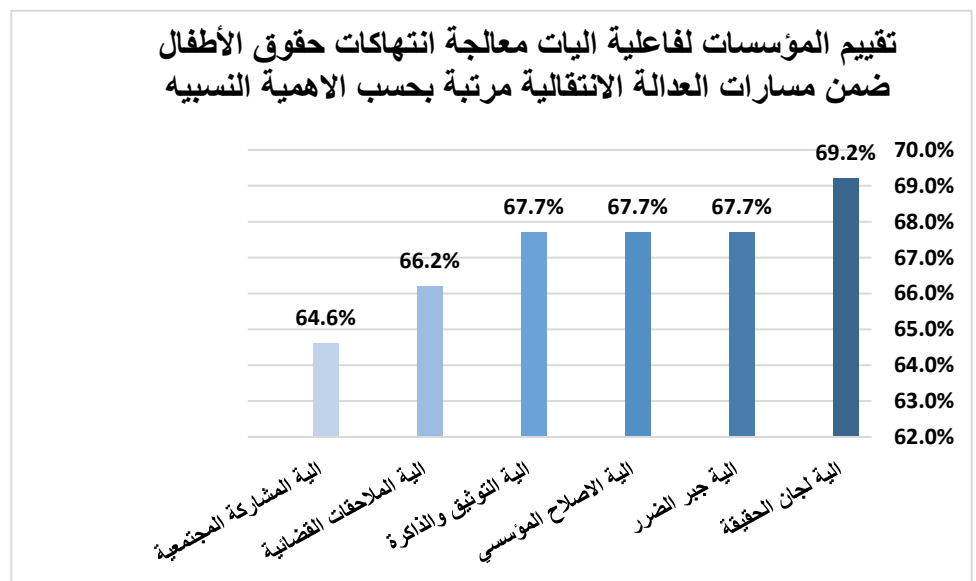
b. Assessing the Effectiveness of Transitional Justice Mechanisms in Addressing Violations of Children's Rights

Survey findings reveal that the overall effectiveness of transitional justice mechanisms in addressing violations of children's rights is at a moderate level, with noticeable differences among the mechanisms. The reparations mechanism ranked highest at 65.2 percent due to its provision of material and moral compensation that supports psychological and social recovery. It was followed by documentation and memory preservation at 64.7 percent, owing to their role in preserving historical record and ensuring non-repetition.



Judicial prosecutions ranked third (63.7 percent), but their moderate evaluation reflects the lack of trust in judicial systems and the difficulties of implementation in a conflict environment. Truth commissions were fourth (62.9 percent), valued as mechanisms for uncovering violations and achieving symbolic justice.

Institutional reform scored 61.6 percent, underscoring its significance despite the challenges associated with implementation amid war. Finally, children's community participation was ranked last at 57.7 percent, which highlights the weak involvement of communities and children in decision-making processes.



Institutional assessments display variance in the perceived effectiveness of proposed mechanisms

to address violations of children's rights under transitional justice. Truth commissions emerged as the most effective mechanism at 69.2 percent, due to their capacity to ensure accountability and reparations. This was followed by reparations, institutional reform, and documentation, each scoring 67.7 percent, suggesting a relative appreciation for their roles under certain conditions of implementation. Judicial prosecutions received a lower score (66.2 percent), possibly reflecting legal or practical challenges, while community participation ranked last at 64.6 percent, indicating limited confidence in its effectiveness within the current context.

The results illustrate a gap between community priorities and institutional orientations in addressing violations of children's rights through transitional justice. While the community assigns greater importance to symbolic and documentary mechanisms that preserve memory and acknowledge violations, institutions are more inclined toward tangible remedial and structural mechanisms that provide concrete compensation and rehabilitation. This divergence highlights the need for a balanced approach that integrates memory preservation with both material and moral redress, concurrently building public trust in judicial systems and expanding the participation of children and their families in the design and implementation of these mechanisms to ensure their inclusivity and sustainability.

Fourth: Principal Challenges to Implementing Mechanisms for Addressing Violations Against Children

The data indicate the presence of a set of prominent challenges that constitute real obstacles to activating transitional justice mechanisms specific to children in Yemen. These challenges have surfaced in an order that reflects the priorities and concerns of the study's participants.

Topping the list is political and geographic fragmentation, cited by 25.3 percent as the primary barrier to developing and implementing unified national policies. This fragmentation is characterized by conflicting authorities, overlapping mandates, and a lack of institutional coordination.

Next is the weakness of the legal and institutional framework, reported by 24.0 percent. This results from the absence or inadequate enforcement of appropriate legislation, as well as the fragility of institutions responsible for law enforcement and child protection, leaving children vulnerable to repeated violations without accountability.

The lack of funding and technical support ranks third at 22.7 percent, reflecting the severe limitations in the material and human resources required for protection, documentation, reparation, and rehabilitation programs. There is an acute need for sustained external support.

The absence of political will is also significant, at 21.3 percent. This is evident in the limited commitment of authorities to child protection issues and the marginalization of these concerns in favor of security and political priorities. Societal awareness is also lacking, as indicated by 20.0 percent, due to the persistence of harmful traditional practices—such as recruitment and early marriage—and the absence of a culture of reporting and accountability.

In addition, participants pointed to further challenges, including security instability, weak international partnerships, the prevalence of a culture of violence, and a lack of trust between local communities and institutions.

It is clear that the challenges facing mechanisms to address violations of children's rights in Yemen are not merely technical or legal, but are in fact structural and multifaceted, intersecting political, institutional, and cultural factors. This reality necessitates the adoption of a comprehensive, multi-level approach, combining political reform, institutional development, and the promotion of societal awareness, alongside the provision of sustained and effective international support.

Fifth: Towards Child-Friendly Transitional Justice

Establishing sustainable peace in Yemen requires the adoption of a comprehensive vision for child-friendly transitional justice. This vision must prioritize the needs of the emerging generation, placing them at the core of redress and reconciliation processes. It should be founded on integrated reform-oriented and community-driven elements that reinforce child protection and secure the effective participation of children in shaping the future.

- A. **Truth Commissions:** Truth commissions represent a central mechanism for uncovering and documenting violations against children. They must conduct safe, victim-sensitive interviews that guarantee informed consent and provide immediate referrals for psychological support and protection. Their work involves analyzing patterns and policies responsible for violations, identifying institutional and individual accountability, and issuing public reports supported by robust databases and binding recommendations for reparations, institutional reform, and national memory preservation. Completed case files should be referred to specialized prosecutors, maintaining the confidentiality of children and making their testimonies a powerful tool for truth-seeking and policy formulation. Comprehensive documentation of violations, accompanied by the involvement of victims and their families in narrating the truth and protection from retaliation, is essential.
- B. **Judicial Accountability:** Judicial accountability is a key mechanism for preventing impunity for perpetrators of violations against children. This requires effective investigation and prosecution of grave crimes, such as recruitment, sexual violence, and extrajudicial killings, in line with fair trial standards. The establishment of specialized courts, prosecution chambers, and police units trained in child-sensitive procedures is necessary, along with the adoption of unified protocols for documentation and evidence. Enhanced national and international judicial cooperation, and linking truth commission outcomes to the public prosecution, are also needed. Conditional restorative justice options (such as recognition, apology, guarantee of non-repetition, and reparations) may be provided without compromising prosecutions for the most serious crimes.
- C. **Reparations:** Reparations form a fundamental pillar of transitional justice and should be implemented in an integrated manner that combines material and moral components. These measures include periodic cash compensation linked to reintegration, educational grants, fee waivers for programs supporting school return, and comprehensive physical and mental healthcare, including prosthetics and support for children with disabilities. They must also address housing, livelihood support for the most vulnerable families, and services for single mothers.

Symbolically, reparations should involve formal apologies from the state and parties to the conflict, the creation of memorials, the naming of schools or grants after victims, and memory preservation programs that integrate victims' stories into curricula and educational activities. This pathway should be managed by a National Fund for Child Reparations, governed transparently and comprising representatives of the state, civil society, and independent experts. The impact should be measured through clear indicators such as school enrollment rates, psychological recovery, and income restoration, alongside ensuring sustainable funding from the national budget, international contributions, asset recovery, and imposed fines.

D. Institutional and Legal Reform: Institutional and legal reform is the cornerstone of ensuring the non-recurrence of violations, through aligning national legislation with international standards. This includes amending the Child Rights Law and the Juvenile Care Law, explicitly criminalizing child recruitment and child marriage, and recognizing all individuals under the age of 18 who participated in the conflict as victims, not perpetrators.

Reform also requires the reconstruction of security and judicial institutions with a child-sensitive approach by establishing specialized police units, activating juvenile courts in line with international standards, and ensuring fair trials that consider the specific needs of children through measures such as closed hearings, the presence of a guardian or counselor, and the avoidance of direct confrontation with the perpetrator.

International experiences, including the United Nations Machel Report (1996), confirm that traditional justice systems often overlook the rights of minors. Yemen must therefore make the best interests of the child a guiding principle at every stage of the transitional justice process¹⁴⁶.

E. Engaging Civil Society: Civil society plays an indispensable role in the path of transitional justice in Yemen, given its accumulated experience in providing psychological, educational, and legal support for children throughout the years of conflict. The post-conflict government can build institutional partnerships with local and international organizations to design joint programs, such as commissioning trusted organizations to manage psychosocial and social rehabilitation centers for former child soldiers and victims, and establishing advisory committees within transitional justice bodies with representatives from child and youth organizations. Empowering grassroots groups—such as victims' families associations, youth unions, and associations of persons with disabilities—to participate in planning and implementation ensures that reconciliation and compensation programs are grounded in the community and enjoy public acceptance¹⁴⁷.

F. Advancing Education and Awareness: Promoting the values of peace and human rights over the long term necessitates integrating the principles of transitional justice and children's rights into curricula in accessible language and teaching conflict history objectively, underlining the importance of truth-seeking, accountability, and reparations for preventing recurrence. This also involves launching public awareness and media campaigns targeted at parents and guardians, engaging religious and educational figures to strengthen values of care and child protection. The concept of child-friendly justice must be widely disseminated, while creating safe spaces for intergenerational dialogue that allow children to express their views and contribute to rebuilding the nation.

G. Supporting Mental Health and Community Rehabilitation: Psychological support and community rehabilitation are foundational in any child-sensitive transitional justice process. The war has left deep traumas that require systematic treatment to prevent the perpetuation of violence. This demands the establishment of specialized mental health centers in governorates, supported by field teams, and the placement of psychological counselors in

¹⁴⁶ Graça Machel, 1996

¹⁴⁷ Cheaito, Rana. 2023. "Breaking the Cycle: Towards Victim-Centered Justice in Yemen." *Open Society Foundations*, August 30, 2023. <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/breaking-the-cycle-towards-a-victim-centered-justice-in-yemen>

schools affected by conflict to monitor children impacted by war, including those whose parents are perpetrators. Integrating psychological support with community reconciliation programs and group therapy sessions can enhance acceptance of others and foster a shared sense of national belonging.

Conclusion

This study highlights that the protection of children's rights in Yemen during years of conflict has been fraught with complex challenges, as grave violations have accumulated alongside institutional collapse and inadequate responses. All of this has occurred in a context of political fragmentation and severe humanitarian decline. The evidence makes it clear that effective response requires a comprehensive national approach that places children's issues at the heart of transitional justice and balances urgent relief efforts with long-term structural reforms.

The proposed vision for child-friendly transitional justice rests on interconnected pillars: reforming the legal and institutional framework to guarantee protection; establishing specialized truth commissions to monitor and document violations against children; undertaking judicial proceedings to hold perpetrators of grave violations accountable; designing comprehensive programs for material and moral reparations; mobilizing civil society and media to foster a supportive culture; providing psychological, social, and educational rehabilitation for affected children; and ensuring the active participation of children and their families in the development of solutions.

Through this approach, transitional justice becomes an instrument for rebuilding society on the foundations of equality and fairness, an investment in future generations, and a pathway to sustainable peace that delivers redress first to the youngest victims. Building on this vision, the study presents the following findings and recommendations as a practical roadmap for implementation.

Findings

1. The study demonstrates that grave violations against children in Yemen persist despite the signing of agreements and action plans with the United Nations. Child recruitment and use in armed conflict tops the list of violations at 88.7%, followed by killing or maiming (61.7%), sexual violence (51%), and attacks on schools and hospitals (50%).
2. The principal structural causes for the continuation of violations are the absence of legal accountability (96.9%), weak protection mechanisms (86.8%), and lack of institutional coordination (80%), regardless of the ongoing nature of the armed conflict.
3. There has been extensive harm to educational infrastructure, as attacks on educational facilities and the use of schools for military purposes have led to the disruption or destruction of thousands of schools, depriving over two million children of education and contributing to higher rates of dropout and school abandonment.
4. Despite the existence of the Child Rights Law of 2002 and Yemen's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its protocols, the lack of legislative amendments, weak enforcement mechanisms, and institutional fragmentation have

rendered this system ineffective. In fact, 73.3% of participants rated the legal framework as weak or very weak.

5. The child protection legal framework in Yemen remains largely nominal. Ratification of international conventions and the presence of a child rights law have not translated into effective protection because of the absence of legislative amendments, weak implementation, and institutional fragmentation, leading 73.3% of participants to consider it ineffective.
6. Institutional division and the multiplicity of de facto authorities have deepened the crisis. The duplication of laws and a paralyzed parliament under the internationally recognized government have fractured the national legal framework, while the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood has failed to fulfill its coordinating role, rendering protection plans dependent solely on donor support.
7. The national child protection system suffers from a lack of coordination between official entities and local and international organizations. This has created gaps in coverage and excluded some of the most vulnerable groups, such as children with disabilities and child soldiers.
8. The study found that political stances regarding the integration of children's issues in transitional justice are inconsistent, with a lack of clear priorities and ongoing cultural barriers and fear of accountability.
9. According to participants, girls (91.7%), children with disabilities (76.9%), marginalized groups, and internally displaced persons are the most exposed to intersecting violations due to the interplay of gender, geographical location, and socio-economic status.
10. Psychological harm ranks highest among short-term impacts at 37.7%, followed by physical and social effects. In the long term, the potential involvement of children in violence is a prominent threat, at 72.7%, to perpetuating the cycle of conflict.
11. Confidence in judicial proceedings as a means of redress is low, with a greater inclination toward mechanisms of reparations, memorialization, and truth commissions, given the absence of a comprehensive legal framework to address violations against children within the context of conflict.
12. Structural and operational challenges persist due to the ongoing conflict, political and geographical division, lack of sustainable funding, and an absence of political will, in addition to security restrictions and the control of armed groups, all of which restrict access to children in certain areas.
13. The results reveal a gap in societal and political understanding of child-focused transitional justice, underlining the need to enhance knowledge and community participation.
14. Psychological and social support and reintegration programs demonstrate clear deficiencies. They remain limited in scope and fail to reach all affected groups and their families, especially in remote or severely impacted areas.
15. There are, nonetheless, potential opportunities to build upon, including successful local experiences in rehabilitation and reintegration that could be scaled up if institutional and financial support were available, and a broad readiness among political and social

actors to collaborate with international and local organizations and to support the establishment of independent mechanisms to address violations.

Recommendations

First: Decision-Makers in the Government of Yemen

1. Reforming the legal and legislative framework by amending the Child Rights Law to criminalize the recruitment of children and establishing the minimum age of marriage at 18 years. Aligning national laws with international conventions, while enacting comprehensive transitional justice legislation that defines mechanisms, mandates, and guarantees the integration of issues concerning women, children, and the most vulnerable groups.
2. Building transitional justice institutions through establishing an independent national transitional justice authority, endowed with broad powers, guarantees of independence, and adequate resources. This should include a specialized mechanism to document violations of children's rights and to protect witnesses and victims. Additionally, reforming the judiciary and security institutions to ensure impartiality and effective accountability, and adopting comprehensive reparation programs for children and their families that cover material and moral compensation, as well as psychosocial and social rehabilitation and livelihood support.
3. Strengthening institutional, educational, and community infrastructure by reactivating the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, creating specialized units within the police and judiciary, and ensuring the protection of education and basic services through implementing the Safe Schools Declaration, rehabilitating educational and health facilities, and guaranteeing non-discriminatory access to aid. Integrating human rights education and the culture of peace into school curricula and media policies, while launching programs to compensate for lost learning.

Second: The International Community

4. Exercising coordinated diplomatic pressure on all parties to halt grave violations against children, linking aid and international recognition to specific commitments to implement child recruitment prevention plans, and ensuring that principles of transitional justice—including reparations and guarantees of non-repetition—are incorporated into any future peace agreements.
5. Providing financial and technical support for the transitional justice process, with respect for national priorities and sovereignty, and linking such support to institutional reform plans that enhance human rights. Supplying specialized international expertise for investigations, reparations, and institutional reform, and developing the capacity of national entities in documentation and monitoring.
6. Supporting the establishment of an independent national mechanism for monitoring violations against children and sharing information with this mechanism to ensure accountability. Additionally, training local personnel on international standards for child protection in the context of conflict, thereby ensuring sustainability at the local level.

7. Supporting the development of effective mechanisms to protect witnesses and victims and providing a safe environment for legal proceedings, contributing to the rehabilitation of educational and health facilities, and funding programs for reparations and mental health. Promoting the reintegration of former child soldiers and survivors of sexual violence, and supporting initiatives to compensate for educational loss.

Third: Parties to the Conflict

8. Immediately ceasing violations against civilians, especially women and children, and fully cooperating with truth commissions and judicial bodies, including facilitating their access to victims and affected areas in order to promote truth-seeking and accountability.
9. Releasing all detainees and forcibly disappeared persons and disclosing the fate of missing individuals, thereby bringing an end to some of the most painful violations and creating opportunities for reconciliation and confidence-building.
10. Allowing unimpeded humanitarian access without political exploitation, ensuring the neutrality of relief operations and their equitable delivery to the most vulnerable groups.
11. Permitting the work of independent monitoring and documentation mechanisms, and ensuring the protection of those working in this field from any threats or restrictions so as to strengthen transparency and foster the credibility of documentation efforts.

Fourth: Political Parties and Components

12. Integrating the protection of children's rights into their programs and policy and legislative agendas, adopting a unified position on transitional justice that ensures child-related issues are included within the reference period. Participating in drafting legislation and policies in accordance with international standards and supporting independent mechanisms for documenting violations.
13. Committing to ending violations, especially recruitment, ensuring the provision of basic services, engaging in national dialogue, and contributing to the development of a national charter on children's rights. Organizing training programs for their own cadres and participating in community campaigns to promote peace and limit hate speech.

Fifth: Local Civil Society Organizations

14. Enhancing documentation and monitoring capacities in accordance with international standards, collecting data and delivering it to national and international mechanisms, assisting in designing and implementing reparation and reintegration programs for children and their families, and providing psychological, social, and legal support through specialized centers.
15. Playing a pivotal role in raising awareness and advocating for transitional justice and child rights through media and training campaigns, ensuring the involvement of children and their families in program design, and building local and international coordination networks to exchange expertise and direct resources effectively.